

HARSHA VARDHANA

(EARLY LIFE AND ACCESSION)

**B.A. (HISTORY) PART-2
PAPER-3**

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According to Banabhatta, the family of Harsha Vardhana was founded by one Pushyabhuti. His family was known as Pushyabhuti family. Inscriptions like 'Madhuban' copper plate does not mention about the name of any Pushyabhuti. It record the name of one Naravardhana, as the founder. Banabhatta says that Pushyabhuti was a Saivite and great disciple of one 'Vairabhacharya' from south. He was also devoted to goddess Lakshmi. Bana record that once Lakshmi, the goddesses of wealth and

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fortune being pleased with Pushyabhuti, granted a boon. Pushyabhuti instead seeking the boon for himself, requested her to grant boon for his teachers' Vairabhachraya. Bana further noted that Laxmi pleased with Pushyabhuti devotion to his teacher blessed Pushyabhuti. Laxmi granted a boon that he would become the founder of a great dynasty and kings of his family would become a Chakravartin. Bana holds that Harsha was that ruler. The Madhuvan copper plate gives us a clear picture of the genealogy of the

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Vardhana dynasty, where Naravardhana was mentioned as founder of the family. The copper plate reveals the following list of kings.

Naravardhana → Adityavardhana →
Prabhakaravardhana → Rajyavardhana,
Harshvardhana and Rajyashree. Among all the kings of the dynasty prior to Harshavardhana, Bana praised highly Prabhakaravardhana in his work, which suggested that the kingdom of Thaneswar was extended from Himalaya in North to Rajasthan in South and upto River Beas

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in the west. In this famous royal dynasty Harsha was born on the date “*Jaistha Mase Prurtika Nakshyetre Krushna Paksheye Dwadasi Thithi Sayan Kale*” the exact date on the above account fall on June 4th of 590 A.D. Bana, writes that when Harsha was born astrologer forecasted that the new born baby would be a great king on earth.

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Rajya Vardhan's and Harsha's sister Rajyashree had been married to the Maukhari king, Grahavarman. This king, some years later, had been defeated and killed by King Deva Gupta of Malwa and after his death Rajyasri had been cast into prison by the victor. Harsha's brother, Rajya Vardhan, then the king at Thanesvar, could not stand this affront on his family and marched against Deva Gupta and defeated him. But it happened when Sasanka, king of Gauda in Eastern Bengal, entered Magadha as a friend of

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Rajya Vardhana, but in secret alliance with the Malwa king Sasanka treacherously murdered Rajya Vardhan. On hearing about the murder of his brother, Harsha resolved at once to march against the treacherous king of Gauda and killed Deva Gupta in a battle. Harsha Vardhana ascended the throne of his ancestral kingdom of Thanesvar in 606 A.D at the age of 16. He probably started Harsha Era from the same year. The immediate task which confronted Harsha was to recover Rajyashree, his widow sister. Harsha got the information that Rajyashree had

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escaped from the prison and entered the Vindhya forests. With the help of forest chiefs like Vyaghra-ketu, Bhukampa and Nirghata and the ascetic teachers Divakamitra and his disciple, Harsha was able to rescue Rajyashree who was just going to burn herself by throwing herself into the fire. Soon his arrival in his capital, a problem arose before him, that the King of Kanauj, Grahavarman, who was killed by Deva Gupta left no heir and the widow queen Rajyashree refused to accept the responsibilities

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of Kanauj. The statesmen of Kanauj led by Bhandi, requested Harsha to ascend the throne of Kanauj. As Harsha was not sure of the feeling of the people, he consulted the circle of Bodhisattva, ultimately he decided to act as the regent and he did not assume the title of the king of Kanauj at that time. But, when his position became secure afterward he transferred his capital from Thanesvara to Kanauj and made Kanauj, the imperial capital. The same incident was also mentioned by Hiuen Tsang in his travelogue.