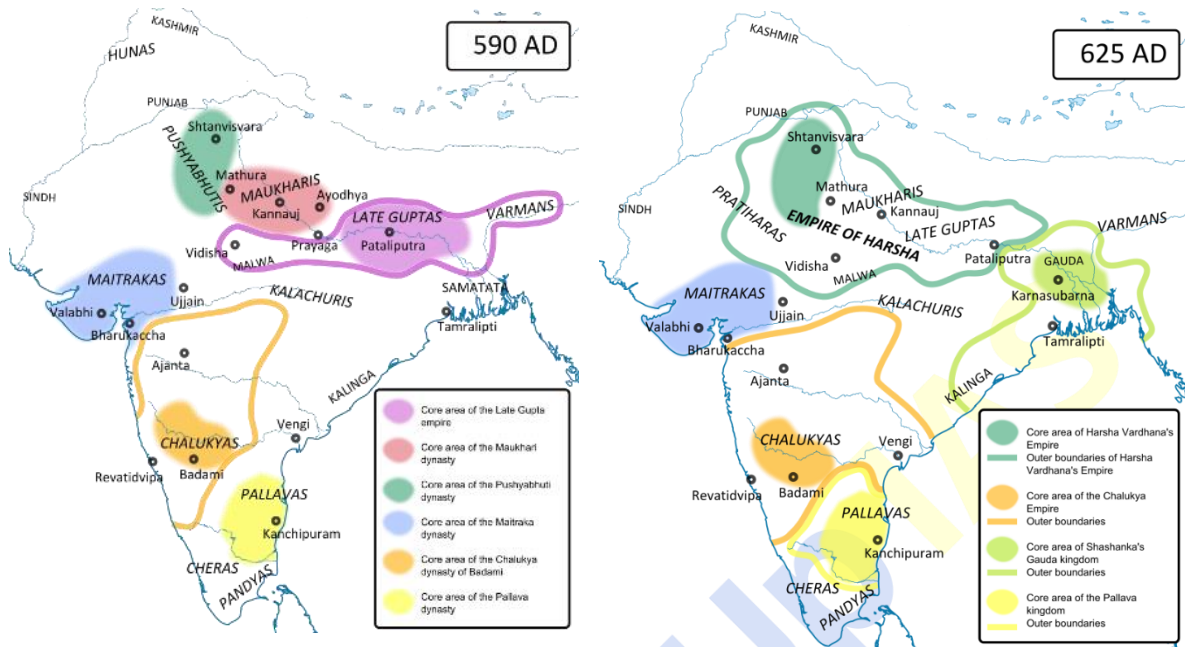


**Prelims Master Program (2023-24) – Ancient, Medieval, Art and Culture**  
**Handout 15: Post-Gupta Era**



**Harshavardhana (606- 647 CE)**

After disintegration of Gupta, almost for half a century, there was political fragmentation in north India. Many smaller powers emerged, such as Later Guptas, Maitarkas, Karkotas, Vardhanas, Maukharis etc. For the last time during the ancient period, political unity over large parts of north India as established by Harsha Vardhana.

**Sources**

Archaeological evidence	Literary evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coins from NW India, especially Haryana.</li> <li>Madhubani inscription</li> <li>Banskhara inscription - tells us that he was a prolific writer                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harsha was also known as 'Siladitya'.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Aihole Inscription - refers to his defeat at the hands of Pulakesin II. He is referred as Sakalauttarapathanatha.</li> <li>Harsha's seals (dynasty and religious affiliations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Huien Tsang's 'Si-Yu-ki' (630-44 in India)</li> <li><b>Banabhatta</b> - the court poet of Harshavardhana                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Harshacharita</b>: First historical biography in Sanskrit as well as masterpiece of literature.</li> <li><b>Kadambari</b>: romantic novel in Sanskrit</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Harshavardhana</b> composed 3 Sanskrit plays                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Priyadarshika, Ratnavali, Nagananda</b> based on Natyashastra tradition.                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>R – folk music and dance</li> <li>P – Garbhanaataka device</li> <li>N – inspired by Buddhism</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Dhavaka</b> as the author?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Personal Details

He belonged to the Pushyabhuti/ Vardhana dynasty, with its capital at **Thaneshwar/Sthaneshwar** (Haryana), which was originally a **skandhavana**.

- Father - Prabhakar Vardhan
- Brother - Rajyavardhan
- Sister - Rajyashree
- Brother-in-law - Grihavarman (ruler of the Maukhari dynasty at Kanyakubja)

### Conquests

Harsha was an ambitious king. He expanded his kingdom from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas and from Sindh to Bengal, with the exception of Kashmir and Assam. However, on the banks of the Narmada, he was defeated by Pulakesin II.

### Harsha's Administration:

**Transition from ancient to medieval** (On the same lines as did the Guptas, but gradually feudal and decentralized)

**King was the supreme head of government, appointed important officers, led the armies in battle.**

- Council of feudatories, samantas, princes and high officials.
- No clear separation of civil and military departments.
- Army: 100,000 horses, 60,000 elephants.
- Provincial/district administration similar to Guptas (based on seals and charters)

### Huen Tsang paints Harsha as an industrious king.

- "He was indefatigable and forgot sleep and food in his devotion to good works." (Huen Tsang)
- His day was divided into three periods out of which one was devoted to the affairs of the kingdom (admin) and two to religious affairs (inclusive of welfare activities like hospitals, rest houses, charity, philosophical debates, planting trees, educational institutions etc).
- He kept in close touch with the common man through open and secret inspection tours.
- His close familiarity with his extensive empire, its geography and people helped him in choosing the right governors.

### Revenue (Huen Tsang)

- Taxes were not heavy (eg 1/6th of farmer's produce). No regular corvee.
- Religious land grants continued but Huen Tsang claims that Harsha used to pay officials by land grants. This feudal practice may explain less coins but the actual evidence of such secular grants lacking.
- Revenues divided into 4 equal parts:
  - King's/royal family's expenditure
  - Public servants/army/administration
  - Religious purposes/education/scholars
  - Poor people.

- However, this arrangement seems to be an exaggeration.

### Law and Order

- In Harsha's empire, law and order was not well maintained. Even Huen Tsang was robbed.
- He still reports severe criminal punishments being meted out. Robbery was a second treason and robber's hand was amputated. Apparently, under the influence of Buddhism, the severity of punishment was mitigated, and criminals were imprisoned for life.

### Tributary and neighbouring Kings

- Lesser semi-independent kings (rajas, maharajas) owed allegiance to the sovereign. Harsha convened personal audiences with his tributary leaders. In 643 CE there were about 20 such tributary leaders.
- Harsha was on friendly terms with neighbouring countries who he asked to extend facilities to Huen Tsang.
- Diplomatic contacts with the Chinese emperor.

### Religious Works

- Harsha was a follower of the Sun God, Shiva as well as Mahayana Buddhism.
- During his reign, the famous religious festival called '**Mahamoksha parishad**' was organised every 5 years at **Prayag**, lasting for 4 days.
  - Attended by all tributary princes, ministers, and nobles
  - Worshipped images of the Buddha, Sun and Shiva
  - On the first 3 days, Ganesh, Shiva and Buddha were worshipped. The 4th day was reserved for charitable purposes. Harsha almost exhausted the royal treasury by making lavish gifts (dana) to learned.
  - Every five years, religious ceremonies were celebrated here. In Dana most of the wealth accumulated in the last five years was exhausted. *Once, he even gave his clothes and jewellery and begged his sister for an ordinary garment to wear.*
- Harsha also organised a grand conference at **Kannauj**, for Mahayana and presided over by Huien Tsang.
  - Attended by Huen Tsang, Kamarupa ruler **Bhaskaravarman**, kings of twenty states and by several thousand priests of different sects.
  - A life-size golden statue of Buddha was worshipped by Harsha.
  - Discussion was initiated by Huen Tsang who spoke on the virtues of Mahayan and challenged the audience to refute his arguments. However, nobody came forward.
  - Violence erupted, Huien Tsang's theological rivals threatened to kill him and the conclave was burnt down. Hearing of this plot, Harsha threatened to behead anybody causing Huen Tsang the slightest harm.
  - There was also an attempt to assassinate Harsha by 'heretics' (brahmins). Huen Tsang makes much of the clemency. Nevertheless, 500 brahmans had to be packed off into exile.
- Huen Tsang paints Harsha as an ideal Buddhist king
  - While **Shasanka** cut down the sacred Bodhi tree, elsewhere in arya-varta it was the other way round, as Huen Tsang mentions royal patronage to Mahayana was resented by Hinayana and brahmanas.

- Harsha had granted 100 villages to **Nalanda University** to support 10000 students. They were taught Buddhist philosophy of the Mahayana school.
  - PS: In 670 CE I-tsing mentions that only 3000 monks lived there with the support of 200 villages.
- Harsha constructed various stupas and viharas
- Harsha made animal killing as a capital offence
- But in reality, he was an inclusive king.
  - At Prayag Assembly, Harsha worshipped Buddha, Shiva, Sun and distributed charity to all.
  - Banskhera and Madhuban copper plates: Land grant to brahmanas.
  - Seals: early Pusyabhutis worshipped Surya, Rajyavardhana was Buddhist, Harsha was Shaiva
  - Two plays by Harsha begin with invocation to Brahmanical gods.



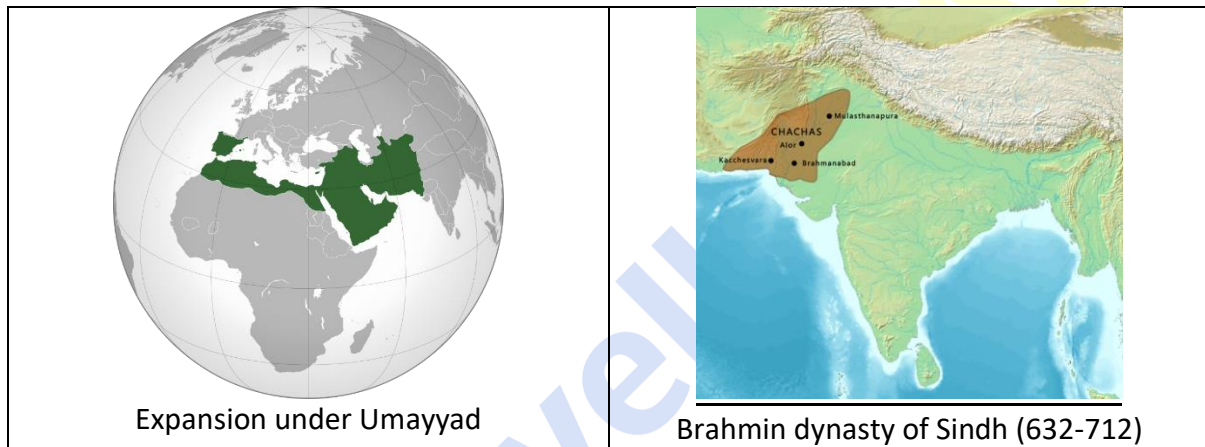
### Arab Invasion of Sindh

Islam spread among the Arabs during the 7th century CE.

- Prophet of Islam Mohammad (570-632)
- In 629, Cheraman Juma Masjid in Kerala.

### **Arab Invasion of Sind (711-12)**

- Sources
  - Futuh-ul-Buldaan (conquest of countries) by Al-Biladuri in Arabic
  - **Chachnama** by an unknown author in Persian
- **Mohammed bin Qasim** defeated **King Dahir** of the Chach Dynasty.
  - He was sent to establish control over the Sindh region by Umayyad
  - The justification for this invasion was to punish the ruler of Sindh where some Arab merchants had reportedly been looted while returning from Kerala.
  - Conquest - Battle of Alor, Battle of Brahmanabad



### Impact of Arab Conquest

#### **Political impact of the Arab Conquest of Sind**

- The Arab hold over Sind lasted for the next 300 years, influencing the local culture heavily. However, their influence could not expand further into the subcontinent beyond Sind due to the presence of the Pratiharas to the east.
- It was due to military success against Arab invaders that certain Indian dynasties like Gurjar-Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas gained legitimacy.
- However, Arabs were the first to establish an Islamic state in India, which became a template for the Turkish rulers later.

Cultural Impact on Sindh	Cultural Impact on Arabs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Islam</b> spread rapidly and became the most popular religion in Sindh.</li> <li>• The development of <b>Sindhi language</b> was also influenced by the introduction of several Arabic words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brahmagupta's texts were translated into Arabic by Muhammad al-Fazari, an astronomer in Al-Mansur's court, under the names <b>Sindhind</b> and Arakhand.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the field of <b>mathematics</b>, they learnt the <b>Hindsa</b> (the Indian numeral system including zero) and the use of decimals.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arabic <b>script</b> became popular and today Sindhi is written both in Arabic as well as Devanagari.</li><li>• Geography, <b>history</b>, <b>medicine</b>, <b>astronomy</b> received a huge boost due to Arab influence, who had developed advanced knowledge in these fields.</li><li>• The Arabs were also great <b>interlocutors of culture</b>. They transmitted many new inventions from China and Greece to the rest of the world. e.g. paper, soap, gun powder, the magnetic compass etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Al-Khwarizmi wrote a text on Hindu numerals, who was the head of House of Wisdom of Harun al-Rashid.</li><li>• This revolutionised the development of science and commerce.</li><li>• They learnt <b>yoga</b> from the great Indian <b>physician Manak</b>, who was appointed as the chief surgeon at Baghdad.</li><li>• The great Indian <b>physicist Hala</b> was also invited to Baghdad. He contributed to the development of physics in the Arab world.</li><li>• The Arabs also learnt <b>Chaturanga/Shatranj</b> from India.</li></ul>
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### North India in the 8<sup>th</sup> century

The history of the period between 647-836 is the history of unrest and wars which ended only with the establishment of Pratihara dynasty in north India. A few important rulers emerged in these decades in north India.

#### **1. Bappa Rawal (r. 728-63) of Mewar**

- Founder of Guhila clan, established Mewar kingdom
- Repelled Umayyad Arab invasions

#### **2. Yashovarman (r. 725-52) of Kannauj**

- Conquered large swathes of northern India — including Bihar, Bengal (Gauda), the western Deccan, Indus Valley and Kashmir
- Diplomacy: Sent a minister to China in 731, and for a time in alliance with Lalitaditya Muktapida of Kashmir. The two rulers defeated the Tibetans.
- However, in the end, he was defeated by Lalitaditya Muktapida, another great ruler, from Kashmir.
- Literature
  - **Vakpati** wrote **Gaudavaho** (Slaying of the Gauda), a Prakrit-language eulogistic poem (prashasti-kavya)
  - **Bhavabhuti**, a Sanskrit dramatist and poet, who rivals Kalidasa, was also in his court. He surpasses Kalidasa in Karuna rasa. He wrote following plays:
    - Mahaviracharita, depicting the early life of Rama.
    - Malatimadhava, a play based on the romance of Malati and Madhava.
    - Uttararamacarita, depicts Rama's coronation, abandonment of Sita, and reunion.

**Kashmir** had a series of major dynasties in this era.

#### **3. Lalitaditya Muktapida (724-60 CE) of Karkota Dynasty, Kashmir**

- Most powerful Karkota ruler.
- Kalhana (12<sup>th</sup> c) paints a picture of him creating a grand empire from Central Asia, Afghanistan to entire North India reaching upto Bengal. However, this account is disputed.
- Defeated Yashovarman of Kannauj.
- He seems to have resisted attempts of Arabs to invade into India beyond Sindh and Punjab.
- Constructed **Martanda Sun Temple**.
- Built the new capital of **Parihaspur**.

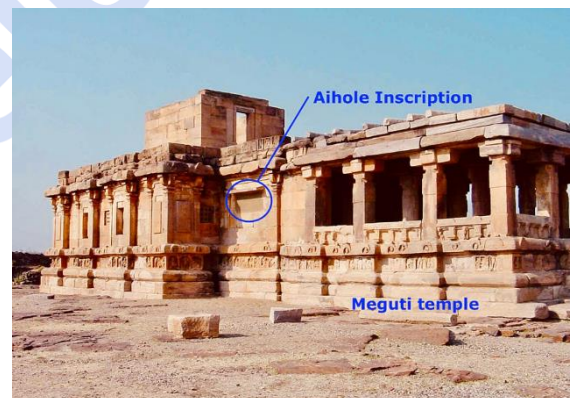
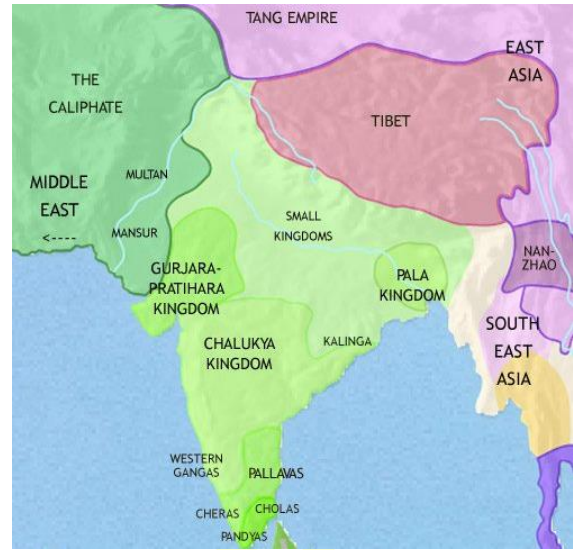
#### **4. Avantivarman (855-83), the founder of Utpala dynasty**

- His minister **Suyya** was known for developing irrigation system, also built dam on Jhelum to control flood.
- Patron of **Anandavardhana**, the author of **Dhvanyaloka**.
- Founded the city of **Avantipura** with temples Avantishwara (Shiva) and Avantiswami (Vishnu)



## **BADAMI CHALUKYAS (543-753 CE)**

- Successors of Vakatakas in Deccan and ruled for next two centuries. Capital at **Vatapi** which was fortified by Pulakesin I, founder of the dynasty and the first to perform the horse-sacrifice.
- During their reigns, the Deccan transformed from a dusty, anarchic region to an irrigated, urban, artistically sophisticated, and highly connected landmass that profoundly shaped the history of India and the world.
- An extremely important cultural contribution was the remarkable Temples laying the foundation of Vesara style.
- Most Famous Ruler: **Pulakesin II (610-642)**
  - **Clashed with the Pallavas** of Kanchi
    - Defeated Mahendravarman I (battle of Pullalur, 619)
    - Defeated by the Pallava King Narsimhavarman I (battle of Vatapi, 642)
      - Vatapikonda: Badami was captured and destroyed.
  - **Aihole inscription** - Ravikirti - Sanskrit language, Kannada script (634 CE)
    - It is found on the walls of Meguti Jain Temple. Opens with salutation to Jinendra.
    - Victory over Harsha on the Banks of the Narmada (618).
    - Ravikirti is compared with Kalidasa and Bharavi in the Aihole inscription.
    - 3735 years after Bharata War.
  - Huien Tsang visited his kingdom.
- **Vikramaditya II (733-44)**
  - **Kanchikonda:** took revenge after one century (Virupaksha temple pillar inscription, Pattadakal)
  - His cousin stopped Umayyad Arab invasions into Deccan, and was given title of **Avanijanashraya**. Dantidurga fought in this battle too.
  - His queens Lokadevi and Trilokadevi built **temples at Pattadakal**, including Virupaksha, inspired by Kailasanathar temple, Kanchi.
- Patronised the Vesara Style of Temple Architecture.



### PALLAVAS of KANCHI

- Although started to rule quite early, it is the later Pallavas that are of our interest.
- Ruled over Andhra Pradesh and Northern Tamil Nadu upto the Kaveri river (7th-9th C)
- Cities: **Kanchipuram** (capital and important centre of religion as well as learning), **Mahabalipuram**.
- Issued huge number of **copper plate** land grants, including the oldest one known so far.
- Rise of **Tamilian Bhakti movement**.
- Pioneers of the **Dravidian** Style of Temple Architecture.



King	Significant event	Architecture	Literature
<b>Simhavishnu</b> (575-600)	Conquest of Chola-mandalam Vanquished several enemies including the Kalabhras	Likely started making Mahabalipuram place a great centre of art	Patronized great Sanskrit poet <b>Bharavi</b> who wrote <b>Kiratarjuniya</b>
<b>Mahendravarman I</b> (600-630)  (Birudas: Chitrakarapuli, Vichitrachitta, Chaityakari, Mattavilas)	Commencement of the long-drawn Pallava-Chalukya conflict. Defeated by Pulakesin II (battle of Pullalur, 619)  Gave up Jainism and <b>embraced Shaivism</b> under the influence of Saint <u>Appar</u> .	Many rock-cut mandapas were constructed. Began construction at <b>Mamallapuram</b>	Wrote <b>Matta-vilasa-Prahasana</b>  Patronised learning - Famous 'Ghatika' at Kanchi.
<b>Narsimhavarman I</b> (Mamalla, great wrestler) (630-668)	Successful naval expedition to Ceylon to reinstate the Sinhalese prince Manavarma. Defeated Pulakesin II (battle of Vatapi, 642) and captured Vatapi. Title: Vatapikonda	Mamallapuram Monolithic Rathas: Pancha Rathas, Arjuna's penance etc.	Huien Tsang visited Kanchi during his reign
<b>Narsimhavarman II</b> (Rajasimha) (695-722)	Peaceful reign Sent embassies to China - Alliance with the Tang Dynasty (South China)	Shore Temple at Mamallapuram Kailashnath Temple at Kanchipuram	Patronised Sanskrit scholar <b>Dandin</b> who wrote <b>Dashakumaracharitam</b> and <b>Kavyadarsha</b>
<b>Nandivarman II</b> (Pallavamalla) (731-796)	Born in Champa (Vietnam) into a dynasty of Pallava origin and was elected as a Pallava king at the age of 12.	Vaikuntha Perumal Temple at Kanchipuram	

**Post-Gupta Era: Practice MCQs**

**From the decline of Guptas until the rise of Harshavardhana in the early seventh century, which of the following kingdoms were holding power in Northern India? [2021]**

1. The Guptas of Magadha
2. The Paramaras of Malwa
3. The Pushyabutis of Thanesar
4. The Maukhari of Kannauj
5. The Yadavas of Devagiri
6. The Maitrakas of Valabhi

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| (a) 1, 2 and 5 | (b) 1, 3, 4 and 6 |
| (c) 2, 3 and 4 | (d) 5 and 6       |

**The Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) who visited India, recorded the general conditions and culture of India at that time. In this context, which of the following statements is/are correct? [2013]**

1. The roads and river-routes were completely immune from robbery.
2. As regards punishment for offences, ordeals by fire, water and poison were the instruments for determining the innocence or guilt of a person.
3. The tradesmen had to pay duties at ferries and barrier stations.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below.**

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| (a) 1 only       | (b) 2 and 3 only |
| (c) 1 and 3 only | (d) 1, 2 and 3   |

**Consider the following statements: [2004]**

1. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien attended the fourth Great Buddhist Council held by Kanishka.
2. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang met Harsha and found him to be antagonistic to Buddhism.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- |            |            |                  |                     |
|------------|------------|------------------|---------------------|
| (a) 1 only | (b) 2 only | (c) Both 1 and 2 | (d) Neither 1 nor 2 |
|------------|------------|------------------|---------------------|

**Emperor Harsha's southward march was stopped on the Narmada river by: [2003]**

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| (a) Pulakesin-I    | (b) Pulakesin-II    |
| (c) Vikramaditya-I | (d) Vikramaditya-II |

**The Badami rock inscription of Pulakesin I is dated in the Shaka year 465. If the same were to be dated in Vikrama Samvat, the year would be: [1997]**

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| (a) 601 | (b) 300 |
| (c) 330 | (d) 407 |

**1. Consider the following statements:**

1. Harshavardhana convened Mahamoksha Parishad at Prayag.
2. The purpose of the assembly was to highlight the teachings of Buddha.
3. He also organized another assembly to popularize only the Mahayana form of Buddhism.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

**2. Consider the following statements:**

1. Mayursharman was the founder of Kadamba dynasty.
2. Narasinhavarman-I defeated Pulakeshin-II and took the title of 'Vatapikonda'.
3. Trailokeshwar temple and Lokeshwar temple were built on the names of Vikramaditya-II's wives.

Which of the above mentioned is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 (b) 1 and 2  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) All of the above

**3. Consider the following statements:**

1. Hiuen-Tsang and Dignaga received education at Kanchipuram.
2. Pallava rulers gave patronage to Bharavi and Dandin.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**4. Consider the following statements:**

1. Mahendravarman-I composed Mattavilasaprahasana and Bhagavadajjuk.
2. Bharavi composed Kiratarjuniya.
3. Dandin composed Dasakumaracharita.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 2 (d) All of the above

**5. Consider the following regarding the Pallava art-**

1. Pillars and Mandapas
2. Rock cut temples
3. Rath Temples

**Which of the above mentioned is/ are associated with Pallava architecture?**

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 2 (d) All of the above

**6. Which of the following is NOT a Pallava temple?**

- (a) Kailasanathar Temple (b) Parshurameshwara Temple

(c) Vaikuntha Perumal Temple

(d) Virupaksha Temple

**7. Suya, a famous engineer, who built a dam on the river Jhelum for irrigation, was adorning the court of which of the following ruler?**

(a) Durlabhavardhana

(b) Avantivarman

(c) Shankaravarman

(d) Yashaskara

**8. With reference to the Harsha Empire, consider the following statements. [JKPSC 2023]**

1. Harsha's administration had become more feudal and decentralized than the Gupta Empire.

2. Harsha is credited with paying off cash to his officers, differing from his ancient predecessors.

Choose the correct answer:

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

**9. Which of the following statements about King Harshavardhana are correct? (HPSC 2022)**

a. He belonged to the Maukhari dynasty.

b. He was defeated by Pulakesin II

c. Ban, Mayura and Matanga Divakara were the famous writers at his court.

d. Harsha himself wrote three plays Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagamanjari

(a) a, b and c

(b) a, b and d

(c) b, c and d

(d) a, c and d