

Post-Gupta Period - Vardhana Dynasty

(550 AD-647 AD) Pushyabhuti - Vardhana Dynasty

1. The Pushyabhuti or Vardhana dynasty was founded at Thanetwar (Karnal district, Haryana) by Pushyabhuti probably towards the beginning of the 6th century. Pushyabhuti were the feudatories of the Guptas, but has assumed independence after the Hun invasions.
2. The first important ruler of the dynasty was Prabhakaravardhana (580-605 AD).
3. Prabhakaravardhana was succeeded by his eldest son Rajyavardhana (605-606 AD).
4. Rajyavardhana had to face problems from the day of his succession to the throne. Grahavarman, the Maukhari ruler of Kannauj and husband of Rajyashri (sister of Rajyavardhana) was murdered by Deva Gupta (the ruler of Malwa) who in alliance with Shashanka (ruler of Gaud or North-Western Bengal) now occupied Kannauj and imprisoned Rajyashri.
5. Rajyavardhana, therefore, undertook a campaign against Deva Gupta and killed him but he was killed by Shashanka in 606 AD. In the meanwhile Rajyashri escaped into the forests of Central India.

Harshavardhana : 606-647 AD

1. After the killing of Rajyavardhana, his younger brother, Harshavardhana also known as Siladitya ascended the Pushyabhuti throne in 606 AD and from this year started the Harsha Era.
2. After ascending the throne Harsha first rescued his widowed sister Rajyashri from the Vindhyan forest, where she was going to throw herself into the fire.
3. Harsha drove out Shashanka from Kannauj who had occupied it after killing Rajyavardhana. He not only unified Kannauj with Thanetwar but also made it his new capital, which made him the most powerful king of North India.
4. Harsha there after, proceeded towards the east against Shashanka with a view to avenge the death of his brother, Rajyavardhana and brother-in-law, Grahavarman. Harsha was not successful in his first expedition against Gaud, but in his second expedition towards the close of his reign, after the death of Shashanka (died in 637AD), he conquered Magadha and Shashanka's empire.

5. Harshavardhana defeated Dhruvasena II, the Maitraka ruler of Vallabhi. However, Harsha, in order to secure the safety of the western boundary, reinstated him and gave his daughter in marriage to Dhruvasena II. Dhruvasena II accepted the position of a feudatory vassal. It was an important diplomatic achievement of Harsha.

6. The course of Harsha's conquests suffered a serious setback on his expedition towards the Deccan. Pulkeshin II of Chalukya dynasty of Vatapi / Vadami inflicted a decisive defeat on him at the bank of Narmada. It was the only defeat of Harsha's victorious life. The Chalukya records describe Harsha as the lord of whole of Northern country (Sakalottarapatheshvara).

7. The area under his control covered many parts of Northern India, Eastern Rajasthan and the Ganges Valley as far as Assam. His empire included territories of distant feudal kings too.

8. Harsha maintained diplomatic relations with China. In 641 AD, he sent an envoy to Tai-Tsung, the Tang Emperor of China. Three Chinese missions subsequently visited his court. Hiuen-Tsang, the celebrated Chinese pilgrim, visited India during Harsha's reign. He spent about eight years (635-643 AD) in the dominions of Harsha.

9. Hiuen-Tsang mentions two most celebrated events of Harsha's reign the assemblies at Kannauj and at Prayaga. The Kannauj assembly (643 AD) was held in the honour of Hiuen-Tsang and to popularise Mahayana sect of Buddhism. The Prayaga assembly was held in 643-644 AD. In Prayaga, Harshavardhana used to celebrate religious festivals at the end of every five years, at the confluence of the Gange, the Yamuna and the Saraswati. It is said that this was the beginning of Kumbha fair.

10. Harshavardhana was a Shaiva by faith, but he showed equal respect to other sects. Hiuen-Tsang portrays him as a liberal Buddhist (Mahayana) who also honoured gods of others sects.

11. According to Hiuen-Tsang, Nalanda University, meant for Buddhist monks, was maintained by the revenue from 200 villages which granted by Harshavardhana.

12. He died in 647 AD. Harsha does not appear to have any heir to his throne, which was usurped after his death by his minister named Arunashva.

13. Harshavardhana was not only a patron of learning, but was himself an accomplished author. He wrote three Sanskrit plays-Nagananda, Ratnavali and Priyadarsika. He gathered around him a circle of learned men, of whom Banabhatta, the author of Harshacharita (an important historical work narrating the incidents of the earlier part of Harsha's reign) and Kadambari (a poetical novel of great literary merit) and Bhartrihari the author of Niti Shataka,

Shringar Shataka and Vairagya Shatak (jointly called Shatakatrayi) are the well known.

14. Harsha governed his empire on the same lines as the Guptas did, except that this administration had become more feudal and decentralised.

States of the Deccan and South India

Chalukyas of Vatapi / Vadami : 543-755 AD

1. The Vakataka power was followed by Chalukyas.
2. Chalukyas established their capital at Vatapi / Badami in the district of Bijapur in Karnataka.
3. Pulakesin II (609-42 AD) was able to check Harsha's design to conquer Deccan.
4. Aihole inscription is an eulogy written by his court poet Ravikirti.
5. He sent an ambassador to the Persian King Khusro II in 625 AD and also received one from him.
6. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsan visited his kingdom.
7. Pallava ruler Narsimhavarm in 'Mammala' invaded the Chalukya kingdom, killed Pulakesin II and captured Vatapi. He adopted the title Vatapikonda i.e. the conqueror of Vatapi.
8. In 757 AD, Chalukyas were overthrown by their feudatories, the Rashtrakutas.

Vesara Style/ Deccan Style

1. Chalukyas began the Vesara style or Deccan style in building structural temples which however, reached culmination, only under the Rashtrakutas and the Hoysalas.
2. Specimens of Chalukyan Temples : 1. Vesara style—Jinendra temple/ Meguti temple- Aihole (Ravikirti); Vishnu temple-Aihole, Ladh Khan temple (attributed to god Surya) - Aihole, Durga temple-Aihole; Aihole is called a 'town of temples' because it contains about 70 temples. 2. Nagara style : Papanatha temple-Pattadakal 3. Dravida style : Virupaksha temple and Sangamesvara temple— Pattadakal.

Pallavas of Kanchi : 575-897 AD

1. There is controversy regarding the origin of Pallavas. Possibly the Pallavas were a local tribe who established their authority in the Tondaimandalam or the land of creepers.
2. They were orthodox Brahmanical Hindus and their capital was Kanchi.
3. Both Chalukyas and Pallavas tried to establish their supremacy over land between Krishna and Tungabhadra.
4. Pallava king Narsimha varman (630-668 AD) occupied Chalukyan capital Vatapi in about 642 AD and assumed the title Vatapikonda i.e. conqueror of Vatapi.
5. Pallavas were instrumental in spreading Indian culture in South-East Asia. Till the 8th century AD Pallava influence was predominant in Cambodia. The Pallava type of Shikhara is to be found in the temples of Java, Cambodia and Annam.

Pallava Art

1. Pallavas began the Dravida style of temple architecture, which reached culmination under the rule of Cholas.
2. The development of temple architecture, particularly Dravida style, under the Pallavas can be seen in four stages :
 1. Mahendravarmana Group -----> Mammala Group
 2. Mahendravarmana I(600- 630 AD)---> Narsimhavarmana I 'Mammala' (630-668 AD)
 3. Temple at Bhairavkona (North Arcot Distt.), Ananteswar temple at Undavalli (Guntur Distt. ---> Mahadeva temples and Ratha temples (Sapt Pagodas) at Mammalapuram (Mahabalipuram)
 1. Mahendravarmana Group-----> Rajasimha Group
 2. Mahendravarmana I(600-630 AD)---> Narsimhavarmana II 'Rajasimha' (668-720 AD)
 3. Temple at Bhairavkona (North Arcot Distt.), Ananteswar temple at Undavalli (Guntur Distt.)----> Kailashnatha and Vaikunth Perumal Temple at Kanchi, Shore temple at Mammalapuram
 1. Mahendravarmana Group-----> Aparajit Group

2. Mahendravarmana I(600-630 AD)---> Nandivarmana 'Aparajit' (879-897 AD)

3. Temple at Bhairavkona (North Arcot Distt.), Ananteswar temple at Undavalli (Guntur Distt.)---->Mukteshwar and Matangeshwar temple at Kanchi, Parshurameswar temple at Gudimallam

3. The Pallavas also contributed to the development of sculpture in South India. The Pallava sculpture is indebted largely to the Buddhist tradition. It is more monumental and linear in form, thus avoiding the typical ornamentation of the Deccan sculpture. The best example is the Descent of the Gangas or Arjuna's Penance at Mammalapuram.

Gupta 'n' Post-Gupta Dynasties and Their Founders

Dynasty	Founder
The Chalukyas of Vatapi	Jayasimh
The Gangas of Talakad	Konakanivama
The Guptas of Magadha	Shri Gupta
The Kadambas of Vanavasi	Mayurashrman
The Kingdom of Gaud	Shaha ka
The Kingdom of Thaneswar	Pushyabhuti
The Later-Guptas of Magadha-Miwa	Krishnagupta
The Maitrakas of Vallabhi	Bhattarka
The Maukharis of Kannauj	Yajnavarman
The Pallavas of Kanchi	Yajnavarman
The Pallavas of Kanchi	Simhavarman
The Pandya of Madurai	Kodimongon
The Vakatahs	Vindhyashakti