

# **HARSHAVARDHANA**

**(RELIGIOUS POLICY)**

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

**DR. MD.NEYAZ HUSSAIN  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR & HOD  
PG DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
MAHARAJA COLLEGE, VKSU , ARA (BIHAR)**

# RELIGIOUS POLICY

The sources like Sonepat (Haryana), Madhuban(Uttar Praesh) and Banskhera(Uttar Pradesh) inscription reveals that Harsha's ancestors were ardent devotees of lord Surya and Shiva, which was further attested by their title like '*Paramaditya bhakta*' and '*Paramesvara*'. Harshacharita also testifies that Harsha's great grandfather or ancestor 'Pushyabhuti' was an ardent Saivite. Harsha's forefathers were not Buddhist. Harsha, himself was in his earlier days a devotee of the god Siva attested by the title

## RELIGIOUS POLICY

*'Paramamahesvara'* or devout worshipper of the god Mahesvara or Siva (Bankshera & Madhuvan Plates). In his later years, Harsha was inclined towards Buddhism. Most Indian rulers were tolerant to various sects and patronized more than one sect also. After accepting the Mahayana sect of Buddhism he stood as its redoubtable champion and also patronized his earlier religion side by side with Buddhism.

# RELIGIOUS POLICY

## KANAUJ ASSEMBLY

Soon after adopting Buddhism (without being converted), Harsha convened special assembly at Kanyakubja for the avowed purpose of exhibiting the refinement of the great vehicle and of making manifest the exceeding merit of the master. On this occasion Harsha showed some amount of open partiality and narrow sectarian sprit for Mahayana. To this occasion Harsha invited princes and disciples of various sects to assemble in the town of Kanyakubja to investigate the treatise of the master of law, of

# RELIGIOUS POLICY

China, Hiuen Tsang. It was attended by 20 kings, 1000 scholars from the Nalanda University, 3000 Hinayanists and Mahayanists, 3000 Brahmins and Jains. The Assembly went on continuously for 23 days. Hiuen Tsang explained the values of Mahayana doctrine and established its superiority over others. However, violence broke out and there were acts of arson. There was also an attempt on the life of Harsha. It was brought under control and the guilty were punished. On the final day of the Assembly, Hiuen Tsang was honoured with costly presents.

# RELIGIOUS POLICY

## **Prayag Assembly.**

After the assembly of Kanauj, Harsha invited Hiuen Tsang to attend another imposing ceremony which the sovereign held every year at Prayaga at the confluence of the river Ganga and the Yamuna. Harsha celebrated sixth quinquennial distribution of the alms called the Maha Mokshya Parisad during this time. At this ceremony 5,00,000 sramanas, heretics, narganthas, the poor, orphans and the solitary of the five Indies were present. Hiuen Tsang mentions in his account about the conference

# RELIGIOUS POLICY

held at Allahabad, known as Prayag. Harsha gave away his enormous wealth as gifts to the members of all religious sects. According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha was so lavish that he emptied the treasury and even gave away the clothes and jewels he was wearing. His statement might be one of admiring exaggeration.