

BANABHATTA  
(PART-3)  
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DR. MD. NEYAZ HUSSAIN  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR & HOD  
P.G.DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
MAHARAJA COLLEGE, ARA  
(BIHAR)

## BANA'S HARSHACHARITA AS A HISTORICAL WORK-AN ESTIMATION

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Bana has not only provided the life history of Harsha but also a true picture of social, economic, political, religious and cultural life of the people of India in his time. Some other historical information of great value has also been incorporated in his work. His historical knowledge was superb. He has nowhere in his work lavished extravagant praise on his patron. Nor do we come across any exaggeration in his presentation of the subject-matter.

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He has dealt with main theme of the work without much bias and prejudice. He has plainly stated the truth. Most of the facts stated by him are historically authenticated. However, it is undeniable that his work suffers from rhetorical descriptions and literary embellishment. The work after all belongs to a branch of literature called *kavya* (epic). “Indeed, it is possible to prove by a diligent and critical examination of our sources that the Indians in the ancient and the early medieval periods possessed a sense of

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history, which at present appears to be imperfect and rudimentary, and that they developed a tradition of writing historical biography through its concrete evidence comparable to the lives of Plutarch is not available. Were the sense of history or the tradition of biography-writing completely absent in ancient India, the emergence of Banabhatta and Kalhana would not have been possible. The works of Bana and Kalhana among others

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represent the mature expression of historiography and historical biography and thus presuppose the continuity of literary and historical efforts and experiences of several generations." Cowell and Thomas have spoken very highly of Bana and his work. They have observed that he in his Sanskrit work "has woven the story out of actual events." His work, in fact, is "based on real events." It contains "a living and contemporary picture wherein we can see something of the India of that time, just as we see in Arrian and

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Plutarch something of the India of Alexander's time." The work "has another interest from the vivid picture which it offers of the condition of Indian society and the manners and customs of the period." Bana's "descriptions of the court and village life abound with masterly touches which hold up the mirror to the time . . . . The court, the camp, the quiet village and the still more quiet monasteries and retreats, whether of Brahmans or Buddhists, are

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all painted with singular power and his narrative illustrates and supplements the Chinese travelers' travel at every turn.”

Devabhuti has also admitted that despite some defects typical of the courtly literature of the time, one can find a realistic picture of contemporary life and many valuable facts about Harsha's character and achievements in Bana's Harshacarita.

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