

9. Post Mauryan India

9.1 Shunga Empire

9.2 Rise of Satavahana Empire

9.3 Administrative system, literature, art and social life

Magadha was the first empire of India. A stable and systematic administration was set up during the Mauryan period. We studied this in the previous lesson. After Emperor Ashoka, due to the internal conflicts, this empire became weak. After Brihadratha, the last Mauryan emperor, Pushyamitra Shunga came on the throne.

9.1 Shunga Empire

The Shunga empire was spread from Magadha in the east to Siyalkot (Punjab) in the west, as well as Himalayas in the North to Vidarbha in the south. Although Pataliputra was the main capital of this empire, Pushyamitra established a second capital at Vidisha. Pushyamitra Shunga was valiant and ambitious. He strengthened his rule in the provinces of Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti etc. Later he conquered the lost provinces of Magadhan empire upto Siyalkot. He courageously repelled the attack of the Greek King Demetrius. His victory over Demetrius is mentioned in 'Malavikagnimitram' a play written by Kalidasa.

Try this out : Collect information about the plays written by Kalidasa and make a note based on it.

After establishing his rule over North India and some parts of South India. Pushyamitra twice performed the Ashwamedha sacrifice to proclaim himself as a powerful king. Pushyamitra revived the vedic sacrificial system which had lost its significance during the Mauryan period. The Garuda pillar of

Heliodorus at Besnagar (Vidisha) indicates that there were some Greek followers of Vaishnavism. Literature in Sanskrit language was encouraged during the Shunga period. To review the changes in Sanskrit language, Patanjali wrote the 'Mahabhashya' based on Panini's 'Ashtadhyayi'. According to some scholars, there were many new additions made in the original text of Mahabharata during this period. The Manusmriti was composed during this period.

Along with literature, the Shunga's contribution in the field of art is also important. The stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut, Garuda pillar at Besnagar are excellent examples of art during this period. The sculptural art in the Shunga period widened its horizons and depicted the life of common people on a large scale.

The last king of Shunga dynasty, Devbhuti, was not an efficient king. His minister, Vasudeva, killed him and established the Kanva dynasty. This incident is described in the Harshacharita by Banabhatta.

9.2 Rise of Satavahana Empire:

After the Mauryas, the Shunga dynasty established itself in the north whereas in the south the Satavahana dynasty rose to power. The disintegration of Mauryan empire created a favourable atmosphere for the rise of new powers. Satavahanas are mentioned as the earliest ruling dynasty in Maharashtra. Initially the Satavahana rule came to a rise in Nashik, Pune, Aurangabad and later spread in the vast region of Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnataka. Paithan, in Maharashtra, was the capital of the Satavahanas. The Puranas mention the 'Andhras' or 'Andhrabhrutyas'. According to some scholars, these terms refer to Satavahanas.



For the map of Satavahana empire, visit the website given below:

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Satvahana.svg>

Many Satavahana inscriptions are found in North Maharashtra. Simuka, the first Satavahana king, is mentioned in the Naneghat inscription. Shri Satakarni, Hala, Gautamiputra Satakarni, Yajna Satakarni were among the important kings of the Satavahana dynasty.

Before Gautamiputra Satakarni, some of the Satavahana kings were not capable. Taking advantage of this situation, the Shaka Satrapas established their rule in the western regions of India. Gautamiputra Satakarni, the Satavahana king, conquered the Shakas. Satavahana dynasty regained its strength with this victory.

Gautamiputra Satakarni conquered Central India and the entire regions of Dakshinapatha. He defeated the southern kingdoms of Avanti, Surashtra (Saurashtra) and the Shaka kings in Maharashtra. Similarly he established his dominance over the Republic states in Central India and Rajasthan. A hoard of coins is found at Jogaltembi in Nashik district. These coins belong to Shaka Kshatrapa Nahapana on which Gautamiputra restructured his own emblem. This clearly indicates that Gautamiputra proved his strength by gaining victory over Nahapana.

After Gautamiputra, Vashishthiputra Pulumavi and Yajnashree Satakarni were the important kings. But after their rule, Satavahana rule began to decline. They

became weak due to the constant struggle between Shakas and Satavahanas.

9.3 Administrative system, literature, art and social life

Administrative System :

The state under the Satavahanas was divided into small provinces and on every province civil and military officials were appointed to administer individual provinces over it. These included civil officials, such as 'Amatya', 'Mahabhoj' and military officials, such as 'Mahasenapati' and 'Maharathi'. Grama (village) was the smallest unit of administration. Grama was a source of revenue and also for the recruitment of soldiers during warlike situations. Thus, Grama was an integral part of the central machinery.

Agriculture was the main source of means of subsistence. Along with it many industries and trade flourished under the Satavahanas. Various shrenis (Guilds) also emerged during this period. The trade and industries were controlled with the help of these shrenis. The shrenis also provided loans. Indo-Roman trade also flourished during the Satavahana period. Trade centres like Pratishthan (Paithan), Tagar (Ter), Nasik (Nashik), Karhatak (Karhad) developed during the Satavahana rule.

Tagar (Ter) and Pratishthan (Paithan) are mentioned in the 'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea'. According to it, "Among the market towns of Dakshinapatha, there are two cities of special importance; Paethana

For Additional Information : The reign and achievements of Satavahana Emperor Gautamiputra Satakarni are described in the Nashik inscription of his mother Gautami Balashri. Gautamiputra Satakarni is mentioned as 'Shakapahlavyavannisudan' i.e. the destroyer of Shakas, Pallavas and Greeks, 'Satavahanakulayashahpratishtapankar' i.e. the one who reinstalled the success of the Satavahana family, 'Trisamudratoyapitavahana' i.e. the one whose horses drank the water of the three seas. Such type of mentioning indicates that many kings in the southern region must have accepted feudatory status and ruled under the suzerainty of Gautamiputra Satakarni. The Satavahana kings used Matronomics, i.e. using the names of their mothers as prefix, for example, Gautamiputra Satakarni, Vasishthiputra Pulumavi etc.



(Pratishthana or Paithan of today) at a distance of about twenty day's journey to the south of Barygaza (Bhadoch); beyond which about ten days to journey towards the east, there is another great city, Tagar (Ter). Carnelian is transported in great quantity from Paithan to Bhadoch. There are no permanent roads built for these purposes, but only untreaded tracts. Cotton cloth, muslins and sack cloth (rough jute fabric) and other merchandise from coastal regions is transported from Tagar to Barygaza."

Various artisans such as Kularika*, Tilpishaka**, Kolika*** are mentioned in the inscriptions at Nashik and Junnar. Pliny mentions thirty fortified cities that existed in Satavahana kingdom. The coins, found during the excavations at the archaeological sites of these cities are indicators of the well developed trade during this period. Sopara, Kalyan, Bhadoch were important trade centres of this period.

*Potter **Oil miller *** Weaver

You would like to know : Naneghat is a mountain pass on the ancient trade route in Maharashtra. This route connects the ancient town 'Jirnanagar' (Junnar) and the konkan province. The route proceeds in the direction of Junnar and descends into Kokan at Murbad (District Thane). Satavahanas excavated a cave on this route; the inscriptions in this cave mention the Satavahana Queen Naganika, the achievements of the Satavahana kings and the donations given by them. These inscriptions are in Brahmi script. There were statues of the Satavahana kings. At the foothills of the pass there is a village named Vaishakhede. A number of inns (Dharmashalas) were probably built here

for the convenience of travellers. There is a stone jar excavated for collection of toll in the pass. Sopara and Kalyan were the most important trade centres in ancient Maharashtra. Internal as well as foreign trade was carried out from these towns. Especially, the goods imported from Rome were unloaded at Sopara and from there it was carried over to Paithan and Kolhapur via Kalyan, Naneghat, Junnar, and Nevasa. Similarly the same route was used to transport the goods to be exported to Rome. Another important feature is that the inscriptions in the cave include numeric symbols for "2, 4, 6, 7, and 9" that resemble modern numerals.



By the Way : This is a picture of a ship on the coin belonging to King Pulumavi. This image on the coin is an indication of flourishing sea trade during Satavahana period.

king of the Satavahana dynasty, compiled 'Gathasaptashati'. Gunadhya, a minister in his court, wrote an incomparable text named 'Brihatkatha' in a Prakrit language called Paishachi. Sarvavarma wrote a treatise on Sanskrit Grammar, named 'Katantra'.

Literature :

During the Satavahana period, learning and art received royal patronage. Prakrit language and literature flourished during Satavahana period. Hala, the seventeenth

Art and Architecture : The influence of Persian and Greek sculptural styles during the Mauryan period seems to have decreased during the Shunga and Satavahana period. A new native Indian style emerged in this





Karle Chaitya

period. The four gateways (Toranas) of the Sanchi Stupa No.1 built during this period are excellent examples of this style. Many incidents from the life of Gautama Buddha are carved on these gateways. A number of rock-cut caves (Viharas and Chaityas) at Bhaje, Nashik, Karle etc. belong to Satavahana period. Especially the Chaitya at Karle, its magnificent facade entrance and sculptures are the finest examples of the sculptural art of this period.

Gathasaptashati : The Satavahana king, Hala, compiled several poems written in Prakrit. He selected 700 verses, and compiled it which was named as 'Gaha Sattasai' (Gatha Saptashati). This is the first text composed in Maharashtri Prakrit language. These poems beautifully portray human nature and transactions. Various religious observance, ethical norms and contemporary festivals are described in it. Gatha Saptashati reflects the social life in Maharashtra of Satavahana period. Some words in Gatha Saptashati are used in today's Marathi language as well. The poems in Gatha saptashati clearly indicate the relation between Maharashtri Prakrit and the modern Marathi language in Maharashtra.

For Additional information : The world famous Ajanta caves, cave no. 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 belong to the Satavahana period. It is interesting that the paintings in cave no. 9 and 10 are the earliest in India.

Society : The society of Satavahana period was organised into four varnas. Similarly during this period the caste system also became deeply rooted. The intermixture of varnas and castes (*Varnasankara*), closed nature of different guilds, need of including foreigners in the social structure were some of the reasons behind it.

Apart from that, there were four classes in the society. The first class consisted of officials such as 'Maharathi', 'Mahabhoja' and 'Mahasenapati'. They were appointed on the various 'Rashtrakas' (*Subhas*). 'Mahabhoja' was appointed on the Konkan province and *Maharathi* on the plateau area. The second class consisted of 'Amatya', 'Mahamatra' and 'Bhandagarika', 'Naigam' (traders), 'Sarthavaha' (chief of caravan merchant), and 'Shreshthi' (Head of trade guilds). 'Lekhanika' (scribes), 'Vaidya' (physicians), 'Halakiya' (cultivators), 'Suvarnakar' (goldsmith), 'Gandhika' (traders of perfumes) were included in the third social class. Whereas the fourth class included 'Vardhaki' (carpenter), 'Malakara' (gardeners), 'Lohavanija' (blacksmith), and 'Dasaka' (fisherman).

The invasions of foreigners like Greeks, Pallavas, Shakas and Kushanas took place during the Satavahana period. But these foreigners were soon absorbed in the social structure. This means that the contemporary society, was flexible enough to accommodate the foreigners. However, these political invasions also brought about some social, economic and cultural changes which we will study in the next lesson.

Exercise

Q.1 (A) Choose the correct alternative and write the complete sentences.

- (1) The last emperor of the Mauryan dynasty was
(a) Ajatashatru
(b) Chandragupta Maurya
(c) Brihadratha
(d) Emperor Ashoka
- (2) The Nashik inscription mentions king as 'Trisamudratoyapitavahana'.
(a) Gautamiputra Satakarni
(b) Hala
(c) Yadnashree Satakarni
(d) Simuka
- (3) Satavahana king, Hala, compiled
(a) Brihatkatha
(b) Gatha Saptashati
(c) Katantra
(d) Meghdoota

(B) Find incorrect pair from Set B and write the correct ones.

Set 'A'

- (1) Kalidasa
- (2) Gunadhya
- (3) Sarvavarma
- (4) Patanjali

Set 'B'

- (1) Malavikagnimitram
- (2) Gatha Saptashati
- (3) Katantra
- (4) Mahabhashya

Q.2 Explain the following statements with reasons.

- (1) During the Satavahana period there was rise of many trade centres.
- (2) The caste system became rigid during the Satavahana period.

Q.3 Give your opinion.

Prakrit language was encouraged during the Satavahana period.

Q.4 Write short notes:

- (1) Nashik inscription of Gautami Balashri
- (2) Naneghat – ancient trade route in Maharashtra
- (3) Gatha Saptashati

Q.5 Write information about the Satavahana dynasty with the help of the given points.

- (a) Rise and expansion
- (b) Administrative system
- (c) Trade and industries
- (d) Literature and art

Activity

Collect information about historical remains in your surrounding area and prepare an information booklet based on the gathered information.

