UNIT 7 : EARLY STATE FORMATION: THE VARMAN DYNASTY

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7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will able to-

- know the various rulers of Varman Dynasty of Kamrupa;
- explain the formation of Varman Dynasty;
- understand the polity and administration of Varman Dynasty;
- discuss the role of Kumar Bhaskar Varman.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In ancient days Assam was known as Kamrupa and Pragjyotisha. The name Pragjyotisha has been mentioned in both great Indian epics- Ramayana and Mahabharata. Moreover, as mentioned in the local epigraphs of the region the rulers of the ancient Kamrupa were known as Pragjyotishadhipati and the Pragjyotishpur was the capital of Kamrupa. However it is important to note that the modern state of Assam is a small part of the ancient Pragjyotisha or Kamrupa (Baruah, S.L., 2015). According to the Yogini Tantra Kamrupa included roughly the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur and Cooch Bihar (Kakati, B.K.,1948). A detailed account

of Kamrupa is found mentioned in the Kalika Puarana, Yogini Tantra, Haragaurisamvada, etc.

In the middle of the fourth century, Varman monarchs ruled Kamrup. Pushyavarman founded the Varman dynasty. He traced his lineage back to the Bhauma Dynasty of Naraka-Bhagadatta through Bhaskar Varman's Nidhanpur grant.(Baruah S.L., 2015). Kumar Bhaskar Varman was the last ruler of the Varman Dynasty. The Varman Dynasty existed for around three centuries. The literary and epigraphic materials clearly show that ancient Assam's political history begins with the Varmanas.The dynasty left behind several historical evidences, such as the Allahabad Pillar Inscription: Harshcharita, Nidhanpur grants, Dubi grants, Chinese travellers' account, and so on.

7.3 RULERS OF VARMAN DYNASTY

As mentioned earlier, Pushyvarman was the founder of the Varman Dynasty. After Pushyvarman, different Varman rulers ruled in the Kamrupa. There were about thirteen Varman rulers who ruled Kamrupa. However, historians give different opinions regarding the reign period of Varman rulers. Let us discuss the Varman rulers and their ruling period.

Varman rulers and their period (Barpujari, H.K.,2007).:

King	Period
Pushyavarman	(350-74 C.E.)
Samudravarman	(374-98 C.E.)
Balavarman	(398-22 C.E.)
Kalyanvarman	(422-46 C.E.)
Ganapativarman	(446-70 C.E.)
Mahendravarman	(470-94 C.E.)
Narayanvarman	(494-518 C.E.)
Bhutivarman	(518-42 C.E.)
Chandramukhvarman	(542-66 C.E.)
Stitavarman	(566-90 C.E.)
Susthitavarman Mriganka	(590-95 C.E.)

Supratisthitavarman	(595-600 C.E.)
Kumar Bhaskar Varman	(600-50 C.E.)

Pushyavarman: Pushyavarman , who reigned from 350 C.E. to 374, was a powerful ruler of ancient Assam. He assumed the title of Maharajadhiraj, symbolizing his status as an independent king. The Dubi grant of Bhaskar Varman portrays him as equivalent to Siva in honor and fame, and to Indra in sacrificial prowess, reflecting his strength and popularity. The inscriptions highlight his prowess as a warrior and leader, emphasizing his role as an annihilator of enemies.

Samudravarman : Samudravarman succeeded his father, Pushyavarman, in 374 C.E. He also assumed the title Maharajadhiraja, and his rule was defined by peace and stability, as evidenced by the Nidhanpur grant, which emphasises the absence of 'matsyanyaya', or anarchy. Under Samudravarman's administration, there were neither internal rebellions or exterior invasions, indicating a period of prosperity and tranquillity. The Dubi grant also praised him as a great king with excellent attributes.

Balavarman: Samudravarman was succeeded by his son Balavarman. Balavarmn was born of queen Dattadevi. Balavarman developed an early relationship with Kashmir. Balavarman is thought to be the father of Princess Amritprabha, who married Kashmir's King Meghavahana.

Kalyanvarman: Balavarman was succeeded by his son, Kalyanvarman. According to the Dubi grant, Kalyanvarman was always willing to help his subjects. He worked to maximise the enjoyment of others. In the Dubi inscription, Kalyanvarman was compared to Indra. Furthermore, the Dubi inscription states that Kalyanvarman killed the enemies and possessed a moon-like face.

Ganapativarman: Ganapativarman succeeded the throne after his father Kalyanvarman. His mother's name was Gandharvavati. Ganapativarman was sometimes referred to as Ganendravarman. Ganapativarman's reign was less eventful. According to the Dubi gift, Ganapativarman was a ray of light in the darkness of enemies. Ganpativarman seems to have governed peacefully.

Mahendravarman: Ganapati varman was succeeded byhis son Mahendra varman Mahendra varman was a powerful king. He was the first Varman ruler to perform *Ashwamedhas* (Horse sacrifices). Mahendra varman started the territorial expansion in the west.

Narayan Varman: Mahendra varman was succeeded by his son Narayan varman. Suvrata was the mother of Narayan varman. All of the verses included in the Nidhanpur and Dubi grants highlight distinct qualities of Narayana varman. Narayana varman ruled his realm peacefully. The Dubi plate tells that Narayan varman appointed his son as king and died by the means of Yoga.

Bhutivarman or Mahabhutivarman: Bhutivarman was a great conqueror. He also performed Ashwamedha. He was acknowledged for his territorial expansion in the west. He succeeded in expanding his influence over eastern India. Bhutivarman's significance is evident from the fact that both the Dubi and Nidhanpur grants were originally issued by him.

Chandarmukh varman The reign of Chandramukh varman was not so eventful. Chandramukh varman may not have added any new extensions, but he did consolidate his father's conquests. Chandramukh varman voluntarily gave up his reign for his son (Sthitavarman).

Sthita varman: Sthitavarman was a wise man and and well-versed in the Vedas. Sthitavarman carried out the ritual of his coronation. He is credited with carrying out two horse sacrifices on the Nalanda clay seal. A capital city was constructed by Sthitavarman on the Brahmaputra bank. There were many feudatory rulers under Sthitavarman.

Susthita varman: Susthita varman was also known as Mriganka. Harsha charita describes him as a powerful and learned monarch. He had two sons namely Supratisthita and Bhaskar . The Later Gupta King Mahasena gupta defeated Sustita varman in a battle, resulting in the loss of Kamrupa's possessions in North Bengal (Baruah,S.L, 2015).

Supratisthita: Supratisthita succeeded the throne after the death of Susthitavarman. Sasanka, the king of Gauda, invaded Kamrupa during his reign. The young king Supratisthita and his companion Bhaskar were unable to muster enough time and resources to resist the Gauda army,

leading to their capture. However, after some time, both Supratisthita and Bhaskar were released by the Gauda army.

Kumar Bhaskar Varman: Kumar Bhaskar Varman, the last ruler of the Varman Dynasty, took the throne amid a period of political unrest in Kamrupa. He increased Kamrupa's importance in North Indian politics by regaining lost lands and formed an alliance with Harshavardhana, During his reign, Hiuen Tsang made a notable visit to Kamrupa in 643, highlighting the region's growing political prominence.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is the founder of Varman Dynasty?

Q 2: Under whose rule did Hiuen Tsang visit Assam, and in which year did this visit occur?

7.4 FORMATION OF VARMAN DYNASTY

One of the most significant period in the history of ancient Assam is the establishment of the Varman Dynasty, which signalled the beginning of a ruling linage that would play a major role in determining the sociopolitical climate of the region.

a) Foundation by Pushyvarman:

As we know, King Pushyavarman is regarded as the Varman Dynasty's founder, having established its early roots in the region around the fourth century C.E. Pushyavarman's reign marked the consolidation of power and the establishment of a stable political order, laying the foundation for future Varman rulers to expand their power. When the imperial Guptas established their dominance over the Indian peninsula in the middle of the fourth century C.E. the Varman dynasty began to flourish in Kamrupa. Pushya Varman's lineage can be traced back to Naraka-Bhagadatta's Bhauma Dynasty. The Nidhanpur grant of Bhaskar Varman states that there was a long gap between Pushyavaraamn and Naraka. According to Bhaskar Varman's Dubi grant Pushyavarman was born into the Naraka lineage.

It is stated in the Nidhanpur grant of Bhaskarvarman:

"When the kings of his (Naraka) family, having enjoyed the position (of rulers) for three thousand years, (all) attained the condition of gods, Pushyavarman became the lord of the world" (Baruah,S.L.,2015).

Pushyavarman was contemporary of Samudragupta of Gupta Kingdom. The name Kamrupa was mentioned as the Gupta Kingdom's frontier in the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta. Along with Kamrupa, Samatata, Davaka, Nepal, and Kartipur were also mentioned as Gupta frontier kingdoms. The monarchs of these kingdoms owed allegiance to Samudragupta by giving him tribute in various forms, following his orders, and visiting his court. The name of the Kamrupa King who entered into this alliance is not mentioned. But a large number of historian identify him with Pushyavarman.

Regarding geographical extension, it is unclear exactly how far Pushyavarman expanded his kingdom. However, it can be said that Kapili Valley was not a part of Pushyavarman's realm. The reason for this is that Davaka was referenced in Allahabad Pillar Prasasti as a separate Kingdom. The Kapili valley in the current Nagaon district of Assam was identified as Davaka. During the reign of Pushyavarman the boundary of Kamrupa on the west extended to the border of West Bengal where from on the North of the Brahmaputra it extended upto Tezpur, as Dabaka and Samatata along the sea were two contemporary independent states, so the area of the kingdom of Pushyavarman was confined to the district of Kamrup, Goalpara, Darang and some segment of Sonitpur.

b) Military Conquests and Strategic Alliances:

Struggle for territory was common in monarchies. A king's authority and influence are demonstrated by the extent of their kingdom. In order to increase the amount of territory, the Varman kings undertook military campaigns with nearby kingdoms. It is unclear exactly how far the kingdom was extended by the first Varman ruler, Pushyavarman. However, it is evident from the inscription found on the Piller in Allahabad that the Kapili Valley was not a part of Pushyavarman's empire. After Pushyvarman many Varman rulers progressively expanded their hegemony over enormous regions by the means of warfare.

Balavarman expanded Kamrupa's south-east frontier by capturing 'the kingdom of Davaka'. Mahendravarman made an excellent start in bringing Kamrupa politically closer to the Indian subcontinent. In terms of Mahendravarman's kingdom's geographical extension, the Dubi grant states that he stretched his power as far as the 'ocean', or Bay of Bengal. Mahendra Varman was the first Kamrupa ruler to capture and sustain control over a wide territory. Bhutivarman extended Mahendravarman's territorial expansion towards the west. Both the Nidhanpur and Dubi grants described Bhutivarman as a renowned conqueror. Bhutivarman occupied a portion of present Purnea. Bhutivarman occupied the domains of Pundravardhana. He controlled Samatat, Sylhet, Tripura, and other regions. After Balavarman, succeeding varman monarchs expanded their empire by conquest. Susthitavarman, Bhaskar Varman's father, was beaten by Mahasenagupta, undermining the Kamrupa's political and military prestige. As a result of the battle, Kamrupa lost her possessions in North Bengal, and her western boundary was pushed back to the Karatoya river. Kamar Bhaskar Varman reclaimed Kamrupa's lost valuables and reaffirmed his predecessor's land grant.

Besides the military battle, the Varman monarchs maintained diplomatic contacts with their neighbouring countries. The epigraphs describe the Kamrupa monarchs' diplomatic ties with feudatories and neighbouring states. The renowned alliance between Bhaskar Varman and Harshavardhan, as well as the marital union between Meghavahana and Kamrupa's king, are watershed moments in ancient Kamrupi diplomacy. Bala Varman offered his daughter's hand to the King of Kashmir. This marriage relationship between Kamrupa and Kashmir had a tremendous impact on Indian political history. The establishment of the alliance between Harsha and Kumar Bhaskar Varman was a significant event during the Bhaskar Varman rule. Harsha and Bhaskar Varman defeated Gauda's Sasanka in battle, leading to Bhaskar 's unprecedented rise in power.

C. Cultural Syncretism and Adaptation

Cultural syncretism and adaptation were prevalent under Varman's leadership. They appreciated features of Hinduism and Budhism. The

diffusion of learning and expansion of the *Aryadharma* were other important duties of the Kamrupa kings, for the promotion of which, they established the Brahmanas in different parts of the kingdom and usually amongst the non-Aryan people. According to the Nidhanpur grant, Bhaskar Varman showed the light of Aryadharma by eliminating the accumulated darkness of the Kali period. The ancient Indian monarchs' conventional strategy was to maintain and protect Varnasrmadharma. According to Nidhanpur grant, Bhaskar Varmann carefully organised the tasks of the various castes and stages of life. In addition to this, Sthitavarman performed his coronation ceremony according to Vedic rites.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: According to the Dubi grant of Bhaskar Varman Pushyavarman was born into the Naraka lineage. (True/False)

Q 4: Make a short note on the strategic alliances of Varman Rulers.

7.5 POLITY AND ADMINISTRATION OF VARMAN DYNASTY

A. Monarchy

Monarchy was the regular form of government in ancient Assam (Baruah,K.L, 2009). The Varman Dynasty followed the monarchy system. The king served as the chief administrator. The king is the supreme authority in state affairs. Generally, monarchy was hereditary.In some cases, however, kings were appointed by ministers and other officials.

- **Qualities of King :** The Kalika Puran outlines ideal standards of administration for kings, based on Hindu law books. Kings such as Kalyanavarman, Mahendravarman, Narayanvarman, and Kumar Bhaskar Varman exemplified these ideals by prioritizing the welfare of their subjects. Mahendravarman protected his subjects as his own children. Kumar Bhaskar Varman devised many ways of enjoyment for his people. According to the Nidhanpur Grant, the king devised many ways of increasing the enjoyment of his hereditary subjects.

- **Coronation of King:** Records provide scant details on the coronation ceremonies of Kamrupa kings. Sthitavarman's coronation followed Vedic rites, as noted in the Dubi Copper-Plate inscription. Renaming the king during coronation was common, as seen when Susthitavarman became Mriganka. Similarly, Bhaskar Varman was previously known as Bhaskar dyuti, as per the Harshacharita.(Baruah, S.L.,2015)
- **Aswamedha :** Ancient Indian kings performed "Aswamedha" (horse sacrifices) to demonstrate their imperial power. Varman monarchs also practiced "Aswamedha". For instance, Mahendravarman was the first Varman ruler to conduct the "Aswamedha".
- **Imperial Titles:** The title Maharajadhiraja denotes a King's independence. Pushyavarman, the first monarch of the Varman family, took the title 'Maharajadhiraja'. This suggests that he was an independent ruler. Other Varman kings, such as Samudravarman, Balavarman, and Susthitavarman, used the title Maharajadhiraja.

B. Central Administration

The epigraphic record reveals that there existed a complex structure of governance at both the central and local levels. A group of officials assisted the king in performing his duties. In ancient Kamrupa, the most significant central government officers were the Samantas, Yuvaraja, Mahasenapati, and Amartyas. The feudatory chiefs are called *Samantas.* The chief of the Samaantas was called Mahasamanta. Regarding the Varman Dynasty, the Nidhanpur grant mentioned Mahasamanta. The Nidhanpur Grant states that Mahasamanta Divakaraprabha was in command of the bhandagara, or royal storehouse. A council of ministers advised the King on administrative concerns. According to Hiuen Tsang, Kumar Bhaskar Varman met with his minister before visiting Harsha on the Ganges River bank. The actual strength of the Council is not known. The existing sources imply that ministership was the monopoly of the Brahmanas. The Kalika Purana suggests that a king should employ intelligent and wise Brahmanas as ministers. It is unclear whether Varman monarch appointed Brahmans as ministers or not.

C. Local Administration

The detailed working of the local administration in ancient Assam is not clearly known. Ancient Assam's local administration featured centralized control with limited autonomy at the local level. Administrative divisions included rajya, desa, bhukti, and visaya, with villages or gramas serving as the lowest units. The *bhukti* was perhaps the largest division. The term *bhukti* was used in the sense of a province. The next administrative division was the *Visaya* or district. Inscriptions mention a number of visayas such as, Chandrapuri, Dijjina, Hapyoma, Puraji and Bada. A Visaya was consisted of a number of villages or gramas. Grama or village was the lowest unit of administration as it had been in other parts of India. The epigraphs mention a number of gramas. Inscrptions also mention small divisions like pataka, konchi and palli. Perhaps Pataka constitute only a part of a village. The term konchi might have stood for a part of a village or a small village inhabite by members of a clas or caste. The term palli means a row or group of house.

A clear idea can be obtained from the records regarding the general administration. The *Visaya* was administered by a *visayahpati*. The office of the *Visayapati* included some of the following officers: *Nayayakaranika, Vyavaharika, Simapradata, Kayastha, Nayaka, Kosthagarika, Uparika, Utkhitayita, Lekhaka, Sasayitr, Sekyakara*, and others.(Baruah,B.K.2011). The Nidhanpur Grant mentions the *Nayaka Sriksikunda*. Nayaka, according to the Arthasastra, sometimes stands for Nagarika, the chief (Mayor) of a town or district, but generally it is taken to mean a headman of a village.

D. Administration of Justice

The organization of judiciary in ancient Assam remains unclear, but epigraphs suggest justice was based on Hindu law books. Administration of justice relied on Vedas, Angas, Dharmasastras, and Puranas. Laws were drawn from sacred texts, case-law, customs, and the king's decrees. Inscriptions mention various titled officers involved in the judiciary system of ancient Assam, such as Nyayakaranika, Vyavaharika, Kayastha, Dandika, and Dandapasika. The Nidhanpur Grant highlights Nyaya Karnika as the chief justice officer, illustrated by Jonardan Swami's role. Nyaya Karnika not only administered justice but also settled land disputes and inspected

boundary demarcations. Vyavaharika likely served as a judicial administrator or lawyer, closely associated with Nyaya Karnika. Additionally, two types of police officers are mentioned: Chauroddharanika, responsible for apprehending thieves, and Chata-bhata, whose duties remain undefined. However, records detailing trial procedures, witness testimonies, and punishments are absent.

E. Revenue Administration

In ancient Assam, revenue collection was derived from six primary sources, including regular taxes like the kara imposed on cultivators. The Nidhanpur grant mentioned key figures like Dattakarapurna as tax collectors, with officers such as uparika and utkhetika overseeing revenue administration. Additionally, roles like Bhandagaradhikrita and Kosthagarika managed the royal storehouses and treasuries, respectively. The Nidhanpur grant mentions that the Mahasamanta Divakara was in charge of the bhandagara. Land revenues were collected through local administrative heads, reflecting a structured system of fiscal management in ancient Assam

Ancient Assam had several types of land, including arable land (kshetra), waste land (khila), and building sites (vastu). Land ownership includes both collective and individual tenures, allowing people to hold arable land, pastures, and water reservoirs. However, the Nidhanpur grant allowed only arable land to be owned individually, while resources such as water reservoirs and pastures were allocated. When lands granted by Bhutivarman becamesubject to taxation due to the loss of the copper-plates, Bhaskar renewed the grant to the Brahmanas, who had been enjoying it in the way of Bhumicchidra, so that no tax is charged on it for as long as the sun, moon, and earth exist.

F. Military Administration

The Varman rulers of ancient Assam were renowned for their prowess in warfare, engaging in battles to expand their territories and defend their kingdoms against invaders. Epigraphic records provide insights into their military organization, with a war minister overseeing divisions such as infantry, elephant troops, and navy. Notably, Bhaskar Varman's military camp at Karnasuvarna boasted impressive ships, elephants, horses, and infantry.

Naval conflicts between Varman kings and other rulers underscored their naval strength. Although cavalry played a lesser role due to a scarcity of quality horses, elephants were abundant and served as vital assets in warfare. Primary weapons included swords, axes, spears, maces, bows, and arrows, as well as chakr as, javelins, and others mentioned in inscriptions like the Dubi grant.

7.6 ROLE OF KUMAR BHASKAR VARMAN

Kumar Bhaskar Varman, the last ruler of the Varman Dynasty, created a brilliant chapter in the history of Assam. Bhaskar Varman significantly elevated the political significance of Kamrupa within the context of North Indian politics. Kamrupa was politically unstable when Bhaskar Varman succeeded to the throne. Mahasenagupta attacked Kamrupa and defeated Bhaskar Varman's father, Susthitavarman. The fall of Kamrupa by Mahasenagupta had a significant impact on the kingdom's political and military splendour. As a result of the battle, Kamrupa lost her possessions in North Bengal, and her western boundary was pushed back to the Karatoya river. Suthitavarman died, and his son Supratisthitavarman succeeded to the throne. However, his reign was short. Kumar Bhaskar Varman succeeded to the throne following Supratisthitavarman's death. He reoccupied Kamrupa's lost property. Two notable events occurred during Kumar Bhaskar Varman's reign: Hiuen Tsang's visit to Kamrupa and the beginning of diplomatic relations with Harshavardhan. In historical documents, Banabhatta referred to him as "Kumara, the lord of Pragjyotisha, while Hiuen Tsang called him as "Kumararaja."

Geographical extension of Kamrupa During the reign of Kumar Bhaskar Varman: As we have discussed, Kumar Bhaskar Varman played a crucial role in reviving Kamrupa's power. He restored lost regions and upheld prior land grants, which strengthened his kingdom's standing. In addition to Kamrupa, he had an impact on northern Indian politics in the early seventh century C.E.. His efforts helped restore Kamrupa's former strength and made him a key player in the region's history.

In terms of geographical extension, Bhaskar Varman is referred to

as the "King of Eastern India" in Chinese records. The clay seal of Bhaskar Varman, unearthed in Nalanda, provides additional historical information on Kamrupa's boundaries, which extended beyond Bengal. Aside from the entirety of Kamrupa as specified in the Yogini Tantra, his reign covered a large amount of Bengal and perhaps parts of Bihar, or at least the Nalanda region. His rule over the Nalanda region has been supported by the Nalanda clay seal and confirmed by I-Tsing's writtings. P.C Choudhury proposed that the kingdom of Bhaskar Varman encompassed all of Assam, a significant portion of Bengal, and some of Bihar, or at least the Nalanda region. Bhaskar Varman occupied Karnasuvarna and Pundravardhana, as evidenced by the Nidhanpur grant. On the basis of Nidhanpur grant J. C. Ghosh, A.C. Chaudhury and others claimed that the kingdom of Bhaskar Varman included the area of South-east Bengal, including Sylhet, Tripura and parts of Samatata. On the other hand, P.N Bhattacharya, K.L. Baruah, and others claimed that Sylhet was outside the Kamrupa. The Tippera grant of Loknath shed insight on Bhaskar Varman's control over Sylhet and Tripura. Hiuen Tsang attests to Bhaskar Varman's political power in South-east Bengal, claiming that the sea route to China was protected by the monarch of Kamrupa. This statement leads us to believe that Bhaskar had control over Sylhet and Tripura. According to Hiuen Tsang's report, his kingdom bordered China and Burma to the east. Thus, it may be claimed that Bhaskar Varman's realm was larger than the Kamrupa outlined in Yogini Tantra.

Hiuen Tsang's Visit to Kamrupa: During Bhaskar Varman's reign, a Chinese pilgrim paid a visit to Kamrupa. Hiuen Tsang visited Kamrupa in 643 A.D. (Baruah, K.L.,2011). Hiuen Tsang spent more than a month in Kamrupa. Hiuen Tsang provided an insightful picture of Kamrupa's expansion, the state of the kingdom, and people's social lives. The traveller was so impressed by the king's enthusiasm in learning and education, as well as his depth of knowledge, that he assumed he was a Brahmana. According to Hiuen Tsang, Kamrupa, with a circumference of about 10,000 li (approximately 1700 miles), has a capital town of about 30 li. Further he mentioned that the land of Kamrupa was fertile, with cultivation of jack fruit and coconut. The climate of Kamrupa was mild, and the people were simple

and honest, according to Hiuen Tsang. Hiuen Tsang mentioned that the kingdom borders hills to the east and faces barbarian territories to the southwest of China.

Relationship between Kumar Bhaskar Varman and Harsha : Kumar Bhaskar Varman made an alliance with Harshavardhana. Harshavardhana was a great ruler from Northern India. This union was a huge diplomatic achievement for Bhaskar Varman. The diplomatic relationship between Kumar Bhaskar Varman and Harsha was developed to achieve a mutual purpose. Both sought to exact revenge on Gauda's ruler, Sasanka. Sasanka was the common enemy of both Kumar Bhaskar Varman and Harsha. Kumar Bhaskravarman sent a proposal to Harsha through an ambassador for the formation of an alliance. The ambassador's name was Hamsavega. Hamsavega met Harsh with rich presents and put forward the proposal. Harsha welcomed the offer and dismissed the ambassador with valuable presents. Harsha and Kumar Bhaskar Varman attacked Gauda's king, Sasanka. Bhaskar Varman conquered Karnasuvarna, Gauda's capital.After the victory Bhaskar Varman issued the famous Nidhanpur grants reconfirming the land-grant made by Bhutivarman. The stunning victory over Sasanka elevated Bhaskar 's status to new heights.

The diplomatic relationship between Harsha and Bhaskarvarman continued till their deaths. Harsha's alliance with Kumar Bhaskar Varman was compared to well-known alliances between Kuvera and Siva, Dasaratha and Indra, Dhananjayaa and Krishna, and Karna and Durjyodhana in Harshacharita. Harsha invited Kumar Bhaskar Varman to the religious assemblies in Kanauj and Prayag. Harsha paid special tribute to Bhaskar Varman during the religious assembly

Harsha organized a grand assembly at Kanauj to give the utmost publicity to the doctrine of the Mahayana. Both Harsha and Kumar Bhaskar Varman attended the solemn procession in the assembly. Again Kumar Bhaskar Varman was invited to quinquennial distributions assembly at Prayaga. Kumar Bhaskar Varman attended the ceremony along with Dhruvabhata, "king of south India" and other royalties. It demonstrated that

Harsha viewed the Kamrupa ruler as a respected ally and esteemed friend, not as a vassal king.

From the above discussion, it can be stated that Kumar Bhaskar Varman of Kamrupa strengthened his empire by forming alliances with Harshavardhana and maintaining diplomatic connections. His rule saw major territorial advances, as evidenced by Hiuen Tsang's visit, and his victory over Sasanka raised his status. Bhaskar Varman's relationships with Harsha persisted, demonstrating mutual respect and political power in North Indian politics.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Discuss about the military organisations of Varman Dynasty.

Q 6: Explain the Hiuen Tsang's visit to Kamrupa.



7.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt-

- In ancient days Assam was known as Kamrupa and Pragjyotisha. Pragjyotishpur was the capital of Kamrupa. In the middle of the fourth century, Varman monarchs ruled Kamrup. Pushyavarman founded the Varman dynasty. He traced his lineage back to the Bhauma Dynasty of Naraka-Bhagadatta through Bhaskar Varman's Nidhanpur grant. The Varman Dynasty existed for around three centuries. The literary and epigraphic materials clearly show that ancient Assam's political history begins with the Varmanas.
- After Pushyvarman, different Varman rulers ruled in the Kamrupa. There were about thirteen Varman rulers who ruled Kamrupa. However, historians give different opinions regarding the reign period of Varman rulers
- Pushyavarman was contemporary of Samudragupta of Gupta Kingdom. The name Kamrupa was mentioned as the Gupta Kingdom's frontier in the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta. Along with

Kamrupa, Samatata, Davaka, Nepal, and Kartipur were also mentioned as Gupta frontier kingdoms. The monarchs of these kingdoms owed allegiance to Samudragupta by giving him tribute in various forms, following his orders, and visiting his court

- In order to increase the amount of territory, the Varman kings undertook military campaigns with nearby kingdoms. For instance, Mahendravarman made an excellent start in bringing Kamrupa politically closer to the Indian Mahendra Varman was the first Kamrupa ruler to capture and sustain control over a wide territory.
- Besides the military battle, the Varman monarchs maintained diplomatic contacts with their neighbouring countries. The epigraphs describe the Kamrupa monarchs' diplomatic ties with feudatories and neighbouring states.
- The diffusion of learning and expansion of the *Aryadharma* were other important duties of the Kamrupa kings, for the promotion of which, they established the Brahmanas in different parts of the kingdom and usually amongst the non-Aryan people. According to the Nidhanpur grant, Bhaskar Varman showed the light of Aryadharma by eliminating the accumulated darkness of the Kali period.
- The Varman Dynasty followed the monarchy system. The king served as the chief administrator. The king is the supreme authority in state affairs. Varman monarchs also practiced "Aswamedha". Some Varman rulers assumed imperial titles. group of officials assisted the king in performing his duties. The organization of judiciary in ancient Assam remains unclear, but epigraphs suggest justice was based on Hindu law books.
- The Varman rulers of ancient Assam were renowned for their prowess in warfare, engaging in battles to expand their territories and defend their kingdoms against invaders. Epigraphic records provide insights into their military organization, with a war minister overseeing divisions such as infantry, elephant troops, and navy.
- Kumar Bhaskar Varman, the last ruler of the Varman Dynasty, created

a brilliant chapter in the history of Assam. Bhaskar Varman significantly elevated the political significance of Kamrupa within the context of North Indian politics. Two notable events occurred during Kumar Bhaskar Varman's reign: Hiuen Tsang's visit to Kamrupa and the beginning of diplomatic relations with Harshavardhan.



7.8 FURTHER READING

1) Baruah, B.K. (2011). Acultural History of Assam. Guwahati: Bina Library

2) Baruah, H.K. (2007). The Comprehensive History of Assam. Guwahati: Publication Board of Assam.

3) Baruah, K.L (2009). Early History of Kamrupa. Guwahati: LBS Publications.

4) Baruah S.L. (2015). Comprehensive History of Assam. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

5) Gait, E (2005). A History of Assam. Guwahati. LBS Publication.

6) Kakati, B.K.(1948). Mother Goddeses Kamakhya. Guwahati:Lawyers book stall.



7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Pushyavarman.

Ans to Q No 2: Hiuen Tsang visited Kamrupa during the reign of Kumar Bhaskar Varman.

Ans to Q No 3: True.

Ans to Q No 4: Besides the military battle, the Varman monarchs maintained diplomatic contacts with their neighbouring countries. The epigraphs describe the Kamrupa monarchs' diplomatic ties with feudatories and neighbouring states. The renowned alliance between Bhaskar Varman

and Harshavardhan, as well as the marital union between Meghavahana and Kamrupa's king, are watershed moments in ancient Kamrupi diplomacy. Bala Varman offered his daughter's hand to the King of Kashmir. This marriage relationship between Kamrupa and Kashmir had a tremendous impact on Indian political history. The establishment of the alliance between Harsha and Kumar Bhaskar Varman was a significant event during the Bhaskar Varman rule. Harsha and Bhaskar Varman defeated Gauda's Sasanka in battle, leading to Bhaskar 's unprecedented rise in power.

Ans to Q No 5: The Varman rulers of ancient Assam were renowned for their prowess in warfare, engaging in battles to expand their territories and defend their kingdoms against invaders. Epigraphic records provide insights into their military organization, with a war minister overseeing divisions such as infantry, elephant troops, and navy. Notably, Bhaskar Varman's military camp at Karnasuvarna boasted impressive ships, elephants, horses, and infantry. Naval conflicts between Varman kings and other rulers underscored their naval strength. Although cavalry played a lesser role due to a scarcity of quality horses, elephants were abundant and served as vital assets in warfare. Primary weapons included swords, axes, spears, maces, bows, and arrows, as well as chakr as, javelins, and others mentioned in inscriptions like the Dubi grant.

Ans to Q No 6: During Bhaskar Varman's reign, a Chinese pilgrim paid a visit to Kamrupa. Hiuen Tsang visited Kamrupa in 643 C.E. Hiuen Tsang spent more than a month in Kamrupa. Hiuen Tsang provided an insightful picture of Kamrupa's expansion, the state of the kingdom, and people's social lives. The traveller was so impressed by the king's enthusiasm in learning and education, as well as his depth of knowledge, that he assumed he was a Brahmana. According to Hiuen Tsang, Kamrupa, with a circumference of about 10,000 li (approximately 1700 miles), has a capital town of about 30 li. Further he mentioned that the land of Kamrupa was fertile, with cultivation of jack fruit and coconut. The climate of Kamrupa was mild, and the

people were simple and honest, according to Hiuen Tsang. Hiuen Tsang mentioned that the kingdom borders hills to the east and faces barbarian territories to the southwest of China.



7.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each and every question within 50 Words)

Q 1: Define 'Aswamedha'*?*

Q 2: Who was 'Chaurodhasanika'*?*

Q 3: What do you mean by 'Aryadharma'?.

Q 4: Define 'Bhukti'.

B) Short Questions (Answer each and every question within 150 words)

Q 1: What were the qualities of a king ?

Q 2: Write a short note on the local administration of the Vanaras.

Q 3: What were the types of land in Ancient Assam ? Briefly disscuss.

Q 4: What are the characteristics of a state ?.

C) Long Questions (Answer each and every question in between 300-500 words)

Q 1 : Discuss the role of Pushyavarman in establishing the Varman dynasty.

Q 2 : How did military conquests under Varman rulers contribute to the expansion of Kamrupa's territory?

Q 3 : Explain the diplomatic relationship between Kumar Bhaskar Varman and Harsha.

Q 4 : How did Kumar Bhaskar Varman strategically expand Kamrupa's political influence through alliances and military comapaigns in ancient Inida?

Q 5 : Discuss the polity and administration of Varman Dynasty.

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