

Post Mauryan India

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

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.
- Pataliputra was the main capital of this empire; Pushyamitra established a second capital at **Vidisha**.
- 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.
- 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.
- The stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut, Garuda pillar at Besnagar are excellent examples of art during this period.
- 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**.

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 favorable 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 (*Pratisthan*)**, in Maharashtra, was the capital of the Satavahanas.
- The Puranas mention the ‘**Andhras**’ or ‘**Andhrabhutyas**’. According to some scholars, these terms refer to Satavahanas.
- 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.
- Satavahana Emperor Gautamiputra Satakarni was described in the *Nashik inscription* of his mother Gautami Balashri.
- 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 is mentioned as ‘**Shakapahlavyavannisudan**’ (शकपहल्वयवनिसुदन) i.e. the destroyer of Shakas, Pallavas and Greeks, ‘**Satavahanakulayashahpratishtapankar**’ (सातवाहनकुलयशप्रतीस्थापनकार) i.e. the one who reinstated the success of the Satavahana family, ‘**Trisamudratoyapitavahana**’ (त्रिसमुद्रतोयपीतवाहन) i.e. the one whose horses drank the water of the three seas.
- Gautamiputra Satakarni conquered Central India and the entire regions of Dakshinapatha.
- After this Gautamiputra Satakarni adopted title ‘**Dakshinapathaadhipati**’ (दक्षिणपथाधीपती).
- 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 King Nahapana* on which Gautamiputra re struck 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.

Administrative system, literature, art and social life

Administrative System:

- a. 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.
- b. These included civil officials, such as ‘**Amatya**’, ‘**Mahabhoj**’ and military officials, such as ‘**Mahasenapati**’ and ‘**Maharathi**’.
- c. **Grama** (village) was the smallest unit of administration.
- d. **Gramkut** is head of village.
- e. Grama was a source of revenue and also for the recruitment of soldiers during warlike situations.
- f. Thus, Grama was an integral part of the central machinery.
- g. Agriculture was the main source of means of subsistence.
- h. Along with it many industries and trade flourished under the Satavahanas.

Trade and Industries:

1. Various **Shrenis** (Guilds) also emerged during this period.
2. The trade and industries were controlled with the help of these shrenis.
3. The shrenis also provided loans.
4. **Indo-Roman** trade also flourished during the Satavahana period.
5. Trade centres like **Pratishthan** (Paithan), **Tagar** (Ter), Nasik (Nashik), **Karhatak** (Karhad) developed during the Satavahana rule.
6. Tagar (Ter) and Pratishthan (Paithan) are mentioned in the ‘Periplus of the Erythraean Sea’.
7. According to it, “Among the market towns of Dakshinapatha, there are two cities of special importance; **Paethana** (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).
8. **Carnelian** is transported in great quantity from Paithan to Bhadoch.
9. Cotton cloth, muslins and sack cloth (rough jute fabric) and other merchandise from coastal regions is transported from Tagar to Barygaza.”
10. **Pliny** mentions thirty fortified cities that existed in Satavahana kingdom.
11. The coins, found during the excavations at the archaeological sites of these cities are indicators of the well-developed trade during this period.
12. **Sopara, Kalyan, Bhadoch** were important trade centers of this period.

Literature:

- i. During the Satavahana period, learning and art received royal patronage.
- ii. **Prakrit** language and literature flourished during Satavahana period.
- iii. Hala, king of the Satavahana dynasty compiled ‘**Gathasaptashati**’.

- iv. *Gunadhya*, a minister in his court, wrote an incomparable text named 'Brihatkatha' in a Prakrit language called Paishachi.
- v. **Sarvavarma** wrote a treatise on *Sanskrit Grammer*, named 'Katantra'.

Art and Architecture:

- a. The influence of Persian and Greek sculptural styles during the Mauryan period seems to have decreased during the Shunga and Satavahana period.
- b. A new native Indian style emerged in this period.
- c. The four gateways (Toranas) of the Sanchi Stupa No.1 built during this period are excellent examples of this style.
- d. Many incidents from the life of Gautama Buddha are carved on these gateways.
- e. A number of rock-cut caves (Viharas and Chaityas) at Bhaje, Nashik, Karle etc. belong to Satavahana period.
- f. Especially the Chaitya at Karle, its magnificent facade entrance and sculptures are the finest examples of the sculptural art of this period.

Society:

1. The society of Satavahana period was organised into four varnas.
2. Similarly during this period the caste system also became deeply rooted.
3. The intermixture of Varnas and Castes (Varnasankar), closed nature of different guilds, need have including foreigners in the social structure been some of the reasons behind it.
4. Apart from that, there were four classes in the society.
 - a. The first class consisted of officials such as 'Maharathi', 'Mahabhoja' and 'Mahasenapati'. They were appointed on the various 'Rashtrakas' (Subhas).
 - b. The second class consisted of 'Amatya', 'Mahamatra' and 'Bhandagarika', 'Naigam' (traders), 'Sarthavaha' (chief of caravan merchant), and 'Shreshthi' (Head of trade guilds).
 - c. The third social class included 'Lekhanika' (scribes), 'Vaidya' (physicians), 'Halakiya' (cultivators), 'Suvarnakar' (goldsmith), 'Gandhika' (traders of perfumes).
 - d. The fourth class included 'Vardhaki' (carpenter), 'Malakara' (gardeners), 'Lohavanija' (blacksmith), and 'Dasaka' (fisherman).