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SATAVAHANA DYNASTY

Satavahanas of Deccan

- Before the emergence of the Satavahanas in Maharashtra and Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas dynasties were ruled southern India the region was settled by megalithic people.
- The Satavahanas, also known as '**Andhras**' (in Deccan region) covering the parts of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra was a powerful dynasty.
- The *Andhras* were ancient people and were mentioned in the *Aitareya* Brahmana also.
- The Greek writer Pliny mentions that the *Andhras* were powerful people who possessed a large number of villages and thirty towns, an army of one lakh infantry, two thousand cavalries and one thousand elephants.
- During the Mauryan age, they were part of the Mauryan Empire, but it appears that immediately after the fall of the dynasty, the Andhras declared themselves free.
- Simuka dynasty ruled from 235 B.C. to 213 B.C. and established *Simuka* dynasty.
- Simuka was succeeded by his brother Krishna.
- Satakarni-I was the third king. He made extensive conquests and performed two *Ashvamedhayajna*. The *Nanaghat* inscription described his achievements in details. He conquered western Malwa, Vidarbha, and Anupa (Narmada Valley). He is also referred to as the lord of '**Dakshinapatha**'.
- Satakarni-I's name also occurs on one of the gateways of *Sanchi* stupa because substantial donations were made by the Satavahanas for the renovation and decoration of Sanchi stupas and monasteries.
- Satakarni-II ruled for about 56 years.
- Gautamiputra Satakarni gained Malwa from the Sungas.
- Nahapana had conquered the part of Satavahana territory after Satakarni-II. A large number of coins of Nahapana has been found in Nasik area.
- The Satavahanas became powerful again during the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni. His achievements are recorded in glowing terms in the Nasik inscription of Queen-mother, Gautami Balasri. This inscription was engraved after his death and in the nineteenth year of the reign of his son and successor Pulmavi II.
- In Nasik inscription, Gautamiputra Satakarni has been described as one who destroyed the Sakas, Yavanas, and Pahlavas. He overthrew Nahapana and restricted a large number of his silver coins. He also recovered northern Maharashtra, Konkan, Vidarbha, Saurashtra, and Malwa from the Sakas.
- Satakarni dedicated a cave in Nasik in the eighteenth year of his reign and granted some land to ascetics in the twenty-fourth year.
- Gautamiputra Satakarni is the first king bearing matronymic and this practice was followed by nearly all his successors.
- Gautamiputra was succeeded by his son Vasisthiputra Sri Pulmavi in about A.D. 130 and ruled for about twenty-four years.
- The coins and inscription of Pulmavi have been found in Andhra Pradesh. This shows that Andhra was the part of Satavahana Empire in the second century A.D. Perhaps, in order to

save the Satavahana Empire from the onslaught of the Sakas, Pulmavi married the daughter of Saka ruler Rudradaman. But this Saka king defeated the next Satavahana ruler twice.

- Sri Yajna Satakarni (A.D. 165-195) was perhaps the last of the great Satavahana rulers. His inscriptions have been found in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.
- From the distribution of his coins, it appears that he ruled over a large kingdom extending from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the Arabian Sea in the west. Thus he regained the land that the Sakas had conquered from his predecessors.
- Maritime trade and activities during his reign had been proved by the depiction of ship with a fish on his coins.
- The successors of Yajna were weak and unworthy to govern such a large empire. Hence, the Satavahana Empire collapsed especially when Abhiras seized Maharashtra and Ikshvakus and Pallavas appropriated the eastern provinces.

Literature of Satavahana Period

Smritis

- The *Smritis* have continued to play a very important role in Hindu life as it were playing since the last two thousand years.
- The *Smritis* explained the religious duties, usage, laws, and social customs.
- The *Smritis* are the expanded version of the *Dharmasutras*, which covered the period from (about) sixth century to third century B.C.
- The *Smritis* compiled almost in the period of eight hundred years or even more.
- *Manusmriti* is the oldest among all. It was composed in about the 1st century B.C. Other important *Smritis* are –
 - Naradasmriti,
 - Vishnumsmriti,
 - Yajnavalkyasmriti,
 - Brihaspatismriti, and
 - Katyayanasmriti.
- These *Smritis* (discussed above) are very important sources of law and social customs of the contemporary society and hence, declared to be of divine origin.
- ***Mahabhasya*** written by Patanjali was the most outstanding work in the field of grammar during the period of 2nd century B.C.
- The center of Sanskrit grammar learning shifted to the Deccan after Patanjali.
- In Deccan, the Katantra School developed in the first century A.D. Sarvavarman composed the grammar of Katantra. He was a great scholar in the court of Hala (Satavahana King)
- Katantra's grammar was short and handy to help the learning of Sanskrit in about six months.
- Hala, the King of Satavahana wrote a great poetical work, namely '***Gathasaptasati***' in Prakrit language.
- Asvaghosha was an important literary figure of this period. He was a great Buddhist philosopher. He had written many poetry, plays, etc. Important of them are –

- o Saundarananda,
- o Buddhacharita,
- o Vajrasuchi, etc.
- '**Buddhacharita**' was written in the form of *Mahakavya*. It is a complete life of Buddha. It has been translated into many languages of the world.
- Remains of Asvaghosha's plays have been recovered from Turfan (in central Asia).
- '**Svapnavasavadatta**' was written by Bhasa. It is famous Sanskrit play of the period.
- The art of dance and drama had already been codified by Panini's time and mentioned by Kautilya and Patanjali.
- Natyashastra was written by Bharata in the same period.
- '**Milindapanho**' was written in Pali language. It explains the Buddhist doctrines in the form of a dialogue between Milinda and his teacher (the great Buddhist philosopher Nagasena). Milinda is generally identified with the Indo-Greek king Menander.

Sangam Literature

- Tamil language is the oldest one among the south Indian languages. The earliest phase of Tamil literature is associated with the three *Sangams*.
- *Sangams* were the societies of learned men established by the **Pandya kingdom**. Each *Sangam* comprises of a number of distinguished poets and learned scholars.
- All literary works were submitted to these *Sangams* where learned scholars selected the best ones from different works and set their seal of approval.
- The *Sangam* literature was compiled between A.D. 300 and 600.
- **Ettutogai** collection (the eight anthologies) is considered to be the earliest one belonging to 3rd century B.C. to 3rd century A.D.
- **Tirukkural** written by Thiruvalluvar is the best of the minor didactic poems. Its teachings are considered as an everlasting inspiration and guide to the Tamilians.
- **Silappadikaram** and **Manimekhalali** are the two Tamil epics. These are important sources for the construction of the early history of south India.

Society of Satavahana Period

Social Classes

- *Varna* and *Ashrama* systems continued to govern the society.
- The society consisted of four *Varnas*, namely –
 - o Brahman,
 - o Kshatriya,
 - o Vaishya, and
 - o Sudra.
- *Dharmasastras* described the duties, status, and occupations of all the four *Varnas*.
- Over a period of time, there was great increase in the number of mixed *Jatis* (castes).
- *Manusmriti* defines the origin of the numerous mixed (*sankara*) *Varnas*.

- **Anuloma** was the marriage between the male of higher *Varna* and the female of lower *Varna*.
- **Pratiloma** was the marriage between the male of lower *Varna* and the female of higher *Varna*.
- The social status of a person born of *Anuloma* was higher than *Pratiloma* and they followed their father's occupation.
- According to the Buddhist texts, mixed castes resulted from organizations like guilds of people following different arts and crafts.
- The Buddhist texts described that a Kshatriya working successively as a potter, basket-maker, reed-worker, garland-maker, and cook. *Setthi* (Vaisya) working as a tailor and a potter without loss of prestige in both cases.
- Kshatriyas of the Sakya and Koliya clans cultivated their fields.
- The *Vasettha Sutta* refers to Brahmans working as cultivators, craftsmen, messengers, and landlords.
- The *Jatakas* mentioned that Brahman pursuing tillage, tending cattle, trade, hunting, carpentry, weaving, policing of caravans, archery, driving of carriages, and even snake charming.
- *Jatakas* story tells that a Brahman peasant as a supremely pious man and even a Bodhisattva.
- The gradual absorption of foreigners like Indo-Greek, Sakas, Yavanas, Kushanas, and Parthians into the Indian society was the most important development of this period.
- The life of an individual man was divided into four stages. The stages are called as *Ashramas*.

Stages of Life

- The four stages of an individual life as mentioned in *Dharmasutras* are –
 - **Brahmacharya** – In this *ashrama*, a person lives a celibate life as a student at the home of his teacher.
 - **Grihastha** – After learning the Vedas, a student returns back to his home, gets married, and becomes a *Grihastha* (householder). *Grihastha* has manifold duties broadly marked out as (i) *yajna* (ii) *adhyayana* (iii) *dana*
 - **Vanaprastha** – In the middle age, after seeing his grandchildren; he leaves home for the forest to become a hermit.
 - **Sanyas** – *Sanyas ashrama* is the time meditation and penance; one frees his soul from material things. He leaves hermitage and becomes a homeless wanderer and thus, earthly ties have been broken.

Economy of Satavahana Period

- Major economic system of Satavahana and other contemporary dynasties was well organized and systematic.
- There was all round development in the field of agriculture, industry, and trade during this period.
- Agriculture was the main occupation of a large section of the people.

- The land was held by the individuals as well as by the state.
- The *gramakshetra* was protected area by fences and field-watchmen against pests like birds and beasts.
- Usually, the land holdings were small enough that could be cultivated by the individual family. But sometimes, the land holdings were big enough consisting of up to 1,000 acres.
- The land outside the village is called arable land.
- Beyond the arable land of the village lay its pastures, which were common for the grazing of cattle. The arid land also belonged to the state.
- The forest was located on the boundary of the village.
- Kautilya gives a complete scheme of village plan.

Land Classification

- According to Kautilya, the land of the village was divided into –
 - Cultivated land,
 - Uncultivated land,
 - Grove,
 - Forest,
 - Pastures, etc.
- The main crops were rice of different varieties, coarse grains, sesame, saffron, pulses, wheat, linseed, sugarcane, and mustard. Besides, a large number of vegetables and fruits were also grown.
- Every village had artisans like carpenter, potter, blacksmith, barber, rope maker, washer man, etc.

Major Guilds

- Eighteen types of 'guilds' were mentioned in the literature.
- Guilds became an important institution in the economy.
- The guilds implemented and defined rules of work and controlled the quality of the finished product and its prices to safeguard both the artisans and the customers.
- The disputes of the guild members were resolved through a guild court.
- Guilds also acted as a banker, financier, and a trustee. Such functions were carried out by a different category of merchants known as '*Sresthies*' in north India and '*Chettis*' in south India.
- Loans were given on security of gold and other things.
- Money was lent for interest on promising rates to be renewed every year.
- Nasik cave inscription mentioned that the interest rates on money deposited to guilds. The common rate of interest was between 12% and 15% per annum
- Both internal and external trade was practiced in most of the parts of India since Mauryan period.
- All the internal cities and ports were interconnected with a well-knit road system.
- A large number of modern national highways were developed during this period including Grand Trunk road. The same road was further maintained and developed by Sher Shah Suri.

- The discovery of monsoon winds in the first century facilitated foreign trade with Egypt as it reduced the distance between the western ports of India to the ports of Alexandria in Egypt. Now the whole distance could be covered in forty days.
- India's trade with Rome also increased enormously by sea as well as by land route, which is generally known as the silk route.
- The account of the author of Periplus of Erythraean Sea and Roman historians like Pliny and Ptolemy mentioned about the trading commodities.
- Indian literature, both in Tamil and Sanskrit mentioned common items of trade were Indian spices, sandalwood, and other variety of woods, pearls, textiles of various types, sea products, metals, semi-precious stones, and animals.
- Arikamedu was an important Roman settlement and trading station. It was located close to a port, which was excavated in 1945.
- Romans paid for the goods mainly in gold currency.
- A number of hoards of Roman coins found in the Deccan and south India indicates the volume of this trade (which was in favor of India).
- Pliny, Roman historian mentioned that Indian trade was a serious drain on the wealth of Rome.

Art and Architecture

- Taxila, Sakala, Bhita, Kausambi, Ahichchhatra, Patliputra, Nagrujunkonda, Amaravati, Kaveripattanam were well planned and developed cities, protected by fortification walls and moats.
- Buddhism stupas at Sanchi, Amaravati, Bharhut, and Sarnath are the best examples of art and architecture that flourished during this period.
- Stupa is a hemispherical dome or mound built over sacred relics either of the Buddha himself or of a sanctified monk or a sacred text. Buddha relics were kept in a casket in a smaller chamber in the center of the base of the stupa.
- The stupa has a fenced path around called '**Pradakshinapatha.**'
- The four gateways of Sanchi stupa built in the first century B.C. are extremely artistic and are one of the finest examples of art and architecture of India.
- One of these gateways was donated by the Guild of ivory workers of Vidisa.
- Rock-cut caves are another form of marvel architecture of this period. These rock-cut caves are of two types, namely –
 - A stupa and worshipping hall called as '*Chaitya*' and
 - Monastery called as '*Vihara.*'

Sculpture

- Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodh Gaya, Mathura, Amaravati, Gandhara were the important centers of art activities during post Mauryan period.
- The Mathura and Gandhara schools flourished during the Kushana period.
- The Mathura school produced many fine specimens of sculptures that included the images of Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist deities and the life size sculptures of *Yakshas*, *Yakshini*, and portraits of the kings. This form of art is popularly known as '*Gandhara School of Art,*' which portrays the Buddhist themes.

- Stucco was a popular medium in Gandhara art. Furthermore, the monasteries of Afghanistan were decorated with an abundance of stucco images.
- Gandhara artists created the images of Buddha in different postures and sizes. The large statues of *Bamiyan* Buddha were one of the finest examples of the Gandhara art of having produced the first image of Terracotta.
- The most productive centers of art production were Ahichchhatra, Mathura, Kausambi, Bhita, Rajghat, Pataliputra, Tamralipti, Mahasthan, etc.

Science and Technology

- Engineering skills were evident in this period as proved by the remains of famous dam built for the irrigation works during Chandragupta Maurya's period and repaired by Saka king Rudradaman.
- Another remarkable structure is a complex of four water tanks at Shringaverapura, which reflects a very advanced level of hydraulic engineering.
- In Shringaverapura structures, tanks were built of millions of bricks and water was brought from the river Ganga through a canal measuring about 250 mts in length and 38 mts in width. It had the capacity of about eighty lakh litres of water.
- Indian astronomers had developed an elaborated astronomical system after modifying and adopting more accurate values by counting the periods of revolution of the sun, the moon, the five planets, and the two nodes, namely Rahu and Ketu.
- Eclipses were also predicted with an accuracy.
- *Pancha Siddhantika* written by Varahamihira, gives the summary of five schools of astronomy present in his time.

Medicinal System

- The Indian medicinal system was based on the theory of three humors - air, bile, and phlegm – the correct balance of these maintains a healthy body.
- The medicinal system made remarkable progress during this period.
- The surgical equipment commonly consisted of twenty-five types of knives and needles, thirty probes, twenty-six articles of dressing, etc.
- *Athaavnaaveda* is the source of Ayurveda branch of medicine.
- Medicine became a regular subject of study at higher centers of learning like Taxila and Varanasi.
- Varanasi was specialized in surgery.
- *Sushruta Samhita* is an encyclopedia of surgery. It was compiled by the great surgeon Sushruta at Varanasi.
- *Charaka Samhita* was compiled by **Charaka** at Taxila; it contains mainly the teachings of Atreya, which were collected by his pupils.
- Charaka and Sushruta were the contemporaries of Kushana king Kanishka. The great works of Charaka and Sushruta reached as far as Manchuria, China, and Central Asia through translations in various languages.
- Theophrastus gives details of the medicinal use of various plants and herbs from India in his book 'History of Plants.'

- This shows that the knowledge of Indian herbs and medicinal plants had reached the western world through Greeks and Romans.
- Arabic translation of Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas in the 8th century A.D. influenced the Europeans and west Asian medicinal system during the middle age.
- The large number of gold and silver coins-shows the purity of metal and craftsmanship of the period.

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