

History of India up to 1206AD

(18BHI13C)

UNIT 3

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1 Gupta Empire

An inscription tells us that Sri Gupta was the first king and Ghatotkacha was the next to follow him with the title Maharaja. This title was often borne by feudatory chiefs. The Poona copper plate inscription of Prabhavati Gupta describes Sri Gupta as the first king of the Gupta dynasty. In the Riddhapura copper plate inscription, it is stated that Sri Gupta belonged to the Dharan Gotra.

Chandragupta I (A.D. 319-320 to 335):

The first Gupta ruler of consequence was Chandragupta I, son of Ghatotkacha. By marrying a Lichchhavi Princess Kumaradevi he sought to gain in prestige, though Vaishali does not appear to have been a part of his kingdom. His rule remained confined to Magadha and parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh (Saketa and Prayaga). He took the title of Maharajadhiraja, and his accession in about A.D. 319-20 marked the beginning of Gupta era.

Samudragupta (A.D. 335-380):

Chandragupta I was succeeded by his son Samudragupta probably in A.D. 325. Samudragupta became the ruler after subduing his rival Kacha, an obscure prince of the dynasty. His conquests are known from a lengthy eulogy composed by his court-poet Harishena and inscribed on an Asokan pillar at Allahabad. This account contains a long list of states, kings and tribes which were conquered and brought under various degrees of subjugation.

The list can be divided into four categories:

1. The first category includes the twelve states of Dakshinapatha with the names of their kings who were captured and then liberated and reinstated. They were Kosala, Mahakantara, Kaurata, Pishtapura, Kottura, Erandapalli, Kanchi, Avamukta, Vengi, Palakka, Devrashtra and Kushthalpura.

2. The second category includes the names of the eight kings of Aryavarta, who were violently exterminated; prominent of them were Rudradwa, Ganapatinaga, Nagasena, etc.

3. The third category consists of the rulers of the forest states (atavirarajyas) who were reduced to servitude and the chief of the five Border States (pratyantas) and nine tribal republics that were forced to pay all kinds of taxes obey his orders and came to perform obeisance.

The five Border States were Samtata (South-east Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam), Nepala (Nepal), Davaka (Assam) and Kartipura (Kashmir). The nine tribal republics were the Malavas,

Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Abhiras, Prarjunas, Arjunayanas, Sarakinakas, Kavas and Kharaparikas.

4. The fourth category consists of the Daivaputra Shahi Shahanushahi (Kushanas), the Shaka-, Murundas, the dwellers of Sinhala (Ceylon) and all the other islands who paid tribute to the King.

Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta rightly describes him as the hero of a hundred battles, and Vincent Smith calls him the 'Napoleon of India'. But in spite of his preoccupation with political and military affairs, he cultivated music and poetry. Some of his gold coins represent him as playing on the lyre. The Guptas were followers of the Brahmanical religion and Samudragupta performed the Asvamedha sacrifice. However, he fully maintained the tradition of religious toleration. According to a Chinese source, Meghavarman, the ruler of Sri Lanka was granted permission by Samudragupta to build a monastery at Bodha Gaya.

Chandragupta II (A.D. 380-412):

Samudragupta was succeeded by his younger son Chandragupta II. But, according to some scholars, Samudragupta who died shortly before A. D. 380 was succeeded by his elder son Ramagupta. The drama Devichandraguptam of Vishakhadatta suggests that Ramagupta suddenly attacked by the Sakas, made peace with them on condition that his queen Dhruvadevi was to be surrendered to the Saka chief.

This infuriated his younger brother Chandragupta, who went himself in the disguise of the queen to the Saka chief and killed him. Then he murdered his royal brother Ramagupta and married the queen. The official records of the Guptas, however do not refer to Ramagupta and trace the succession directly from Samudragupta to Chandragupta II.

Kumaragupta I (412-454 A.D.):

Chandragupta II died about A.D. 413 and was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta who enjoyed a long reign of more than forty years. He performed the Asvamedha sacrifice, but we do not know of any military success achieved by him.

He maintained intact the vast empire built up by his two predecessors. Towards the close of his reign the empire was menaced by hordes of the Pushyamitras probably a tribe allied to the Hunas which were defeated by the Crown prince Skandagupta.

Skandagupta (454-467 A.D.):

Skandagupta, who succeeded Kumaragupta I, was perhaps the last powerful Gupta monarch. To consolidate his position he had to fight the Pushyamitras, and the country faced Huna invasion from across the frontiers in the north-west. However, Skandagupta was successful in throwing the Huns back.

This heroic feat entitled him, like Chandragupta II, to assume the title of Vikramaditya. It appears that these wars adversely affected the economy of the empire, and the debased gold coinage of Skandagupta bears testimony to these. Moreover, he appears to have been the last Gupta ruler to mint silver coins in western India.

The Junagarh inscription of his reign tells us about the public works undertaken during his times. The Sudarsana lake (originally built during the Maurya times) burst due to excessive rains and in the early part of his rule his governor Parnadatta and his son Chakrapalita got it repaired. The last known date of Skandagupta is 467 A.D. from his silver coins.

The last days of the Gupta Empire:

Skandagupta died about A.D. 467 and the line of succession after him is very uncertain. Purugupta, a son of Kumaragupta, ruled for some time and was succeeded by his son Budhagupta whose earliest known date is A. D. 477 and the latest A.D. 495. He was succeeded by his brother Narasimhagupta Baladitya.

A king named Kumaragupta II is known to have reigned in A.D. 474. This indicates internal dissension which continued after the end of Budhagupta's reign. He was succeeded by his son and grandson, Kumaragupta III and Visnugupta – the three reigns covered the period A.D. 500-550. Two other kings, Vainyagupta (A.D. 507) and Bhanugupta (A.D. 510) ruled in Samatata and Nalanda and in Eran respectively. The Guptas continued to rule till about 550 A.D., but by then their power had already become very insignificant.

Fall of the Empire:

The successors of Chandragupta II had to face an invasion by the Hunas from Central Asia in the second half of the fifth century A.D. Although in the beginning, the Gupta king Skandagupta tried effectively to stem the march of the Hunas into India; his successors proved to be weak and could not cope with the Huna invaders. By 485 A.D. the Hunas occupied eastern Malwa and a good portion of Central India. Thus, the Huna attacks caused a major blow to the Gupta authority particularly in northern and western regions of the empire.

The Huna power was soon overthrown by Yashodharman of Malwa, who successfully challenged the authority of the Guptas and set up, in 532 A.D., pillars of victory commemorating his conquest of almost the whole of northern India. Yashodharman's rule was short-lived, but it meant a severe blow to the Gupta Empire.

The policy adopted by the Guptas in the conquered areas was to restore the authority of local chiefs or kings once they had accepted Gupta suzerainty. In fact, no efforts were made to impose a strict and effective control over these regions. Hence it was natural that whenever there was a crisis of succession or a weak monarchy within the Gupta Empire these local chiefs would re-establish their independent authority.

Divisions within the imperial family, concentration of power in the hands of local chiefs or governors, loose administrative structure of the empire, decline of foreign trade, growing practice of land grants for religious and other purposes, etc. contributed towards the disintegration of the Gupta Empire.

Gupta's Administrative System

The King

During the Gupta age, political hierarchies can be identified by the titles adopted. Kings assumed titles such as maharajadhiraja, parama-bhattaraka and parameshvara. They were also connected with gods through epithets such as parama-daivata (the foremost worshipper of the gods) and parama-bhagavata (the foremost worshipper of Vasudeva Krishna). Some historians have suggested that the Gupta Kings claimed divine status. For example, Samudragupta is compared to Purusha (Supreme Being) in the Allahabad inscription. These assertions can be seen as reflections of an attempt to claim divine status by the king.

Minister and other Officials

Seals and inscriptions make a mention of official ranks and designations, whose precise meaning is often uncertain. The term "kumaramatya" occurs in six Vaishali seals, which suggests that this title represented high-ranking officer associated with an office (adikarana) of his own. The designation "amatya" occurs on several Bita seals, and the "kumaramatya" seems to have been pre-eminent among amatyas and equivalent in status to princes of royal blood. Kumaramatyas were attached to the king, crown prince, revenue department or a province. One of the Vaishali seals refers to a kumaramatya who seems to have been in charge of the maintenance of the sacred coronation tank of the Lichchavis.

Individuals holding the ranks of kumaramatyā sometimes had additional designations as well, and such ranks were hereditary. For example, Harisena, composer of the Allahabad prashasti (inscriptions of praise), was a kumaramatyā, sandhivigrahika and mahadandanayaka, and was the son of Dhruvabhuti, a mahadandanayaka.

Council of Ministers

The Gupta king was assisted by a council of mantrins (ministers). The Allahabad prashasti refers to an assembly or council, presumably of ministers, which was known as the Sabha. The various high-ranking functionaries included the sandhivigrahika or mahasandhivigrahika (minister for peace and war), who seems to have been a high-ranking officer in charge of contact and correspondence with other states, including initiating wars and concluding alliances and treaties.

High-ranking officials were called dandanayakas, and mahadandanayakas were high-ranking judicial or military officers. One of the seals mentions a mahadandanayaka named Agnigupta. The Allahabad prashasti refers to three mahadandanayakas. All these suggest that these posts were hereditary by nature. Another person had a designation mahashvapati (commander of the cavalry), indicating military functions.

Division of the Empire

The Gupta Empire was divided into provinces known as deshas or bhuktis. They were administered by governors who were usually designated as uparikas. The uparika was directly appointed by the king and he, in turn, frequently appointed the head of the district administration and the district board. Uparika carried on the administration “with the enjoyment of the rule consisting of elephants, horses and soldiers”, indicating his control over the military machinery as well. The fact that the uparika had the title maharaja in three of the Damodarpur plates indicates his high status and rank in the administrative hierarchy. The Eran pillar inscription of Budhagupta, dated Gupta year 165 CE, refers to maharaja Surashmichandra as a lokpala, governing the land between the Kalinndi and Narmada rivers. Lokpala here seems to refer to a provincial governor.

The provinces of the Gupta Empire were divided into districts known as visayas, which were controlled by officers known as vishyapatis. The vishyapatis seems to have been generally appointed by the provincial governor. Sometimes, even the kings directly appointed the vishyapatis. Prominent members of the town assisted the vishyapati in administrative duties.

Administrative Units below the District level

The administrative units below the district level included clusters of settlements known variously as vithi, bhumi, pathaka and peta. There are references to officials known as ayuktakas and vithi-mahattaras. At the village level, villagers chose functionaries such as gramika and gramadhyaksha. The Damodarpur copper plate of the reign of Budhagupta mentions an ashtakula-adhikarana (a board of eight members) headed by the mahattara. Mahattara has a range of meanings including village elder, village headman, and head of a family community. The Sanchi inscription of the time of Chandragupta II mentions the panch-mandali, which may have been a corporate body.

Army

Seals and inscriptions mention military designations such as baladhikrita and mahabaladhikrita (commander of infantry and cavalry). The standard term “senapati” does not occur in Gupta inscriptions, but the term could be found in some Vakataka epigraphs. A Vaishali seal mentions the ranabhandagar-adhikarana, which is the office of the military storehouse. Another Vaishali seal mentions the adhikarana (office) of the dandapashika, which may have been a district-level police office.

The officials connected specifically with the royal establishment included the mahapratihara (chief of the palace guards) and the khadyatapakita (superintendent of the royal kitchen). A Vaishali seal mentions a person both as a mahapratihara and a taravara. The top layer of the administrative structure also included amatyas and sachivas, who were executive officers in charge of various departments. The system of espionage included spies known as dutakas. The ayuktakas were another cadre of high-ranking officers.

2 The Golden Age of Gupta

The prosperity created under the leadership of the Gupta Empire, which covered much of the Indian subcontinent from approximately 320-550 CE, enabled the wide pursuit of scientific and artistic endeavors. This period became known as the Golden Age of India because it was marked by extensive inventions and discoveries in science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy. These discoveries crystallized elements of what is generally considered Hindu culture.

Science, Literature, and Art

Although Chandragupta I and his son, Samudragupta, were prominent rulers, the reign of Chandragupta II included the greatest promotion of science, art, philosophy, and religion by the government. Chandragupta's court was even more influential than those that came before or after because it contained the Navaratnas, or the Nine Jewels, a group of nine scholars who produced advancements in many academic fields.

These scholars included Aryabhata, who is believed to have envisioned the concept of zero, as well as working on the approximation for the long-form number Pi. Aryabhata is also believed to be the first of the Indian mathematician-astronomers who postulated the theory that the Earth moves round the Sun and is not flat, but instead is round and rotates on its own axis. He also may have discovered that the moon and planets shine due to reflected sunlight.

Varahamihira was an astronomer, astrologer, and mathematician, whose main work is a treatise on mathematical astronomy. Sushruta, a famed Indian physician of the Gupta period, wrote the Samhita, a Sanskrit text on all of the major concepts of ayurvedic medicine, with innovative chapters on surgery. Other scholars of the Golden Age helped create the first Indian numeral systems with a base of ten. The game of chess also likely originated during this period, where its early form, Chaturanga, contained game pieces for infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots, each of which would evolve into the modern pawn, knight, rook, and bishop, respectively.

Krishna and Radha playing Chaturanga: Scholars during the reign of Chandragupta II contributed many scientific advancements in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, and medicine.

Kalidasa, considered the greatest poet and dramatist of the Sanskrit language, also belonged primarily to this period. He wrote plays, such as Shakuntala, which is said to have inspired the famed German writer and statesman, Johann von Goethe, centuries later. Kalidasa also became renowned for his study of the shringara, or romantic, element of literature. The Indian scholar and Hindu philosopher Vatsyayana, authored the Kama Sutra, which became a standard work on human sexual behavior, while Vishnu Sharma was thought to be the author of the Panchatantra fables, one of the most widely-translated, non-religious books in history.

The cultural creativity of the Golden Age of India produced magnificent architecture, including palaces and temples, as well as sculptures and paintings of the highest quality. The walls of Buddhist shrines and monasteries were decorated with colorful frescoes, a type of wall

paintings. These showed scenes from the life of the Buddha, the ascetic and philosopher, who lived in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent sometime between 6th and 4th centuries, on whose teachings the Buddhist religion is based. Some shrines were cut out of the cliffs, and although dark, they were also decorated with sculptures and paintings.

3 Legacy of Satavahanas

With the fall of the Maurya Empire, most of the vassal states declared independence, and the great empire built by Ashoka and his predecessors lay in fragments. There was much feud and conflict among these small states. The rise of the Satavahana Empire in south-central India provided much-needed peace and stability to the land.

The Satavahana Dynasty

The Satavahanas find mention in the Puranas, sacred Hindu texts, but their rise to prominence was led by Simuka, who declared his independence from Mauryan rule in about 230 BC. He then embarked on conquests of Malwa and Maharashtra, and annexed parts of western and central India. Simuka's brother, Krishna, reigned next. He added Nasik to the kingdom. Krishna was succeeded by Malia Satakarni and Purnothesanga.

Satakarni I, the next king, was the greatest Satavahanan emperor. He ruled for fifty-six years and annexed Berar, Malwa, and many southern states. He performed the traditional Ashwamedha and Rajasuya sacrifices that declared his supremacy. Satakarni II, the next king, conquered Pataliputra and Kalinga. By this time, the Sakas and the Greeks had started to trouble the Satavahana Empire.

In about 78 BC, Gautamiputra Satakarni, also known as Yajna Sri Satakarni, took over the kingdom. The Saka Era was established by King Gautamiputra Satakarni and was popularly followed by people in southern India. He was also the king to introduce coins with royal images in India. He was the last powerful king of the Satavahana Dynasty. Though other Satavahana kings are known to have reigned until about 200 AD, most of the empire broke away and the Pallavas, the Western Satraps, the Kadambas, and Ikshvakus had declared independence.

The Satavahanas were early issuers of Indian state coinage struck with images of their rulers. They formed a cultural bridge and played a vital role in trade and the transfer of ideas and culture to and from the Indo-Gangetic Plain to the southern tip of India. The people of Satavahana Empire were fully acquainted with the use of agriculture and iron.

Social organization

The Satavahana Empire's society reflected the existence of four classes.

- The first class consisted of the people who administered and controlled the districts
- The second class consisted of the officials
- The third class were the cultivators and Vaidhyas
- The fourth class was common citizens

The head of the family was the Grihapati.

Pattern of Administration

Satavahana Empire was divided into five provinces. The western territory of Nasik was ruled by the Abhiras. The Ikshvakus ruled over the eastern part in the Krishna -Guntur region. The Chutus dominated the southwestern parts and extended their territory to the north and east. The pahlavas controlled the south eastern part. Officials were known as Amatyas and Mahamatras. The senapati was appointed as the provincial governor. Gaulmika was in the charge of a military regiment which included 9 elephants, nine chariots, 25 horses and 45 foot soldiers. There were three grades of feudatories within the Satavahana kingdom. The highest grade was known as Raja who had the right to strike coins while the second grade was mahabhoja and the third grade was known as the senapati. We also get to know terms such as Kataka and Skandhavaras through the inscriptions of this era.

Religion

Both Buddhism and Brahmanism prevailed during the Satavahana rule. Among the various sects of people state of religious tolerance existed following varied faiths.

Architecture

During Satavahana phase, Chaityas and monasteries were cut out of the solid rock with great precision. Chaityas were Buddhist temples and monasteries were known as Vihara. The most famous Chaitya is located in Karle in the western Deccan. Rock-cut architecture was also found in this phase.

Language

The Satavahana rulers patronised Prakrit which was the official language used on documents. All the inscriptions were composed in Prakrit language and were written in the Brahmi script.

Significance and Decline

Satavahanas competed with the Sungas and the Kanvas of Magadha to set up their empire. Later on, they played a major role in protecting a large part of India against foreign attackers like Pahlavas, Sakas and Yavanas. Gautmiputra Satakarni and Sri Yajna Satakarni were some important rulers of this dynasty. Satavahanas struggled with the Western Kshatrapas for a considerable period of time. In the 3rd century AD the empire was split into smaller states.

4 Harsha Vardhana (606-647 A.D.)

A graphic account of Harsha's family history is to be found in Bana's Harshacharita supplemented and corroborated by Chinese visitor Hiuen-Tsang's description of Si-Yu-Ki in the 'Records.' The Banskhera and Madhuban plates and royal seals mention five earlier rulers, among whom the first three are given the title of Maharajas. The Banskhera, Nalanda and Sonapat inscriptions of Harsha describe him as a worshipper of Siva. The Nausasi Copper plates give us information about Harsha's successful expedition against Valabhi.

Harshavardhana ascended the throne of Thaneshwar around 606 A.D. and immediately sent a great army against Sasanka of Gauda to avenge his elder brother's death and to rescue his sister Rajyashri who had been taken prisoner by the Malwa king. He succeeded in both. Now the two important kingdoms Kannauj and Thaneshwar were united with Harsha now ruling from Kannauj. Between 606 and 612 A.D. he brought most of northern India (Punjab, Kannauj, parts of Gauda, Orissa and Mithila) under his control, and assumed the title of Siladitya.

Harsha's Military Conquests:

In his first expedition Harsha drove away Sasanka from Kannauj who had occupied it after murdering Harsha's brother. Harsha's early relations with the rulers of Valabhi were cordial but soon Malwa became the bone of contention between the two and so he had to turn his attention to western India.

It resulted in the defeat of the Valabhi ruler, Dhruvasena II and his acceptance of the position of a feudatory vassal. His hostilities with Valabhis ended through a matrimonial alliance. The above success however proved to be the immediate cause of conflict between Harsha and Pulakesin II, the Chalukya ruler of Badami.

Further, the question of over lordship over the Latas, Malwa and Gurjaras seems to have been the long-standing cause of conflict between the two. An eulogy or Prasastioi Pulakesin II by Ravi Kirti (the court poet of Pulakesin II) placed on a temple wall at Aihole, also mentions Pulakesin's military success against Harsha. Hiuen Tsang's account mentions that inspite of his victories over many kingdoms Harsha was not able to defeat Pulakesin II.

Harsha was success-ful in his eastern campaign. A Chinese account mentions him as the king of Magadha in 641 A.D. The king of Kamarupa, Bhaskaravarman, was his ally in his campaign of Bengal and other parts of eastern India.

In the course of the forty-one years that Harsha ruled, he included among his feudatories, kings as distant as those of Jalandhar, Kashmir, Nepal, Valabhi, Gujarat, Malwa, Sind, Frontier provinces and Assam. United Provinces, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Central India and Rajputana were under direct ad-ministration of Harsha.

Administration:

Harsha governed his empire on the same lines as the Guptas did, except that his administration had become more feudal and decentralised. The accepted title of a great king in Harsha's days was Parma-Bhattaraka Mahesvara and Maharajadhiraja which implied the existence of lesser kings with considerable authority within the empire.

The major part of the territory conquered by Harsha was ruled by such feudatories. Independent in the internal administration of their territories, they generally owed allegiance to a suzerain. The leading feudatories of Harsha were Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa, Dhruvabhata of Valabhi, Purnavarman of Magadha and Udit of Jalandhara.

The King was the centre of administration, helped by the crown prince. Other princes were ap-pointed as Viceroys of provinces. Ministers of various types and advisers assisted the king in the administration. During Harsha's time high officers i.e., Daussadha Sadhnika, Pramatar, Rajasthaniya, Uparika and Vishayapati, etc., were not paid in cash for their services to the state, but were compen-sated by way of offering one-fourth of the royal revenues.

Thus under Harsha, revenues were granted not only to priests and scholars but also to the officials of the state, a practice the existence of which is supported by the paucity of coins belonging to this period. In the areas administered by the Samantas (feudal chiefs), the emperor realised annual taxes from them and not from the subjects.

Bana speaks of samanta, mahasamanta (chief samantaj, aptasamanta (those who willingly accepted the vassalage of the overlord), pradhana samanta (were the most trusted chiefs of the emperor, who never disregarded their advice), shatru mahasamanta (conquered army chiefs) and pratisamanta (a hostile vassal).

Defeated kings were made to render three kinds of services to king in the court. They held chowries, served as door-keepers in the court and served as reciters of auspicious words like success (jaya). Normally, an important duty of these rajas and samantas was to render military aid to their overlord.

Decentralisation of administrative authority was caused by increasing grants of land and villages with fiscal and administrative immunities to priests and temples. The vesting of magisterial and police powers together with fiscal rights on the priests evidently weakened the central authority.

The local administration was, for all practical purposes, independent of the centre. The officers in charge of the districts (ayukta) and the provincial official (kumaramatya) were the link between local administration and the centre. Village came under the control of rural bodies consisting of the headman and the village elders.

Harsha maintained contact with public opinion both through his officers and by his own tours, which gave him the opportunity of supervising the administration.

Socio-economic condition:

The land grants paved the way for feudal development in India from the fifth century onwards. From the sixth century, share croppers and peasants were particularly asked to stick to the land granted to the beneficiaries. Apart from Hiuen-Tsang, for the first time, Asahya, a legal commentator of the seventh century, describes the shudras as agriculturists.

In the tribal areas, agriculturists were placed under the control of the religious beneficiaries, especially the brahmanas, who were granted land on a large scale. The villages transferred to the grantees were called sthana-jana-sahita, janata -samriddha and saprativasi-jana-sameta. All this worked- for a closed economy, which was fostered by the decline of trade and commerce.

The major portion of land continued to be in possession of free peasants, who paid revenues directly to the state. Besides this, the peasants were subjected to various impositions

such as Udranga (frontier tax), Uparikara, tribute to the divisional officer called Uparika and had also to perform forced labour of all varieties (Sarva-vishti) probably for military purposes.

All this naturally caused depreciation in the position of free peasants. The guilds of artisans and merchants also began to lose their earlier importance because of the decline of trade and urban life.

The rise of the quasi-feudal mode of production modified the varna-divided society. This period witnessed the ascendancy of varnasramadharm and it became an indispensable cornerstone of the Brahmanical social structure. Hiuen Tsang writes about the existence of four varnas or orders in India.

Both Bana and Hiuen Tsang talk about the existence of many subcastes. The position of women seems to have suffered a further decline during this period. Remarriage of widows was not permitted particularly among the higher varnas. Sati and dowry was prevalent during this period.

Cultural Conditions:

From the Harsha's time started the formation of regional cultural units such as Bengal, Gujarat Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, etc Harsha was a man of considerable literary interests and talents and despite his administrative duties, he managed to write plays i.e. Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagananda.

He maintained a magnificent court where philosophers, poets, dramatists and painters flourished. Bana, the author of Harshacharita and Kadambari, was the court poet of Harsha. Mayura the author of Mayurashataka, and Bhartrihari, the author of Vakapadiya, a grammarian, also lived at the court of Harsha. Harsha was the chief patron of the University of Nalanda where about 10,000 students from all parts of India and abroad studied.

Harsha was in the beginning, a devotee of Siva. Probably owing to the influence of his sister Rajyashri and the Buddhist saint Divakara Mitra, he accepted Buddhism. Later on, he changed over to Mahayana Buddhism under the influence of Hiuen Tsang. But he respected all religions and patronised them equally. With a view to popularise and propagate the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism, Harsha arranged at Kannauj, a great assembly, which was presided over by Hiuen Tsang.

Another great ceremony was held for 75 days at Prayag (Allahabad). The images of Buddha, Sun and Siva were worshipped and gifts of valuable articles and clothing were

distributed in charity. Harsha had diplomatic relations with the Chinese, for his contemporary T'ang emperor sent three embassies to his court. The last of these, under Wang-hiuen-tse arrived in India in 647 A.D. when Harsha was no longer alive. Harsha himself had sent a brahmana envoy to China in 641 A.D. Harsha ruled for a period of 41 years and is said to have died about 647 A.D.