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[THREAD: WHEN GREECE RULED INDIA]

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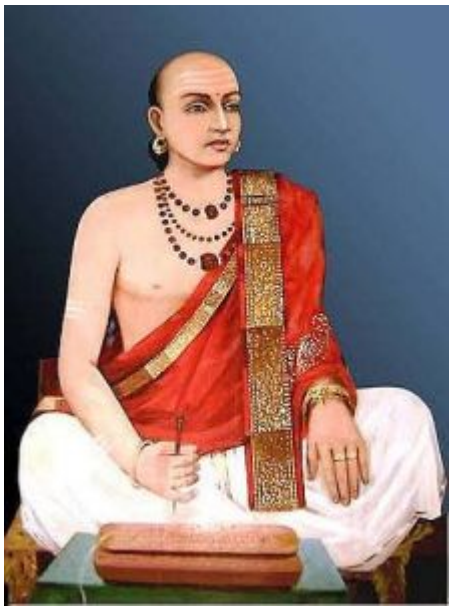
Some time in the 7th century AD, Sanskrit writer B■■abha■■a did a biography on his patron, emperor Harshavardhana. It was titled Har■acar■ta and is said to be the first biographical work from the subcontinent.



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Besides abundant references to the Greeks (as Yavanas, derived from Ionians), the book recounts a curious incident of king Vatsapati being ambushed by soldiers emerging from "the belly of a sham elephant."

This section may or may not have been lifted from an earlier work.

All that your majesty has undertaken is worthy of the nobility[1] fostered in Puṣpabhūti's line, of your own inborn valour, of your arms long as a sky-elephant's trunk, and of your peerless affection for your brother. When even the wretched worms named snakes brook no insult, how should such mines of valour as yourself? Yet the story of his majesty Rājyavardhana has given you some inkling into the despicable characters of vile men. Thus do national types vary, like the dress, features, food, and pursuits of countries, village by village, town by town, district by district, continent by continent, and clime by clime. Dismiss therefore this universal confidingness, so agreeable to the habits of your own land and springing from innate frankness of spirit. Of disasters due to mistaken carelessness frequent reports come daily to your majesty's hearing[2]. In Padmāvatī there was the fall of Nāgasena[3], heir to the Nāga house, whose policy was published by a *çārikā* bird. In Çrāvastī faded the glory of Çrutavarman, whose secret a parrot heard. In Mṛittikāvatī a disclosure of counsel in sleep was the death of Suvarṇacūḍa. [222] The fate of a Yavana king was encompassed by the holder of his golden chowrie, who read the letters of a document reflected in his crest jewel. By slashes of drawn swords Vidūratha's army minced the avaricious Māthura king Bṛihadratha while he was digging treasure at dead of night. Vatsapati, who was wont to take his pleasure in elephant forests, was imprisoned by Mahāsena's soldiers issuing from the belly of a sham elephant[4]. Sumitra, son of Agnimitra, being over fond of the drama, was attacked by Mitradeva in the midst of actors, and with a scimitar shorn, like a lotus stalk, of his head. Çarabha, the Açmaka king, being attached to string music, his enemy's emissaries, disguised as

[1] Read *abhijanasya* or *ābhijātyasya* for *ajātyasya:* the Kāshmir text has *abhijanasya ābhijatyasya.*

[2] This speech refers to a curious mass of unknown legendary history.

[3] Cf. *Viṣṇu P.* Wilson's tr. (Hall's ed. vol. iv. p. 217) Manu, vii. 149. 150.

[4] Cf. *Kathāsarit. S.* ch. 12.