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Socioeconomic Infrastructure of the Pushyabhuti Dynasty and the Harshvardhan

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Abstract

In the ancient history of India, the Pushyabhuti dynasty emerged after the fall of the Gupta Empire. Although not much information is available about the origin of the Pushyabhuti dynasty, much information has been found later from the Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang and other historians. Hiuen Tsang stayed in India for about fifteen years. The history of the Purshabhuti dynasty, the archaeological and historical information available about their social and economic activities is very valuable. From his account and the account of Harsha's court poet Banabhatta, very little is known about the first three kings of the dynasty. The fourth king of this dynasty was Prabhakaravardhana, who is described in the Harshacharita as a great commander with many military victories. Through the marriage of the princess Rajyasri to the Maukhari ruler Grahavarman, an important marriage bond was formed between the Pushyabhuti and the Maukharis of Kanyakubja (Kallauj), who were their neighbors to the east.

Keywords: Pushyabhuti, Ornaments, Ratnaranjaka, Ratnodadhi, Vardhan, Sapinda, Pancha Bharata, Ratnasagara, Traveler

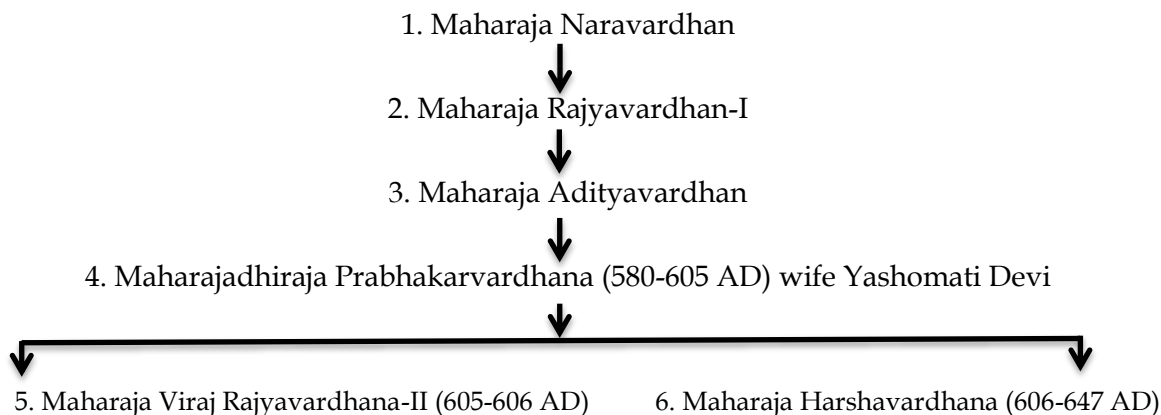
Introduction:

The Pushyabhuti dynasty of Thaneshwar was one of the regional powers that emerged in North India after the fall of the Gupta Empire. Historians have different opinions about the origin of the Thaneshwar kingdom. According to Banabhatta, a person named Pushyabhuti established a kingdom in the Thaneshwar region of eastern Punjab and added the word 'Vardhan' to the end of the names of the kings of this dynasty. The names of some of the kings mentioned in the coins and inscriptions are Maharaja Narvardhana, Maharaja Rajyavardhana, Maharaja Adityavardhana, Maharajadhiraja Prabhakarvardhana (580-605). Banabhatta's 'Harshacharita' states that Prabhakarvardhana had three sons - Rajyavardhana (605-606 AD), Harshavardhana (606-647AD) and Krishnavardhana. His only daughter was Rajyashri. Some information is not known about the names of the first three rulers of the Pushyabhuti dynasty, but they were basically loyal to the Guptas. The Thaneshwar kingdom became increasingly prominent from the time of Prabhakara Vardhana, the fourth king of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. He ruled independently, holding the title of Maharajadhiraja. The Sources for the Study of the history of the Pushyabhuti Dynasty:- Basically, the origin of the Pushyabhuti dynasty is known from a few sources, namely, 1) Hiuen Tsang's account, 2) Banabhatta's Harshacharita, 3) contemporary coins and inscriptions. Banabhatta was the court poet of Harshavardhana and on the other hand,

Hiuen Tsang's 'Ci-u-ki' is a biographical book. He visited 81 small and large states and regions in India. However, the most important of these inscriptions are the Bansaksha inscription (628 AD), the Madhuban copperplate inscription (631 AD) and the Sonpat inscription. Apart from this, the Nalanda seal, the 'Aihole inscription' of the Chalukya king Pulakeshi II is also very important.

List of the Pushyabhuti dynasty that founded the empire:

The historical material available about the rule of the Pushyabhuti dynasty is as follows:-



1. Origin of the Pushyabhuti dynasty: Accurate information about the early history of the Thaneshwar kingdom or Pushyabhuti dynasty nothing is known. However, it can be said that the Pushyabhuti dynasty of Thaneshwar arose near Kurukshetra in eastern Punjab in the late 5th or early 6th century AD. They were Vaishyas and the founder of this dynasty was the Jain Pushyabhuti.

Therefore, starting from Kurukshetra in Swarashtra or East Punjab, during the reign of Harshavardhana, it was (Kanyakubja) Uttar Pradesh, (Mithila)-Bihar, (Gaudh)-West Bengal and (Utkal)-Orissa that the Pushyabhuti dynasty empire was formed. Which Hiuen Tsang called 'Panchabharat'. Harshavardhana's court poet Banabhatt mentioned the words Tushar Shail or Snow-covered Hills. That is why many think that Kashmir and Nepal were part of his empire, but that is a matter of debate.

2. Prosperity of life: Hiuen Tsang was impressed by the prosperity of India. The standard of living there was high. Both gold and silver coins were in circulation. Curry husk and Pearls were in circulation. The soil was rich and capable of producing abundant crops. A variety of crops and grains were grown. The main food of the people was wheat cakes, dried grains and goat meat, milk, fish, and deer meat.

3. Marriage System: The rules and regulations regarding the ancient Indian marriage system are set out in the Manusmriti, Narada Smriti, Manu Samhita, Rigveda, Yajñabandhya, Vatsyayana, Katyayana and Dharmasutra. The Samhita or Law contains detailed descriptions of ancient Indian customs. But although the Rigveda does not provide detailed descriptions, some instructions are reliable. In this regard, Manu has instructed to enter into domestic life after completing Vedic studies. Domestic life begins with the formal ceremony and festivities of marriage. Regarding marriage, Manu said that a Dwija (a twice born man) should marry a virgin but his mother should not be a Sapinda or low caste and his father should not belong to the same family. There are basically eight

types of marriages mentioned in the Manusamhita and Dharmasutras. But it cannot be said whether it was prevalent in the Vedic era. These eight types of marriages are-

1. Brahma marriage, in which the father of the girl decides on the marriage and gives the girl as dowry during the water-drinking ceremony.
2. Divine marriage, in which the father of the girl gives the girl to the priest on the altar as his remuneration through rituals.
3. Arya marriage, in which the father of the girl accepts a cow and a bull from the son's side for the marriage.
4. Prajapatya marriage, in which the father recites a mantra and blesses and hands over the girl to the groom.
5. Asura marriage, in which the groom buys the girl in exchange for paying money to the girl's father and his relatives and marries her.
6. Gandharva marriage, in which both the relatives are not required. Only the permission of the guardian is taken.
7. Rakshasa marriage, in which the girl is forcibly kidnapped from her house and married. There are even instances of burning the bride's house and killing her relatives.
8. Paishach marriage, the bride is married by administering medicine or by taking her away in a daze. Just as these eight types of marriage rituals were prevalent in the Gupta era, some form of this custom is also seen in the Pushyabhuti dynasty.

4. Location of cities and villages: Originally, cities were high walls and winding streets. The people of villages and towns were busy with their respective jobs like fishermen, dancers, butchers, executioners, carpenters, etc. The houses and streets of the villages were somewhat low walls and plastered with lime and mud, while the houses and streets of the cities were built with bricks and tiles.

5. Status of women and property rights: In the Brahmana and Samhita sections of the Vedas, it is seen that the birth of a girl child was considered an unfortunate event. Female foeticide was also prevalent. From the end of the second century BC to the sixth century BC, due to conservative attitudes, society became divided into four castes, namely - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Caste divisions began in the flower society. According to Greek writers, there was a practice of sati in this kingdom. But the king Women were employed as spies. That is why Romila Thapar says that the moral education of the society was strong. Megasthenes says that Indian men were accustomed to many marriages. As a result, the condition of women in the society became miserable. In the Gupta era, Batsayana's 'Kama Sutra' says that courtesans had to learn various arts and had to master speech and behavior. When the girl reached puberty, they would say that she was married. However, in reality, child marriage was practiced. In the Narada Smriti, like the Artha Shastra, widows are given the right to remarry, but Manu and Yajna Valya were not given it. In the Vedic era, women got social and religious rights, but they were lost in the Smriti Shastra. As a result, the condition of women at that time is seen as miserable from independence. The form characteristics of the Gupta era society also had its impact on the society of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. Yajñabandhya was the first to order that a sonless widow should inherit a portion of her property. She could also enjoy her property herself or donate it to someone else. In the Gupta era, Katyayana gave the women the legal right to inherit property. The Smriti Shastra spoke of 'Stridhan'. Stridhan meant expensive ornaments and clothes. In Yajñabandhya and Narada Smriti, women were not deprived of

'Stridhan'. If the wife died, her daughter would be entitled to it. But if she married a second time after the death of her husband without the permission of her father-in-law, she would be deprived of Stridhan. Even if the widow did not remarry after the death of her husband, her right to property would have remained. Because the Smriti Shastra does not recognize the right to divorce, remarriage or widowhood. In this case, of course, Manu in the ninth chapter and Yajñabandhya in the second chapter have provided that if there is no other heir, the son of the remarried woman will be the owner of the father's property.

6. Jewelry: People were fond of jewelry. The jewelry of the king and the royal family was very extravagant. They wore precious stone necklaces, rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc. Rich merchants used only bracelets.

7. Agrahara System: Agrahara system is one of the features of the economic system of the Gupta era. In the Agrahara system, the place of worship or the Brahmin priest was donated as unclaimed land. In this land donation system, land was transferred to the Brahmins. And later this Agrahara system was also used in the construction of Buddhist temples. The central royal power issued land donation papers. As a result, the emergence of feudal lords started from this Agrahara system in the later period.

8. Feudal Tantric Trend: The influence of the feudal system in India developed from 650 AD to 1200 AD. Between the 7th and 12th centuries AD, several regional states began to emerge in India instead of empires. At that time, the influence of the regions began to increase. Accordingly, the Pala and Sena dynasties of Bengal, the Gujjar Pratihara dynasty of North and West India, the Rashtrakuta dynasty of South India, and the Chola Empire in the far south emerged alongside the social and political context of the feudal system. However, in this case, the Pushyabhuti dynasty is no exception.

Historians Ramcharan Sharma, B.N.S. Yadav and D.N. Jha have constructed the theoretical framework of Indian feudalism. They believe that the seeds of Indian feudalism were sown by the imposition of the copper rule and the grant of free land. According to Dr. Ramcharan Sharma, the feudal system in India emerged between 300 and 600 AD and was very strong between 900 AD and 1200 AD and later started to break down. From this, it can be said that this feudal system was also seen during the period of the Pushyabhuti dynasty.

9. Socio-Economic Infrastructure and the Harshavardhan: Although there is not much authentic historical information about the social and economic infrastructure of the kings before Harshavardhan, Hiuen Tsang's account, Banabhatt's Harshacharita, Madhuban Copperplate Inscription, Sonpatra Inscription etc. provide experience about the social and economic infrastructure of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. The soil of India was very fertile and very suitable for crop production. The standard of living of the indigenous people of the country was high. The villages and cities were quite clean, goods were imported and exported and useful goods were available in the market.

10. Food and Caste: From 630 to 645 AD, Hiuen Tsang visited various places in India. From there, he said that the people of India ate wheat, rice, vegetables, milk, butter and sugar. Again, they ate fish and meat from time to time. The people were hardworking and had a good and religious nature. During the reign of Harshavardhana, there were four types of caste. There were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. However, the

lowest of these four castes was the Shudra, whom Hiuen Tsang described as farmers, because they earned their living by the labor of others.

11. Social status: As the caste system was divided into high and low castes based on social status at that time, the caste system was also divided. The emergence of feudal system further strengthened the caste system. As a result, those who were warriors and heroes were classified as high class and the wage earners were classified as Shudras.

12. Education system: It is interrelated with the practice of knowledge and religion. Knowledge was practiced by religious people. In order to acquire this knowledge, one could take education for nine to thirty years and in some cases, lifelong. In ancient times, the practice of knowledge was strongly prevalent in the form of a teacher and disciple. The only major role in the practice of that knowledge was played by Nalanda University, besides there were colleges. There were also three big libraries, such as Ratna Sagar, Ratnodadhi and Ratna Ranjaka. Many great Chinese and foreign people used to acquire education in it along with religious practice. Sanskrit was the language of scholars and Brahmi script was also prevalent. This curriculum included several subjects, among them - Charvaka, Vedas, Grammar, Logic, Sankhya, Yoga and Nyaya.

13. Agriculture: In ancient times, agriculture was the only major source of income. It is known from the works of Hiuen Tsang and Banbhata that the soil of Thaneshwar kingdom was very fertile. In the field of agriculture, wheat, sugarcane, paddy, fruits, pulses, fragrant rice, which are also delicious to eat, were grown in northwestern India. Moreover, various types of vegetables and fragrant flowers of various colors were used for temple worship. The king used to collect 1/2 of the crop as revenue. In some cases, he collected more or less in special cases. Due to the Agrahara system, the king used to give land instead of salaries to his employees. This land was often used by the farmers through inheritance. Most of the Shudra castes used to devote themselves to agriculture. However, during the reign of Harshavardhana, the system of forced labor was not in practice. The farmers were given enough value. Therefore, the economic system of the Pushyabhuti dynasty was a reflection of the characteristics of the economic systems of their predecessors (Maurya, Satavahana, Kushana and Gupta). The economic system of the Pushyabhuti dynasty has some similarities with the economic system of the Gupta era.

14. Industry: During the reign of Harshavardhana, Varanasi was known as the best silk cloth production center among the industries. Apart from silk, woolen cloth, fine silk cloth and various types of soft cotton cloth were produced as is known from the narrative information of Hiuen Tsang. He also said that he saw cotton cloth being made in Mathura. King Bhaskara Varman of Kamarupa sent silk cloth, picture cloth, kshaum (Silk Cloth) etc, as gifts to Harshavardhana. Hiuen Tsang also said that yarn, flax, jute cloth and various other types of mixed silk and yarn were made under the name of Basuma (Yarn). But the blankets were made from that wool. Therefore, it can be said that these industries existed during the reign of the rulers of the Pushyabhuti dynasty before Harshavardhana.

15. Trade: Most of the information about the trade of the Pushyabhuti dynasty is known from the description of Hiuen Tsang. There is not much information in history about the rulers before the reign of Harshavardhana. In ancient times, the trade practices of the Pushyabhuti dynasty were close to China and Southeast Asia respectively in the 7th century AD. At that time, Tamralipta port was a major trade center in North India.

Moreover, the import and export of maritime trade to Indonesia, Sinhala, etc. in Southeast Asia used to go to Tamralipta port. Apart from this port, there was also a sea port in Kongod or present-day Ghanjam. On the other hand, 'Mahabalipuram' and 'Kaveripatnam' were famous ports in South India. Apart from these sea ports, there were three land ports-

- 1) India had a communication system with China through Karakoram and Kashmir.
- 2) It extended from Tonking to Kamrupa through North Bengal to Magadha.
- 3) Northwestern India could be entered through Central Asia and Bactria via the Suleiman mountain pass. Among these imports and exports, horses were imported from Persia and Afghanistan. Among these exports Silk, Ivory, Pearls etc were the main ones.

15. Revenue system: Revenue is one of the sources of income of Pushyabhuti clan. Pusyabhuti divided the clan revenue collection into several categories, among them Bhaga, Hiranya, Bali etc. According to the Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang, kings of the Pushyabhuti dynasty did not assign much duty to palaces in revenue collection, subjects were free from duties and kings were philanthropists. But in this case, he was obliged to obey the words of the kings. He used to spend a lot of money on road construction, irrigation and the welfare of widows and destitute people besides giving salary scholarships to the Palace.

During Harshavardhana's reign, three types of revenue were levied, viz., Bali, Bhaga and Hiranya. 'Bali' was collected to meet additional expenses in times of emergency. In some cases, farmers gave labor in exchange for crops. 'Bhaga' was the amount of land revenue, which was One-Sixth of the crops produced. Hiranya on the other hand is trade duty. The land tax in Harshavardhana's kingdom was one-sixth of the harvest. There were also other internal duties and market taxes. According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha spent the collected money in four areas namely-

- 1) Scholarships to meritorious persons
- 2) State administration
- 3) Expenditure on various religious functions and
- 4) Salaries and maintenance of royal servants. During the reign of Harshavardhana, there was an accountant named 'Akshapatal'.

17. Penal code of society: The king was himself in giving penal code. Besides, there were other employees under him. The first stage of Pushyabhuti clan has strict penal system. Fines and imprisonment were imposed for common crimes, but mutilation or death was also imposed for serious crimes. On the other hand, during the reign of Harshavardhana, severe punishments were introduced towards the end but could not be completely suppressed. Attempts were made on Emperor Harshvardhan's life at least twice, and even the Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang confessed to Turkey.

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