

ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY



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Post-Gupta Period

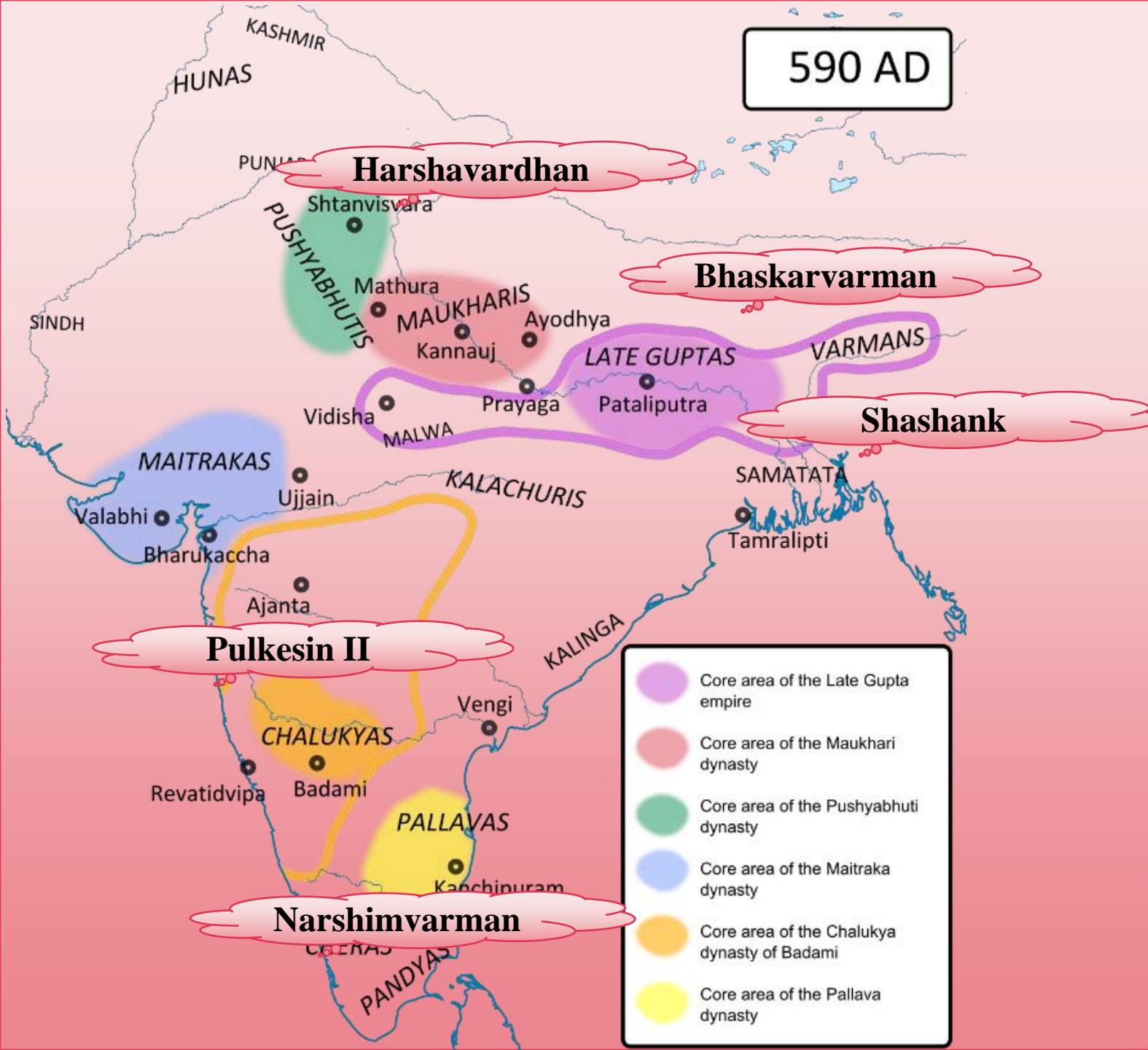
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7th Century India

590 AD



Harshavardhan

Bhaskarvarman

Shashank

Pulkesin II

Narshimvarman

-  Core area of the Late Gupta empire
-  Core area of the Maukhari dynasty
-  Core area of the Pushyabhuti dynasty
-  Core area of the Maitraka dynasty
-  Core area of the Chalukya dynasty of Badami
-  Core area of the Pallava dynasty

Chalukyas of Badami

- ❑ The most notable of the early medieval dynasties of the Deccan was that of the Chalukyas.
- ❑ **Jayasimha** was the first Chalukyan king. But **Pulakeshin I** is generally attributed to be the first Chalukyan king.
- ❑ He was succeeded by Maharaja **Kirtivarman** in 566.
- ❑ **Pulakeshin II** was the most prominent ruler of the dynasty who ruled from 608 and was a contemporary of Harshavardhan.
- ❑ His fame was far extended even up to Persia, with whom he exchanged embassies.
- ❑ He had defeated Harshavardhan and stopped him moving towards Deccan.
- ❑ However, he was **defeated** and killed by the Pallava ruler **Narsimvarman**.
- ❑ 32 years later in 674, one of Pulakeshin's sons avenged his father's death and captured Kanchi.
- ❑ Pulakeshin II was a patron of arts and architecture.
- ❑ During his reign, significant architectural marvels were constructed, including the exquisite rock-cut temples at Badami, Aihole, and Pattadakal.
- ❑ His administration was characterized by a decentralized system with local governance structures

CHALUKYA



Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi

- ❑ Pulkeshin II's brother, **Kubja Vishnu Vardhan** established a new dynasty with its capital at the ancient city of Vengi.
- ❑ But soon its power declined and in about the 10th century they allied with the Cholas but the Chola king did not maintain the alliance and annexed the kingdom in 1076.

Western Chalukyas of Kalyani

- ❑ The kingdom founded by **Taila II** in 973, after defeating Amoghavarsha IV, the last Rashtrakuta ruler.
- ❑ He extended his kingdom up to the southern part of the Pormera kingdom of Malwa.
- ❑ **Vikramaditya II Tribhuvanmall** (1076-1126) was the greatest ruler of this dynasty and he was regarded as the hero of Bilhana's *Vikramankadevacharita*.
- ❑ He is the founder of the Vikarm Samvat Era.
- ❑ Jagadekamall II was the last ruler after whose death his Kalachuri minister Vijjala usurped his throne.

CHALUKYA

Art and Architecture

- ❑ Art made great progress under their patronage. The temple architecture was a blend of Dravida and Nagara styles.
- ❑ They built about 70 temples at Aihole which is rightly regarded as the 'cradle of Indian temple architecture'.
- ❑ Other famous temples include the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, the Vishnu temple of Badami, the Shiva temple of Maguti and the Kasi Vishvesvara temple of Lakhundi.
- ❑ They gave patronage to Hinduism and Jainism.

Pallavas

- ❑ Kanchipuram was the capital of the Pallavas.
- ❑ Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram and the Kanchi Kailasanathar Temple at Kanchipuram are famous temples that were constructed during the reign of Pallavas

Ruler	Reign	Key Achievements/Characteristics
Sivaskanda Varman	Early 4th century AD	Considered the greatest among early rulers; performed Ashwamedha and other Vedic sacrifices
Simhavarman/Simhavishnu	575 AD – 600	Was a Buddhist; included Sri Lanka in his kingdom; defeated contemporary Tamil ruler
Mahendravarman	600 AD – 630	Poet, composed Vichitrachita and Mahavilasa Prahasana; introduced rock-cut temple architecture; converted from Jainism to Saivism; engaged in rivalry with Pulakesin II of Chalukya dynasty
Narasimhavarman I	630 AD – 668	Defeated and killed Pulakesin II; assumed title 'Vatapikonda'; vanquished Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas; sent naval expedition to Sri Lanka; founded Mahabalipuram; patronized Nayannar saints; noted for agricultural prosperity
Last Rulers		After Mahendravarman II, his son Parameswaravarman became the king. During his rule, Kanchipuram was occupied by the Chalukyas. Nripatunga was an important king who defeated a Pandya king. There were a few other rulers. The last ruler of the Pallava dynasty was Aparajitavarman who was killed in battle with the Cholas.

Chalukya-Pallava Conflict



Causes of the Conflict

- 1. Agricultural Fertility:** The Doab region's rich, fertile land was highly suitable for agriculture, making it a valuable asset for both dynasties.
- 2. Strategic Importance:** Control over this region provided strategic advantages in terms of trade routes and military positioning.
- 3. Political Dominance:** Both dynasties aimed to establish political supremacy in the Deccan, and control over the Doab was crucial for asserting dominance.

Key Events in the Struggle

- ❖ **Pulakeshin I and Mahendravarman I:** Pulakeshin I, the Chalukya ruler, defeated Mahendravarman I of the Pallavas and acquired Vengi. However, his ambition extended beyond this initial victory.
- ❖ **Pulakeshin II and Narasimhavarman I:** Pulakeshin II sought to completely subdue the Pallavas but was eventually defeated by Narasimhavarman I, the most powerful Pallava ruler, who took the title of 'Vatapikonda' (Conqueror of Vatapi) after his victory.
- ❖ **Vikramaditya and the End of Pallavas:** After a period of relative calm, the aggressive Chalukyan ruler Vikramaditya repeatedly defeated the Pallavas and overran Kanchi thrice. Despite these successes, the Chalukyas could not sustain their dominance for long, as Vikramaditya was ultimately defeated by Dantidurga, heralding the rise of the Rashtrakutas.

Importance of the Struggle

- **Military and Political Dynamics:** The continuous warfare between the Chalukyas and Pallavas significantly influenced the military and political dynamics of the Deccan region.
- **Cultural and Architectural Developments:** The competition for supremacy also spurred the construction of new cities and temples, contributing to the cultural and architectural heritage of South India.
- **Titles and Legitimacy:** The adoption of grand titles like 'Vatapikonda' highlighted the importance of military victories in establishing royal legitimacy and prestige.

Maukhari Dynasty

1. Rise to Power: The Maukharis initially existed as feudal rulers during the Gupta period. After the decline of the Gupta Empire, they consolidated their power in the region of modern-day Uttar Pradesh, with their capital at Kanyakubja (modern Kannauj).

2. Feudatory Relations with Guptas: During the early phases, some branches of the Maukhari family served as feudatories or subordinates under the Guptas. They had matrimonial relations with the Gupta rulers, which helped in consolidating their influence and expanding their territories.

3. Conflict and Dominance: As Gupta power weakened further, the Maukharis saw an opportunity to assert their independence and dominance. **Ishanavarman**, one of the prominent rulers of the Maukhari dynasty, seized the opportunity to expand his influence. He defeated several local feudatories in the Magadha region, establishing his dominance there.

4. Tussle with Later Guptas: The relationship between the Maukharis and the Later Guptas of Magadha evolved from feudal ties to a state of rivalry and conflict. Ishanavarman and later his son Sarvavarman challenged the Later Guptas, particularly during the reign of Kumaragupta III and Damodaragupta.

5. Political Supremacy: Sarvavarman succeeded Ishanavarman and continued to assert Maukhari dominance over the Magadha region. The presence of coins minted by Ishanavarman, Sarvavarman, and Avantivarman during this period attests to their political supremacy and control over significant parts of Northern India.

- Harivarman
- Adityavarman
- Ishvaravarman
- Ishanavarman r.c. 550–574 CE
- Sharvavarman r. c. 574–586 CE
- Avantivarman
- Grahavarman, r. c. 600–605 CE

Political and Matrimonial Alliances

1. Alliance with the Pushyabhuti

Dynasty: The Maukharis formed a significant matrimonial alliance with the Pushyabhuti dynasty of Thaneshwar, which would eventually lead to the rise of Harshavardhana. The marriage between Grahavarman, a Maukhari prince, and Rajyashri, the sister of Harshavardhana, cemented this alliance and linked the two powerful dynasties.

2. Impact of the Alliance:

- The alliance with the Pushyabhutis facilitated Harshavardhana's consolidation of power after the assassination of his brother, Rajyavardhana, and the capture of his sister, Rajyashri. Harsha's subsequent efforts to rescue his sister and avenge the death of Grahavarman, her husband, positioned him as a key figure in the region's power dynamics.

The Fall of the Maukharis and the Rise of Harshavardhana

1. Conflict with Shashanka: The Maukhari dynasty faced a significant setback when Shashanka, the ruler of Gauda (Bengal), assassinated Grahavarman and captured Rajyashri. This event precipitated the fall of the Maukhari dynasty and created a power vacuum in the region.

- Harshavardhana, motivated by personal and political reasons, launched a campaign to avenge his brother-in-law's death and rescue his sister. This led to his successful takeover of the Maukhari territories and marked the beginning of his rise to prominence.

2. Acquisition of Maukhari Territory: With the fall of the Maukhari king Grahavarman, Harshavardhana took control of the extensive Maukhari territories without significant military conquest. This acquisition was crucial in establishing his authority and expanding his empire.

- By integrating the Maukhari territories, Harsha effectively became the ruler of a vast and strategically important region, which laid the foundation for his subsequent campaigns and the expansion of his empire.



Coins of
Ishanvarman

Vardhanas

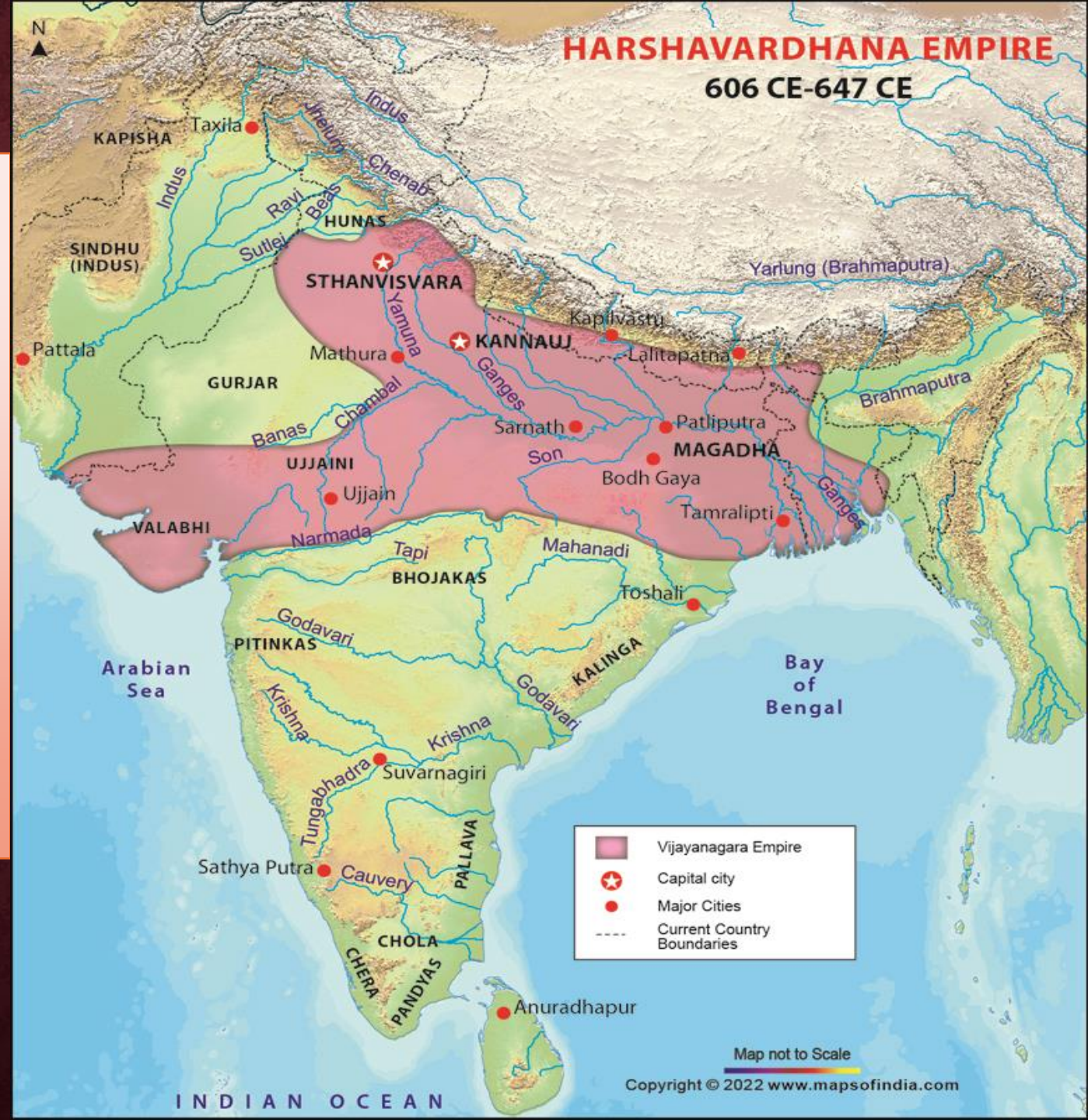
Pushyabhutis of Thanesar

- An important ruling family that gained prominence after the decline of the Gupta was the **Pushyabhutis**, whose capital was at **Thanesar** (near Kurukshetra, Haryana).
- Two major historical sources providing information regarding the Pushyabhuti dynasty are the **Harshacharita**, a biography of Harsha written by Harsha's court poet Banabhatta, and travelogues of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang/Xuanzang (Si-Yu-Ki).

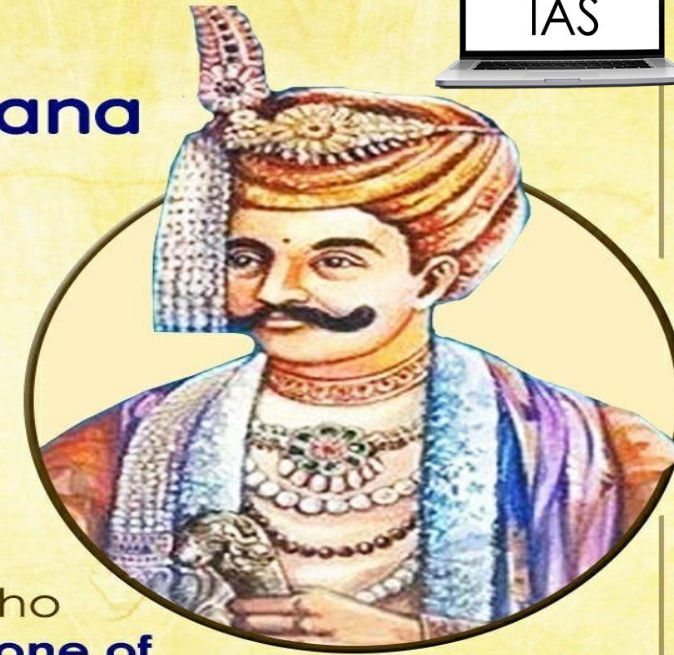


Prabhakar Vardhana

- The fourth king of the dynasty laid the foundations of the Pushyabhuti dynasty.
 - He was a great general with several military victories.
- He established important marital alliances with the Maukharis of Kanyakubja/Kannauj (the neighbours to the east) by marrying his own daughter Rajyashri to Maukhari ruler Grahavarman.
- Following his death, his elder son **Rajya Vardhana** came to the throne, but **Shashanka**, the king of Gauda, treacherously killed him.



King Harshavardhana aka Harsha



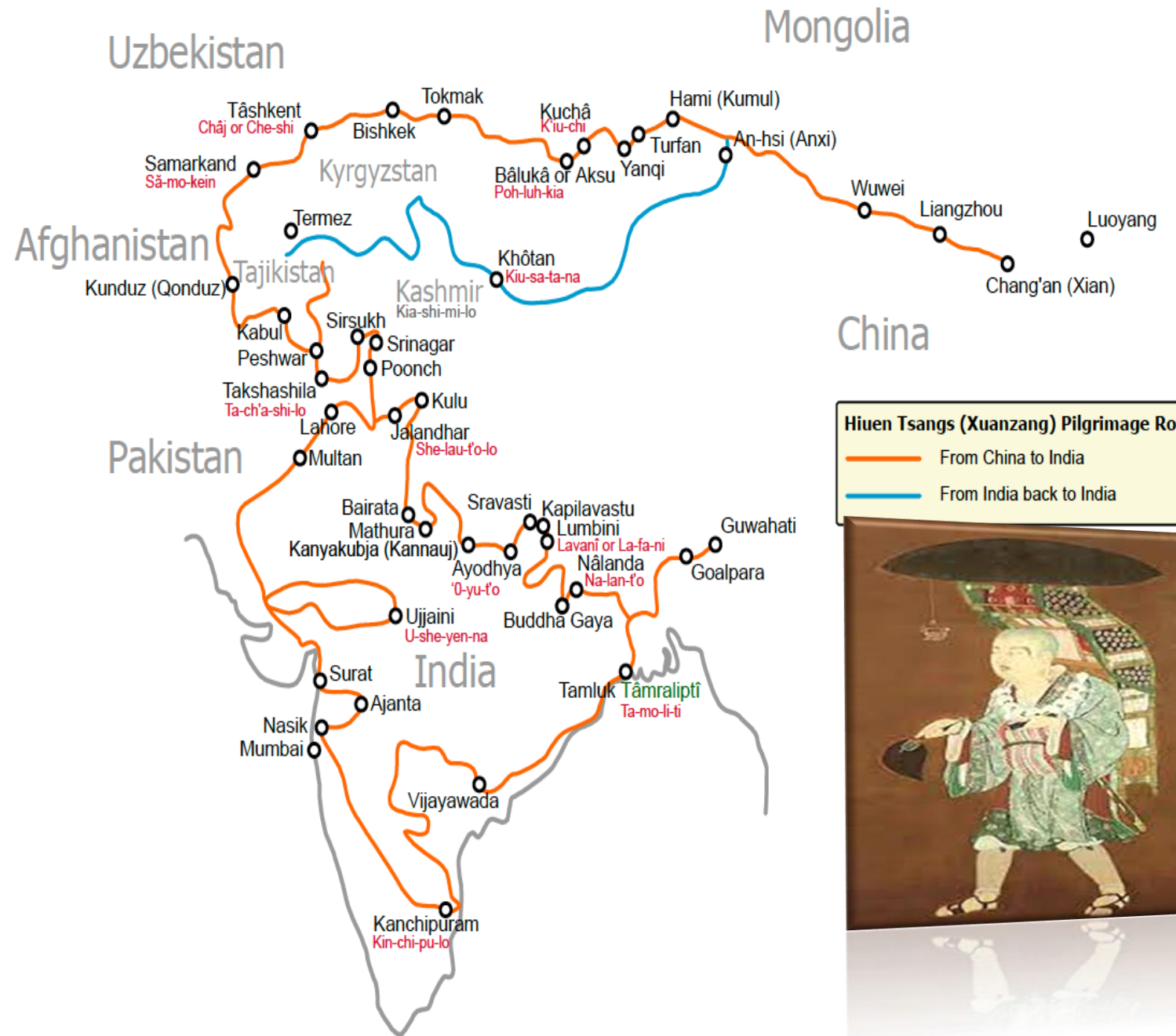
A 16 year old boy who crowned with the **throne of Thanesar in 606 AD** & eventually, become the founder of **VARDHANA DYNASTY**.
Competing for Its Control

- ❑ Harsha Vardhana was the **last great Hindu king of ancient India**. He was initially a Shaiva and supported Buddhism to a great extent, and made generous endowments to Buddhists.
- ❑ Harsha was only sixteen years of age when ascending the throne, but he still proved to be a great soldier and an efficient ruler.
- ❑ Numerous military victories marked Harsha's reign, and he brought most of north India under his control as he got **control of the five 'Indies (regions)'** — Punjab, Kannauj, Bengal, Orissa, Mithila and assumed the title of '**Siladitya**' (as mentioned in travel records of Chinese traveller Xuanzang (Hsuan Tsang)).
- ❑ He also got a victory against the ruler of Sindh in the north-west. He defeated the Vallabhi king, **Dhruvasena II**, as mentioned in the Nausasi copper plate inscription.
- ❑ However, he was then **defeated** by **Pulkesin II** of western Chalukyan King of Badami on the banks of Narmada, who conferred himself with the title of "**Sakal-auttara-pathanatha**", meaning "**Lord of the entire north**".

- ❑ Harsha's empire probably included Thaneswar, Kannauj, Ahichchhatra, Shravasti, and Prayag, and he extended his empire into Magadha and Orissa.
- ❑ Initially, the Capital of Harsha was Thaneswar, but it was shifted to Kannauj.

- The Chinese pilgrim **Hsuan Tsang**, also known as the Prince of Travelers and author of Si-Yu-Ki, visited India from 629–644 CE.
 - Si-Yu-Ki earned Harsha's friendship and left a vivid account of the beauty, grandeur, and prosperity of Kannauj.
 - He gives a detailed account of a grand assembly held at Kannauj in 643 CE, attended by Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism representatives. Xuanzang and others gave discourses on Mahayana doctrines.
- This grand conclave was also attended by various subordinate kings, including those of Vallabhi and Assam.
 - A huge tower with a golden Buddha statue was constructed for the occasion, which Harsha himself later worshipped.

Hiuen Tsangs (Xuanzang) Pilgrimage Route from China to India and return



Hiuen Tsangs (Xuanzang) Pilgrimage Route
 — From China to India
 — From India back to India



Great assembly

Kanauj

Hsuan Tsang

Bhaskarvarman (Kampura ruler),

Kings of 20 countries

A Number of priests

Gold statue of the Buddha

Prayag

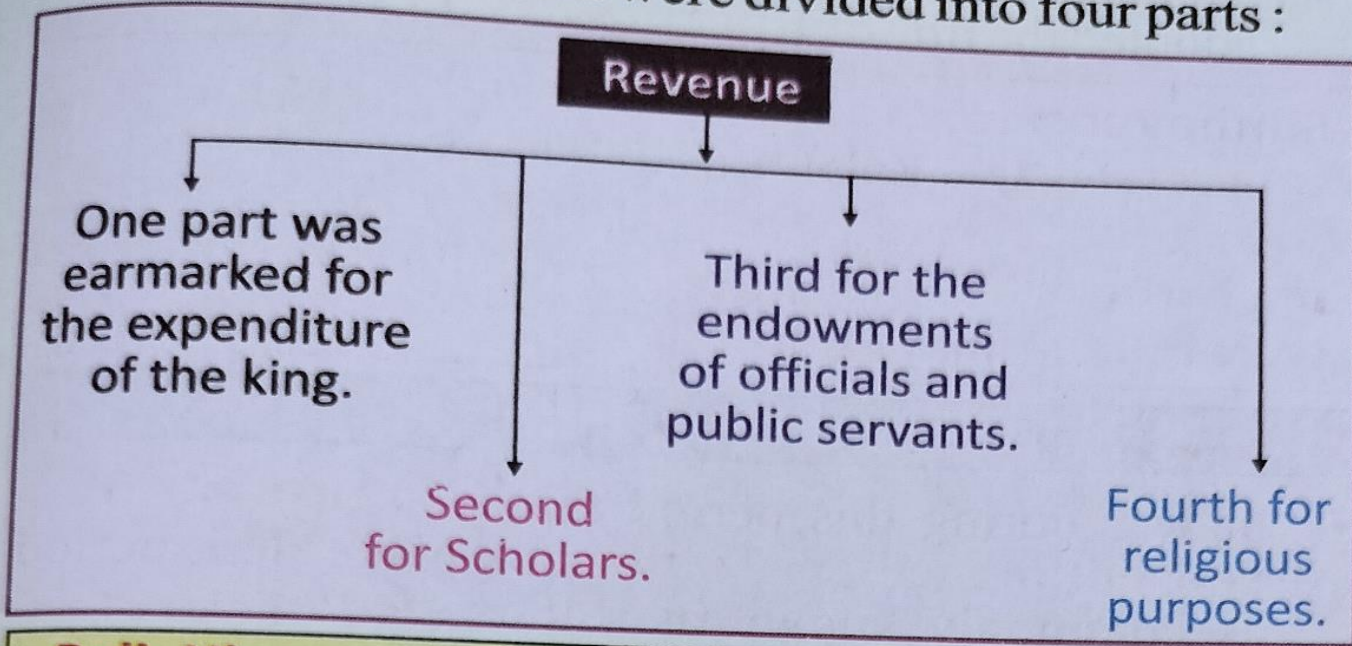
Tributary princes

Ministers & nobles

An image of the Buddha, the Sun
and Shiva



- ▣ **Hsuan Tsang** mentioned in his account that the revenues of Harsha were divided into four parts :



Bali, Hiranya (tax paid by peasants and merchants in cash) and **Bhaga** (land tax paid in kind) were the three main taxes collected during Harsha's period.

- ▣ King's share was **1/6th of the agricultural produce.**
- ▣ **Udranga** (Frontier tax)
 - ◆ **Uparikara** (Tribute to the divisional officer called uparika).
- ▣ **Forced labour** (vishti) of all varieties was prevalent.

Military

- ▣ **Harsha** paid great attention to the strength of the army. His army included elephants, infantry and cavalry. Ordinary soldiers were called **Bhatas** and **Chatas**.
- ▣ **Infantry officers** were called **Baladhikritas** and **Mahabaladhikritas**. **Cavalry officers** were called **Brihadisvaras**.

Towns and Cities

- ▣ Hsuan Tsang pointed out that **Pataliputra** lost its prominence and its place was taken by **Kanauj**.
- ▣ Most of the **towns** had outer walls, which were wide and high. The **streets** were narrow.
- ▣ **Houses** had balconies made up of wood and coated with lime mortar. **Floors** were smeared with **cow dungs**.
- ▣ **Magnificent multi-storeyed** structures were built of kiln-fired bricks, red sandstone and marble.
- ▣ **Free hospitals** all the towns were constructed to provide medical treatment free of charge and rest rooms were constructed where outsiders could stay.

Harshavardhan's Death

The death of Harshavardhana in 647 A.D. was a turning point in Indian history. His demise not only marked the end of a significant era of empire-building but also heralded the onset of profound political and socio-economic changes that reshaped the Indian subcontinent. The implications of Harsha's death can be understood through various lenses, including political fragmentation, the rise of feudalism, and the transition from ancient to medieval India.

1. End of Political Unity and Stability:

- **Last Great Empire-Builder:** Harshavardhana was the last ruler in ancient India to attempt the consolidation of a large empire after the fall of the Guptas. His empire spanned much of northern India, but his death left a power vacuum that no subsequent ruler could fill effectively.

- **Political Fragmentation:** After Harsha's death, the empire quickly disintegrated into several small, independent kingdoms and regional powers. This fragmentation undermined the political unity of northern India, leading to a period of decentralization and instability.

2. Rise of Feudalism:

- **Feudal System Emergence:** The absence of a strong central authority following Harsha's death accelerated the process of feudalization. Local chieftains and landlords, known as feudal lords, gained greater autonomy and control over land and resources. This shift laid the groundwork for the feudal structure that would dominate medieval India.

- **Economic Decentralization:** The rise of feudalism resulted in the decline of a centralized economic system. The economy transitioned from a money-based economy to a land-based economy, with land grants becoming a common means of rewarding loyalty and service. This change diminished trade and commerce, weakening the economic fabric of the region.

Harshavardhan's Death

3. End of the Classical Age:

- Transition to Medieval Period: Harsha's death is often viewed as the demarcation between ancient and medieval India. The classical age, characterized by relative political unity and cultural flourishing, gave way to the medieval period marked by regionalism, the rise of local kingdoms, and a shift in socio-economic structures.

- Cultural and Intellectual Decline: With the fall of Harsha's empire, the cultural and intellectual centers that had flourished under his patronage, such as universities and monasteries, experienced decline. The focus shifted from the grand cultural achievements of the classical period to the more localized and diverse cultural expressions of the medieval age.

4. Impact on Buddhism and Hinduism:

- Decline of Buddhism: Harsha was a patron of Buddhism, and his death led to the decline of this religion in northern India. With the loss of royal patronage and the rise of Brahmanical Hinduism, Buddhism gradually lost its prominence and support.

- Rise of Hinduism: The period following Harsha's death saw a resurgence of Hinduism, particularly the Bhakti movement and the construction of Hindu temples. The regional kingdoms that emerged often favored Hindu practices and deities, further diminishing the influence of Buddhism.

5. Regional Kingdoms and Cultural Diversity:

- Proliferation of Regional Powers: The collapse of Harsha's empire paved the way for the emergence of powerful regional kingdoms such as the Pratiharas, Palas, and Rashtrakutas. These kingdoms fostered distinct cultural and political identities, contributing to the rich diversity of medieval India.

- Cultural Syncretism: The fragmentation of political power allowed for the development of regional cultures and traditions, leading to a syncretic blend of local and classical influences. This period saw the rise of various regional languages, literary traditions, and artistic styles.

The death of Harshavardhana in 647 A.D. was a watershed moment in Indian history. It marked the end of an era of centralized political authority and heralded the onset of feudalism, leading to significant changes in the socio-economic and political landscape of India. The fragmentation of power and the rise of regional kingdoms set the stage for the diverse and dynamic medieval period. While Harsha's contributions to cultural and religious life were significant, his death underscored the challenges of maintaining a unified empire in the face of rising regionalism and changing socio-economic structures.