

THE VARDHANAS

Rise of Harshavardhana

1 THE VARDHANA DYNASTY

After the decline of the Gupta Empire, many independent dynasties arose in North India. The **Pushyabhuti dynasty** was the most prominent among them. **Prabhakaravardhana**, **Rajyavardhana** and **Harshavardhana** were its important rulers.



2 HARSHAVARDHANA ASCENDS THE THRONE

Harshavardhana was sixteen years old when he ascended the throne. His father Prabhakaravardhana died, and his elder brother Rajyavardhana became king before him.



3 FAMILY TRAGEDIES AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

Rajyashree, Harshavardhana's sister, was married to **Grahavarman** of the Maukhari family. The king of **Malwa** imprisoned Rajyashree and killed Grahavarman. Rajyavardhana defeated the Malwa army but was later killed by **Shashanka of Gauda**.



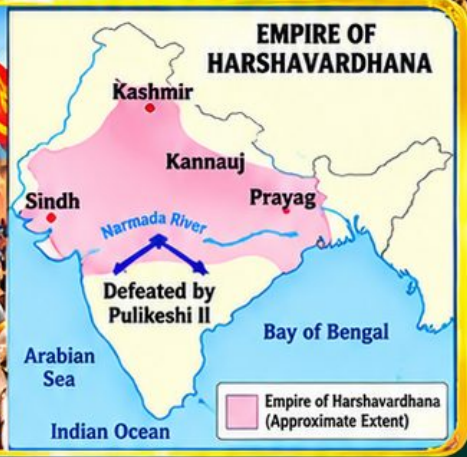
EMPEROR HARSHAVARDHANA

Conquests, Literature and Religious Tolerance

1 EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE

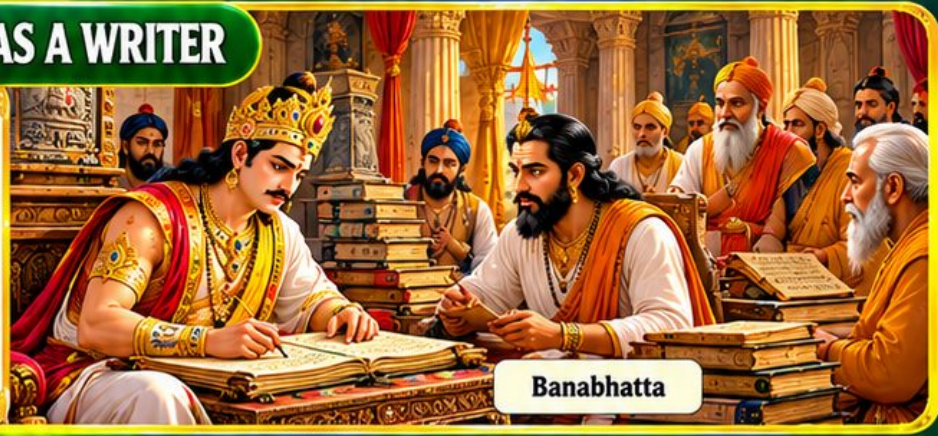
Harshavardhana brought a large part of North India under his control. He organised an army and won **Kashmir** and **Sindh**. He later invaded South India but was defeated by **Pulikeshi II**, the Chalukya ruler, on the banks of the **Narmada River**. Harshavardhana ruled for nearly 40 years.





2 HARSHAVARDHANA AS A WRITER

Harshavardhana was both a warrior and a poet. He wrote the Sanskrit plays **Priyadarshika**, **Ratnavali** and **Nagananda**. He patronised the poet **Banabhatta**, who wrote ***Harshacharita***, a biography of Harshavardhana.



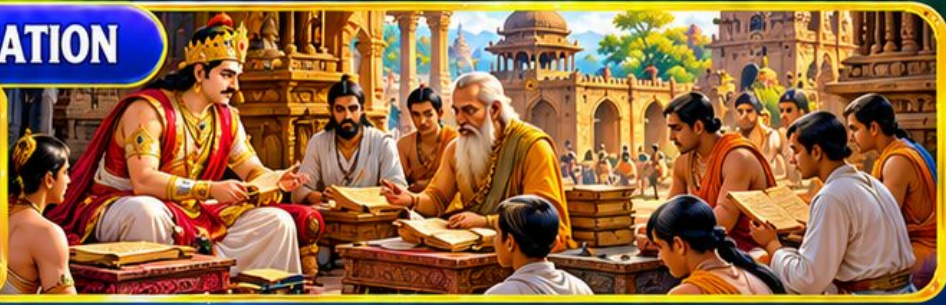
3 RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Harshavardhana respected different religions. Although originally **a Shaivite**, he later gave great importance to **Buddhism**. He organised religious conferences at **Kanauj** and **Prayag**.



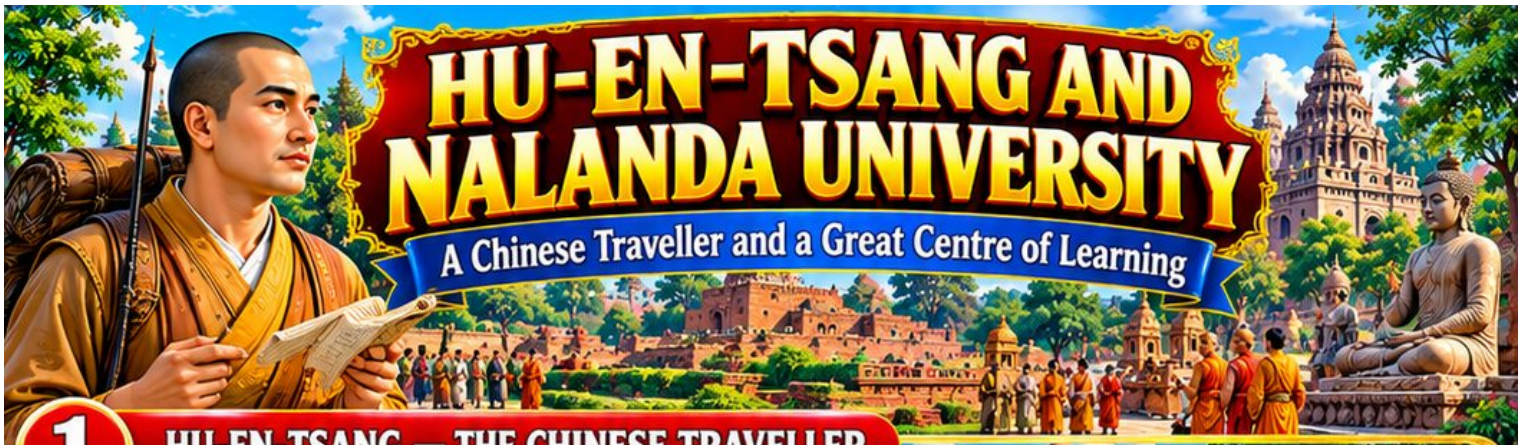
4 CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Harshavardhana supported learning and scholars. His reign is remembered for its literary and religious activities.



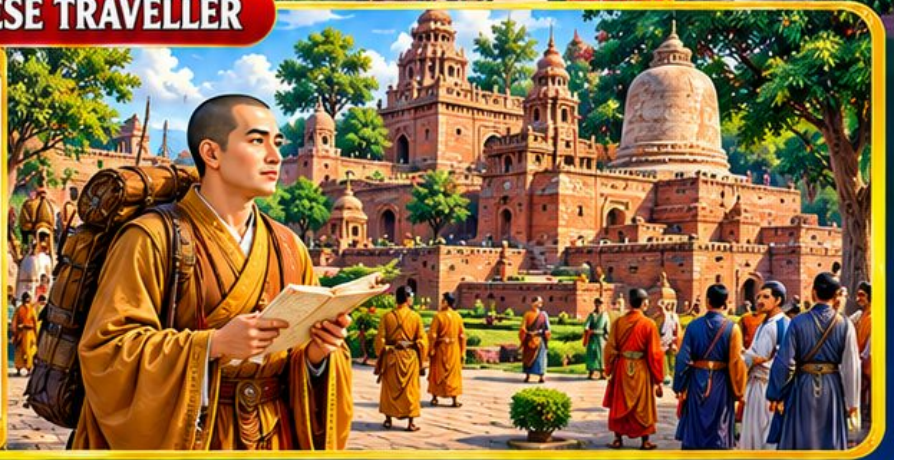
HU-EN-TSANG AND NALANDA UNIVERSITY

A Chinese Traveller and a Great Centre of Learning



1 HU-EN-TSANG — THE CHINESE TRAVELLER

Hu-en-Tsang was a famous Chinese traveller who came to India about **1,400 years ago**. He travelled in India for fifteen years and studied Buddhist literature. He also studied at Nalanda University and spent many years at the court of Harshavardhana. He recorded his experiences in a travelogue called **'Si-yu-ki'**.



2 NALANDA UNIVERSITY

Nalanda University, in present-day Bihar, was a famous centre of learning for more than six centuries, beginning in the Gupta period. Students from foreign countries, including China and Japan, came to study there.



3 SUBJECTS AND LIBRARIES

Buddhism was an important subject at Nalanda. **Veda, Yoga, medicine** and other subjects were also taught. The textbook describes **eight large schools** and **three large libraries**.



4 EDUCATION AND ROYAL SUPPORT

According to the textbook, students received education, shelter and food **without fees**. Revenue from **a hundred villages** was allocated to meet these expenses. **Harshavardhana** was one of the patrons of the university.

