The period following the disintegration of the Gupta Empire and preceding the advent of Islam occupies a very strategic position in the history of India. It affected not only the events and culture of the medieval period but also the conditions, life and mode of thought of the majority of Hindus to this day. The social strains and tensions, which resulted in the partition of India in 1947, can be traced back to this period.

The reign of Harsha is the only abiding landmark in this age of confusion and disintegration. It was the last effort of Ancient India to fight back the disintegrating forces which were threatening to engulf the country and its institutions prostrating it in every sphere of life. The fall of the Vardhans was the triumph of disorder over peace and stability. Soon afterwards India experienced invasion of a new type of people, who, unlike the earlier raiders, refused to be assimilated into the culture of the country. Their aggressiveness and iconoclasm keeps them a distinct social unit, apart from the Hindus.

Strangely enough the first half of the seventh century the period which witnessed the last effort at empire-building by the Hindus of Northern India, has received very scanty attention. A study of the ideas and institutions of this age, to discover how they
entered and established themselves in subsequent periods, is long overdue. Moreover, since the publication of the works of Dr. R. K. Mookerjee and C. V. Vaidya quite a lot of new material has been unearthed which throws a welcome new light on this period. Many of the current views upon the problems and polity of those days also need to be revised. Mine is an humble effort in this direction.

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