



Post-Gupta Period: Political Landscape in North India

Emergence of Regional Powers

Following the decline of the Gupta Empire in the 6th and early 7th centuries CE, North India saw the rise of several regional kingdoms. Though politically fragmented, this era marked a crucial transition in Indian history, with emerging dynasties frequently engaging in warfare to consolidate their power.

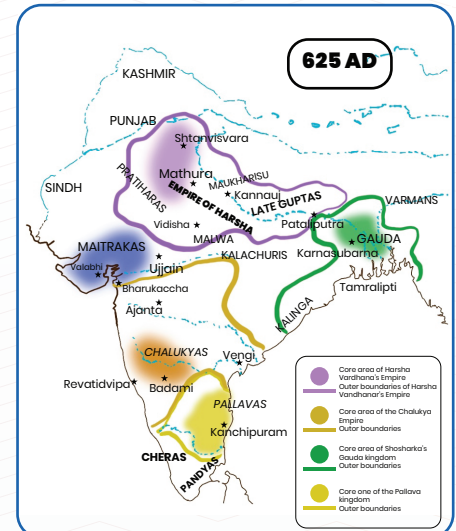
Major Kingdoms in Post-Gupta North India

1. Maitrakas of Valabhi (c. 475-776 CE)

♦ **Origins & Rule:** Originally subordinates of the Guptas, the Maitrakas became independent in the early 6th century CE. Their capital was Valabhi (present-day Gujarat).

♦ **Notable Rulers:**

- **Dhruvasena I Baladitya (c. 519-549 CE):** Issued numerous land grants but little is recorded about his political achievements.
- **Guhasena (c. 556-559 CE):** Established independence.



- **Shiladitya I Dharmaditya (c. 606-626 CE):** Recognized by the Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang for his capable and benevolent rule.

2. Maukharis of Kanauj (c. 550-606 CE)

♦ **Territory & Origins:** Initially vassals of the Guptas, the Maukharis controlled the western Ganges plains, with Kanauj as their capital.

♦ **Notable Rulers:**

- **Isanavarman (c. 550-570 CE):** Defeated the Andhras, Gulikas, and Gaudas.
- **Sarvavarman (c. 570-580 CE):** Triumphed over Damodargupta of the Later Gupta dynasty.
- **Avantivarman (c. 580-600 CE):** Last sovereign Maukhari ruler.

♦ **Decline:**

- **Grahavarman (c. 600-606 CE):** The last ruler, defeated and killed by Malava king Devagupta, leading to the collapse of the Maukharis.

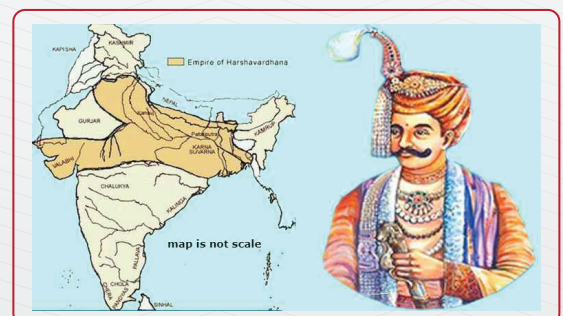


3. Pushyabhutis of Thanesar and Harshavardhana (c. 550-647 CE)

♦ **Rise to Power:** The Pushyabhutis, ruling from Thanesar (north of Delhi), gained prominence under Prabhakaravardhana (c. 580-605 CE).

♦ **Harshavardhana (606-647 CE):**

- Expanded the empire significantly.
- **Shifted the capital to Kannauj** and established dominance over North India.
- Defeated the Maitrakas but was unsuccessful against the Chalukyas of Badami (Pulakesin II, c. 610-642 CE).



4. Later Guptas of Magadha (c. 550-750 CE)

- ◆ **Dynasty Overview:** Ruled **Magadha** from the **mid-6th century to c. 750 CE**. Though named "Guptas," they were **not direct descendants of the Imperial Guptas**.



Notable Rulers:

- ◆ • **Kumaragupta III (c. 550–560 CE):** Defeated Maukhari king Isanavarman.
- ◆ • **Damodaragupta (c. 560–570 CE):** Defeated by Maukhari king Sarvavarman.
- ◆ • **Adityasena (c. 672 CE):** Most powerful ruler; expanded the kingdom and took the title "Maharajadhiraja".

5. Yasodharman of Malwa (c. 515-540 CE)

- ◆ **Rise to Power:** Ruler from the **Aulikara dynasty of Malwa**, known from **Mandasor pillar inscriptions (532 CE)**.
- ◆ **Military Campaigns:**
 - Defeated the **ruler of Gauda (Bengal)**.
 - Clashed with the **Chalukyas** and expanded influence over **Magadha**.
 - Allied with **Lalitaditya of Kashmir** against the **Arabs** but later lost to him.
- ◆ **Decline:** Reigned between **700–740 CE** before losing territory to **Lalitaditya**.



6. Karkota Dynasty of Kashmir (c. 625-855 CE)

- ◆ **Historical Accounts:** **Rajatarangini** by **Kalhana** is the primary source on **Kashmir's history**.
- ◆ **Notable Rulers:**
 - **Durlabhavardhana (c. 627 CE):** **Founder; controlled parts of Punjab**.
 - **Chandrapida (c. 713 CE):** **Resisted Arab invasions and sought aid from China**.
 - **Lalitaditya Muktapida (c. 724–760 CE):** Expanded Kashmiri influence and fought against **Yasodharman**.



Social, Religious, and Economic Aspects Under Harshavardhana

Social Structure

- ◆ **Caste System:** The **Varnashrama dharma** became dominant, with rigid **occupational divisions**.
- ◆ **Women's Status:** Declined significantly; **practices such as Svayamvara diminished, widow remarriage was restricted, and the dowry system became prevalent**.
- ◆ **Agricultural Economy:** Peasants **bore heavy tax burdens, with forced labor (Vishti) becoming more common**.



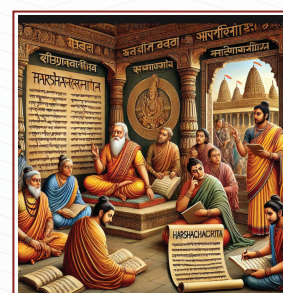
Religious Policies

- Initially a **Shiva worshipper**, Harsha later patronized **Buddhism** and organized grand **assemblies** to promote **Mahayana Buddhism**:
 - Kannauj Assembly**: Attended by **20 kings, 4,000 Buddhist monks, and scholars** from all over India.
 - Allahabad Assembly**: Held **every five years**, with mass **distributions of wealth** to people of all faiths.



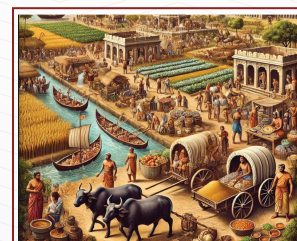
Education and Literature

- Patronage**: Harsha supported scholars like **Banabhatta and Haridatta**. His court also welcomed **Hiuen Tsang**, who recorded his travels in **Si-Yu-Ki**.
- Notable Works**:
 - Harshacharita (Banabhatta)**: Biography of Harsha.
 - Priyadarshika, Nagananda, Ratnavali (Harsha)**: Sanskrit plays.
 - Malatimadhava (Bhavabhuti)**: Sanskrit drama.
 - Kadambari (Banabhatta)**: Romantic novel.



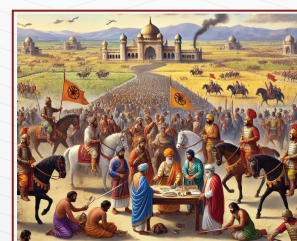
Economic System

- Land revenue** was the primary source of income, with **officers paid** through land grants.
- Increasing feudalism** led to decentralization, as **landholders gained autonomy** and became less dependent on the king.



Decline of the Harsha Empire

- Revenue Collection**: **Local feudal officers controlled revenue collection**, weakening central authority.
- Post-Harsha Disintegration**: After Harsha's death in AD 647, political fragmentation resumed, leading to prolonged instability.
- Rise of New Powers**: By the **8th century**, the **Gurjara-Pratiharas and Palas** emerged as dominant forces in North India, shaping the next phase of Indian history.



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