

## 1

## TWO BIG STATES

## 1. KANAUJ

**Harshvardhan (606-647 C.E.)**

King Harshvardhan was born in 606 CE. After the death of his father, Prabhakarvardhan, Harshvardhan's elder brother, Rajyavardhan ascended the throne of Thaneshwar. However, Rajyavardhan was killed by the king of Gaud, Shashank. Their sister, Rajyashree was imprisoned by the king of Malwa, Devgupt. Under these circumstances, as advised by the leaders of the kingdom, Harshvardhan shouldered the responsibility of Thaneshwar (present Punjab-Haryana).

Immediately after ascending the throne, he decided to free his imprisoned sister, Rajyashree. In the meanwhile, she had escaped from the clutches of Devgupt and ran away into the Vindhya forest. He went in search for his sister and with the help of the people living in the forest and a Buddhist hermit, Diwakarmitra, he stopped her from committing Sati. Since Rajyashree's kingdom, Kanauj (Uttar Pradesh), was without any king at that time, Harshvardhan became its ruler. Later, he defeated Devgupt, the king of Malwa.

As part of his preparation to launch an attack on Shashank, the Gaud king, he formed an alliance with the king of Kamrup (Assam), Bhaskarvarman. With the help of a large army, he defeated the Gaud king and won over a major part of his kingdom. He also conquered Malwa and Saurashtra, but was unsuccessful in defeating Pulkeshi II, king of the Chalukya dynasty of South India. After seven successive victorious years, Thaneshwar emerged as a large kingdom in North India.



**1.1 King Harshvardhan**

**Think**

- Was it right on Harshvardhan's part to defeat those states?

**Harshvardhan's reign and administration**

Harshvardhan personally supervised the administration of his state by traveling extensively to different parts of his empire. He divided his daily routine into three parts - the first was for administrative purposes while the other two parts were devoted to public welfare and religious activities. He was so diligent in carrying out his administrative responsibilities that at times, he even forgot to have his meal.

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**1.2 Handwriting of Harshvardhan**

## Things to know

- To help him in the administration, Harshvardhan had Commander-in-Chief of the army, Pratihara (Dwarpal), Sandhivigrahaka (Foreign Minister), Rajdoot (Ambassador), Parrajya Mantri, Mahadandanayaka (Chief Justice) and Aksharpatalika (Registrar).

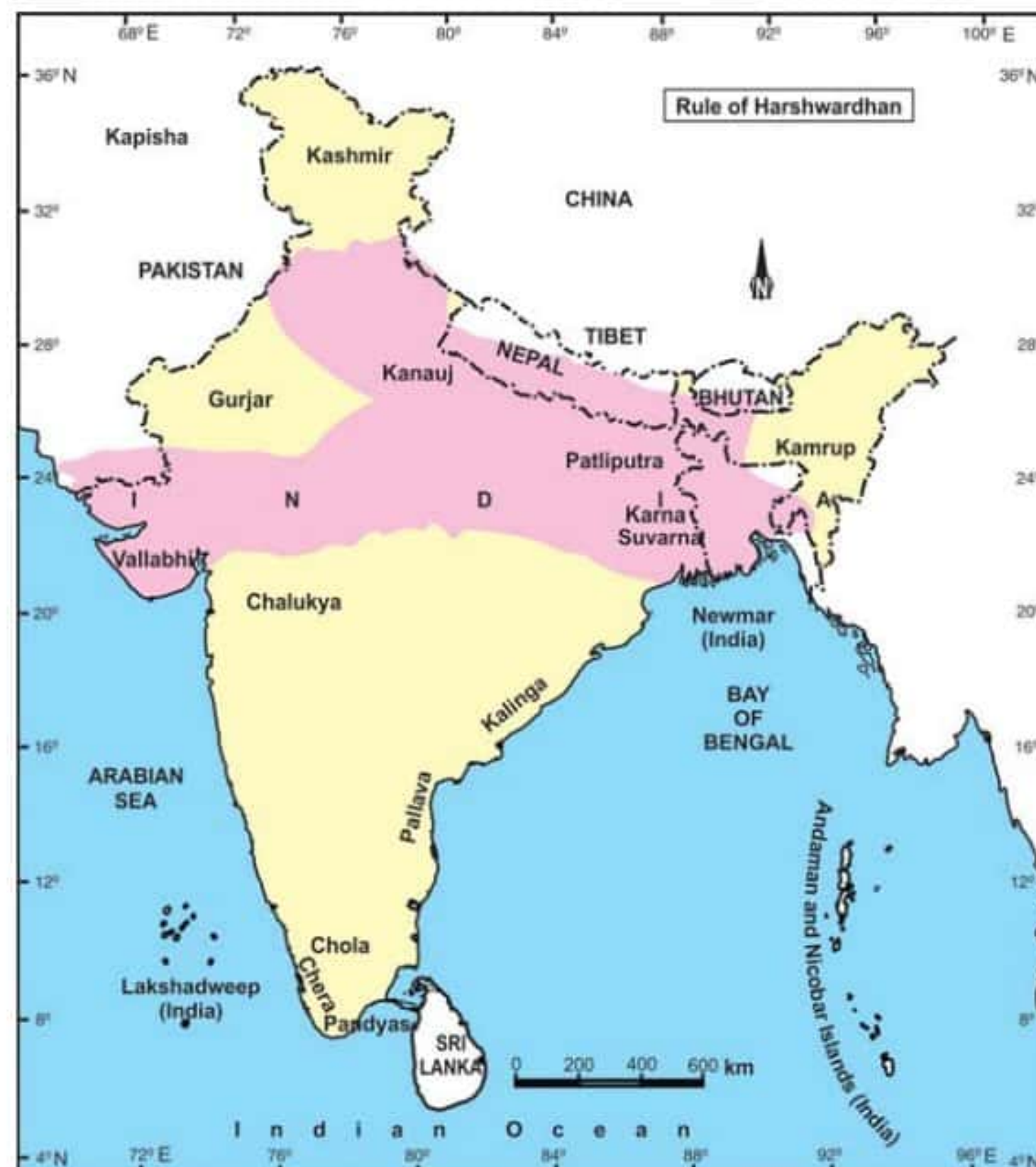
## Think

- Name the administrative officers in charge of the administration of your district or taluka currently.

### Imprints Left by Harshvardhan

Harsh built many rest houses, wells, step wells, lakes, mathas and viharas and also prohibited animal slaughter. Every year, he organized a Buddhist Religious Meet and every five years he would organize a huge religious congregation at Prayag. There, he would donate generously till his entire treasury was emptied and would even give away the ornaments he would be wearing at the time.

The great Sanskrit poet and writer, Banbhatt, adorned his court. His famous works, 'Harshcharit' and 'Kadambari' are famous even today. We come to know about many important aspects of King Harshvardhana's reign from 'Harshcharita'. King Harsha himself was a writer and wrote three plays 'Naganand', 'Ratnavali' and 'Priyadarshika.'



1.3 Harshvardhan's Empire

## Activity

- *Make a list of the various objects that are seen in your school.*
- *How were those objects obtained?*
- *How many of those objects were donated?*
- *Why do people make donations to schools?*

## Emperor Harshavardhan's Empire

### Nalanda University

King Harsh extended all possible assistance to Acharya Shilbhadra and made Nalanda into a world famous university. The University had access to the revenues of 100 villages given to them by King Harsh for its upkeep and maintenance. Renowned chemist Acharya Nagarjuna, who proved that iron, arsenic and mercury ash could be used as medicine, also belonged to Nalanda University.



1.4 Nalanda Vidyapith

## Things to know

- *Students had to clear an entrance test for admission into Nalanda University.*
- *Free education, lodging and boarding were provided in Nalanda University.*
- *The extensive library of Nalanda University was known as 'Dharmaganj'.*

## Think

- *Why was free education provided at Nalanda University?*

## Life of the people

Information about the reign of King Harsh is available from the writings of Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsang. Towns and villages of the time were fortified and had huge gateways at their entrance. The society was divided into four groups. While the 'purdah' system and inter caste marriages were not prevalent at that time, the custom of 'sati', child marriage and polygamy had started by then. The local diet consisted of Milk and Milk products, wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables. They wore clean, simple white clothes. Men wore dhotis and women wore saris. Their ornaments (rings, bangles, bracelets, necklaces) were made from flowers. Chess and games of dice were popular means of entertainment. Acrobats and conjurers wandered from village to village entertaining people.

Farming and animal husbandry were the main occupations of the people. Land revenue was one-sixth of the production. Internal and international trade was carried out by the 'Vaishyas'. A highway from Patliputra to Brugu Kachchh (Bharuch) port was built by the state for trade and transportation of goods.

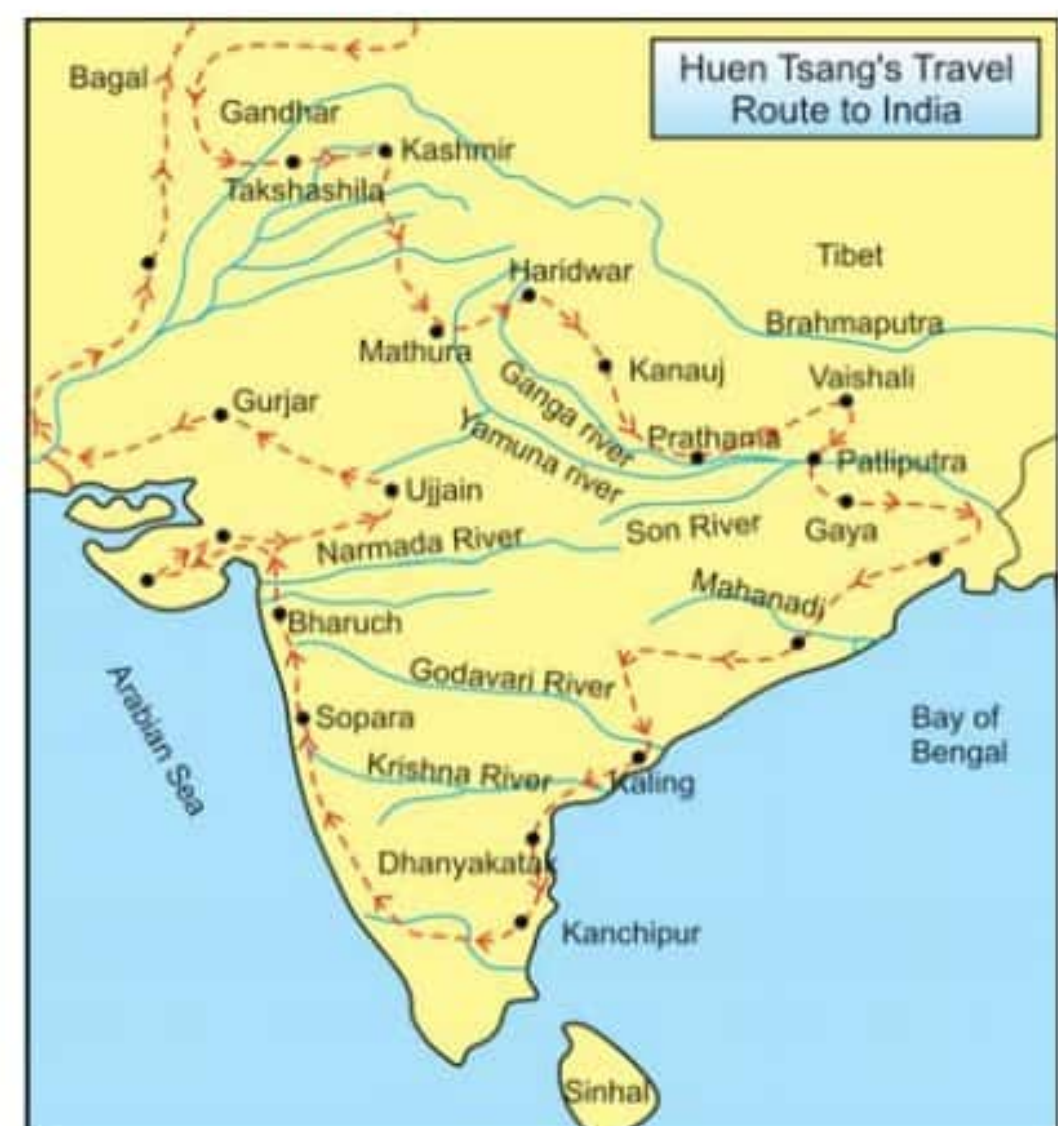
Gold and silver coins were used for commercial transactions. Ornaments, statues, ivory and carved wooden pieces were exported. The export of different materials from India increased her prosperity. During the reign of King Harsh, India had good business relations with Rome which led to the inflow of gold in India. People followed Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism but were tolerant towards other religions.

### Think and write

- *What were the evils prevalent in society during King Harsh's time?*
- *What are the evils prevalent in society today?*
- *What are the various means of entertainment in present times ?*
- *Why were villages and towns fortified in ancient times?*



1.5 Hiuen Tsang



1.6 Route of Hiuen Tsang's India tour

## Hiuen Tsang (629 - 645 C.E.)

The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited India during Harsh's reign and studied Buddhism at Nalanda for 5 years.

### Activity

- *Make a list of the present day places in India that Hiuen Tsang visited (Refer to the map on Page 4).*

### Things to know

- *Hiuen Tsang stayed in India for 15 years and visited different places. He has described the social, political and religious conditions of that time. In 645 C.E., he returned to China via Central Asia and took with him many books, relics and statues. During his stay, he attended the 6th Buddhist Religious Congregation at Prayag.*

## Hiuen Tsang has noted that

- There were 100 Buddhist 'Mutths' in Harsh's kingdom.
- People lived a simple, pious and peaceful life based on living by rules of good moral conduct and justice. Cheating and breach of promise were considered sinful.

### Activity

- *List out the states of South India from the list of places visited by Hiuen Tsang.*

## 2. Vatapi

When King Harsh was ruling over his empire in North India, King Pulakeshi II was ruling in South India. He had earlier defeated Harsh.

### Route to the throne

The Kings of the Chalukya (Solanki) dynasty established a vast empire in South India which they ruled from their capital at Vatapi (Badami- Karnataka). Pulakeshi I, a great king of the Chalukya dynasty, performed the Ashwamegha yagna. His flag had the symbol of 'Varahavtar'. His son, Kirtivarma, ascended the throne after him. He was succeeded by his brother, Manglesh who built the grand Vishnu temple at Vatapi. After him, the righteous Pulakeshi II became king and ruled over the empire for about 30 years.



1.7 Pulkeshi - II

## Pulkeshi II (610-642 C.E.)

Pulkeshi was a valiant king who won many battles. His first victory was over Laat (South Gujarat) followed by his win over Gurjar (North Gujarat). He gained control over the Vengi region that lay between the rivers Krishna and Godavari and also acquired Andhra Pradesh. He transformed the capital Vatapi into a city of magnificence and splendour.

The armies of Harshavardhan and Pulkeshi II fought a great battle near River Narmada in which the former was defeated. This halted Harsh's expansion towards South India and so the empire of Kanauj could not extend beyond Narmada.

Pulakeshi II was not only a great warrior but also a lover of arts.

The cave of Vatapi and Dharapuri were built during his reign. The famous cave murals of Ajanta were also painted at that time. In his travels, Hiuen Tsang visited the court of Pulakeshi II and has given a vivid account of its grandeur. The kings of the Chalukya Dynasty were followers of Hinduism. During this time, Buddhism went into decline while the 'Digambar' Jain sect gained popularity.

Harshavardhan and Pulkeshi II were contemporary rulers. However, Harsh fought fewer battles as compared to Pulakeshi, who continued waging wars. He finally met his end in 642 C.E. in a conflict with the Pallav king of Kanchipuram. King Harshavardhan died five years after him.



**1.8 Ajanta Caves**

## EXERCISE

### Q.1. Answer the following questions in brief

1. Study the maps of the states of Harsh and Pulkeshi-II and note down the major cities and rivers.
2. What was the difference between Pulkeshi-II and Harsh's personalities?
3. Why did Hiuen Tsang carry books, relics and statues back with him to China?
4. Whom did Harsh think of freeing after ascending the throne?
5. Name the plays written by Emperor Harshavardhan?
6. Which caves were constructed during Pulkeshi II's reign?

### Discuss

1. Why was Harsh not able to defeat Pulkeshi II?
2. Who was a better king - Harsh or Pulkeshi II? Give reasons.
3. Why was there war between Harsh and Pulkeshi II? Why did they not wage war again?
4. What are the differences between present day universities and Nalanda University?