



HISTORY OF INDIA-II

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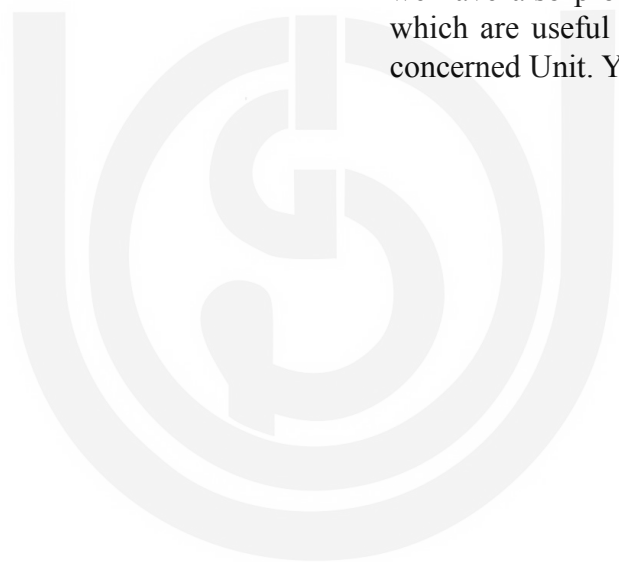
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GUIDELINES FOR STUDY OF THE COURSE

In this Course, we have followed a uniform pattern for presenting the learning material. This starts with an Introduction to the Course, underlining significant developments in a chronological order and covering four major themes divided into 18 Units. For the convenience of study, all the Units have been presented with a uniform structure. Objectives as the first section of the Unit have been included to help you find what are you expected to learn from the study of the Unit. Please go through these objectives carefully and keep reflecting and checking them after studying few sections of the Unit. Introduction of the Unit presents to you the subject-area covered and guides you to the way the subject-matter is presented. These are followed by the main subject discussed through sections and sub-sections for ease of comprehension. In between the text, some Check Your Progress Exercises have been provided. We advise you to attempt these as and when you reach them. These will help you assess your study and test your comprehension of the subject studied. Compare your answers with the answer guidelines provided after the Summary. The Key Words and unfamiliar terms have been appended to the Unit. At the end of each Unit under Suggested Readings we have also provided a list of books and references. These include sources which are useful or have been consulted for developing the material for the concerned Unit. You should try to study them.



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COURSE INTRODUCTION

History is very relevant for society. It is just not limited to understanding the past. It is about the present too. History studies changes that a culture, society or country goes through. No culture is static. Cultures change; they go through many transformations. Some of the changes are so slow and gradual that they become apparent only later, when we study history. The advantage of history is that it affords us the long term view. It becomes possible to appreciate changes which are so minor that they appear insignificant to most people. However, such changes when looked from the perspective of the long term, allow us to understand how modern world has emerged over long centuries of development, how kings and queens have shaped centuries, how ordinary men and women have toiled and brought changes in their lives. Thus history is not only about the lives and activities of the elite but also of the ordinary men and women, children and other genders who have contributed as much to the society as kings and queens have. History is not only about political events, it is about everything that happens in society. Not only the extraordinary but also the mundane will be a subject of study in the present course. We should realize that what appears to be insignificant, unexciting in the first instance may hold the key to understanding changes of enormous significance.

The Course on Ancient Indian history (History of India II) that you are going to study is divided into four **Themes**. Each Theme consists of a number of units. Each theme is intended to introduce to you a major concern or period which may be considered as significant in the context of the history of the ancient period of our country. The present course on **History of India II (BHIC-103)**, starts with the post-Mauryan period since the history prior to that was covered in **History of India I (BHIC- 101)**. The Mauryan period had profound impact on the history of the post-Mauryan period. Although the political power of one region or one ruling family over the Indian sub-continent came to an end, it did not mean decline or set-back for the society as a whole. On the other hand, the empire had initiated processes of change in many regions, and these processes of change reached a level of maturity in the post-Mauryan period. The **First Theme** of this course is a broad one which deals with such changes. The first two Units deal with the some new features which became part of the political history of north India. Population movements across Central Asia had direct impact on the political situation in the north and north-west India. The Bactrian Greeks, Scythians, Parthians and later Kushanas moved into the north and north-west India from Central Asia. They soon became a part of the population of the Indian sub-continent. They made the political map of northern India in the post-Mauryan period vastly different from the political map of Mauryan India. Unit 3 discusses the peninsular India which included both the Deccan and the extreme south, where the first rulers were local kings and some important families, like those of the Maharathis, who started mining their own coins from about the second century BCE. The first organized state in the Deccan, however, was built by the Satavahanas. In the far south, in the area represented by the present-day Tamil Nadu and Kerala, an identical change did not take place in this period. In the

different regions of the south, power was wielded by chiefs who are known to us from poems written in their praise by bards. Among them the chiefs of the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras were like kings who commanded immense agricultural resources and profits from trade. The society of *Tamilaham* was going through changes and cannot be considered a society with a single structure. There were major differences between different sub-regions of the far south. These differences were expressed, in the early Tamil poems, in the different styles of life followed in different sub-regions in *Tamilaham*. The different sub-regions like hilly areas, river-valleys, coastal areas, grasslands were viewed as representing different *tinais* (eco-zones) in the early Tamil poem collections known as *Sangam*. They refer to big chiefs like the Cholas, The Cheras and the Pandyas who were controlling the river valleys where agrarian settlements were expanding (Unit 4) and also the coastal ports which were becoming prosperous because of lucrative trade. The contacts between different regions was maintained through trade and other means which became more intense in this period. This is the main subject which is dealt with in Unit 5. The Indian sub-continent as a whole developed links with Central Asia, parts of Western Asia, the Mediterranean world including north Egypt, and to some extent with Southeast Asia and China. These links were not limited to importing and exporting goods for trade only; they also meant movements of people and ideas. Towns and cities which had originated much earlier, reached their most prosperous phase.

Theme II is focussed mainly on the political history of both north India and peninsular India from the beginning of the fourth century to the eighth century CE. We have already learnt that a number of ruling families emerged in the post-Mauryan period. This points to the fact that more and more areas were experiencing the emergence of local states which were represented by local ruling families. Secondly, when a large state structure emerged, these small local states either lost their separate existence or they continued as subordinates within large states. One such large state structure which began to emerge from the beginning of the fourth century CE was that of the Guptas. In Unit 6 you will read about the political and other aspects of the history of the Gupta period. Certain key features such as the administrative, economic and social aspects of the Gupta period will be addressed. In the post-Gupta period, a number of new political powers emerged in different parts of north India (Unit 7 & 8). They may give the impression that political authority was very fragmented and this was the result of the weakening of the central authority. However, viewed from a different angle, one realizes that the formation of new political powers was a continuous process in early Indian history. Further many powers like the Gurjara-Pratiharas or the kingdom of Harsha lasted for more than a generation. They were more stable, they had their bases in the regions in which they emerged and in many cases they marked the beginning of the political identity of a region or a sub-region. In Unit 9, you will be reading about the kingdoms that emerged in peninsular India in the post-Satavahana period. Here too you will notice that the minor ruling families gradually became subordinates to the powers of the Pallavas of coastal Tamil Nadu and the Chalukyas of Badami in north Karnataka. The basis of Pallava and Chalukya power were important political sub-regions, respectively in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Theme III will address the changes that has started taking shape in the Gupta and the post-Gupta period. You will learn how these changes may together be taken to mark the beginning of a new period in Indian history. Historians have come to think that the ancient phase of Indian history was drawing to a close now, and the period, approximately between the sixth century and the eighth century, may be considered to mark the beginning of the early medieval phase. You will notice that the change from one phase of history to another was not simply a matter of change from one ruling family to another or even a change from an imperial power like the Guptas to the rise of comparatively insignificant local states. This was a change which gave new shape to various spheres of life: political, economic, social, religious and so on. Political authority had their base in the control of land. The grants of land by kings created a strata of landholders who also came to wield political control in their areas. A new kind of polity emerged in which it was not only the king who was the symbol of political authority, but different types of political authorities also laid claim to a share in political power. Land grants to brahmanas, temples and other beneficiaries point to major changes in the agrarian and revenue systems. The decline of trade and urbanization (Unit 10 & 12) also put considerable strain on the economy which was essentially dependent on resources from land. Of-course there was a revival of trade towards the end of the first millennium CE. The decline of trade and urban centers is the subject of a lively debate among scholars who either see this period as one of feudalism and decay, or conversely, one of dynamism. Agriculture expanded between 7-13 centuries CE. The improvement in agriculture and the expansion of sedentary settlements through land grants of villages resulted in the cultivation of cash crops which in turn created favourable conditions for the development of agro-based crafts and industries. Examples of these were making of sugar candy and molasses, textiles, salt, edible oil, iron implements etc. A lot more effort is needed to clarify the nature of dynamism of early medieval economy, but what is known is enough to belie the obstinate image of an unchanging East or medieval stagnation. Society was also going through important changes. The post-Gupta period adversely affected the position of women (Unit 11). Women on the whole suffered as far as their status and standing in the society is concerned. The ideal woman was perceived as one who was chaste, loyal and fulfilled her *stridharma* and *pativrata dharma*. She was devoted to her husband, practiced monogamy even though her husband kept many wives or visited a courtesan for pleasure. The period concerned was patriarchal and deeply ingrained virtues of chastity, purity and loyalty applied to women more than men. Religious changes, which were taking shape in an earlier period, manifested themselves in many forms. The orthodox Brahmanical order in addition to the continuing the tradition of Vedic sacrifices and Vedic learning for which it was given land grants on an extensive scale, included the Vaishnava and Saiva orders (Unit 13). Together, the different groups, practising a wide variety of religious rituals and beliefs, represent what historian call Puranic Hinduism. Gradually tantrism permeated all the major religious traditions.

Theme IV will take a sweeping view of language and literature; art and architecture; science and technology; economy and trade; and environment, forests and water resources in the period between 200 BCE-800 CE. Unit 14 discusses

important aspects of language and literature that flourished in India. As the Vedic texts are the earliest specimens of Sanskrit language, so are the Tamil poems, collectively known as the Sangam, and a few short inscriptions, the earliest specimens of Dravidian languages. Changes in art styles and the emergence of architectural languages is yet another important subject of study (Unit 15). The *stupas* and *viharas* received extended patronage by various groups in the society. Influence of art of other regions like Central Asia and Hellenistic world is seen on Indian art. The Guptas accelerated the growth of temple architecture and this period saw the flowering of different styles of temple architecture: *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara*. Knowledge benefitting from familiarity with developments in other parts of the world was applied to astronomy, mathematics and science (Unit 16). Communication with Western Asia led to an exchange of knowledge on astronomy, astrology, with some texts from Alexandria, such as *Sphujidhvaja*, being translated from Greek into Sanskrit. Unit 17 discusses the broad trends in economy and trade in this period of thousand years. From the burst of trading activity in the post-Mauryan period to feudalism in the Gupta and the post-Gupta period, changes in economy and how they were related to the social set up have been dealt with in this Unit. The last Unit (18) looks at the water resources, forests and environment in the period that followed the Mauryas. The way forests have been perceived in textual sources and how rivers and other water resources became significant in early India have been discussed. A close symbiotic relationship between humans and nature was a matter of importance in early India and played a major role in conserving and preserving the environment



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BLOCK 1
INDIA : 200 BCE TO 300 CE

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UNIT 1 THE SINGAS AND KUSHANAS*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Emerging Significance of North-West India
- 1.3 Sources
- 1.4 The Singas
 - 1.4.1 Territorial Control of the Singas
 - 1.4.2 Administrative Structure
 - 1.4.3 Suga Art
- 1.5 The Indo-Greeks
- 1.6 Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians
- 1.7 The Kushanas
 - 1.7.1 Early Days
 - 1.7.2 Territorial Expansion
 - 1.7.3 Successors of Kanishka
 - 1.7.4 Religious Policy of the Kushanas
 - 1.7.5 Dynastic Sanctuaries of the Kushanas
- 1.8 New Elements in Indian Society
- 1.9 Non-Monarchical Powers
- 1.10 Summary
- 1.11 Key Words
- 1.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 1.13 Suggested Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to learn about:

- political events in India from the close of the Mauryan period to about 300 CE;
- the assimilation of diverse foreign elements into the mainstream of Indian society; and
- the religious leanings of the rulers who came to control the north-west and north India between 200 BCE to 300 CE.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Mauryan rule in 187 BCE paved the way for the emergence of several powers in the Indian subcontinent. The period from the decline of the Mauryas to the rise of the Guptas (2nd century BCE to 3rd century CE) is known in Indian history as the post- Mauryan period.

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The Mauryan Empire had initiated important processes of change in many regions. These processes of change reached a level of maturity in the post-Mauryan period. From now henceforth, the monarchical state system become more prevalent. Though this period did not witness a large empire like that of the Mauryas, it is historically significant as cultural contacts with Central Asia, and the assimilation of foreign elements into the Indian society become widespread. Numerous regional powers emerged in north and north-western India.

1.2 THE EMERGING SIGNIFICANCE OF NORTH-WEST INDIA

North-western India had always been a region which had active contacts with Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. In the post-Mauryan period population movements across Central Asia had direct impact on the political situation in north and north-western India, particularly to the west of upper Ganga and Yamuna. Since the middle of the second century BCE, regions of Central Asia and the area between the Caspian Sea and China were embroiled in conflict among various nomadic tribes. These nomadic tribes who were known as the Scythians, Sakas, Huns, Turks etc. had started migrating from the Steppes in search of new pasture lands once China was closed to them.

Early on, the Achaemenid invasion of India and Alexander's campaigns had opened the north-western parts of India to successive campaigns. Thus, in quick succession, the Greeks or the *Yavanas* (as they are known in India) were followed by the Scythians (Sakas) and the Parthians (Pahlavas). The Kushanas, a branch of the Yueh-chi tribe soon followed. Of course, the movements did not stop here and in later periods too, the movements of people across the north-west frontier continued.

The geophysical characteristics of the Indo-Iranian borderlands allowed for the formation of easy linkages with the West and Central Asia on the one hand and regions to the south of the Hindu Kush on the other. Very early in history, the kings of India had established close contacts with the north-west. Ashoka's bilingual inscription has been found at Kandahar in Greek and Aramaic. It indicates the interaction between the centers of Greek world and the outlying settlements during the Mauryan period. Ashoka's own references to 'Yonas' (*Yavanas*, referring to the people in the north-western borderlands, where he issued Aramaic and Greek edicts) within his empire and to the five 'Yona' rulers of West Asia, North Africa and Greece proper (RE.XIII) are indicative, again, of communications and commerce between India and the Hellenistic world. Such widespread and intimate contacts with the regions in the west became more definite in the post-Mauryan period. However, in the east, Central India and the Deccan, the Mauryas were succeeded by the Sungas, the Kanvas and the Satavahanas. We will take up for study some of the more prominent dynasties like the Sungas, Indo Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and the Kushanas.

1.3 SOURCES

Our sources for studying this period are *Mahabhasya* of Patanjali, *Divyavadana*, *Puranas*, *Malavikagnimitra* of Kalidasa, *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta, a few inscriptions and art historical materials. For some regions the Puranic lists of dynasties and rulers become important and in some cases the inscriptions

supplement the information. Some information is present in *Gargi Samhita*, and there are inscriptions from Ayodhya, Vidisa and Bharhut.

One important development in this period was the emergence of minor ruling families in north India. Information about them is provided by coins minted by them. These coins have names of rules inscribed on them and thus are an important source. However for the political history of this period, they have to be supplemented with sources from Central Asia. Inscriptions written in Kharosthi script have been found in large numbers in Gandhara and many Kharosthi documents have been recovered from Central Asia. Besides, Greek and Latin sources refer to regions of north-western India and its rulers. The Pali work *Milinda-Panha* (The Questions of Milinda) gives information about the *Yavana* king Menander and on Buddhism of this period. The Chinese historical chronicles contain many references to events in Central Asia, Bactria and north-west India. For example, the chronicles of early Han and later Han dynasties of China give ample information on the early history of Yueh-chis or Kushanas.

1.4 THE SUNGAS

As mentioned before, the last king of the Mauryas, Brihadratha, was assassinated by Pushyamitra Sunga in 180 BCE. This is corroborated by Bana, the court poet of Harshavardhana of Kannauj.

The Sungas were brahmanas and there are several references to Sunga teachers in Vedic texts. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* mentions a teacher named Sungiputra. From Panini we learn that the Sungas were of Bharadvaja *gotra*. Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra* describes Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra, as belonging to the Baimbika *kula* and the *Baudhayana Srauta Sutra* represents the Baimbikayah as Kashyapas. In view of the conflicting statements, it is difficult to say whether Pushyamitra was a Sunga of Bharadvaja *gotra* or Baimbika of Kashyapa lineage. However, all these sources indicate that the Sungas were brahmanas. Moreover a later text like *Harshacharita* also refers to Pushyamitra as a brahmana who was an ignoble person.

Sunga rule in India according to the *Puranas* lasted for 112 years. Magadha was the nucleus of the kingdom. The usurpation of the Mauryan throne by Pushyamitra is referred to in the *Puranas* and Banabhatta's *Harshacharita*. According to the *Puranas*, Pushyamitra ruled for 36 years and died in 151 BCE. His son and successor was Agnimitra and he was succeeded by his son Vasumitra. The *Puranas* refer to ten Sunga rulers. Except for Pushyamitra, Agnimitra, Vasumitra and Dhanadeva, the historicity of other rulers is not supplemented by sources. Pushyamitra Sunga is also known for his encounter with the *Yavanas* (Bactrian Greeks.) According to Patanjali's *Mahabhasya* (III.2.111), there were Greek incursions during the rule of the Sungas. This information is also corroborated by *Yugapurana*. The Greeks besieged Saketa (near Ayodhya in the Faizabad District of Uttar Pradesh) and Madhyamika (Nagari near Chittor in Rajasthan). This is clear from the phrase '*Arunòad Yavano Saketam, Arunòad Yavano Madhyamikam*'. Patanjali also indicates that the *yavanas* lived outside Madhyadesha which was situated to the east of Adarsa. The date of *Mahabhasya* is taken to be c.150 BCE. *Malavikagnimitram*, a play by Kalidasa, preserves the memory of the defeat of the *yavanas* at the hands of Vasumitra, the grandson of Pushyamitra Sunga. According to the play, Pushpamitra (Pushyamitra) sent his

grandson Vasumitra (Agnimitra's son) who escorted the sacrificial horse during its travels through different areas prior to the performance of the *Asvamedha yajya*. Vasumitra defeated the *Yavanas* on the banks of the Sindhu river. The sacrifice was performed after Vasumitra returned victorious along with the horse. It is not certain who the leader of the Bactrian Greek army was. Menander Demetrius and Eucratides have been suggested as possible candidates.

After Ashoka's tryst with *Dhamma* and Buddhism, the Sungas are known for having reverted to Brahmanical orthodoxy. In the Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva, Pushyamitra Sunga is credited with the performance of two *Asvamedha* sacrifices. Buddhist sources claim that he persecuted the Buddhists. *Divyavadana* depicts Pushyamitra as a destroyer of Buddhist monasteries and places of worship, particularly those constructed by Ashoka. For instance, it is said that he attempted to destroy the Kukuta *Arama* monastery at Pataliputra. According to sources he also fixed a prize of 100 *dinaras* for the head of every monk. However this account of *Divyavadana* seems highly exaggerated. If the renovations conducted on the Stupas and other Buddhist monuments date to this period, then it would be difficult to believe that the Sungas acted against the Buddhists.

Another feature of this period was that the kings assumed grandiose titles. This is in contrast to the Mauryan period when Ashoka called himself only *Raja*. In this period however, we see the use of titles like *Maharaja*, *Rajaraja*, *Rajati raja*, *Shaonanoshao* etc. Vedic sacrifices like *Asvamedha*, *Rajasuya* etc. were performed with a view to augment royal power. Theoretical treatises of this period uphold the concept of divine creation or divine origin of the king. The *Manusmriti* explains that *Prajapati* (the Creator) created the king by combining the essence of divinities like Indra, Varuna, Vayu, Yama, Agni, etc. More or less a similar description also figures in the *Ramayana* which presents the king as someone who must not only be always obeyed, but revered too (*manyascha puhyascha nityada*). Thus relation with divinity formed a crucial aspect of the polity of the period.

The last Sunga king was Devabhuti. He was killed by his brahmana minister Vasudeva. Thus, the Sunga line came to an end by 75 BCE. They were followed by Kanvas whose founding member was Vasudeva.

1.4.1 Territorial Control of the Sungas

The Sunga rule with its centre at Pataliputra, seems to have embraced territories in the middle Ganga plain, the upper Ganga valley and eastern Malwa. According to the *Divyavadana* and Taranatha's account, it also included Jalandhara and Sakala in the Punjab. There are two Prakrit inscriptions at Bharhut datable to first century BCE, which clearly refer to 'rule of the Suga' (Suganam *raje*) which means 'of the Sunga' dynasty. It appears that some of the more distant regions were probably not directly under their control and merely owed them political allegiance.

1.4.2 Administrative Structure

The organization of the Sunga kingdom was in all probability not the same throughout the long period of 112 years. It varied from time to time according to the power and ability of the ruler at the centre and the extent of the empire. It is

possible that Pushyamitra had a central administration at Pataliputra. He was assisted by a council of ministers and bureaucrats, and his empire was divided into provinces. The provinces were put under the charge of governors of royal blood. A council assisted it. Certain tribal regions having autonomous power were also integrated. Patanjali mentions that the *sabha* which was convened under Pushyamitra probably functioned as a council of ministers or an Assembly. It is stated in the *Malavikagnimitram* that Agnimitra, the Viceroy at Vidisa was assisted by a Council of ministers. We have also evidence to justify that the princes of the royal blood were appointed either as governors or Commanders-in-Chief. Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra was a governor. The Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva proves that one of his forefathers had been the governor of Kosala and he was related by blood to Pushyamitra. Vasumitra, grandson of Pushyamitra, was the Commander-in- Chief of the Sunga army.

Kalidasa and Patanjali mention a *mantriparishad*. It may have been an important element in the governmental machinery. Even princes were assisted by *parishads*.

It appears that after Pushyamitra's demise, the Sunga kingdom weakened. His successors may have ruled in the Vidisha area for some time. In the *Malavikagnimitram* of Kalidasa, admittedly a drama of a much later date, Agnimitra is portrayed as the viceroy at Vidisha (near Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh). This drama also refers to the conflict between Pushyamitra and Yajnasena, king of Vidarbha (the eastern Maharashtra area). The Sungas were victorious. The drama further describes Vasumitra's victory (Pushyamitra's grandson) over a *Yavana* king in an area to the south of the river Sindhu (the river Kalisindh in Madhya Pradesh or the Indus). However some of the Pushyamitra's family members may have ruled in the Kosala area (in Uttar Pradesh) too. The Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva describes him as the lord of Kosala and the sixth in descent from Senapati Pushyamitra. Pushyamitra is in fact praised by Dhanadeva for having performed two horse sacrifices (*dvirasvamedhayajin*), which alludes to his military success. It is the first inscription on stone or metal which mentions the name of Pushyamitra. He was earlier known only from literary sources.

The Kanvas, who perhaps began their political career as subordinates of the Sungas (*Puranas* call them *shungabhrityas*), brought to an end the Sunga kingdom. The last ruler according to the *Puranas* being Devabhuti or Devabhumi. According to Bana he was the victim of a conspiracy engineered by his brahmana minister Vasudeva and was killed by a slave girl who approached him in the guise of a queen. Altogether ten Sunga kings ruled for a period of 112 years from c.187 to 75 BCE.

1.4.3 Sunga Art

The Sunga empire played an important role in patronizing art. Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi bear evidence of the patronage received from the Sunga rulers. The gates and railings of the Bharhut *stupa* and the fine gateway railings which surround the Sanchi *stupa* are said to have been built during the Sunga period. A phenomenal spatial expansion of Buddhist monastic sites occurred from the second-first centuries BCE onwards. The period saw the flowering of visual arts including small terracotta images, larger stone sculptures and architectural monuments like the *caitya* hall at Bhaja, the *stupa* at Bharhut and the Great Stupa at Sanchi.



North Torana (Gateway) (Sunga period) of Sanchi Stupa I. Credit: Arnoldbetten. Source: Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sanchi_Stupa_1_Nord-Torana_\(1999\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sanchi_Stupa_1_Nord-Torana_(1999).JPG))

A most characteristic formal quality of Sunga art is its flowing linear rhythm that binds all isolated objects in one continuous stream of life. The coping stones of the period have huge lotus stalks flowing in rhythmical waves from form to form. The vegetal world is intimately, engrossingly and luxuriously rendered in the Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi reliefs. Its radiating and continuous linear movements dominate the composition and all the figures of men and animals become equal and integral parts of the whole.

The Sunga artists appear to delight in the handling of the human figures. The reliefs illustrate episodes from the life of the Buddha and incidents that give us an idea of contemporary life. Some sculptures of Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi represent the first organized art activity which was opposite to the court art of the Mauryas. It reflects for the first time the results of the ethnic, social and religious fusion and integration. Important religious developments also took place during this period. Patanjali's synthesis of the tradition of *Yoga* became the foundation of one of the schools of thought.

1.5 THE INDO-GREEKS

Under the rule of Alexander, Greeks had settled in Bactria, a region which can be identified with the present-day northern Afghanistan, southern Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. After Alexander's death, his generals came to rule the kingdoms. One such example was the Seleucid kingdom which was coterminous with the Mauryas. Soon Bactria broke away from the Seleucid Empire in about 250 BCE and the Bactrian Greeks formed their own empire as the eastern most post of Hellenism. The Bactrians were pushed out of Bactria by the nomadic incursions from Scythian tribes. The Greeks were dislodged between 145 and 130 BCE and the Bactrian Greeks moved southwards and came to control southern Afghanistan (Arachosia), covering the area from the Hidukush to Gandhara. It is from here that the history of Indo Greeks begins (to be covered in the 2nd Unit).

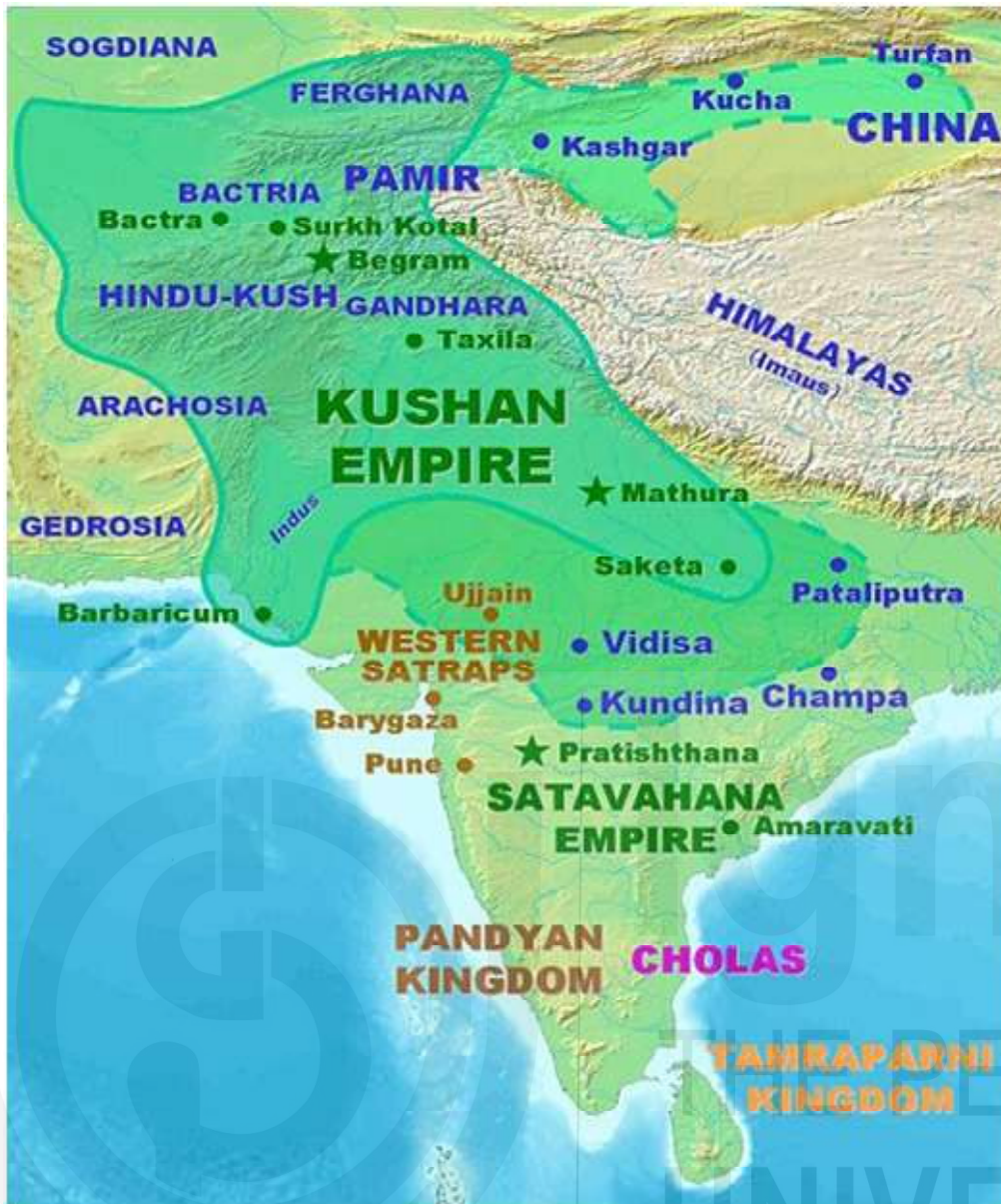
1.6 INDO-SCYTHIANS AND INDO-PARTHIANS

The Indo-Scythians are also known as the Sakas. They were the first large nomadic community to reach South Asia through Bactria. The history of the Indo-Scythians has to be reconstructed largely on the basis of numismatic evidence as the names of the rulers are furnished by their coins. Scythian is a generic term which refers to a group of people, originating in Central Asia and then migrating to south and west. One of the Scythian clans was that of Vonones and his associates who reached India through Afghanistan; the other was Maues who had crossed the Pamirs and entered into India. However, in the middle of the first century BCE, it was Azes, once a co-ruler of the Vonones group who assumed sole power and extended the rule of the Scythians in India. He issued coins with the title 'King of Kings'. Large parts of north-west India were united during the rule of Azes I and his huge output of coinage suggest a great increase in wealth. He might have reached the north-western section of the Indian subcontinent from Arachosia through the Gomal pass and through the regions watered by the Gomal, Tochi and Kurram rivers. That an Era was introduced in his name in 58/57 BCE is evident from inscriptions which are dated in the Era of 'The Great King Azes'. This was known earlier as *Vikrama Era* but now we know that it owed its origin to the first Indo-Scythian king, Azes I. Azes I had for some time Azilises as his co-ruler. Later Azilises succeeded him as the supreme ruler. Azilises could hold together the territories conquered by Azes I including the original seat of power, Arachosia. He too issued a large number of coins which is indicative of his control over areas of north-west India. Apart from consolidating the kingdom of his predecessor; his rule extended to Mathura. His associate Azes II succeeded him in about the first quarter of 1st century CE. His rule however saw contraction in the territorial extent of the kingdom. The coins issued by him show that he continued to rule in the regions of both west and east of Indus. In the region to the west of Indus we have the name of Strategos (general) Aspavarman on the reverse of his coins. This implies that there was sharing of responsibility with his general. We have no evidence of his rule in Mathura. The Indo-Scythians ruled in the north-west India giving space to local dynasties till they were supplanted by Gondophares, the founder of the Indo-Parthian kingdom.

The Indo-Parthians or the Pahlavas succeeded the Indo-Scythians in the Indo-Iranian borderlands. The first ruler was Gondophares whose kingdom extended from Seistan through Arachosia, to the Kabul valley and over Gandhara to the Jammu-Pathankot area. Their coins were divided into four principal categories. The reign of Gondophares could be fixed approximately between c.20 and 45 CE. The Indo-Parthian kingdom was quite large and there were geographical variations. In order to keep the kingdom together, Gondophares probably allowed the Kshatrapas a large measure of autonomy. He cooperated with powerful forces on the ground and absorbed them in his sphere of influence. He expanded his influence from Seistan to the river Sutlej. His policy was conquest by a system of absorption, allowing local rulers to keep their independence. The kingdom collapsed as a result of a major invasion by the Kushanas under Kujula Kadphises. The overstrikes of Kujula Kadphises over the coins of Gondophares indicate very clearly that Kujula brought to an end Parthian rule in Paropamisadae (Kabul-Begram region) and Gandhara.

- What are the important sources for the reconstruction of the history of northern India between 200 BCE – 300 CE?

The significance of the Kushana realm in the political history of the subcontinent and its north-western borderlands is enormous. With the advent of the Kushanas, small territorial kingdoms in the Indo-Iranian borderlands gave way to an Empire which was achieved through political integration of the region. It transformed the Kushana principality in Bactria into a massive empire which included portions of Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, parts of Chinese Central Asia, north-west borderlands of the subcontinent, Mathura and at times beyond Mathura through the Ganga plains till Bhagalpur in Bihar. Because of this, the Kushana Empire is sometimes called the Central Asian Empire.



Map 1.1 : Kushana Empire. Credit: not mentioned. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KushanEmpireMap.jpg>)

The glowing testimony of Kushana control till the Ganga valley comes from the Rabatak inscription discovered from the Puli Khumri area of Afghanistan of Kanishka I written in Bactrian language. Although the name of Vima Taktu as the direct successor of Kujula Kadphises (the head of the Kushana clan) is not entirely clear, the Rabatak inscription confirms that Kujula Kadphises was followed by another ruler before Vima Kadphises (Kanishka's father). Vima Taktu can be linked with 'Soter Megas' ('Great Savior'), the Kushana ruler who issued a series of coins that follow the coin-types of Kujula Kadphises and precede those of Vima Kadphises.

During the Kushana period in the first to third centuries CE, political, economic, religious, and cultural contacts between South Asia and Central Asia increased greatly. Archaeological excavations, art historical evidence, coins, and inscriptions directly reflect these connections. During Kanishka's rule over Transoxiana and Bactria, the empire came to play an important role in the Silk route. The Silk route connected China across Bactria with West Asia and the Mediterranean.



Figure 1.1: Gold Coin of Kanishka. British Museum. Credit: Not mentioned. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KanishkaCoin3.JPG>)

Besides this, the Kushana empire had direct contacts with Indo-Roman trade in the Indian Ocean through the western coast of India.



Figure 1.2: Statue of Kanishka from Mat, Mathura. Credit: Biswarup Ganguly. Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Emperor_Kanishka_-_Greatest_of_Kushan_Monarchs_-_Circa_1st_Century_CE_-_Mathura_-_Government_Museum_-_Mathura_2013-02-23_5836.JPG

1.7.1 Early Days

The first ruler was Kujula Kadphises who adopted the title 'Great King, King of Kings' on coins patterned on Saka and Parthian issues. He had united the five tribes of the Yueh-chi and made successful inroads into India. He established himself at Kabul and Kashmir.

In the light of the Rabatak inscription, the third ruler of the Kushana dynasty was Vima Kadphises. The nimbate figure of the ruler represented him as a supramundane being, often showing him as emerging from the clouds, an obvious indicator of his divine status. The scepter of course indicated the royal authority or pointed to the prerogative to punish the subjects. In the Dasht-i-Nawur inscription of Vima, the Kushana ruler was described as the 'Law of the Living World' [Dom(r)a-ata<D'm-arta]. Thus the king was depicted as a law giver or upholder of the cosmic order. Again, Vasishka had the title *devamanusha*, or a god in human form in the Kamra inscription. Significant is the fact that in the Rabatak inscription of Kanishka I he is given the attribute 'Bago' i.e. God himself. Thus Kanishka was elevated from 'son of a god' to god itself.

1.7.2 Territorial Expansion

The maximum territorial expansion of the Kushana empire took place during Kanishka I's reign. The accession of Kanishka is dated between 78 and 144 CE. An Era based on 78 CE has come to be called the Saka Era, but it is also thought by some to be linked to the accession of Kanishka.

According to the Rabatak Bactrian inscription, the Kushana realm at the time of Kanishka extended to the cities of Saketa, Kausambi, Pataliputra, and Sri-Campa in the Ganges-Yamuna valley. A colossal statue of Kanishka near Mathura with a Brahmi inscription labeling him 'Great King, King of Kings, Son of God, Kanishka' shows that he fulfilled the role of 'Universal Emperor' (*cakravartin*). Whereas the Indo-Greeks used *basileos basilei* (king of kings) title, the Kushanas borrowed titles from the Persians, Chinese and the Romans. They took the titles of *maharajadhiraja* (king of kings), *daivaputra* (son of heaven), *soter* (savior) and *Kaisara* (Caesar).

Kanishka was certainly in control of the north-western frontier areas of the subcontinent. In the Shah-j-i-Dheri relic casket inscription, the city of Purushapura (Peshawar in Pakistan) figures as Kanishkapura, obviously named after the Kushana monarch. The renaming of the city after the reigning Kushana emperor strongly suggests that this was the premier political centre of Kanishka within his South Asian territories. Here Kanishka erected a huge stupa which was a place of attraction among foreign travelers.

1.7.3 Successors of Kanishka

Of the successors of Kanishka I, the most powerful and prominent was Huvishka who ruled for more than three decades. The coinage of Huvishka is especially varied. It included a large number of gold, and many copper coins. Several inscriptions of his reign have come from Mathura. His control over the areas to the west of Kabul is evident from his inscription at Wardak (year 51). Huvishka also issued the maximum varieties of gold coins. His coins show an impressive number of images of divinities from the Indic, Iranian, Central Asian and Hellenistic pantheons.

From the Ara inscription we have reference to one Kanishka II. The next ruler Vasudeva also enjoyed a long reign of more than three decades (yrs. 64/67 to 98). His epigraphic records demonstrate the continuity of the Kushana control over Mathura. Two more successors of Vasudeva I are known from their coins. They are Kanishka III and Vasudeva II. The last possible ruler of the dynasty was Vasudeva II. By the time of Vasudeva II's rule the Kushana realm had shrunk in size. The end of the empire was brought in by the Sassanid ruler Shapur I of Iran.

In the Kushana realm we notice the simultaneous rule of two rulers- one senior and a junior ruler. This form of hereditary dual rule was one such curious practice under the Kushanas. It thus appears that there was less of centralization under these rulers. The Kushanas strengthened the *satrap* system of government adopted from the Sakas. The empire was divided into numerous *satrapies*. Each *satrapy* was placed under the rule of a satrap.

1.7.4 Religious Policy of the Kushanas

The Kushanas incorporated several local divinities into the Kushana pantheon which were depicted on coins. Rosenfield rightly proposed that the selection of reverse types indicated the nomination of individual deities as associates of the king, 'divine companions and supporters of the monarchy' so that the coinage types were propagandist in nature. The multiplicity of gods that are shown added to Kanishka's status and importance.



Figure 1.3: Coin of Wima Kadphises (reigned around 110-20 CE). British Museum. Credit: Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WimaKadphises.JPG>



Figure 1.4: Coin of Kanishka with the Divinity Helios. Greek Language Legend: Obverse: BASILEUS KANISHKOY (King of Kings Kanishka); Reverse: ILIOS "HELIOS". (From 'Coins of the Indo-Greeks', Whitehead, 1914 ed.). Credit: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coin_of_Kanishka_depicting_Helios.jpg)

Iranian religious ideas were dominant on the coins of Kanishka which is the result of their Bactrian cultural background. So the majority of Kanishka's coinage shows gods of the Iranian sphere on its reverse, indicating their names in Graeco-Bactrian. From the Rabatak inscription it is clear that the gods worshipped by the Kushanas and seen as the source of their power were of Iranian origin and Nana was the presiding deity. Representation of the Buddha as Boddo is a significant addition to the repertoire of deities depicted on Kanishka's coins. The Buddha is depicted on the coinage in the same way as the gods such as Siva, Mithra, Ahurmazda etc. By placing the Buddha on a coin, Kanishka has equated his position with that of deities, and thereby implied for himself a divine role. The Buddha images used on Kanishka's coins show that his adherence to Buddhism was a close reflection of the cults prevailing in his realm.



Figure 1.5: Kushana Divinity Adsho (Carnelian Seal). British Museum. Credit: Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AdshoCarnelianSeal.jpg>

While Kanishka's religious inclination was based on Bactrian creeds, Huvishka followed more innovative religious strategies and admitted a wide range of Greek, Brahmanical, Buddhist and Zoroastrian gods for his numismatic pantheon. Representations of the Alexandrian and Roman deities indicate an inclination on the part of Huvishka to appease the Roman traders involved with Indian trade network.



Figure 1.6: Coin of Kanishka with Lettering BOΔΔO" (i.e. Buddha). Credit: CNG Coins. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coin_of_Kanishka_I.jpg)



Figure 1.7: Detail of Kanishka coin with the Image of the Buddha. Credit: B.P. Murphy. Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kanishka_Buddha_detail.jpg

One has also to remember that the heyday of the flourishing Silk Road trade was during the rule of Kanishka I and Huvishka. It can be said that multicultural coins and the cosmopolitan attitude of these Kushana rulers facilitated the trade that passed through their territory. Skanda, Kumara, Vishakha and Mahasena were four different gods to Huvishka, which later on merged into one deity that became known under the name Karttikeya in Brahmanical religion.

The depiction of a bewildering variety of deities on the coins of the Kushanas, belonging to different religious beliefs in the empire indicates promotion of pluralistic religious practices by the rulers where acknowledgment of the local is a significant phenomenon. Though Iranian religion gained pre-eminence, no particular religion dominated.

1.7.5 Dynastic Sanctuaries of the Kushanas

Apart from using the coins as a mode of projecting their claims for divinity, the Kushana rulers also constructed dynastic sanctuaries *Bagolango* or *Bogopouro* (in Bactrian) or *devakula* (in Sanskrit/Prakrit inscriptions) and they also became objects of divine worship. Vima Kadphises began the construction of two such centres of royal cult, one at Mat, near Mathura, the other in Surkh Kotal. Kanishka I continued and finished building the dynastic sanctuary at Surkh Kotal. The sanctuary bore the name 'Kanishka Oanindo-sanctuary'. Kushana dynastic sanctuaries have been recovered from Khalchayan and Airtam (Uzbekistan). It corresponds with their image of 'God like King'. They erected shrines to house life-sized free standing portraits of three generations of kings at Surkh Kotal and Mato. The Rabatak inscription belonging to Kanishka I also refers to the construction of a sanctuary called Nana sanctuary (*bago-laggo*) which housed images of different deities as well as the Kushana rulers such as Kujula Kadphises, Vima Taktu, Vima Kadphises and Kanishka. Significantly in this inscription Kanishka is called a *bago* i.e. God himself. As suggested by scholars, the deification of kings, the practice of installing and worshipping their images in shrines and people's veneration for them led to the foundation and growth of the

Cult of the emperor. The Cult of the Emperor acted as a cementing factor which accommodated immense diversities of ethnic and linguistic groups, religious beliefs and cultural practices. There was acknowledgement of diverse regional features.

Interaction between the Indo-Iranian borderlands and the *Doab* became more intense as the major urban centers of the period were integrated by the Kushanas in their rule. Taxila in the north-west and Mathura in the *Doab* were located on the great trade route that linked the Gangetic region with the north-west and finally to locations in Afghanistan. Such linkages provided elements of commonality in the material culture of Mathura with those of the north-west. It allowed the Kushana monarchs to engage in a kind of royal symbolism through the creation of a dynastic sanctuary at Mathura that suggested that the relationship with Mathura was much more than of mere political control.

1.8 NEW ELEMENTS IN INDIAN SOCIETY

As mentioned earlier, large scale movement of peoples across the northwest frontier took place in the post-Mauryan period. It would, however, be wrong to think that north and north-west India was under foreign domination in this period. The distinction between foreign and Indian was not clear in this period and the Yavanas, Sakas etc. in any case became part of the population of the Indian subcontinent. The Greeks, Sakas, Parthians, Kushanas were gradually Indianized. According to the lawmaker Manu, the Sakas and the Parthians were kshatriyas who had deviated from their duties. Thus, they came to be regarded as second class kshatriyas. In no other period of Indian history were such large numbers of foreigners assimilated into the Indian society as it was during the post-Mauryan period.

Most of these rulers did not have their own script, written language or any organized religion. They became an integral part of Indian society to which they contributed considerably. They introduced better cavalry and the use of the horse on a large scale. They popularized the use of reins and saddles which appear in the Buddhist sculpture of the second and third centuries CE. Kushana equestrian figures have been discovered from Begram in Afghanistan. The Sakas and Kushanas introduced the turban, tunic, trousers and heavy long coats. Caps, helmets and boots were also worn by the Central Asian warriors. Later their military technology spread to India.

1.9 NON-MONARCHICAL POWERS

There were different areas in the Panjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh where small local states were being ruled either by minor royal families or by members of dominant clans like the Audumbaras, Yaudheyas, Malavas, Sibi, Vrishni, and Kunindas. The Audumbaras occupied the land between the upper courses of the Ravi and Beas. Kunindas ruled the territory between the upper courses of the Beas and the Yamuna along the foothills of the Siwalik ranges. The Trigartas ruled the plain country between the rivers Ravi and Sutlej. Yaudheyas ruled the territory between the Sutlej and Yamuna and parts of eastern Rajasthan. Arjunayanas, Malavas and Sibis were distributed in different parts of Rajasthan.

Panini refers to most of the groups mentioned above. With the decline of the Mauryan empire, these groups asserted their autonomy and they began to control

different pockets between the Indus, the Beas and the Sutlej. But their peace was soon disturbed with the inroads made by the Indo-Greeks and the Kushanas. It was perhaps due to Menander I, who conquered both east and west Punjab in and around the middle or the third quarter of the 2nd century BCE, that the Malavas were forced to move towards the Haryana region and then further to eastern Rajasthan. Similar was the case of the Sibis who were contemporary of the Malavas and were neighbours. Like the Malavas they too migrated to eastern Rajasthan following the occupation of their territory by Menander. In the case of the Yaudheyas, they migrated in phases, being pushed first by the Indo-Greeks to the region around Rohtak in Haryana, then by the Saka-Pahlavas to Rajasthan and later on they moved back to their original habitat after perhaps dislodging the Later Kushanas. The Kunindas had to succumb to the Kushanas. The Vrishnis offered a different scenario. Though they bore the brunt of the Kushana rule, they recovered in the post-Kushana phase but were subsequently overthrown by the fellow Yaudheyas. In the opinion of B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'the significance of post Mauryan Punjab lies in the fact that there was an overall change in the political-economic scenario and an opening up of new networks of communication in which the structures of early *gana-samghas* too started undergoing processes of change'. Finally, they withered away during the Gupta period.

These *gana-sangha* states were in transition and issued coins in the name of the *gana*, or community, in the early stages, suggesting the absence of social differentiation. In standard literature they are referred to mostly as 'republics' or 'tribal states'.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Write a note on the 'tribal' polities of north India.

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- 2) Write a note on the assimilation of foreigners into the Indian mainstream.

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1.10 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have learnt that in the north-western part of the subcontinent there were Central Asian powers who intruded into the region south of the Hindukush and beyond at least till Mathura. Actually the boundary line between regions to the north and south of Hindu Kush were extremely fluid and mutual contacts must have been intensive.

The Greeks, Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushanas gradually merged into Indian society. They came as warriors and therefore most of them were absorbed in the Indian society as kshatriyas. With various ruling houses interested in trade and commerce the period also witnessed unprecedented growth in economic life which was visible in all spheres of economy. The Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushanas issued gold, silver and copper coins. Kushana coins became the proto type for Gupta numismatic issues. Copper coins and coin moulds are found in large numbers in areas associated with several non-monarchical clans in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan (Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas etc.).

1.11 KEY WORDS

Caitya: a Buddhist Shrine.

Gana: a word which has many meanings, including an oligarchy.

Kshatrapa: a viceroy or subordinate ruler of the Scythio-Parthians; a title assumed by kings of the Kshaharta and Kardamaka dynasties.

Kshatriya: the *varna* associated with warfare and rulership.

Yavana: Greeks, foreigners from the West.

1.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) a) $\sqrt{\quad}$ b) $\sqrt{\quad}$ c) $\times$
- 2) a) See Section 1.4 and its Sub-sections
b) See Section 1.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See Section 1.9.
- 2) See Section 1.8.

1.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 2 EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POWERS*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Antecedents
- 2.3 Indo-Greeks
- 2.4 The Saka-Kshatrapas of Western India
- 2.5 The Satavahanas
 - 2.5.1 Sources
 - 2.5.2 Antecedents
 - 2.5.3 Political History of the Satavahanas
 - 2.5.4 Administration
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 2.9 Suggested Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to learn about:

- political events in north-western, western India, and Deccan from the post-Mauryan period till 300 CE;
- the Satavahana dynasty which founded the earliest state in the Deccan; and
- the changes in societal and political spheres during this period.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

You have read in the earlier Unit that after the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire, the period which commenced from 200 BCE becomes historically significant as one in which there were widespread cultural contacts with Central Asia along with the assimilation of foreign elements into the Indian society. Both in north and north-west India, a number of polities emerged. Some of the polities like those of the Sungas, Indo-Sythians, Indo-Parthians and Kushanas have already been dealt with in the earlier Unit.

In this period, the regions of the Deccan and south India were also undergoing change. The beginning of territorial states in north India was represented by the sixteen *mahajanapadas* which originated in the 6th-5th centuries BCE. We have also learnt how in the next few centuries Magadha built a formidable state covering almost the entire Indian subcontinent. In the Deccan and peninsular India, however, the emergence of the institution of the state had to wait till the rise of the Satavahanas in the first century BCE.

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In this Unit, we will be focusing our attention on those dynasties which were not covered in the preceding Unit but are equally important such as the Indo-Greeks and Kshatrapas. Additionally, the Satavahanas will be taken up for study.

2.2 ANTECEDENTS

If we go a little back in time, we find that the spread of Chalcolithic settlements in western Deccan had taken place in the second millennium BCE. The eastern Deccan was occupied a little later in the second half of the first millennium BCE by iron using communities. All of these settlements were villages which were inhabited by a large number of tribes. The *Epics* and the *Puranas* mention several tribes such as the Andhras, Sabaras, Pulindas etc. who lived in the Deccan. Ashokan inscriptions also mention them. The process of change started with the Mauryan expansion in the Deccan. The Mauryas were interested in exploiting the rich mineral resources of the Deccan such as gold, diamond and gems from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Land and coastal routes were used to transport these resources to Magadha. Many prosperous settlements such as Dharnikota on the banks of the Krishna in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, and Karad in Satara district of Maharashtra, became important. Many chiefs such as the Maharathis controlled scattered pockets of this region. The family of Satavahanas was related by marriage to the Maharathis and with their rise to power the foundations of the first state in the Deccan were laid.

Before the emergence of the Satavahanas, the first rulers were local kings and some important families. Examples include those of the Maharathis, who started minting their own coins from about the second centuries BCE. The first organized state under the Satavahanas emerged and the changes in the political and social structure of the Deccan accelerated. Satavahanas attain an added significance as they problematize the emergence of the institution of state in the Deccan.

Let us discuss the Indo-Greeks first.

2.3 INDO-GREEKS

Under Alexander, the Greeks had settled in Bactria (Bahlika) which is present-day northern Afghanistan and southern Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Seleucid Empire which was formed in Bactria and the adjoining areas of Parthia by Alexander's erstwhile general after his fall, was soon overthrown by Diodotus I (c. 250-230 BCE) who revolted against the Seleucids and established an independent Bactrian Greek kingdom. The ideal geographical location of Bactria connecting West Asia and Central Asia on the one hand, and with South Asia, on the other, held the clue to the rise of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. Soon Bactrians extended their control into other areas as well, for instance, south of the Hindukush. In c. 145 BCE, they lost their hold over Bactria but continued to rule over parts of north-west India. The Bactrian Greeks who ruled over parts of north-west India between the 2nd century BCE and the early 1st century CE are known as the Indo-Greeks or Indo-Bactrians.

The history of Indo-Greeks is largely reconstructed on the basis of their coins. These coins were dynastic issues and acted as markers of the sovereign authority of the ruler. For the first time, the region to the south of the Hindu Kush experienced die-struck coinage, portraiture and legend. Some of the rulers are,

however, also known from the Greek and Latin sources. The most detailed extant account of Bactrian events is that offered by the Latin *Philippic Histories* of Pompeius Trogus, preserved only in an abridged form. A few passages on Bactrian history are preserved in Diodorus, Polybius or Strabo.

The presence of a large number of rulers in a short span of time suggests that some of them ruled concurrently. Demetrius I, Demetrius II, Appollodotus, Pantaleon and Agathocles were responsible for extending rule to the south of the Hindukush into north-western India. Out of the 42 Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kings, as many as 34 are known only through their coins. The sequence of kings which has been proposed by scholars is based on the composition of the hoards, overstrikes, monogram patterns, geographical distribution of coins and stylistic features.

The coins of the Graeco-Bactrians which circulated in the region north of the Hindu Kush were mostly in gold, silver, copper and nickel. They followed the Attic weight standard. They carried Greek legends, royal portraits and Greek deities along with the name and title of the king. On the other hand, the coins of the Indo-Greeks which circulated in regions to the south of the Hindukush were mostly made of silver and copper. The conquest over Indian territories necessitated the issue of bilingual and bi-inscriptional coins. On a few exceptional pieces, we have legends written in Brahmi script. To cite an example, we have a coin type of Agathocles in which the obverse has a legend in Prakrit written in Brahmi 'Rajine Agathuklayesa', and on the reverse in Greek language and script 'Basileus Agathokleous'. These Indian issues followed an Indian weight standard. Apart from royal portraits, the coins carried Indian religious symbols.

Any study of the Indo-Greeks would make Menander I Soter, the main protagonist. First, he surpasses all the Indo-Greek kings who ruled before and after him in the subcontinent not only by the number of coins but also by the number of different dies and monograms for both silver and bronze coins. Secondly, in all the public and private collections worldwide and in the recent coin hoards, the quantity of his coins is far superior to any of his Greek contemporaries. Thirdly, he was the only Greek king who is represented in Indian literature. Two classical authors refer to Menander, Pompeius Trogus and Strabo. He is indicated as a Bactrian king by Trogus and he refers to his 'Indian activities'. Strabo on the authority of Apollodorus of Artemita writes that more Indian tribes were subdued by the Bactrian Greeks than by Alexander.

Thus, it appears that by the time of Menander Soter, the Kathiawar peninsula and the Indus Delta were under their control. *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* refers to *drachms* of Apollodotus and Menander circulating in Barygaza. The historical background of Menander could be reconstructed from *Milindapanha* ('The Questions of Milinda' datable to second-first century BCE) which contain his discussions with the Buddhist monk Nagasena, and the coins. The Pali version of *Milindapaho* suggests that he was born in a place called Kalasigama ('*Kalasigamo Nama, Tatthaham Jati Ti*'), Begram, Kavisi region. The *Milindapanho* states that his capital was Sagala, identified generally with Sialkot in Pakistan. His first series of coins were minted and found in the western part of the Indo-Greek kingdom, thereby, suggesting that like his predecessors Antimachus II and Apollodotus I, he ascended the throne in the city of Alexandria of the Caucasus. The date of Menander's accession to the throne is generally taken to be c.155 BCE, though an alternative date c.165 BCE is also suggested.



Figure 2.1 Menander Soter Wheel Coin. Obv: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΥ “Of Saviour King Menander”. Rev: Palm of Victory. Kharosthi legend- *Maharajasa Tratadasa Menandrasa*. British Museum. Credit: Gardner, Percy, 1846-1937; Poole, Reginald Stuart, 1832-1895. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Menander_Soter_wheel_coin.jpg)

Menander I expanded his power base and inaugurated new mints to strike his innumerable coinages with new monetary types and systems. He truly became the monarch of the whole Indo-Greek kingdom integrating several areas of the north-west under a single rule. However, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Menander converted to Buddhism, though he must have patronized the religion to a great extent.

Agathocleia, taken to be the queen of Menander, and her son Strato I (c.135–125 BCE) ruled in the Gandhara region. Agathocleia acted as a regent to her



Figure 2.2: The Bharhut Yavana. Indian Relief of probably Indo-Greek King, possibly Menander. With the flowing headband of a Greek King, northern tunic with Hellenistic pleats, and Buddhist triratna symbol on his sword. Bharhut, 2nd century BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Credit: User: G41m8. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bharhut_Yavana.jpg)

minor son Strato I upon the death of Menander. During the post-Menander phase of Indo-Greek rule in the region to the south of Hindu Kush, we have three near contemporary rulers: Lysias (c.120-110 BCE), Antialcidas (c.115-95 BCE) and Heliocles II (c.110-100 BCE), apart from Strato I. Of them, Antialcidas is mentioned in the Besnagar Pillar Inscription of Heliodorus as the king of Taxila, whose ambassador was Heliodorus. He visited Kasiputra Bhagabhadra, the king of Vidisa (in Madhya Pradesh). Since all the monograms used by Strato I were also used by Heliocles II, it appears that he took control of Strato's mints and territories as well. These rulers must have ruled simultaneously in different pockets of north-west India. The succeeding Indo-Greek rulers had a very short span of rule. There were ten rulers within a small span of fifteen years which shows that political instability had become the norm. The Indo-Greek rule over Gandhara came to an end due to conflicts with the Parthians and Sakas. Their control over the area to the east of the Jhelum ended in the late 1st century BCE or early 1st century CE with their defeat at the hands of the Kshatrapa ruler Rajuvula. Their last stronghold was in eastern Punjab before they withered away.

2.4 THE SAKA-KSHATRAPAS OF WESTERN INDIA

The Scythio-Parthians ruled through their Kshatrapas (viceroys or subordinate rulers). The Kshatrapas ruled over parts of western India during the Kushana period. A group of rulers who ruled in Gujarat, Saurashtra and Malwa during the post-Mauryan times are known as Western Kshatrapas.

There were two important lines of Kshatrapa rulers: the Kshaharatas and Kardamakas. Till recently only two members of the Kshaharata family were known viz., Bhumaka and Nahapana. Another name, Aghudaka or Abhedaka is now known from coins, who also bears the family name Kshaharata on his coins. Bhumaka seems to have originally owed allegiance to Kanishka. His coins with legends in Brahmi and Kharosthi have been found in coastal Gujarat; some also could be traced in Malwa and Ajmer area. Bhumaka was immediately succeeded by Nahapana as his copper coins were of the same type as issued by Bhumaka.



Figure 2.3: Dedicatory Inscription in Brahmi by prime Minister Ayama in the name of his ruler, Nahapana. It reads 'Mahakhatapa ("great Satrap")'. Manmodi Caves, c. 100 CE. Source: Jas Burgess, 1883. Wikimedia Commons. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mahakhatapa.jpg>)

Nahapana is known to us not only from his coins but also from several inscriptions recording endowments and benefactions by his son-in-law Usavadata and one of his ministers Ayama. The Nambanus of the *Periplus* and king Naravahana of the Jaina sources are also identified with Nahapana. Nahapana's coins have been found in the Ajmer area of Rajasthan and Nasik area of Maharashtra. In the earlier inscriptions Nahapana uses the title *Kshatrapa* and in his later ones *Mahakshatrapa* and *Rajan*. He perhaps ruled more or less independently.

Nahapana's kingdom in its largest expanse seems to have included Malwa, Gujarat, Saurashtra, northern Maharashtra, parts of Rajasthan and the lower Indus valley. The capital Minnagara was midway between Ujjain and Broach and perhaps could be identified with Doha.

Epigraphic and numismatic evidences suggest that control over certain areas, especially those that gave access to the western sea board frequently changed hands between the Sakas and the Satavahanas, a formidable power of Deccan during the post-Mauryan period. That Nahapana was gaining political control at the expense of Satavahanas is evident from the distribution of his records in areas which had formed the core of the Satavahana realm: three inscriptions from Nasik, one each from Karle and Junnar (both located close to Pune, Maharashtra). A Nasik inscription records his hold over Bhargukachchha (Broach, Gujarat), Dasapura (Mandasore in western MP), Surparaka (Sopara, a suburb of Mumbai) and Govardhana (Nasik). However, soon after, Nahapana was killed, probably by the Satavahana ruler Gautamiputra Satakarni, who wrested control of the southern territories of the Kshaharata kingdom.



Figure 2.4: Silver Coin of Nahapana. British Museum. Credit: Uploadalt. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silver_coin_of_Nahapana_British_Museum.jpg)

During the later years of Nahapana, another Kshatrapa ruler appeared on the scene. He was Chashtana who belonged to the Kardamaka family. This family name is found in an inscription at Kanheri where the daughter of Rudradaman (Chashtana's grandson), who was the queen of Vashisthiputra Satakarni, mentions herself as having been born in the Kardamaka family. Chashtana assumed the title '*kshatrapa*' on his earlier coins and '*mahakshatrapa*' on his later ones while '*rajan*' remained throughout. Chashtana began his rule most probably in 78 CE.

Chashtana was ruling in western India conjointly with his grandson, Rudradaman I in *Saka Era* 52 (130 CE) as known from Andhau inscription coming from Kutch in western Gujarat. His son was Jayadaman. From the rarity of his coins it appears that he probably ruled for a brief period and predeceased his father. Chashtana is also referred to as Tiasenes in Ptolemy's *Geography* and he

is said to have had his capital at Ujjayini in Avanti. This indicates loss of Ujjayini in western Malwa by the Satavahanas. Rudradaman I was the most important ruler of the Kardamaka family. During his reign the Saka power experienced a major expansion. His famous inscription from Junagarh, dated Saka Era 72 (150 CE) bears testimony to this. He assumed the title of *Mahakshatrapa*. The title '*mahakshatrapa*' assumed by Rudradaman I (c. 150 CE) certainly speaks of his more exalted political position than that of an ordinary Kshatrapa. Thus he assumed independence by 150 CE perhaps from the Kushanas. Rudradaman I (c. 150 CE) established his power over Akaravanti, Anarta a (northern part of Kathiawad), Saurashtra (Kathiawad peninsula), Svabhra (on the banks of the Sabarmati), Kaccha (Kutch), Sindu-Sauvira (lower Indus valley both to the east and the west of the Indus), Kukura, Aparanta and Nishada (located somewhere between the Vindhya and the Paripatra mountains). Some of these places/areas were once under the Satavahanas and now they were conquered by Rudradaman. Rudradaman I, according to the Junagarh *prasasti*, defeated Satakarni twice, the lord of the Deccan, but spared him on account of the nearness of relation; this brought him glory. An inscription from Kanheri informs us that the Satavahana king Vasishthiputra Satakarni married the daughter of '*Mahakshatrapa Ru..*' (the name is unfortunately broken off and therefore, not legible). If *Mahakshatrapa Ru* is the same as Rudradaman I then the defeated Satavahana king could have been Vasishthiputra Satakarni who by the virtue of being the son-in-law of Rudradaman was not uprooted by his Saka adversary.



Figure 2.6: Silver Coin of Rudradaman I (130-150). Obv: Bust of Rudradaman, with corrupted Greek Legend OVONIAOOCVACHANO. Rev: Three arched hill or *caitya* with river, crescent and sun. Brahmi legend *Rajno Ksatrapasa Rudradaman*, "Son of King and Great Satrap Jayadaman". Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coin_of_Rudradaman.jpg)

The Junagarh *prasasti* also throws lights on the diversified revenue demands of the state. This inscription describes that the treasury (*kosa*) of Rudradaman I overflowed with precious metals like gold (*kanaka*), silver (*rajata*) and gems by dint of his collection of lawfully levied taxes (*yathavaprapti*), like rent on land (*bali*), share on agricultural produce (*bhaga*), and tolls and customs (*sulka*). The terms *bali* and *bhaga* as revenue demands have been known since the time of Ashoka and were levied on peasants. The extraction of *sulka* or tolls and customs certainly speaks of the collection from commercial transactions. The successors of Rudradaman I could not keep his entire territory intact but retained their independent position in western Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar till the early fifth century.

- 1) Discuss the Indo-Greeks with reference to Menander.

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- 2) Who were the Western Kshatrapas? Discuss their main features.

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2.5 THE SATAVAHANAS

Contemporary to the Sakas were the Satavahanas in the Deccan. The Satavahana family laid the foundation of the first monarchical polity in Deccan in the post-Mauryan period.

2.5.1 Sources

The names of the Satavahana rulers occur in the lists of kings found in the *Puranas*. However these lists should be used in conjunction with other sources. This is so because, the names of the kings and duration of their rule vary in different *Puranas*. The *Puranas* also contain a lot of myths and legends which distort the picture. However, *Puranas* become an important source when studied with other sources such as coins and inscriptions.

The Satavahanas minted a large number of coins in lead, silver and an alloy of copper. Their silver coins carry the portrait of the king and his name. The inscriptions are found in Buddhist rock cut caves and record donations made by Satavahana kings and queens to a large number of people. By comparing the information available in these different sources, scholars generally accept that the Satavahanas began their rule in the first century BCE. The earliest record is found engraved on rock in a cave near Nasik in the present state of Maharashtra.

2.5.2 Antecedents

Though earlier scholars thought that the Satavahanas emerged as a major power soon after the Mauryas, recent excavations and numismatic sources have brought to light a distinct pre-Satavahana phase which is an intermediary phase between the decline of the Mauryas and the emergence of the Satavahanas.

B.D.Chattopadhyaya believes that soon after the decline of the Mauryas and before the advent of Satavahanas, a large number of small political principalities emerged in various parts of Deccan. Coins of local rulers often bearing the title *maharathi* have been found in stratigraphic contexts at sites such as Verrapuram in pre-Satavahana levels. At Brahmapuri, coins of Kura rulers have been found at pre-Satavahana levels. Unstratified coin finds at Kotalingala give the names of several local leaders such as Gobhadra, Samigopa, Chimuka, Kamvaya, and Narana. *Araja* named Kubiraka is mentioned in a late 2nd century BCE inscription found on a relic casket at Bhattiprolu. All this indicates a significant increase in the power and status of local elites during the 2nd-1st centuries BCE (Singh, 2008).

2.5.3 Political History of the Satavahanas

We can place the beginning of the Satavahana kingdom around the late first century BCE, and it flourished for the next 250 years. Paithan in the central Deccan was the apex political centre throughout the Satavahana history right from the days of the first ruler Simuka (late first century BCE). Though their origin must have been in a region located in eastern Deccan i.e. between the Godavari and the Krishna rivers, initially they rose to power in central Deccan with Pratishthana (modern Paithan, Maharashtra) as their capital.

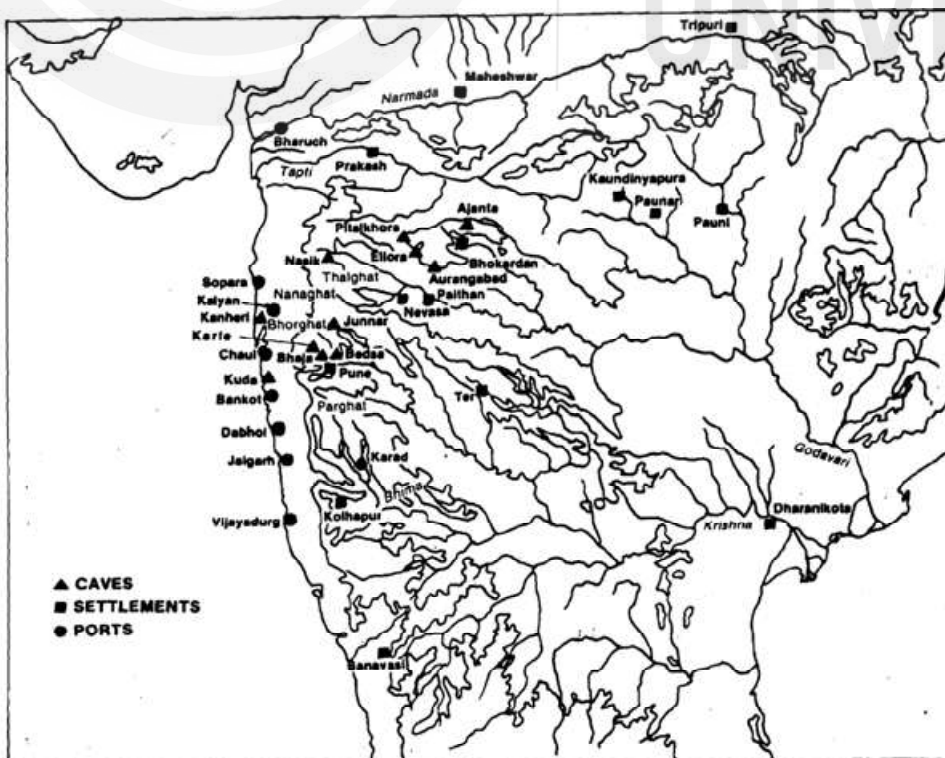
The Satavahanas are identical with the Andhras of *Puranas*. The Sanskrit Puranic texts mention the Satavahanas as belonging to the *Andhra-jati* or as *Andhra-bhrityas*. There is a debate as to whether the Satavahanas initially came to power in the eastern or western Deccan. Since they called themselves Andhras, they probably belonged to the Andhra tribe. The term *Andhra-bhritya* is taken by some scholars to indicate that they were subordinates of the Mauryas (*bhritya* means 'servant' or 'subordinate'). However *Andhra-bhritya* could also mean 'servants of the Andhras'. Thus it may apply not to the Satavahanas but to their successors.

Early Satavahana coins have been found from Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh indicating that their rule began in eastern Deccan. On the other hand, inscriptions in the Naneghat and Nasik caves point to the western Deccan as their initial base. It is possible, according to some scholars, that Paithan was their initial base territory in the western Deccan, from where they expanded into eastern Deccan, Andhra and the western coast.

Ashokan inscriptions mention Andhras among the subject population within the Mauryan realm. Their own inscriptions refer to them as belonging to the Satavahana family (*Satavahana-kula*) and never as Andhras or *Andhrabhrityas*. The *Puranas* provide us with varying lists of rulers of the Andhra origin; *Matsya* and the *Brahmanda Purana* mention a list of 30 kings who were assigned a period of 460 years whereas the *Vayu Purana* gives a list of 17 kings covering 300 years. Some of the *Matsya Purana* manuscripts speak of a shorter duration of Andhra rule of 272/275 years. Epigraphic and numismatic sources provide the evidence in support of approximately fifteen Satavahana kings who actually ruled. It is, therefore, more logical to prefer a shorter chronology of 275 years under fifteen or seventeen Satavahana rulers in the Deccan (from c. 50 BCE to CE 225) to longer duration of 460 years. Thus it could be said that the Satavahanas ruled from about the 1st century BCE to 3rd century CE.



Map: India in 2nd Century CE. Credit: Charles Joppen. Source: “*Historical Atlas of India*,” by Charles Joppen (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1907). Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India_2nd_century_AD.jpg



Satavahana Settlements. Source: EHI-02, Block 7.

If we look at the find spots of the earliest Satavahana inscriptions, we find that they are available from Nasik and Naneghat in the western Deccan. Coins of Satavahanas have been found from excavations at Nevasa (Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra). This suggests that central Deccan was within their realm. The *Puranas* and *Geography* of Ptolemy indicate that the Satavahana capital was located at Pratisthana (Paithan in central Deccan). The later rulers were losing their control over the west and had to move further east and southwards from the late 2nd century CE.

The first known ruler of this dynasty, according to archaeological finds and the *Puranic* lists, was Simuka (also called Sisuka). On his coins Simuka is mentioned as Chhimuka who can be placed around the 1st century BCE. Simuka was succeeded by his brother Kanha or Krishna, who extended the empire eastwards till Nasik; next came Satakarni I. He was the first powerful ruler of the dynasty and has been lauded as the Lord of the Deccan (*Dakshinapathapati*) in Queen Naganika's inscription at Naneghat. Satakarni is known from two records from Nasik. He is possibly identical with Satakarni figuring in Kharavela's *prasasti*. He probably extended his sway to the east as his coins have been recovered from Kaundinyapura in Vidarbha. Who succeeded Satakarni I is not clear, but prior to the succession of Gautamiputra Satakarni there was another ruler named Gautamiputra Siva Satakarni whose coins have been recently reported. The *Puranic* list mentions one Siva Svati as a predecessor of Gautamiputra Satakarni.

Gautamiputra Satakarni was the next powerful ruler in the dynasty. We learn about his achievements and personality from the Nasik *prasasti*, which was caused to be engraved by his mother Gautami Balasri during the reign of Vashisthiputra Pulumavi. He is described as the destroyer of the Sakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas. It also credits him with the annihilation of the Kshaharata dynasty and restorer of the fortune of the Satavahana family ((*khakharatavasa niravasesakara Satavahana-kula-yasa-patithapana-kara*).

There were three phases in the struggle between the Sakas and Satavahanas. The first phase was when, as described in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, the king of Barygaza, Nambanus, put a naval blockade around the port of Kalliene (Kalyan) from where he forced the visiting ships to go to Barygaza. Kalyan's prosperity waned and it does not find any mention in the list of ports available in the *Geography* of Ptolemy (c. 150 CE). The second phase was during the time of Gautamiputra Satakarni as is evident from the Nasik *prasasti* and coins of these two dynasties. A sure indicator of the Satavahana victory comes from the Jogalthembi hoard of coins yielding more than 13,000 coins issued by the Saka ruler Nahapana; more than 9000 of these coins were found counterstruck by Gautamiputra Satakarni. Counterstriking indicates conquest by the victorious ruler over his rival. Thirdly, in his 18th regnal year Gautamiputra Satakarni also donated to a Buddhist monastery near Nasik a piece of land which till recently had been enjoyed by Usavadata, Nahapana's son-in-law (*khetam ajakalakiyam Usavadatena bhuktam*). Gautamiputra Satakarni could confiscate the plot and make the donation again to the Buddhist monastery only after the ouster of the Saka ruler became possible.

The Nasik *prasasti* describes Gautamiputra Satakarni as the ruler of Asika (Rishika, between the Godavari and the Krishna), Asaka (Asmaka to the north of Rishika), Mulaka (area around Pratisthana in the central Deccan), Kukura (northern Kathiawad), Anupa (Mahishmati to the south of the Narmada), Vidabha

(Vidarbha in Nagpur), and Akaravanti (Avanti located around Ujjaini in western Malwa and Akara in eastern Malwa around modern Sanchi-Vidisa-Bhopal region in MP). He is also praised as the lord of the following mountains (*pavata-pati*): Vijha (Vindhya or the eastern part of the Vindhya range), Achhavat (Rikshavat, part of the Vindhya to the north of the Narmada), Parichata (Paripatra or the present Aravalli mountains), Sahya (Sahyadri or the Western Ghats), Kanhagiri (Khanheri near Mumbai), Mahendra (Eastern Ghats) and Setagiri (the hill near Nagarjunakonda in the Guntur area of Andhra Pradesh). When he is praised as the ruler whose chargers drank the water of the three seas (*tisamuda toyapita vahana*), there seems to have been an allusion to the expansion of the Satavahana power over the entire Deccan from the western to the eastern sea-boards. Put differently it points to his claims of extensive conquest in trans-Vindhyan India. He fittingly assumed the epithet 'the Lord of the Deccan' (*Dakshinapathapati*). Under Gautamiputra, the Satavahana power penetrated to the areas to the north of the Narmada, e.g. eastern and western Malwa and southern Gujarat. For the first time a power of the Deccan expanded beyond river Narmada, traditionally known as the northern boundary of the Deccan.

He was succeeded by his son Vasisthiputra Pulumavi who too ruled for twenty-four years (c. 130-54 CE) like his father. He is clearly identifiable with Siro P(t)olemaios (Sri Pulumavi) of Ptolemy's *Geography*. His political centre continued to be at Betana (Paithan). He indeed retained intact the Satavahana control over Nasik which has yielded his four inscriptions (yrs. 2, 6, 19 and 22) and also over Karle near Pune. His inscriptions from Amaravati in eastern Deccan suggest that the Amaravati region was controlled by him. His coin with ship motif circulated in eastern Deccan which also indicates Satavahana mastery over the east coast.

In spite of the heavy losses suffered in later years due to Rudradaman's conquest, the Satavahanas somehow managed to retain their control over their primary stronghold in Nasik and western Deccan (two inscriptions of Vasisthiputra Satakarni from Nasik and Naneghat in his year 13 have been found). Yajnasri Satakarni was a prominent king among the later Satavahanas. Inscriptions attest to his long reign of at least twenty seven years during which the Satavahana territorial possession comprised Nasik, western Deccan, eastern Deccan and Vidarbha. He was probably the last of the powerful Satavahana monarchs. His successors ruled over a much reduced territory which was confined to Andhra Pradesh and the Bellary area of Karnataka. These later successors are mostly known from their silver coins with bust of the ruler. The issuance of such coins began during the time of Vasisthiputra Pulumavi and continued till the end.

The coins of Vasisthiputra Pulumavi have been found in various parts of Andhra Pradesh. The other rulers whose bust type silver coins have been found are Vasisthiputra Satakarni, Yajnasri Satakarni, Vasisthiputra Vijaya Satakarni, Vasisthiputra Sivasri Pulumavi, Vasisthiputra Skanda Satakarni. There are some coins bearing the name of Madhariputra Pulumavi who may also be considered as a late Satavahana ruler. All these rulers probably ruled for a very short period. Some of these later Satavahana rulers are not mentioned in the *Puranic* king-lists and are only known through their coins. It was under the later Satavahanas that coins with bilingual legends were issued and in addition to the name of the king in Prakrit, these carried a legend in a south Indian language.

The end of the Satavahana political presence in Deccan is likely to have taken place in c. 225 CE. This paved the way for the rise of the Vakatakas in the Deccan, Kadambas in Mysore, Abhiras in Maharashtra and Ikshvakus in Andhra. The Ikshvakus became prominent in eastern Deccan.

The regular issuance of coins, including coins with ship-motifs (single or double masted) indicate Satavahana interests in commercial exchanges. Grand epithets were bestowed upon the Satavahana rulers when they were compared in valour with several Epic heroes. Being a monarchy, the rulers embraced the Brahmanical norms as the ideology of the state and performed Vedic sacrifices like *asvamedha*, *vajapeya* and *rajasuya*. Gautamiputra Satakarni was glorified as a unique brahmana (*eka bamhana*) who stopped the admixture among the four varnas (*vinivatita chatuvanasamkara*). In the Satavahana realm the importance of queens, e.g. Nayanika and Gautami Balasri was recognized. Nayanika in fact served as a queen regent when her son was a minor. Even coins were issued with her name inscribed on one side, with her spouse Satakarni's name on the other.

2.5.4 Administration

It appears that the Indo-Greeks, Satavahanas, the Kshaharatas and the Kardamaka rulers maintained diversified and large armies in view of the numerous wars waged by these powers. The Greeks ruled in different pockets and there could have been joint rules. Their territorial expansion was based on their military might. Apart from infantry, the Satavahanas possessed cavalry, chariots and elephant forces. The army commander was styled *mahasenapati*, often associated, however, with discharging civil functions. The maintenance of civil and military functionaries certainly depended mostly on the agrarian resources, but the realm collected levies on crafts (*karukara*), including a cess on salt production (*lonakhadakam*). Diversified revenue demands seem to have been a marker of the emergence of a complex monarchical polity and both the Sakas and the Satavahanas imposed diverse form of taxes. We find that for both the Sakas and the Satavahanas, control of Nasik, Junnar, and Karle were important as these were important towns since they commanded the passes which gave the ports of the northern Konkan access to the hinterland. The Saka-Satavahana struggle or the prolonged conflict between the two royal houses dominates the history of this period.

In addition to the Kstarapas, Satavahana kings had to contend with the power of king Kharavela from Odisha or Kalinga. He is supposed to have dispatched an army to the west and it is known that the Satavahana power suffered set backs both at the hands of the Ksatrapas and Kharavela.

The Satavahanas may have maintained some sort of relationship with the local chiefs, though the nature is not clear. For example, the inscriptions refer to marriage relations of the Satavahanas with the Maharathis and the Mahabhojas. In fact, Queen Nayanika herself was a daughter of a Maharathi. Maharathis are also known to have made independent donations; most of their inscriptions are found around Karle. The records of the Mahabhojas, on the other hand, occur along the west coast.

- 1) Write a short note of about 50 words on the sources that are important for the reconstruction of the history of the Satavahanas.

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- 2) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×)

- a) Menander was a Buddhist convert. ()
- b) The Junagadh rock inscription was written in Sanskrit. ()
- c) The *Satrap* system was introduced into India by the Sakas. ()
- d) The Satavahanas made Buddhism their state religion. ()
- e) There is no controversy regarding the origin and identity of the Satavahanas. ()

2.6 SUMMARY

The period between 200 BCE-200 CE is important in Indian history. A number of polities became significant in north-western, western India and the Deccan. Coins minted by different kings become an important source of history along with inscriptions and *Puranic* texts. In fact, thirty Bactrian Greeks are known from coins only. The nature of coinage and the wide area in which they circulated suggest wide trade networks. The Satavahana period is important in the history of Deccan because it was the earliest state that emerged south of the Vindhyas in the first century BCE.

2.7 KEY WORDS

Kshatrapa: a viceroy or subordinate ruler of the Scythio-Parthians; a title assumed by kings of the Kshaharata and Kardamaka dynasties

Mahakshatrapa: viceroy, subordinate ruler; a title assumed by some kings of the Kshaharata and Kardamaka dynasties.

Brahmi: an ancient Indian script

Aramaic: a language and script. The Aramaic or North Semitic script was the official script of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Achaemenid empires; Ashokan inscriptions indicate the use of the language and script in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent.

2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See Section 2.3
- 2) See Section 2.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See Sub-section 2.5.1
- 2) a) ✓ b) ✓ c) ✓ d) × e) ×

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 EARLY STATE FORMATION IN DECCAN AND *TAMILAHAM**

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Sources
- 3.3 About State Formation
- 3.4 Antecedents
- 3.5 Geographical Background
- 3.6 Outline History of Satavahana Dynasty
- 3.7 Settlement Pattern
- 3.8 Administration
- 3.9 Society
- 3.10 South India (*Tamilaham*): The Region
- 3.11 The Five Eco-zones and Subsistence Patterns
- 3.12 Evolution of Political Society
- 3.13 Summary
- 3.14 Key Words
- 3.15 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 3.16 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to learn about:

- the Satavahana dynasty which founded the earliest state in the Deccan;
- the nature of administration under the Satavahanas, and the changes in the society at this time.

You should also be able to understand:

- what eco-zones constituted *Tamilaham* (south India) of the early period;
- how the various forms of subsistence co-existed and interacted;
- how the different kinds of chiefdoms functioned; and
- how they represented different levels of political control.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit you learnt about the emergence of regional powers in the Indian subcontinent in the period between 200 BCE till 300 CE. In this Unit, we will study the changes in Deccan. The major power that rose in the Deccan around the 1st century BCE was the Satavahana dynasty. Here, we will concentrate on the political and social structure of the Deccan under the Satavahanas.

* This Unit has been adopted from EHI-02, Block 7.

After learning about early state formation in Deccan under the Satavahanas you will see that a similar situation was not seen in south India (*Tamilaham*) during this period. We do not see the existence of a state power in the region, but only chiefdoms. State presupposes the existence of a centralized political authority over a territory. Its authority would be based on the control of the territorial resources. It would have a regular system of taxation and organized defense. Facilitating both taxation and defense, the state would have a bureaucracy or a team of officials of different ranks and functions. On the other hand, a chiefdom would have no such evolved features. A chiefdom would be a society of hereditary status, ruled by a chief. His authority would be the one based on the control of his people bound by the concerned tribal or clannish ties of kinship. The chief would be the embodiment of the kinship relations of his people. There would be no regular taxation or periodic exaction of any revenue from the people, but only occasional voluntary payments to the chief. In this Unit, you will be made familiar with the variety of chiefly powers and their levels of political development in *Tamilaham*.

3.2 SOURCES

The names of the Satavahana rulers, also known as the Andhras, occur in the lists of kings found in the *Puranas*. However, there are many difficulties in using these lists as sources of history without critically comparing them with other sources. For example, the names of the kings and the duration of their rule vary in the different *Puranas*. Moreover, information about the kings is interwoven with myths and legends, and one has to carefully distinguish between facts and legendary stories. The *Puranas* are, nevertheless, useful when studied with other sources such as coins and inscriptions. The Satavahanas minted a large number of coins in:

- lead,
- silver, and
- an alloy of copper.



Satavahana 1st Century BCE Coin inscribed in Brahmi Script. British Museum Collection, London. Credit: PHGCOM. Source: Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Satavahana1stCenturyBCECoinInscribedInBrahmi\(Sataka\)Nisa.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Satavahana1stCenturyBCECoinInscribedInBrahmi(Sataka)Nisa.jpg)).

Their silver coins carry the portrait of the king and his name. The inscriptions are found in Buddhist caves cut in rock and record donations made by Satavahana kings and queens as well as by a large number of ordinary people. By comparing the information available in these different sources, scholars generally accept that the Satavahanas began their rule around the 1st century BCE. Their earliest record is found engraved on rock in a cave near Nasik in the present state of Maharashtra.

3.3 ABOUT STATE FORMATION

We should now pose the question: What is a **state** and how does the emergence of **state** bring about changes in society? There are many theories which seek to explain the reasons for the emergence of a **state**. Reasons for the emergence of a **state** vary from region to region. In certain cases, the development of trade and the growth of urban centres could lead to the rise of a **state**. Other theories suggest that population pressure or conquest could also result in a change in the political structure.

Scholars generally agree that a **state** is a more efficient method of controlling expanding populations. A **state** exercises control over a more or less well-defined territory and maintains an administrative machinery to collect taxes and revenue. It pays for a regular army that enforces law and order. But together with all this, the inequality and stratification in society also increases. There is a well-marked distinction between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers control the resources of society for their own benefit and use. The ruled, on the other hand, provide the revenue and the money required to maintain the members of the ruling family, the notables in the **state**, the various categories of officials and the army. Thus, the basic difference between a tribal society and a **state** society is in the nature of political control. In a **state** system, a specialized administrative machinery separates the rulers from the ruled. In a tribal society, political power is generally exercised by a clan which has no authority to enforce its decisions. The position of the clan depends on the loyalty of the members and most decisions are taken together.

3.4 ANTECEDENTS

As we have learnt, Chalcolithic settlements spread in the western Deccan in the 2nd millennium BCE. The eastern Deccan was occupied a little later in the 2nd half of the 1st millennium BCE by iron using communities. These were, by and large, village settlements – the abode of a large number of tribes. Early Sanskrit literature, particularly the Epics and the *Puranas*, mention several tribes such as the Andhras, Sabaras, Pulindas, etc. who lived in Deccan. Many of these are also mentioned by Ashoka in his inscriptions. But, most of these references are of a general nature and it is difficult to define the region where they lived in Deccan.

The process of change, perhaps, started with the Mauryan expansion in Deccan. The Mauryas were primarily interested in exploiting the mineral resources of the Deccan peninsula. The gold, diamonds and gems from the mines in Karnataka and Andhra were transported to Magadha in the north through a series of land and coastal routes. Market centres developed at important points along these routes such as Dharanikota on the banks of the Krishna in Guntur district of

Andhra and Karad in Satara district of Maharashtra. Many chiefs known as *maharathis* became important in several scattered pockets. But it was under the Satavahanas who were related by marriage to the *maharathis* that the first state emerged in Deccan.

3.5 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

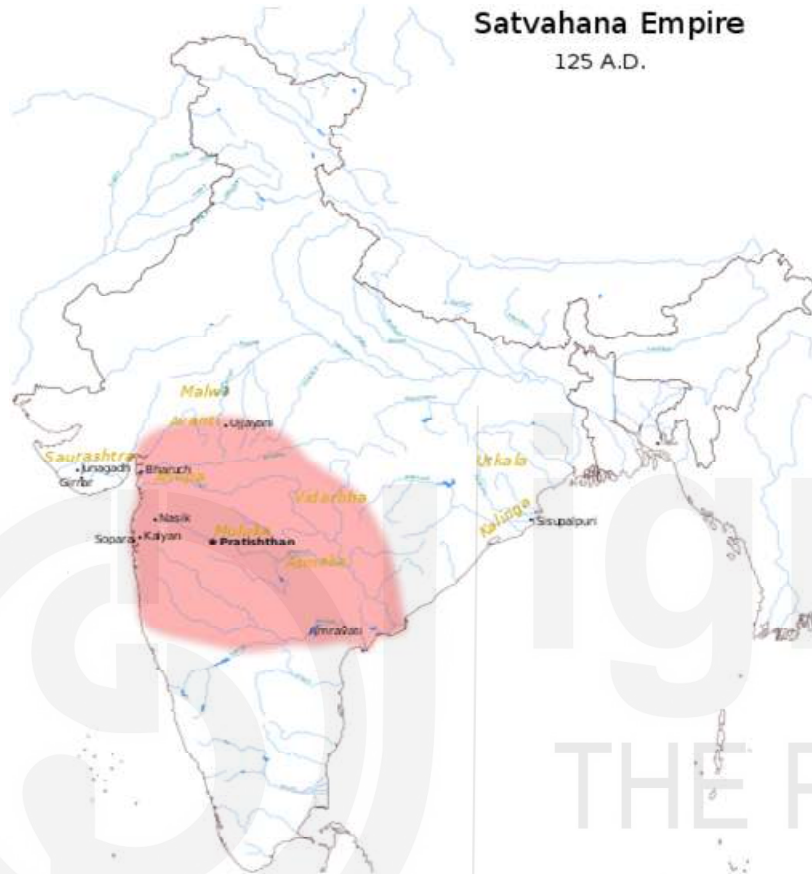
The Deccan peninsula is divided into the plateau region and the coastal plains by the hill ranges of the Eastern and Western Ghats. The Andhra coast is much wider than the Konkan coast to the west. The general slope of the plateau is to the east and as a result, the major rivers such as the Mahanadi, Godavari and Krishna flow eastwards into the Bay of Bengal. The deltas and valleys of the rivers provide fertile areas for settlements. Perhaps, a significant aspect of the geography of the Deccan is the fact that the hill ranges of the plateau can be crossed only along the passes.

3.6 OUTLINE HISTORY OF SATAVAHANA DYNASTY

According to the *Puranic* tradition it was Simuka Satavahana who established the Satavahana power. Kanha or Krishna, his brother, is perhaps known to us from an inscription at Nasik. Another record that lists several rulers of the dynasty is the Nanaghat inscription of Queen Nayanika, the widowed queen of Satakarni, who performed Vedic sacrifices. Nanaghat was a major pass connecting Junnar with the coast, and in a cave at the head of the pass, portraits of the Satavahana rulers were carved. Unfortunately, the sculptures are now completely destroyed and all that remains are labels over their heads giving their names.

We know very little about the rulers that followed Satakarni till we come to the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni. An inscription of his mother engraved on the entrance to a cave at Nasik provides us details about the extent of his kingdom and the events of his reign. One of his major achievements was the defeat of the Kshatrapas of western Deccan and Gujarat. His mother's epigraph praises him as the restorer of Satavahana glory and further proof of this comes from numismatic evidence. After his victory, he counterstruck silver coins of the Kshatrapa Nahapana with his own legend and symbols. According to the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, as a result of rivalry between the Kshatrapas and Satavahanas, Greek ships entering Kalyan, a port near present Mumbai, were sent under guard to the port of Bharuch. Perhaps, control of the lucrative foreign trade was one of the causes for the conflict. It would also seem that under Gautamiputra Satakarni, Satavahana rule extended over Andhra as well. Gautamiputra was succeeded by his son Pulumavi and it was at this time that the Satavahanas consolidated their power in eastern Deccan. For the first time we find Satavahana inscriptions outside western Deccan at Amaravati. Yajnasri Satakarni was the last important Satavahana ruler and after him the kingdom was splintered and divided between his successors – one line of kings ruling in the Andhra region. It was also under the later Satavahanas that coins with bilingual legends were issued and in addition to the name of the king in Prakrit these carried a legend in a south Indian language – opinion being divided on its identification between Tamil and Telugu.

In addition to the Kshatrapas, an early Satavahana ruler had to contend with the power of Kharavela from Odisha (Kalinga). Kharavela rose to power in Kalinga in the middle of the 1st century BCE. He dispatched an army to the west without caring for Satakarni; this suggests that early Satavahana power suffered setbacks both at the hands of the Kshatrapas and of Kharavela. It was revived only through the exploits of Gautamiputra Satakarni.



Approximate Extent of the Satavahana Empire under Gautamiputra Satakarni. Source: *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. II. Credit: chetanv. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Satvahana.svg>).

One of the problems of Satavahana history is that we know very little about the different pockets of Deccan. For example, the inscriptions refer to marriage relations of the Satavahanas with the Maharathis and the Mahabhojas— in fact, in the Nanaghat label inscriptions a Maharathi finds precedence over a *Kumara* (prince) and Queen Nayanika herself was the daughter of a Maharathi. Maharathis are also known to have made independent donations – most of their inscriptions having been found around Karle, while the records of the Mahabhojas occur along the west coast.

3.7 SETTLEMENT PATTERN

On the basis of the find-spots of their earliest inscriptions, it can be said that the Satavahanas began their rule in the western Deccan. A 2nd century BCE inscription of Gautamiputra Satakarni's mother from Nasik provides information about the extent of the kingdom under the Satavahanas. The mention of both the Western and the Eastern Ghats as forming parts of Gautamiputra Satakarni's empire suggests that by this time Satavahana rule covered the entire Deccan and that it

was divided into *aharas* (districts). We get the names of at least five *aharas* in the inscriptions:

- Govardhana-ahara with its centre around Nasik;
- Soparaka-ahara on the west coast;
- Mamala-ahara comprising the hilly portions of Pune and Satara districts;
- Satavahanihara covering the Bellary district of Karnataka; and
- Kapurachara perhaps in Gujarat.



Nanaghat/Naneghat Cave Inscription of Queen Nayanika/Naganika in Sanskrit, c. 2nd Century BCE. Credit: Elroy Serrao. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Complete_view_of_Inscription_in_cave_at_Naneghat.jpg).

West Coast

On the west coast there were a series of ports at Bharuch, Kalyan, Sopara and Chaul and continuing further south all along the Konkan coast. To these ports commodities were brought from the inland centres through passes along the Western Ghats. An important source for understanding the nature of travel and trade is the 1st century CE text *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* written by an anonymous Greek sailor. It provides a graphic account of the dangerous passage through the narrow mouth of the Gulf of Cambay to Bharuch. As a result, incoming ships were piloted into the port by royal fishermen of the district. We have earlier referred to the conflict between the Satavahanas and the Kshatrapas over control of the maritime trade and the competition between the ports of Bharuch and Kalyan.

Inland Settlements

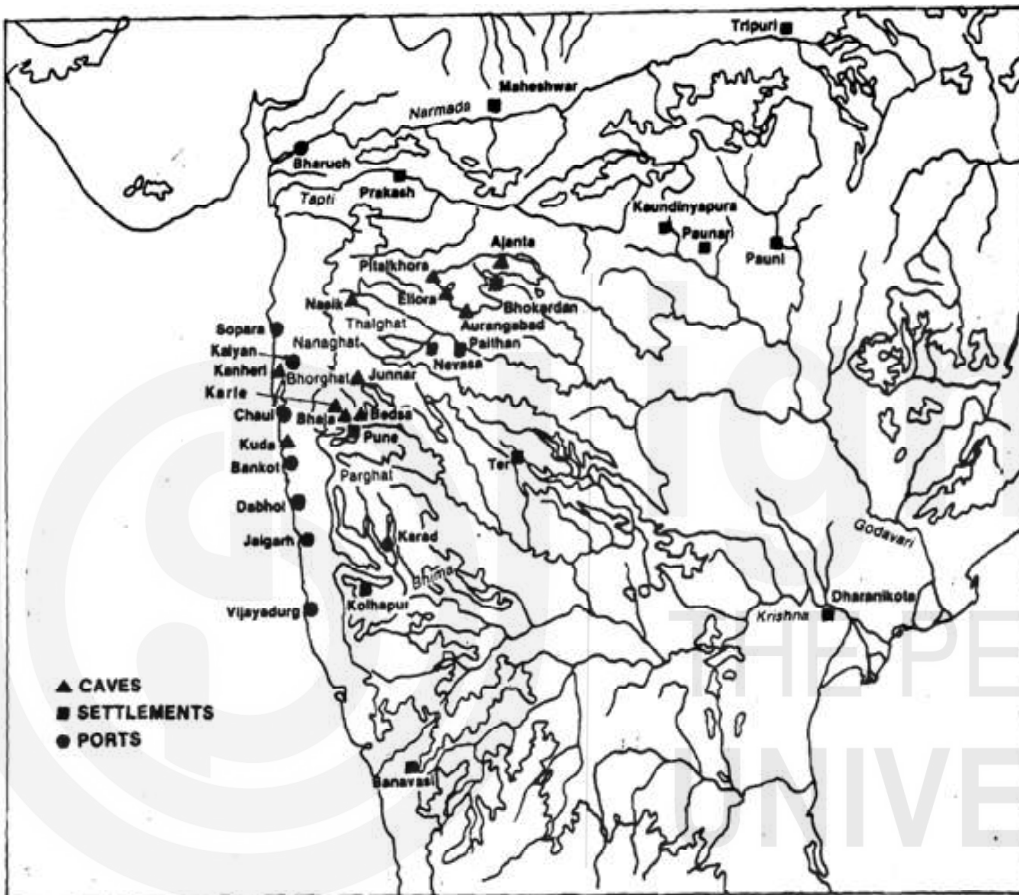
Across the Western Ghats on the inland side, the major concentration of settlements were around:

- Nasik,
- Junnar within a 30 km. radius of Karle, and
- further south in the upper Krishna basin around Kolhapur.

It should be emphasized that all these areas were agriculturally rich and fertile and provided a valuable resource base for the ports on the west coast. These ports handled much of the trade in 1st century CE between India and the Mediterranean region and were also linked by overland trans-peninsular routes across the Deccan to centres in Andhra and along the east coast. It went from Bharuch to Paithan and Ter and further east to centres in Andhra. The ancient

site of Paithan is spread over 4 sq. kms. along the Godavari and from time to time a rich yield of antiquities like coins, moulds, terracottas and pottery have been found in the area so far. We know very little about the structural remains of the Satavahana period.

Ter lies in the major cotton producing region of Deccan. Excavations at the site have yielded evidence of wooden fortifications and a number of vats, perhaps for dyeing cloth. It is also well known for the find of an ivory figurine very similar to the specimen found at Pompeii, but, perhaps, the most important ruin at the site is that of a brick *caitya* subsequently converted into a Brahmanical temple.



Satavahana Settlements. Source: EHI-02, Block-7.

Another route in the Deccan linked Ujjain to Maheshwar on the Narmada and past the caves at Ajanta and Pitalkhora to Bhokardan and Paithan. Bhokardan was a major bead-making centre and was also known for shell and ivory-working. Inhabitants of Bhokardan or Bhogavardhana are known to have made donations at the Buddhist caves of Bharhut and Sanchi in central India.

Further south in the upper Krishna valley Karad is an early centre referred to in Buddhist inscriptions. Also located in the same region is Kolhapur. In the western part of the town a rich hoard of bronze objects was found. Some of these like the statuette of Poseidon were, clearly, imports, while others like carts and bronze vessels were of local manufacture. An extensive site in the adjacent district of Belgaum is the site of Vadgaon Madhavpur, a suburb of Belgaum town where excavations have yielded large numbers of coins and other antiquities. Further south is the site of Banavasi known as the find-spot of one of the Satavahana inscription. It was, perhaps, a fortified settlement as there are indications of a fortification wall and a moat.

The trans-peninsula route across Deccan linked these sites in the western Deccan to centres like Amravati in the lower Krishna valley and went past the Karimnagar region of Andhra. The Karimnagar region has an extensive distribution of early historical sites, an important centre being that of Kondapur about 70 km. north-west of Hyderabad. Excavations at the site have yielded a rich collection of coins and terracottas and several structures of brick of various sizes laid in mud mortar. Peddabankur is a small village now but was an important settlement during the Satavahana period extending over a 30-hectare area. About 10 km. from Peddabankur was the fortified site of Shulikatta. It was surrounded by a mud-rampart and excavations have unearthed a large brick structure at the site. Another major habitation site was at Kotalingala which was settled in the pre-Satavahana period as indicated by recent coin finds. The Satavahana settlement had a mud fortification and extensive brick structures. Large quantities of iron slag and ore were found at the site. Leading from the Karimnagar region, the route branched off into the lower Krishna valley which has a large concentration of early historical sites. Prominent among these are Amaravati and Dharanikota on both banks of the river Krishna, and Dharanikota was connected to the river through a navigation channel. The earliest structural activity at the site was marked by the construction of a wooden wharf which was later converted into a brick structure. But, with the gradual silting up of the navigation channel the site was abandoned in the 4th century CE. In addition to the trans-peninsular route, another alternative was to go to the region of Vidarbha into central India – the important settlements in Vidarbha being those of Panuar, Pauni, Mandhal, Bhatkuli and Adam.

One point that needs to be stressed here is that it is only during the Satavahana period that fortified settlements develop in Deccan, and excavations indicate a marked improvement in the quality of construction. Brick was increasingly used both for fortification as well as for other structures. The floors were well-made by means of rammed clay and the roof supported by wooden posts and covered with tiles.

The railway lines at present follow the same routes that were used in the ancient period. The Bhorphat is still the only pass across the Western Ghats connecting Pune to Bombay past a series of early Buddhist caves such as:

- Shelarwadi,
- Bedsa,
- Bhaja,
- Karle,
- Ambivale, and
- Kondane.

3.8 ADMINISTRATION

Administration under the Satavahanas was much simpler than under the Mauryas. Inscriptions refer to ministers who were in charge of various functions. Among other things, they served as treasury officers and maintained land records. The exact number of ministers is not known. These ministers were appointed directly by the king and the post of a minister does not seem to have been hereditary, i.e. passed from father to son. They were, perhaps, paid in money from the revenue

collected by the state. We do not have exact figures for the amount of revenue collected, but we do know that the state collected taxes both from agriculture and trade. One of the practices started by Satavahana rulers in the 1st century BCE was that of donating revenue of a village to either a brahmana or the Buddhist *sangha*. This practice became much more widespread under the Gupta rulers.

The importance of land revenue for the king can be judged from the elaborate procedure that was used to record donations of land. These donations were first proclaimed in an assembly (*nigama-sabha*). It was then written down either on a copper-plate or cloth by an officer or minister. This record was then delivered to the donee to whom the grant had been made. There was a keeper of records who maintained a detailed account of these donations.

The rulers at this time were eager to bring more land under cultivation so that they could earn extra revenue. It seems that anyone who cleared the forest and tilled a plot could claim ownership of the land. The revenue from trade was another major source of income. We will discuss the expansion of trade in Unit 5. Here, we should point out that much of the trade was handled by guilds who also acted as bankers. The state took elaborate measures to encourage trade. Highways were made secure and rest-houses were constructed along them.

3.9 SOCIETY

The social structure of Deccan under the Satavahanas shows many features which are different from those prescribed in the Sanskrit texts such as the *Manusmriti*. For example, many inscriptions of the Satavahana rulers mention the names of their mothers rather than those of their fathers, such as Gautamiputra Satakarni (Satakarni, son of Gautami). This is not in keeping with the *Dharmasastras* which state that in the approved forms of marriage the bride acquires the *gotra* of her husband and loses that of the father.

Another interesting feature of the inscriptions is that the Satavahanas refer to themselves as unique brahmanas who crushed the pride of the kshatriyas. According to Brahmanical texts it was only the kshatriyas who had the right to rule. The inscriptions are also useful as they record donations by a cross-section of population and from this, we can judge the prosperity of certain sections of the society. Traders and merchants figure prominently as donors, but also important were blacksmiths, gardeners and fishermen. No doubt, these artisans and craftsmen benefitted from increased long-distance trade. What is noteworthy is that they mention their occupations by names and not their castes. In an earlier Unit we had mentioned that Buddhist texts prescribe a somewhat different division of society as compared to the Brahmanical texts. Here, the distinction was based on work and craft and in most cases, people were known by their occupations rather than their castes.

Another category of donors that is known at this time was that of *yavanas* (foreigners). The term *yavana* originally denoted an Ionian Greek, but around the Common Era it was used indiscriminately for any foreigner. Many of the *yavanas* adopted Prakrit names and made donations to Buddhist monasteries. Women frequently made gifts either on their own or sometimes with their husbands or sons. One of the Satavahana queens named Nayanika also performed Vedic sacrifices and made large donations to the brahman and Buddhist monks.

These examples indicate that society in Deccan, as it is known from the records of the period, was not governed by rules laid down by the Brahmanical texts. Thus, any reconstruction of the ancient social structure should carefully analyze textual references and establish their veracity by comparing these with other sources such as inscriptional or archaeological.

The role of Buddhist monasteries mentioned in the records of the period had also changed a great deal since the time of the Buddha. In the beginning Buddhist monks were allowed very few personal possessions. These were limited to a few robes and a begging bowl. Gradually, the influence and membership of the Buddhist *sangha* increased. We have seen that Satavahana kings donated large sums of money and land to the Buddhist monasteries. This added to the wealth of the *sangha*. It is also at this time that we get references to donations made by Buddhist monks and nuns themselves.

CheckYour Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Discuss some features of society under the Satavahanas.

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- 2) Write a short note on the inland trade routes of this period.

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3.10 SOUTH INDIA (*TAMILAHAM*): THE REGION

The land in between the hills of Venkatam and Kanyakumari is called *Tamilaham* or *Tamilakam*. It includes the whole of modern Tamil Nadu and Kerala. With forested hills, undulated terrains, pastures, arid zones, wet-lands and a long sea coast, the region represented a combination of diverse eco-zones. The three principal chiefdoms – the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas – had their strongholds both in the interior as well as on the sea coast. The Cheras had Karur in the interior and Muciris, the well-known ancient port on the west coast.



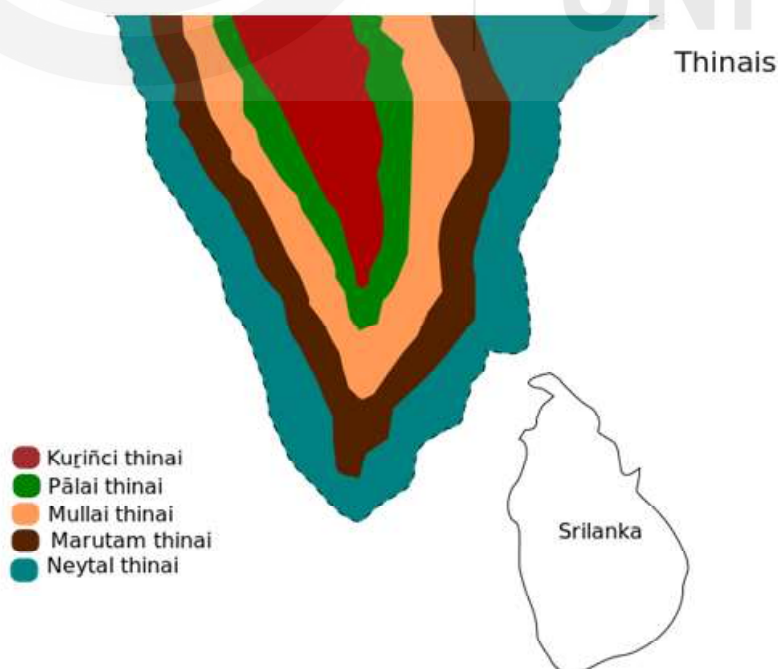
Ancient *Tamilaham* Ports. Source: <http://www2.demis.nl/mapserver/mapper.asp>. Credit: Lotlil. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_tamilakam_ports.png).

The Cholas had Urayur in the interior and Puhar on the Coromandel coast as their strongholds. Similarly, the Pandyas had Madurai and Korkar as their interior headquarters and port respectively. These were the most important political centres of the period in the region.

3.11 THE FIVE ECO-ZONES AND SUBSISTENCE PATTERNS

The ecological differences of the region are reflected in ancient Tamil poetry. This is in the form of the concept of *aintinai* (five eco-zones). In ancient Tamil poetry *Tamilaham* is portrayed as a combination of five *tinai*s, viz.:

- *kurinji* (hilly backwoods),



Credit: Praveenp. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thinai_en.svg).

- *palai* (arid zone),
- *mullai* (pastoral tracts),
- *marutam* (wet-land), and
- *neital* (sea coast).

There could be areas in which one *tinai* or the other dominated. But, generally most of the *tinais* were fragmented and mixed up all over the region. The mode of human adaptation varied from *tinai* to *tinai* depending on its ecological conditions. The social groups also varied. The people of *kurinji* took to hunting and gathering. *Palai* being a dry land, the inhabitants over there could not produce anything. They took to cattle lifting and plundering. The people of *mullai* practised animal husbandry and shifting cultivation. In the *marutam*, the people could pursue plough agriculture and in the *neital*, fishing and salt making. Thus, *Tamilaham* had different forms of subsistence as determined by the ecological conditions of the five *tinais*. People from each *tinai* went out interacting with the peoples of the other *tinais* and entered into barter of goods. For example, the people from the hilly backwoods came down to other zones for exchanging their resources like honey, meat, fruits and other wild goods. The people of pastoral tracts exchanged their dairy products and the coasted people fish and salt. Agrarian zones attracted all of them. The small, self-sustaining *tinais* grew up into larger eco-zones through such interaction and interdependence. There were larger zones of productivity as well as non-productivity. The zones of better productivity had a relatively developed social division of labour. In the zones of lesser productivity, the society was essentially simple and consisted of clans. By and large, the peoples of *Tamilaham* represented a complex society of unevenly developed components which shared a common culture. The political level of the society varied from the simple chiefdom of clans to complex chiefdom of ruling houses. A full-fledged state power was yet to take shape.

3.12 EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL SOCIETY

The earliest recognizable phase of the evolution of political society can be seen in the chiefdoms of clans. There were several chiefdoms of clans, some big and others very small. The chiefs of clan-chiefdoms were addressed to in the poems as the great son (*perumakan*) or chiefly, son (*ko-makan*) indicating the relation between chiefs and their clan members. What is really indicated is the basis of kinship. Some such chiefdoms must have grown beyond kinship through the conquests and subjugation of other clans. The relatively larger chiefdoms of complex nature were born out of conquests and subjugation. Marriage alliances of chiefs also were responsible for the formation of larger chiefdoms, but the real basis of the enlargement of chiefdoms was their wealth. Chiefdoms with large agricultural areas constituted the most powerful ones. There were three such most powerful chiefdoms in contemporary *Tamilaham*, viz: the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas which represented the phase of the evolution of a political society anticipating the emergence of a real state.

Different Kinds of Chiefdoms

There were three different kinds of chiefdoms in *Tamilaham*:

- *kizar* (little chiefs),
- *velir* (bigger chiefs), and
- *vedar* (the biggest chiefs) categories of chiefs.

The *kizar* were headmen of small villages (*Ur*), generally bound by kinship. Many *kizars* are mentioned in the poems. They are referred to by being prefixed with the name of their respective villages. Arnkantur-*kizar* or Urntur-*kizar* may be cited as examples. Some of them were subjugated by the bigger chiefs and had to serve them in their campaigns. The poems refer to *kizar* doing *vidutozil* (obligatory services) to bigger chiefs like the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas in their campaigns. The bigger chiefs, in their turn, rewarded the *kizars* through gifts which included grant of predatory control over the subjugated villages. Such *kizars*, sometimes, received control over certain other villages also as reward for serving bigger chiefs. The *velirs* were mostly hill chieftains, though there were *velirs* controlling low-lands too. The hill chiefs were:

- hunter chiefs,
- *vetar-koman*, or
- *kuravar-koman*, or
- *neduvettuvan*.

The *vetar*, *kuravar* and *vettuvār* were the major clansmen of the hills dominated by the *velir*. Venkatamalai (the hills of Venkatam), Nanjilmalai (the high ranges south of Travancore), Parampuralai (probably modern Parampikkulam reserve forest near Pollachchi), Potyilmalai (high ranges in the modern Madurai district) were some of the important centres of the hill chiefs of the period. The Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were the three principal ruling houses of the biggest category of chiefs. They were known as *Muvendar* – the three *cendars*. These chiefly houses had control over peoples of larger areas. The Cheras controlled the peoples of the Kurinji dominated areas of the Western Ghats towards the sea. The Cholas had control over the peoples in the Kaveri area and the Pandyas, in the south-central area toward the seas. They had several lesser chiefs under their service and paying tributes (*tiarai*). There was no notion of a precisely demarcated territory. The political authority functioned through control over peoples rather than privileges over basic resources. For example, the control over the peoples like *kuravar* or *vetar* or *vettuvār* by their chiefs made them chiefs. The hills as well as plains were collectively owned by such peoples. The right of their chiefs emanated from their kinship with the people. The resources were inherited not by individuals but by groups whose members were bound by ties of common ancestry. These were descent groups and they made voluntary payments to their chiefs. Regular and periodic payment of taxes was not in vogue. However, the productivity of the chieftdom determined the strength of the chiefs. Compared to the chiefs of agricultural areas, the pastoral and hunter chiefs were less powerful. Powerful chiefs tried to subjugate lesser ones and extracted tributes from them. Plunder raid was the characteristic feature of contemporary political practice.

Plunder and Booty Redistribution

All chiefs, big and small, had to resort to plunder raids for satisfying the needs of their people. The chiefs redistributed the booty among their warriors, bards and mendicants besides their own kinsmen. The institution of gift-giving (*kodai*) was integral to the practice of booty redistribution. Gift-giving was considered to be the most important responsibility of any chief. Most of the poems in *Puranaruru* (one of the anthologies under *Ettuttokai*) praise the generosity of the chieftains. Generosity and bravery were the two major virtues of chieftains according to such poems. The insufficiency of local resources made chiefly

plunders an economic imperative. A poem in *Puranaruru*, praising a chief namely Urtur-kizar, shows how meagre his resources were. When a dependent approached him for gifts, he called his blacksmith to get him a new lance, so that he could go for a raid and acquire booty to give gifts. Plunder raids and booty redistribution, thus, became the characteristic feature of contemporary polity. Chiefs of all kinds indulged in plundering against one another. Lesser chiefs joined hands with the big ones in plunder campaigns and obtained their shares of booty. Cattle and grain constituted the routine items of booty. The bards of the period sing about the gifts of:

- elephants,
- horses,
- golden lotuses,
- chariots,
- gems, and
- muslin.

Sometimes, the raids of bigger chiefs involved subjugation of villages beyond their control. In such cases the lesser chiefs assisting the bigger ones got subjugated villages. It was not the land of the village that was granted but the control over the people there.

***Muvendar* and Other Levels of Political Control**

The antiquity of *Muvendars* as the principal ruling groups goes back to the Mauryan period. Ashokan edicts mention them. The bards praise the *Muvendars* as ‘crowned kings’ and mention that the whole of *Tamilakam* belonged to them. The title of crowned kings need not necessarily indicate the establishment of state power. A state presupposes the existence of:

- standing militia,
- regular taxation,
- bureaucracy, and
- local administrative bodies.

These had not evolved as yet. Nonetheless, the authority of the *Muvendar* was significantly different from that of the other categories of chiefs. Their subjugation of lesser chiefs was an ongoing process. The main concern of all the three ruling groups – Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas – was subordination of *velir* chiefs who were next in importance. The *velir* also had great antiquity. Along with Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas, Satyaputras or the Adigaiman chiefs are also mentioned in the Ashokan edicts. Satyaputras were of the status of the *velir* chiefs. They held sway over the communities in the high ranges of upper Kaveri area. The other prominent *velir* chiefdoms lay on the highlands and sea coast along the fringes of the areas of *Muvendar*. The modern districts of Dharmapuri, Nilgiris, Madurai North Arcot, Tiruchirapalli, Padukkottai were the chief places of the hills and plains occupied by the *velir* chiefs. There were about 15 important *velir* chiefdoms in all as scattered in *Tamilaham*. Some of them had control over communities in strategic centres like:

- points of exchange,
- ports,

- junctions of highways, and
- hill stations.

Certain places and resources determined the nature of their power. With the coming of the period of Indo-Roman trade and control over strategic centres and trade goods, the importance of the chiefs increased. Pari of Parambumalai (near Pollachchi), Ariyar of Podiyilmalai (Madurai), Andiran of Nanjilmalai (south of Travancore), Irunko-vel of Kodunbai (Pudukkottai) were some of the prominent *velir* chiefs mentioned in the poems. *Velir* chiefs controlling such strategic centres had to face severe challenges from the superior chiefs like *Muvendar*; sometimes such competitions led to the annihilation of the weak. The destruction of the domain of Pari, the *velir* chief of Parambunadu, by *Muvendar* is a well-known example. Apart from direct combats, the bigger chiefs tried to gain access to the *velir* domains through marriage relations also. There were several instances of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas taking their brides from *velir* families. In the case of the village chiefs of strategic areas the bigger chiefs adopted the method of military control. They were subjugated and made subservient to the bigger chiefs. *Muvendars* had several such subjugated chiefs as their subordinates serving them in plunder raids.

It is obvious that the *Muvendar* was the most powerful political authority in contemporary *Tamilakam*. Next to them was the political authority of *velir*. The village chiefs of Kizar constituted the primary level of political authority. Although this gives the impression of a political hierarchy, there was no determinate chain of political control uniting these three levels of political authority. Integration of the lesser chiefs was in progress under the subjugative and marital policies of *Muvendar*. But a unified political system was still in the making. The traditional authority over resident communities based on kinship remained fundamental to contemporary political control. Traditional assembly of elders transacted the day-to-day affairs in every settlement. The assembly site was called *manram*, a raised seating around the foot of a tree. It was also called *podiyil*. The chief was assisted by a council of elders called *avai* (*sabha*), the structure, composition and functions of which are not known. Two other bodies often discussed as part of early Tamil polity are:

- *aimperumkuzu* (the five great groups), and
- *enperayam* (the eight great groups).

These were relatively later bodies which, probably, developed after 3rd century CE. The structure and functions of these bodies, also, are not known.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×).
 - i) The chiefdoms of *Tamilaham* were based on payment of regular taxes.
 - ii) The political authority of the period was based on the control of people rather than resources.
 - iii) The *Muvendars* were full-fledged state systems.
 - iv) Gift giving was a chief's primary social responsibility.

- 2) How did different categories of chiefdoms co-exist and interact? Write in 10 lines.

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3.13 SUMMARY

The Satavahana period was important in the history of Deccan because it was in the 1st century BCE that the earliest state came into being in peninsular India. The administration of the state was simpler than that of the Mauryas. A crucial factor was the expansion of overland and maritime trade networks. This provided additional revenues to the rulers and also resulted in the prosperity of a large number of towns and cities throughout Deccan in this period.

In this Unit, you have also learnt about the various eco-zones, their subsistence pattern and the various details of the chiefdom level political formation. You learnt how the system of plunder raids and booty redistribution functioned as the crucial factor in the political practice of the time. Another important point you learnt is the basis of clan ties and kinship in the political authority. You also learnt about the gradual process of institution formation during the period after the 3rd century CE.

3.14 KEY WORDS

Eco-zones: A small area with its own ecological characteristics such as climate, soil conditions, organisms etc.

Tinai: A region with its special ecological factors, social groups and subsistence pattern.

Chiefdom: A society of hereditary status controlled by a chief who collected voluntary tributes from his people.

Muvendars: The three principal ruling groups, namely the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas.

Velirs: The chiefly groups next to the principal ones.

Kizar: The smallest category of chiefs who had, virtually, control over their descent groups.

Manram or Podiyil: A raised seating around the foot of a tree.

3.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See Section 3.9
- 2) See Sub-section on 'Inland Settlements' under Section 3.7.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) i) × ii) √ iii) × iv) √
- 2) See Sub-section 'Different Kinds of Chiefdoms' under Section 3.12.

3.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 4 AGRARIAN SETTLEMENTS AND AGRARIAN SOCIETIES: PENINSULAR INDIA*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Sources
- 4.3 The *Tinai* Concept
- 4.4 Agrarian System in *Tamilakam*
- 4.5 Economic, Political and Social organization in *Tamilakam*
 - 4.5.1 Decline of the *Tinai* System
- 4.6 Spread of Agrarian Settlements in Deccan
- 4.7 Social Life in Deccan
- 4.8 Summary
- 4.9 Key Words
- 4.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 4.11 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this Unit is to discuss agrarian settlements and agrarian relations in the peninsular part of the sub-continent from 200 BCE to 300 CE. After reading the Unit, you will learn about:

- different forms of subsistence in peninsular India;
- *tinai* system;
- social conditions that were prevalent in such societies; and
- the organization of labour in such societies.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The establishment of settled agriculture was a landmark in the history of the world. Cultivation began in those settlements which had close proximity to water sources, thereby marking the end of nomadic lifestyle. However, even when agriculture was the dominant mode of subsistence, hunting-gathering, fishing etc. did not completely decline. This Unit deals with agricultural expansion in peninsular India (Deccan and the South). It focusses on the time period between 200 BCE and 300 CE.

Three phases can be ascertained in the spread of agrarian settlements in south India. In the first phase, agriculture was conducted with primitive technology and cultivation was confined to the hill-slopes. In the second phase, some advancement in technology was seen and plough agriculture spread to the river-

valleys. In the third phase, non-cultivating groups became part of the agrarian sectors as brahmanas and Buddhist monasteries became the largest recipients of arable land. They had better knowledge of seasons and aids for methods of cultivation.

4.2 SOURCES

The main source for *Tamilakam* is *Sangam* literature. The other sources include archaeological finds gathered from megalithic burials, epigraphic evidence from Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, numismatic evidence in the form of pre-Roman and Roman coin-hoards and accounts by Graeco-Roman navigators and geographers. We shall first look at the literary sources.

Sangam literature can be dated at its earliest to the first two centuries CE. However, the compilation of these works and their classification into eight Tamil anthologies or *Ettutokai* dates to a much later time period, that is, around the 12th century. The poets were men and women drawn from all classes in society and they were richly rewarded for their compositions. The composition of the texts took place during the three *Sangams*. The word *Sangam* refers to a confluence or academy. The three *Sangams* were patronized by Pandyan rulers and were called the *Talai Sangam*, *Idai Sangam* and *Kadai Sangam* respectively meaning the beginning, middle and end *Sangams*. The compositions of the first two *Sangams* are lost. All the texts that make up the *Ettutogai* come from the *kadai* or end *Sangam*.

To use a single corpus of texts for such a long period is hazardous as it may lead to creating a generalized portrayal of five to six hundred years. Additionally, the *Sangam* texts have internal chronologies. Some scholars argue that *Sangam* literature contains survivals of the earlier tribal organization. Two different socio-political time-periods may be adduced from the texts; the first referring to a 'tribal' stage as seen in the *mullai* (pasture and wood lands) and *kurinji* (hilly regions) and the second stage of incipient urbanization as seen in the *marutam* (agricultural tracts) and *neytal* (zones near the sea) regions. This shall be further explained in the Unit.

Sangam literature is a rich source because it describes a range of activities that were related to agriculture. Many secondary production activities, like the making of sugar from sugar cane, find rich description in *Sangam* literature. Primary agrarian activities like the cultivation of ragi and sugarcane, the harvesting of grain and smaller activities like the drying of grain are also described in *Sangam* literature.

The Graeco-Roman texts include Plinys' *Natural History*, The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* and Ptolemy's *Geography*. From *Natural History* and *Periplus* we get detailed lists of imports and exports. The exports included aromatics, pepper, ginger, cardamom, cloves and other spices, wild fauna, animal skins, ivory; timber like teak and sandalwood; cotton fabrics, precious stones, pearls and gems. Hence, they give us an idea of the goods produced in the *tinai* tracts.

Coin-hoards are important since they point to economic strategies outside of agriculture, like trade. Since the goods traded would have included produce from the *tinai* tracts, it is relevant to our study of agriculture in peninsular India. Punch-marked and Roman coin-hoards are found at various places including Pollachi,

Karur, Vellalur, Kalayamuttur, Madurai, Coimbatore, Yesvantpur, Pudukkottai in Tamil Nadu and Eyyal, Kottayam, Valluvalli and Puthenchira in Kerala. The punch-marked coins are from pre-Mauryan kingdoms while the Roman coins are of the Roman emperors ranging between Augustus in the first century BCE to Constantinus in the fourth century CE. Roman coins also do not appear to have been in wide circulation. They were probably only used for overseas trade or as jewellery. No indigenous coins have ever been found in the context under consideration, but a few punch-marked coins have been found.

An additional source that is difficult to use is in the form of oral tradition. Several folk songs describe parts of agricultural processes. However, the difficulty lies in attributing the songs to a particular time. These are, nonetheless, informative.

4.3 THE *TINAI* CONCEPT

The establishment of agriculture as a dominant mode of subsistence is associated with an increase in population and new types of knowledge regarding the seasons and harnessing of resources.

The *aintinais* or five *tinai*s/eco-zones are referred to in the *Tolkapiyyam*: one of the earliest Tamil texts to have survived till the present. The subsistence pattern of each *tinai* was different. The five *tinai*s are:

- *kurinji* or hilly terrain,
- *mullai* or pastures and woodlands,
- *palai* or arid stretches,
- *neytal* or the littorals (zones near the sea), and
- *marudam* or agricultural tracts in river-valleys or plains.

Each *tinai* tract supported a specific type of economic activity according to soil type, climate, rainfall and the availability of other resources. Each had a specific deity as well as a particular flower or tree associated with it. Each *tinai* tract was also named after a plant that was exclusive to it. The boundaries of any *tinai* tract cannot be distinctly demarcated since one merges with the other. Hence, each *tinai* tract should not be thought of as a rigid bounded entity with minimal or no external relations.

Let us discuss each *tinai* briefly.

Kurinji

Kurinji was inhabited by the hunting tribes such as *vedar*, *parayar*, *vettuvai*, *katampar* and *kuravar* groups. The *kuravar* women were known for predicting the future and for their medical knowledge. The tribes followed a matriarchal system.

Kurinji was the prime tract for hunting but agriculture was also practised. Though historians argue that the plough was in use and hence shifting cultivation was not the only preferred mode. We now know that the inhabitants of *kurinji* were cultivating on the hill slopes. They grew beans, sesame, rye, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, tubers, sugarcane, peas and a special variety of rice called *chamai*. They also collected forest produce such as wood, honey and bamboo,

rice etc. The cultivation and extraction of honey was performed by both men and women.

The deity of *Kurinji* was Murugan or Seyon, meaning the 'red one' or the 'beautiful one'. He was the god of war. Later he was incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as Kartikeya, the son of Shiva. *Kurinji* is named after a particular shrub that grows on the hill side and blooms once in twelve years.

Mullai

Mullai was occupied by cowherds. They kept cattle as well as sheep and goat. They practised animal husbandry, but it alone was not enough for sustenance. Hence, they also practised shifting cultivation and grew various staples and pulses and rye. Cattle rearing and dairy farming were the two most important activities performed in this tract. Women played a major role in these activities.

Despite being a pastoral zone it was a highly forested tract. The *mullai* areas formed part of a transitory eco-zone because they lay at the fringes of settled agricultural tracts and could be merged with them. The presiding deity of the *mullai* was mayon or the 'dark one', who is associated with Gopala or Krishna. The *mullai* is named after a tree that is symbolic of pasture land.

This particular tract was associated with political formations. One theory traces the origin of the institution of kingship to this tract. This argument becomes stronger when we consider that the Tamil word for king, '*kon*' means a herdsman and that for queen, '*aachchi*' means shepherdess.

Palai

The *Maravars* and the *Kallars* inhabited the *palai*. Since they occupied arid tracts which were not sustainable or profitable, they also had to resort to robbing. The *maravars* were petty chieftains. In heroic literature they are portrayed as being preoccupied with cattle raids. However, some scholars argue that such practices were undertaken in all *tinai* tracts. Loot and plunder was not as much related to economic sustenance as with existing power relations.

Historians consider the *palai* tract to be a seasonal phenomenon of summer when there was scarcity of water to meet the needs of agriculture. Hence looting and raiding. The presiding deity was goddess Korravai, but she was worshipped in all the five *tinai* tracts. Worshipped for her fertility, she was incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as Durga. The tree characterizing the *palai* tract had the same name and was known for its ability to survive in dry weather in both summer and winter.

Neytal

The inhabitants of the *neytal* tracts were involved with fishing, pearl farming and salt making. While the *paratavar* gradually exclusively became involved in pearl fishing and trade, the *umanar* came to specialize in the production of salt.

The *neytal* cannot be thought of as only those areas near the sea but refers to a variety of water bodies like backwaters, estuaries, lakes, rivers and lagoons. The gathering of conch shells and their fashioning into bangles and other articles was also an important activity performed in *neytal*. Paddy was also cultivated here.

They also extracted fish oil in the neytal regions. The characteristic flower of *neytal* was water lily found in waterlogged or marshland areas and the presiding deity was Varuna, the rain god.

The Marudam

The *marudam* appears to have been the region where agriculture was the main mode of subsistence. Here the *ulavar* and *toluvar* practised plough agriculture. There are instances of individuals specialising in one activity. Hence, the *ulavar* were ploughmen, the *vinaivalar* cultivated hard agricultural tracts and the *toluvar* were tillers who were engaged in the cultivation of paddy and sugarcane.

The *marudam* areas also attracted individuals from other *tinai* tracts. The productivity of this tract also ensured the presence of a variety of artisans as well as entertainers such as bards, astrologers and musicians. Artisans such as carpenters (*taccar*), smiths (*kollar*) and traders (*vanikar*) lived in this tract. The *kurinji* and *marudam* tracts were brought into networks of commercial exchange by the *marudam* rulers.

The *marudam* was characterised by a red flower of the same name which grows in wet lands and the presiding deity was *vendan*. Women were crucial to all agricultural activities. Like the *mullai*, patriarchy developed at a later time. Later the king came to be known as *vendan*, in keeping with the name of the presiding deity.

The data about the *tinai*s is presented as follows:

<i>Kurinji</i>	Hilly region	Kurinji flower that grows on mountains	Subsistence level hunting-gathering	Ceyon/ Murugan
<i>Mullai</i>	Pastoral tract/ forest	Tree that is symbolic of pasture land	Pastoralism, animal husbandry, shifting cultivation	Mayon
<i>Neytal</i>	Coastal/ littoral	Water lily	Fishing	Varunan
<i>Marudam</i>	Riverine wetland/ plains	Marudam	Agriculture	Vendan
<i>Palai</i>	Parched/ arid zone	Palai	Cattle-lifting/looting	Korravai

However, scholars argue that instead of looking at *tinai*s as absolute categories it is important to think of them as semiotic tools which referred to spatial organization at the moment of transition from early chieftaincies to early Statedoms. The *tinai*s were related to the aesthetics of *Sangam* literature and particularly to relationships between lovers. There is no other literary evidence for the *tinai* system, let alone, archaeological evidence.

4.4 AGRARIAN SYSTEM IN *TAMILAKAM*

Historically, the earliest kings emerged from the *marudam*. The earliest towns arose in *marudam* and *neytal*. Thus, these two *tinai*s were associated with the royal families of the Cheras in the Periyar Valley, the Cholas in the Kaveri Valley and the Pandyas in the Vaigai and Tamraparni valleys. The *marudam* had towns of political and commercial importance while the *neytal* had towns of commercial importance only. The important towns were Uraiyur and Kaveripattinam (Puhar) under the Cholas, Madurai and Korkai under the Pandyas and Vanji (Karuvur) and Musiri of the Cheras. The towns along the coast were called *pattinams*. The *mullai* and *kurinji* regions were associated with 'tribal' stage and the *marudam* and *neytal* regions were associated with incipient urbanization.

The *menpulam* or richer fields were located in the *marudam*. These fields were used for the cultivation of staple food, rice and sugarcane. In contrast to the *menpulam* were *vanpulam* or larger fields in other *tinai*s that were used for the cultivation of pulses, millets, sesame, horse-gram, roots, vegetables, fruits and other crops depending on what could grow in that particular *tinai*.

Plough agriculture was practised. The bullocks were harnessed using a cross-bar at their necks. The plough was called the *meli* or *nanjil*. It was iron tipped. Iron-tipped plough was necessary for deep ploughing as was needed by crops like sugarcane and rice. The use of plough is attested to in literature and inscriptions. There is a reference to a dealer in ploughshare in a cave inscription in Tamilakam. Spades, hoes and sickles were used for various operations. Furnaces and iron slag have been recovered from excavations at many sites. Buffaloes were yoked to the plough and animals were used at several stages of agricultural process, such as threshing and pounding. Both tank irrigation and irrigation from minor dams were available through sluices and harnessed streams. Remains of an ancient reservoir were discovered near Kaveripattinam in Tamilakam. Since rainfall was insufficient, irrigation was considered important.

People performed important agricultural activities including the weeding of plants, clearing of fields, planting of seeds, guarding of crops, husking, winnowing and pounding of grain. This is seen in both *menpulam* and *vanpulam*. We know of these activities from folk songs associated with each of them. Although both men and women were involved in production activities, there was a gendered division of labour.

Land was collectively owned. Debts were referred to as *katam* or *katan*. *Avanam* or *ankati* was the main place where exchange took place. The term *kurietirppai* was used to refer to a loan of goods which were to be paid back in exchange at a later time. Profit does not appear to have been a motivation for selling, but rather exchange was. This extended to producers and sellers of crafts as well.

Uzhavar (ploughmen) and *Vellalar* (masters of soil) were the cultivators of land. One of the sources for labour for agriculture was the groups of ploughmen. *Atiyor* probably means slaves and *vinaivalar* means workers earning 'wages'. Details about 'wage' rates and other conditions of labour are not known. Family labour was not sufficient for production as it could not lead to surplus. However, in spite of this limitation, agrarian settlements could sustain different groups of functionaries like blacksmiths, carpenters, bards, dancers, magicians, priests,

monks etc. Thus, *Sangam* compositions tell us about the various activities that made up the agricultural process.

4.5 ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN *TAMILAKAM*

The village settlement, or *ur*, was made up of several *kudis* or family groups which specialized in different occupations. The *kilar* was the headman of *ur*. The headman got to live in a slightly larger hut. Scholars consider kinship to have been an important feature of clans. He comes to this conclusion from the fact that the chiefs of clans were called *komakan* or *perumakan* meaning the 'hero son'. This suggests that being the headman was a hereditary occupation. The kings are believed to have emerged from *marudams*, replacing the older chiefs and system of chieftainships.

Political forms were not uniform across *tinais*. Thus, *Sangam* literature reveals the tribal character of *mullai* and *kurinj tinai*s and the urbanism of the *marudam* and *neytal tinai*s. The *tinai*s together constituted a *nadu*. In contrast to *nadu/natu* was the *katu* or forest area. There were also different types of settlements like *brahmadeyas* and *devadanas* etc.

Land revenue was the main source of income for the chiefs. The Tamil literature mentions *irai* and *tirai* as two types of contribution received by the chieftains. While *irai* was a regular contribution, *tirai* was a tribute. Not much information exists about the rate and mode of collection of revenue. The rulers are often advised to be moderate in the collection of revenue indicating that coercion and excesses were practised by authorities. How were resources redistributed amongst those who required them? Gift was perhaps the most common mode of circulation of resources. Each producer gave a part of his product to others for services rendered. Gift of a meal or a piece of cloth was a simple form of redistribution. Fighting heroes were provided with feasts both before and after plunder and raid. Many a times gifts included fine imported wine, silk clothes and even gold ornaments. Brahmanas and warrior heroes were beneficiaries of land donations and cattle by way of remuneration of their services. The acts of redistribution through gifts were made by three groups of persons with wealth and power, namely, the crowned kings (*vendar*), the minor chieftains (*velir*) and the well-to-do agricultural householders (*vellalar*) of the agrarian settlements. The recipients of land also received the right to collect income from land.

In order to redistribute the resources efficiently, it was required that all the resources were collected at a centre, such as the residence of chiefs. The pooling of resources often led to plunder and pillage of agrarian tracts. Grain and cattle were looted, fields of enemies were burnt, peasant settlements were set on fire and rich gardens were converted to waste lands by marauders. The *marva* fighters of hill tracts and pasture tracts were employed for plundering. The booty raided was redistributed among *marava* fighters and brahmana priests by way of prestations and remuneration for rituals. Many poems of the *Sangam* anthologies speak of excesses committed against poor farmers. Even though pillage led to terror and exploitation of the peasants, war was celebrated as a noble heroic act. It was even institutionalised. The memorial stones erected in the memory of dead warriors were made into cult objects or objects of worship. The *pana* singers sang in praise of the war-like qualities of the chieftain and his fighters. On the

one hand, booty capture was necessitated by the scarcity of resources, on the other hand plunder and pillage led to destruction of resources. This paradox was a central feature of the mechanism of redistribution at the level of chieftains.

Trade was an important non-agricultural activity. There was a phenomenal increase in trade during this period primarily in maritime trade. The goods brought in from Rome were coins, topaz, fine clothing, antimony rods, coral, crude glass, copper, tin, lead, wine, wheat and ceramics. Of these, gold coins formed the bulk and were obviously for luxury goods. Wine, wheat and ceramics were brought for the Roman sailors who stayed till favourable monsoon winds could take them back. Crude glass, copper, tin and lead were traded as raw materials for the local bead and bronze industries. The goods exchanged were muslin, beryl and pearls.

Barter system was prevalent and there are references to honey and roots being exchanged for fish oil and toddy, and sugarcane and rice flakes being exchanged for venison and arrack. Fish could be exchanged for paddy.

Craft activities were also undertaken. Local rulers are likely to have encouraged exchange since it improved their socio-political standing.

Exchange may be noted at different levels. For example, there was exchange at the level of maritime trade. Similarly, there was also exchange at a much basic level. People were not dependent on long distance trade for their basic needs. Long distance trade was largely related to luxury goods. The nature of circulation of luxury goods in the interiors was also different in that it occurred through networks of kinship, patronage and clientele. The *kurinci*, *mullai* and *marutam* tracts did not engage in luxury overseas trade, but rather in local subsistence trade.

The absence of guilds meant that exchange was in the hands of families. Luxury goods and exotic goods were the main imports. Duties called *ulguporul* were levelled on goods coming to the ports. The inland towns were mainly consumption centres, though some like Kacci, Uraiyur and Madurai dealt with textile weaving. In terms of archaeological evidence, punch-marked coins in coastal town and Roman coins and objects have been found at Arikamedu.

Other hereditary occupations may have included that of warriors required to protect the *tinai*s from marauders. Bards and entertainers may have been a part of similar hereditary occupations. In the *tinai* region people were mostly organized into occupational groups. There was a strong sense of social solidarity amongst people and groups.

The vast use of iron weapons and implements in burials meant that a full-time iron smelting industry developed to meet the substantial requirement for iron. It may have become a hereditary specialization. Similar assumptions may be made in the case of the manufacture of pottery, since pots were easily broken and demand for them was likely to have been large.

Society in early Tamilakam was essentially tribal in character with its kinship organizations, totem worship and tribal cults and practices. Some changes could be seen in the predominantly agricultural regions. Old kinship ties were breaking away and the introduction of Brahmanical *varna* system led to increasing complexity. Social stratification or inequality between different social groups

appeared and there was broad distinction between 'high' and 'low'. The brahmanas are referred to as a distinct social group enjoying higher status. Although there is evidence of Vedic sacrifice in *Sangam* texts, the practice does not appear to have gained prominence. The presence of brahmanas did not mean that they could not freely intermix since there are references to brahmanas eating with people belonging to other groups. Similarly, groups associated with polluting activities are identified as living separately. With the practice of land grants in the seventh century, the *vellalas* became a landed group at par with brahmanas. The *kuyavan* or potters, the *kollan* or blacksmith and the *vannan* or washerman on the other hand occupied the lowest rungs in the caste system.

The landed *vellalar* and the *velala* peasants constituted the basic producing groups in agrarian settlements. Craft specialization was only rudimentary and subsidiary to agricultural production. Mention may be made of blacksmiths (*Kdlao*) and carpenters. The extended family was their unit of production. Weaving was another profession. Religious worship and cult practices of village folk followed old tribal rituals which necessitated the presence of ritual groups, such as *Velan*, *Venttuvan* etc. They looked after supernatural elements and their management. However, society was not 'priest-dominated'.

There was considerable surplus which led to the prosperity of trading groups. They were known after the commodity in which they traded. Thus we hear of *umanan* (salt merchant), *Koglavanikan* (corn merchant), *aruvaivanikan* (textile merchant), *ponvanikan* (gold merchant) etc. Towards the end of our period these traders became part of the *varna* order which had infiltrated into the south. *Tokappiyam*, the earliest available work on Tamil grammar, portrays the Tamil society as consisting of four *varna* divisions. According to this text the traders belonged to the vaishya group. The chieftains of the *marudam* agricultural tracts started claiming descent from *Suryavamsa* (Solar line) or *Chandravamsa* (Lunar line) as the kshatriyas of north India did. Thus, we find that the society in agrarian *Marudam* region of ancient *Tamilakam* was an amalgamation of old tribal practices and Brahmanical ideals and ideology.

Each village had a common meeting place for its inhabitants which was generally under a large tree. The villagers would meet there and also indulge in sports and community activities. It was through such small gatherings that more complex political formations were to emerge in later times.

Another way of identifying social complexity is through the study of megalithic burials which may date back to the period of the composition of *Sangam* texts. Agrarian and warrior groups may be identified.

Buddhism and Jainism spread in urban areas, along with increase in trade. Jainism spread more in inland towns while Buddhism spread more in towns along the coast. These religions were mainly followed by merchants, craftsmen and royal families.

We have already seen the tasks performed by women in each of the *tinai*s. Additionally, women sold a variety of products including toddy, curds and other milk products, meat, etc.

4.5.1 Decline of the *Tinai* System

The fifth to seventh centuries witnessed a change in the manner of agricultural production that was associated with the strengthening of caste system. Agrarian society now had to subsist within the overarching framework of caste and patriarchy. Concepts such as those of purity and pollution were deployed against women of all castes to varying extents and to certain groups that would go on to be identified as untouchables. This is particularly seen in the later *Sangam* texts, since there are no compositions by women, unlike earlier times. The nature of qualities attributed to women also changes in these writings and focuses more on their being polluting and the need to control them.

However, the *tinai* system did not continue after the end of the time period owing to several reasons. Firstly, the decline in overseas trade resulted in a decline in urban growth. This may have been prompted by the lack of institutional control in rice-producing regions. A crisis of sorts occurred when the chiefs attempted a more lasting occupation of rice-producing areas. It delegitimized the *vendars* leading to lack of institutional control.

With the rise of feudalism, however, small pastoralists lost their importance. Some chose to stay out of the caste system and were later relegated to the lowest rungs of caste system, while some continued as agriculturalists.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Mark the right (✓) or wrong (×) statements:
 - a) The five *tinai*s were the Decan, Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. ()
 - b) The *palai* zone was a seasonal phenomenon. ()
 - c) The third phase of agriculture in south India is characterized by introduction of non-cultivating groups into the agrarian sector. ()
 - d) *Tolkappiyam* is the earliest work on Tamil grammar. ()
 - e) The *Vellalar* and *Velala* were cow herding people. ()
 - f) The crowned kings were *Vendar* and the minor chieftains were *Velir* in south India. ()

- 2) What factors influenced the creation of a particular *tinai*?

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- 3) List six features of villages in ancient south India.

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4.6 SPREAD OF AGRARIAN SETTLEMENTS IN DECCAN

As you have read, the Satavahanas emerged as a powerful dynasty in Deccan in the early centuries of the Common Era. The increase in Iron Age sites in Deccan and south India indicates increase in population. There was a transformation from cattle rearing and shifting cultivation to a more sedentary settled agricultural economy. During the Satavahana period there was an overall increase in the number of settlements in the river basins, on the coasts and the plateau. From excavations at Ter, Bhokardan and Nevasa we know that during Satavahana times a number of grains were cultivated including wheat, barley, rice, millets, sorghum, gram, pea and Indian jujube. Material culture under the Satavahanas showed a marked improvement from the earlier Iron Age Megalithic culture. Ploughshares, sickles, spades, axes and arrowheads have been recovered in excavations. The metallurgy had progressed a great deal and socketed hoes were in use. Gold working also is attested to in Deccan in the Satavahana period. Irrigation facilities were known. Water wheel for lifting water from wells, tanks was in use. There are etchings of water devices on Andhra coins. Some historians argue that the digging of wells was a difficult process and required rich benefactors like the king or landowners. The people of Deccan knew paddy transplantation. The river basins of the Godavari and Krishna became extensive rice producing regions. Cotton was grown in black soil areas and the cotton products of Andhra region were famous even in foreign countries. Plantations of coconut, mango and other trees was prevalent.

The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* mentions the use of slaves and the source of labour in Deccan was wage labourers and slaves. Rich landowners or traders were known as *Gahapatis*. According to an inscription, Ushavadatta, son-in-law of Kshatrapa ruler Nahapana of western Deccan, purchased a plot of land from a brahmana and donated it to a Buddhist *Sangha*. This indicates that private ownership of land was in existence. From this deal the private owner received 40,000 *kahapana* coins. In another example, the Nanaghat inscription of queen Nayanika speaks of gifting thirteen village to brahmanas for their performance of Vedic sacrifices. Gautamiputra Satakarni conferred a field measuring 200 *nivartanas* to Buddhist monks living on the Trirashmi hill. There is also an instance of a land grant being made to the Aparajita sect. Thus, the Satavahanas started the system of land grants as early as the first century BCE. This system needs to be understood as a way for the state to monitor productive lands during a period when agricultural expansion was taking place. There are also instances of lay people making land grants from the first century CE onwards.

The Satavahana administration was largely in the hands of local feudatory rulers. The king used to raise taxes. The measure of land under Satavahanas was called *hala*. There is evidence for the use of plough. Taxes like *kara*, *deya*, *meya*, *bhaga* were levied. The actual significance of these terms or the amount of revenue claimed by the state are not known. Some Satavahana rural regions were under *gaulamika* who was in charge of a small military unit; when land was granted to Buddhist monasteries or brahmanas, the state had to guarantee that their rights were not interfered with by the troops operating in rural areas.

The donees enjoyed certain immunities such as:

- 1) Against entry by the king's soldiers for collecting any sort of fees, and

- 2) Against royal officers taking possession of articles from the village.

These would show that:

- 1) Ordinarily, villagers had to pay some contribution of money or articles to soldiers when they came to the village, or
- 2) The soldiers were authorised to collect the revenue.

4.7 SOCIAL LIFE IN DECCAN

In Deccan, the Satavahanas extended patronage to Brahmanism. They were also patrons of Buddhism and Jainism. Some of the famous teachers of the Digambara set flourished in this region. Kondakundacharya, the founder of the *Mulasangha* which became popular in south, lived in Deccan. The Mahayana sect of Buddhism enjoyed good popularity. Acharya Nagarjuna, the greatest exponent of *Mahayana* faith flourished in Deccan. Viharas and Stupas were major recipients of grants. Buddhism flourished during the Satavahana period as it received political patronage. Brahmanism also received great state patronage. Some foreign elements such as the Yavanas, Sakas and Pahlavas embraced either Brahmanism or Buddhism thus resulting in an eclectic atmosphere. Due to the presence of such elements in society, caste rules were much more flexible. The idea of a four-fold division of society was present. The practice of calling people according to their profession was popular. *Halaka* (ploughman), *golika* (shepherd), *vardhaki* (carpenter), *kolika* (weaver), *tilapisaka* (oil presser), and *kamara* (smith) were such professional labels. Joint family system was in practice and the society was patriarchal in nature. Sometimes women are found accepting the titles of their husbands like *bhojiki*, *maharathini*, *mahasenapati* etc.

Certain new elements could be seen emerging in Deccan in this period. The grants of land and even entire villages to religious beneficiaries such as Buddhist monks and brahmanas became a common practice from now on. Along with land, certain economic privileges in the form of right to collect revenue from the village and right over mines was transferred to the donee. Land grants included fiscal and administrative rights of the peasants. These grants freed the village from obligatory payments to administrative functionaries and soldiers who visited the villages. What started as temporary measure became permanent now. The beneficiaries emerged as powerful landlords and thus new forms of land system and economy emerged. Brahmanas and Buddhist monks who were recipients of land had to employ labour to till their land as they themselves were not cultivators. Thus, the actual tillers of the soil were separated from the land and its produce. The collective rights over forests, pastures, ponds and reservoirs came to an end. The peasants cultivating the land were now answerable to the new owners. These new features became more accentuated as centuries went by and led to a new socio-economic formulation called *feudalism* by scholars.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) What were the main features of land grants in the Satavahana period?

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- 2) Write five lines about the tools and implements and irrigational facilities in the agrarian settlements in Deccan.

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4.8 SUMMARY

The basis of *tinai* concept is the relationship between geographic conditions and means of earning a livelihood. Each *tinai* had contacts with the other, thereby forming a network of symbiotic exchange. They were overlapping formations and had no clear boundaries. The symbiotic relationship between the *tinais* was not always peaceful and pillage was a common feature. Around the same time, the Satavahanas were flourishing in Deccan and started the system of land grants. The practice of landgrants increased with time and led to important changes in the countryside.

4.9 KEY WORDS

Tinai system: system of exchange between different groups living in different eco zones.

Tamilakam: the region between the hills of Venkatam and the tips of Kanyakumari.

Slash and burn cultivation: system of agriculture where existing plants are destroyed by burning so that new seeds can be sown.

Pana: a singer of ancient *Tamilakam* who sang in praise of chieftains

Shifting cultivation: mode of agriculture in which the plot of cultivation is shifted periodically. This is to avoid exhaustion of land caused by continuous use of the same plot.

Totem worship: worship of the main symbol of a tribe.

Chiefdom: a society of hereditary status controlled by a chief who collected voluntary tributes from his people.

Muvendar: the three principal ruling groups, namely, Chola, Chera and Pandya.

4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Mark Right (✓) and Wrong (×):

a) ×, b) ✓, c) ✓, d) ✓, e) ×, f) ✓

- 2) See Section 4.3
- 3) See Section 4.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See Section 4.6 and 4.7
- 2) See Section 4.6

4.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Devadevan. M. V. (2006). Lying on the Edge of the Burning Ground: Rethinking Tinas. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 49(2): 199-218.

Gurukkal, R. (1987). Forms of Production and Forces of Change in Ancient Tamil Society. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 48: 76-81.

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UNIT 5 TRADE NETWORKS AND URBANIZATION*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Sources
- 5.3 Political Background
- 5.4 Urbanization in 200 BCE-300 CE
- 5.5 Trade
- 5.6 Commercial Organization
- 5.7 Ports
- 5.8 The Articles of Import and Export
- 5.9 Coinage
- 5.10 Summary
- 5.11 Key Words
- 5.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 5.12 Suggested Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to learn about:

- the different dimensions of expansion of trade and urban centres in India from 200 BCE to 300 CE;
- trade and traders, trade routes, ports, transport and communication facilities, and articles of export and import;
- urbanization in this period and how it obtained a pan-Indian character;
- the interest of political authorities in trade; and
- the cities in various parts of the Indian subcontinent: Textual and Archaeological profiles.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we shall largely focus on two important areas of economy, namely trade and urbanization in the period under discussion. This period appears to have been that of interactions with different cultures including transcontinental cultures in which the mercantile community played a major role.

In the earlier Unit, you read about agrarian settlements and agrarian society. In this Unit, besides trade and urbanization we will also be looking at other associated changes which were taking place in the region. For instance, the introduction of iron technology during the Megalithic period along with irrigation led to

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agricultural surplus in some areas. Secondly, with Mauryan expansion in peninsular India, greater contact with the north became possible. Traders, merchants and others moved through different routes like the *Dakshinapatha* as highlighted in the *Arthashastra*. The earlier system of exchange underwent a profound change in India. Thirdly, the flourishing Indo-Roman trade further led to expansion of trade and urban centres. Fourthly, the associated feature of craft specialization which is indicated by the growth in crafts like pottery-making, bead-making, glass-making, weaving of cloth became an important aspect in local exchange or long-distance trade. One thing to remember is that all parts of India were not uniformly affected by these changes. In some areas earlier forms of culture persisted.

Let us look at the main features of trade and urbanization under different heads.

5.2 SOURCES

The number of inscriptions increased in this period. Majority of them are donative records in which the donor has given details about his family identity, place of origin and occupation. As such they prove to be an important source for this period. The period also saw the increasing use of metal money. A large number of coins have been recovered as hoards or in excavations which tell us about trade and commerce in this period. The archaeological field explorations and excavations have thrown light on the type of settlements and artefacts which may indicate the kinds of town planning, articles of daily use like utensils as well as luxury items like jewellery of precious and semi-precious stones that were in use. The major two *Dharmasastric* texts, the *Manusmriti* and *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, were compiled in their final form in this period. The *Santiparvan* and the *Anusasanaparvan* of *Mahabharata* were also composed during this period and they contain economic data like attitudes towards *dana* or the act of giving. However, it should be remembered that these texts being normative in nature, might not reflect the actual practices in the society. There are various references in foreign accounts also which refer to India's interaction with the outside world. As for instance, we may refer to the *Geographikon* by Strabo, *Bibliotheca Historica* of Diodorus, *Naturalis Historia* of Pliny, *The Periplous Tes Erythrus Thalasses* (*Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*) by an unknown author and the *Geographike Huphegesis* of Ptolemy.

5.3 POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Politically the period saw the decline of the powerful rule of the Mauryas and the end of state-controlled economy. In north, dynasties like the Sungas, Kanvas, Chedis, Nagas assumed power. In Deccan the Satavahanas and Ikshvakus were powerful. In the far south the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas became important. Certain foreign elements such as Greeks, Sakas, Pahlavas and the Kushanas in the north-west and the western and central parts of India participated in the commercial ethos of this period.

5.4 URBANIZATION IN 200 BCE-300 CE

The agrarian expansion of the period under review led to the production of surplus which enabled non-producers like craftsmen and traders to devote themselves to trade and commerce. Cities were centres of trade and commerce, craft

specialization as well as centres of administration. In the north-west, Taxila was a famous city. The remains of this city have been excavated from three mounds, namely Bhir, Sirkap and Sirsukh. The mound of Sirkap has yielded artefacts belonging to 200 BCE to 200 CE. The city began to show marks of urbanization from the period of the Indo-Greeks but it was the Indo-Parthian rulers who fortified the city with walls. Well-made roads and planned houses reflect Greek and Hellenistic influences. At Ahichchhatra a new road was built by 200 BCE. At the Lichchhavi kingdom of Vaishali in north-east Bihar the fortification wall was rebuilt at least thrice between 200 BCE to 200 CE. At Sisupalgarh in Odisha marks of urbanization are seen from 300 BCE. But it advanced rapidly from 200 BCE onwards. A huge wall was built sometimes between 200-100 BCE at first with unbaked bricks and later with baked bricks. There was a remarkable large and embellished gateway to the early historic city of Sisupalgarh.

Mathura emerged as the foremost city in north India during this period. The city reached the highest stage of development during the Saka, Pahlava and Kushana rule. Since these rulers had close connections with the north-west, Mathura although being located in the Ganga-Yamuna *doab*, became closely associated with historical developments in the north-west. The city-remains at Sonkh show the highest marks of development during the Kushana period. The residential buildings were built of both mud bricks and baked bricks. The walls of the city were also renovated and broadened. In the *Anguttara Nikaya* (6th century BCE) the description of Mathura is not a favourable one. It describes the dusty roads of Mathura, poor transport and deplorable economic condition in which alms were not easily obtained by *bhiksus*. This sorry picture of the city can be remarkably contrasted with the description in the Buddhist text *Lalitavistara* in the 3rd century CE. The city increased in size, was much more populated and alms were easily available.

The most important city in the east was Chandraketugarh. Situated at a distance of 23 miles north-east from Kolkata, the site is surrounded by a high mud-wall. The extent of the site indicates that the city was large. At its earliest level Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), a pottery of the urban phase, was found. The city, however, reached its fullest dimension and urban character in the 1st century only. Pottery, terracotta figurines, cast copper coins are found in this stage. The wine glasses hint at the leisure time spent by city-dwellers. The terracotta images are also sophisticated and give an idea of the taste of the urban elite classes.

From the site of Mangalkot in lower Bengal the strata dated to 1st-3rd centuries of the Common Era shows evidence of urbanization. Terracotta images, precious stone neckpieces, drinking glasses, sprinklers of red ware with painted designs, cast copper coins and seals undoubtedly bear testimony to the life of urban centre. Houses were made of bricks and there were brick-wells adjacent to them.

Excavations at Nevasa, Ter and Satanikota in Deccan have given evidence of urban phase. Satanikota was a Satavahana urban centre situated in Kurnool district. This fortified city was situated on the right bank of the Tungabhadra. It flourished during the period of 1st century BCE to 3rd century CE. Apart from the wall, the city was surrounded by a ditch as well. The fortification wall was made of burnt bricks with an elaborate gateway to the south. Manufacture of precious stone beads was an important craft activity in the city.

The Saka and Satavahana inscriptions from Nasik refer to *nagara*, *nigama*. Rudradaman, the Saka Mahakshatrapa claims to have protected the *nagara*,

nigamas from the wild beasts and thieves. During the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni the process of urbanization spread to eastern Deccan with the expansion of Satavahana power. Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Salihundam, Nagarjunikonda are sites in the Krishna Delta which were decidedly urban in character. The accounts of the *Periplus*, Ptolemy, the coins and inscriptions hint at the flourishing agriculture and trade in this region. Dhanyakataka was a city located on a navigable channel of the Krishna. The inscriptions found here also refer to traders and their guilds. The city was protected on three sides by hills. Inside the city a walled enclosure was perhaps the royal residence. Nagarjunikonda was the capital of the Ikshvaku dynasty (225-350 CE). Most of the residences were located in the eastern part of city. The alignment of roads was remarkable. It was a centre of Buddhist and Brahmanical religion as well. There was an open-air auditorium accommodating at least one thousand spectators which reminds us of Roman amphitheatres.

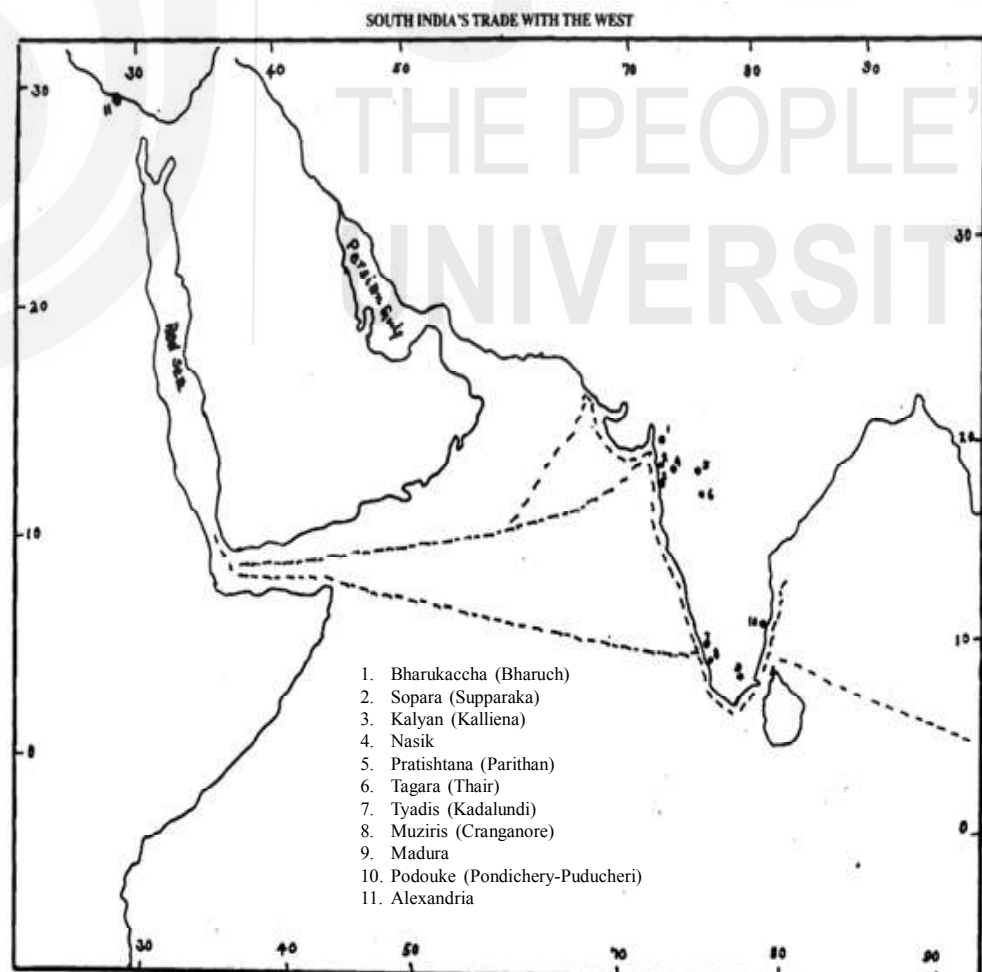
The process of urbanization also reached far south. Two great cities were Madura and Kaveripattinam. The Tamil poem *Maduraikanchi* contains an elaborate description of the city of Madura. Kaveripattinam was an ancient port city of the Cholas, situated in northern Tamilnadu. Description of Kaveripattinam is found in *Padinapalai* and the Tamil epic *Silappadikaram* which is a little later in date. In this text, Kaveripattinam appears as a developed and an affluent city. This indicates its gradual transformation into a great city. The *Silappadikaram* refers to the settlements of traders, artisans and fishermen in different parts of the city while one part was exclusively meant for the residence of *Yavana* traders. The city was a port as well. It contained a light house indicating its importance in maritime trade. Excavations have revealed a storehouse near the port. The epic poem refers to a large number of public baths and water bodies. It tallies with field data which revealed circular brick structures that may have contained water. Water was supplied to it by a channel from river Kaveri. The arrangements made for amenities suitable for a city indicates the importance of Kaveripattinam as an urban centre.

5.5 TRADE

Different geographical regions had products which were specific to them. They lacked in some others. Hence, exchange between regions existed from a very early time in the historical period. For instance, the agricultural tracts produced food-grains and sugarcane but had to depend on coastal areas for salt and fish. The coastal areas produced considerable salt and fish but rice, the staple food, had to be brought from areas of paddy cultivation. The hill ranges were rich in timber, spices etc. but they had to depend on agricultural tracts and coastal areas for food grains and salt. Thus, local and very often long-distance over land and over seas trade networks developed.

Barter was the most common mode of transaction in the context of local trade. Most of the items of barter were for immediate consumption. Salt, paddy, fish, dairy products, roots, venison, honey and toddy were regular items of barter in the far south. Very rarely, luxury items like pearls and elephant tusks also appeared as items of barter. Exchange rate was not fixed. Petty bargaining was the only method of fixing the price of articles. Paddy and salt were the only two items for which a set exchange rate was known in barter system of the far south. The exchange was not profit oriented.

Extensive network of over-land trade routes inside the subcontinent facilitated the movement of merchants and traders. Four major routes and their ancillary shorter routes throughout India were in existence. A route began from Pratisthana or Paithan, the Satavahana capital, and it continued through Tagara, Nasik, Setavya, Banasabhaya, Ujjayini and Sanchi to the mid-Ganga valley. It finally reached Shravasti, the capital of Kosala in north. Another route ran from Champa, the capital of Anga kingdom (Bhagalpur region) to west and north-west towards Pushkalavati in the kingdom of Gandhara. This route finds mention in the context of the forest exile of Rama in *Ramayana*. A third route began from Pataliputra in east and it reached Patala in the Indus delta. The *Periplus* refers to a land route connecting Bhrigukachha, the famous port of the west coast with Kabul. The route ran from Kabul through Puskalavati, Taxila, Punjab and Gangetic valley, crossing Malava till Bhrigukachha. The Buddhist sources refer to a route which ran from the Ganga valley to Godavari valley. This was known as *Dakshinapatha*. Kautilya, the author of *Arthashastra* mentions the articles which the southern territories traded in, which included conch-shells, diamonds, pearls, precious stones and gold. Good varieties of textiles also moved between north and south. Northern Black Polished ware, a deluxe urban pottery also found its way to the extreme south from north India. The remains of this pottery have been found from the territory of Pandyas. Items like herbs and spices which included spikenard and malabathrum (herb used in the preparation of ointment) were shipped to the west. The large number of punch-marked coins that have been recovered from different part of south India bear testimony to the brisk trade between the north and south.



South India's Trade with the West. Source: EHI-02, Block 7

The benefit of long-distance overland trade was mostly in luxury goods and was enjoyed by ruling elites. Regular trade links between Asia and Europe were established in the 2nd century BCE. The major participants in this trade were the Roman empire in West and the Han empire in China in East. The expansion of the Roman Empire and the emergence of a powerful line of rulers led to the growing demand for luxury items in the Roman empire as well as in the West Asiatic countries. Silk was in high demand in West and it was produced only in China. This silk reached West Asia through a long journey through the Central Asian Taklamakan desert, the Pamir plateau and Iran. From there it reached the hands of Roman elites. Although other items were also transported through this road, silk being most precious and in demand, the road was known as the Silk Road in history.



Indo-Roman Trade. Credit: USER: PHGCOM. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indo-Roman_trade.jpg)

Silk Road, however, was a lengthy route and traders had to pass through various hazards. This naturally resulted in the high price of articles transported by traders through this route. Here the rulers of Iran acted as mediators and levied heavy tolls and custom duties on this trade. There was considerable animosity towards them among the Romans as their intervention resulted in very high prices of silk and other products. With the rise of Kushanas in the early centuries of the Common Era, this role came to be assumed by them. The resultant trade and urbanization proved very profitable for all players.

The direct trade between Roman world and peninsular India was carried through the mediacy of Arabs. The Arabs had established commercial connections with India, making the sea as a highway of trade before the beginning of the Common Era. They enjoyed an enviable position in the East-West trade. They had some knowledge of the wind systems in the Arabian sea and they kept it a trade secret.

With the 'discovery' of monsoon winds which is attributed to a navigator named Hippalus, direct contact was established by the Romans with India. The *Periplus* shows that this wind used to flow in the month of Epiphi (July) when traders used to embark upon their journey in the Red Sea. From Eden at the confluence of Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, the Indian coast could be reached in a faster and easier way by following the direction of wind.

The Romans brought raw materials like copper, tin, lead, coral, topaz, flint, glass (for making beads) and finished products like best quality of wine, clothes of fine texture, fine ornaments, gold and silver coins and different kinds of excellent pottery. They carried back with them spices and medicinal herbs like pepper, spikenard, malabathrum, cinnabar; precious and semi-precious stones such as beryl, agate, carnelian, jasper, onyx, as well as shells, pearls and tusks; timber items like ebony, teak, sandalwood, bamboo; textiles items of coloured cloth and muslin as well as dyes like indigo and lac. The Romans paid for Indian articles in gold. South India had commercial connections with Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Spices, camphor and sandalwood were the main items that were traded.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Write a note on over-land trade routes in India in this period.

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- 2) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x).

- a) The period between 200 BCE to 300 CE is notable for the decline of long-distance trade. ()
- b) The name Silk Road was coined in the 19th century. ()
- c) Hippalus is the name of south-western monsoon wind. ()
- d) Muziris was a port in the Konkan coast. ()
- e) India bought pepper from Rome. ()
- f) The Arabs acted as mediators in the Indo-Roman trade. ()
- g) Barter was completely eliminated in the period between 200 BCE and 300 CE. ()

5.6 COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATION

In small scale local transactions, the producers were dealers too. The community of *Paratavas* used to deal with fishing and salt making. They are mentioned in the *neital* (coastal) region of ancient Tamilakam. The salt merchants were known as *Umanas*. Big bags of salt were transported by carts drawn by bullocks or asses. Besides salt merchants, dealers in corn (*koolavanikan*), cloth (*aruvaivanikan*), gold (*ponvanikan*), sugar (*panitavanikan*) were also part of the

trade. They were quite affluent as they figure in some cave inscriptions of Tamilakam as donors of dwelling places to some ascetics. There is a reference to the organization of Tiruvellarai; its members are referred to as *nikamattor*, meaning the members of *nigama*, a guild. In Deccan we find, besides merchants, wandering bards, dancers, messengers, mendicants too who moved from one place to another and used trade routes. Most of the Buddhist cave sites were located near these trade routes in Deccan and they were providing food and shelter to travelling merchants and even provided loans. Not only the merchants from Deccan but also traders from Tamilakam participated in sea borne trade. The presence of some Indian traders in Egypt and Alexandria is attested by foreign writings of this period. In south India, chieftains of Tamilakam encouraged sea-borne trade. Light houses were erected on shores; there were wharves where the Roman ships unloaded their merchandise to be stamped with the chieftains' emblem. Storage facilities were provided, warehouses were given protection. Sea-borne trade in the far south as well as in Deccan shows some features of what is described as 'administered trade' by some modern scholars.

There are ample references to merchants in the donative records of this period. They appear under various designations, the most common being *vanik*, *sreshthin*, *sarthavaha*. The *Jataka* stories frequently refer to them. Among them, *vanik* was probably a petty merchant while the *sarthavaha* was the chief of a *sartha* or caravan. They used to travel with their merchandise to far off places in ox-driven carts. The *Jataka* stories refer to a *sarthavaha* who embarked upon a journey from pubbanta (eastern frontier) to aparanta (western frontier) with 500 or 1000 carts.

The *setthi* or *sreshthin* was the foremost among merchants. In *Jataka* stories they appear as very wealthy. The *Jataka* stories refer to *sreshthin* as a private entrepreneur who was very rich. But what is more significant is that he was also the leader of merchants. Perhaps his wealth accorded him such a leading position among the merchants. The *Jataka* stories indicate close association between kings and *sreshthin*. Though he was a frequent visitor to the royal court, he was never a *rajabhogya* (an employee of the king). This relationship between the king and *sreshthin* was largely based on their shared economic interest. In the royal court *sreshthin* used to represent the merchants. He used to keep the king informed about the well-being of the merchants and their trading interests. The *Avadana* literature shows that a *sreshthin* gave a huge amount of money as loan to the king of Kosala in order to fight against Magadha. Thus, the king depended on them for his financial requirements. This close relationship and understanding between the merchants and the rulers is a special feature of this period. The *rajasreshthin* used to carry on trade on behalf of the king. There was a *rajasreshthin* called Habban of the Parthian ruler Gondophares (19-46 CE). In the Syrian version of the life of St. Thomas (c. 3rd century) it has been told that this Habban was appointed by Gondophares to procure an efficient architect to build the royal palace. Habban thus brought St. Thomas as a slave from West Asia to India. The historicity of this account may be questioned but it reflects the king's dependence on the *rajasreshthin* for his requirements.

5.7 PORTS

Ptolemy and Periplus both refer to the ports of the western and eastern sea-board of India flourishing in the first two centuries of the Common Era. The most

famous was Barbaricum at the mouth of the Indus. It was located at the only navigable middle channel of the Indus. It played an important role in the Indo-Roman trade. On the basis of the Chinese text *Hou Han Shu* it is known that the merchants earned a healthy profit from the maritime trade between *Shentu* (Lower Indus) and Rome. This territory was under the control of Kushanas until the mid-second century CE.

The next important port was Syrastrane (Surat of present day) on the Gujarat coast. Among the ports of the west coast the most important was Barygaza. It finds mention by both Ptolemy and the *Periplus*. In the Indian sources it is mentioned as Bhṛigukachha (Bharugachha in Prakrit). It was situated at the mouth of Narmada. It was however difficult to navigate ships to this port due to shallow waters. So Nambanus (Nahapana, the Saka Satrap) appointed oarsmen to help the ships coming from other countries to reach the port. They used small boats called *trappga* and *Kottymba* in order to guide foreign ships to enter the port or to go out from it. Perhaps the Satavahana kings also followed the Sakas in this matter. An inscription from Kanheri refers to *sagarapalas* who could have been appointed in the same manner to pilot foreign ships to the port. Barygaza was well connected with its hinterland. According to the *Periplus* it took 30 and 20 days respectively from Tagara and Pratishtana (in central Deccan) to Barygaza by ox-driven carts. In the east Barygaza was connected to Ujjayini. The *Periplus* further states that the articles of trade from China were transported from Bactria to Kabul, Pushkalavati and lower Indus and reached Barygaza by land route. Such an extensive hinterland was not associated with any other ports of India at that period.

In the Konkan coast, the *Periplus* refers to three ports, Souppara (Sopara near Mumbai), Kalliene (Kalyan) and Semylla (Chaul, 23 miles to the south of Mumbai). All of them were under Satavahanas. The *Periplus* tells us that until the reign of Elder Saraganus (Satakarni I) Kalliene was a busy port. But its prosperity was much affected by the fight between Sandanes (Sundara Satakarni) and Nahapana who laid a siege on the port. The Greek ships were prohibited from entering the port. This indicates the interest of both the Sakas and Satavahanas to control the Indo-Roman trade. The port of Kalyana probably lost its importance due to this siege and it does not find mention in Ptolemy's *Geography* in 150 CE.

The ports of Mandagora (Bankot), Palaepatme (Daval), Melizigara (Jaygarh), Byzantium (Vizadrog), Togurum (Deogarh), Turannaboas (Malvan) were situated to the south of the Konkan coast. But none of them were as important as Kalyana. In fact, the ports of northern Konkan were more important since northern Konkan was agriculturally more prosperous, and their ports were well-connected with their hinterlands. Both Pliny and Ptolemy refer to the activities of pirates in southern Konkan.

In the Malabar coast the port of Muziris finds mention in the *Periplus*, Ptolemy and *Sangam* literature. It was situated near Cranganore in Kerala. It corresponds to Muchiripattanam of *Sangam* literature which states that *Yavana* ships came to Muziris with gold coins and used to fill themselves with black pepper on their return journey. In a third century Roman text a shrine in memory of the Roman emperor Augustus has been mentioned. This indicates that Muziris housed Roman sailors also. It was under the control of Chera kings. A mid-2nd century CE loan contract document written on papyrus records how a ship anchored at Muziris

was loaded with Gangetic nard (a fragrant oil), excellent textiles, ivory products etc. From Muziris it was to sail for a port in the Red Sea where these goods would be unloaded. Finally, it would reach the port of Alexandria in Egypt. Thus, the far-flung commercial contact of Muziris with the Gangetic delta on one hand and Alexandria on the other are illuminated by this fascinating document.

The ports of Coromandel coast were under the Pandyas and Cholas. They are Camara, Poduke and Sopatma. Poduke corresponds to Arikamedu where excavations have revealed a Roman trading post. Here amphorae, Arrentine ware, Roman lamps, glass and stone beads have been found. Another famous port was Kaveripattinam known from *Sangam* literature. Ptolemy mentioned it as Khaberos. It is modern Puhar or Pumpuhar.

In the Andhra coast two important ports were Kontakossylla (Ghantasala) and Allosygné in the Masulipattana area. From another port of this coast, ships used to sail to Chryse Chora or Suvarnabhumi, well-known in early Indian literature. It referred to the southern coast of Myanmar, Thailand and the islands of Southeast Asia. The Ikshvaku inscriptions of Nagarjunikonda refer to regular contacts between the Krishna-Godavari delta with Srilanka and Vanga. Ceylonese monks came to Buddhist *sanghas* of Krishna-Godavari region. This cultural contact could have been based on trade linkages.

The *Periplus* refers to the port of Gange at the Gangetic delta. The country was also known as Gange. The port is generally identified with the archaeological site of Chandraketugarh. Its muslin was famous. It was exported to the port of Bhrigukachha through the Gangetic valley or reached the Dravida country by coast. From there it was exported to Roman markets. The port of Tamalites mentioned by Ptolemy is probably the same as the port of Tamralipta in modern Tamluk area of Medinipur.

Ptolemy used the designation Emporion (a trading outpost) in case of some selective ports. B.N. Mukherjee thinks that if a port in the east had a Roman settlement then it qualified for Ptolemy's Emporion. The emporions were more numerous in the Malabar and Coromandel coast than in Deccan. Significantly Ptolemy did not use the term for the ports of Gange and Tamelitus. This indicates that the ports of Bengal did not play as active role in the trade between India and Roman Empire.

5.8 THE ARTICLES OF IMPORT AND EXPORT

Pliny, Ptolemy and the author of the *Periplus* give some hints regarding the articles of import and export in the Indo-Roman trade. Among the agricultural products rice and wheat were exported from the Konkan coast, Malabar coast and Bhrigukachha to the coast of east Africa. Pepper was a much-valued item in the Roman markets. Malabathrum was exported from the Malabar coast. Sandalwood was another item of export. Among craft products, garments of cotton and muslin were much valued. On the other hand, Chinese silk also reached the Roman markets through Indian ports. Thus, India came to be involved in the international silk trade. Apart from precious stones, the Romans were also interested in semi-precious stones like agate, carnelian etc. Luxury items formed an important portion among the articles of export, and they had a high price in the Roman markets. Thus, traders involved in this trade used to earn a good amount of profit. The

enormous price the Malabar black pepper fetched, as Pliny mentions, justifies its labelling as 'black gold' by Romila Thapar.

The articles of import from Rome and West Asia, were, however, not so varied. Dates came from Persia to Barygaza. The Periplus refers to Italian and Arabian wine. The Roman amphorae and the wine glasses found in excavation sites bear testimony to the import of wine. Among the other items of import were the needle-crafted garments from Babylon and Alexandria, glass vessels, copper, tin and lead. The Roman gold coins were imported as bullion to the ports of west coast.

From the above list, it is clear that it was India which earned huge profits from Indo-Roman trade. In 22 CE, Tiberius, the Roman Emperor complained that Rome is being drained of its wealth to meet the heavy demands of luxury items. Pliny further states that every year the Indian goods were being sold at a hundred percent higher price in the Roman markets and thus the Roman Empire was losing 550,000,000 sesterces money in each year.

5.9 COINAGE

Many different types of local coins were in use in south India. Ancient Tamil literature speaks of them as *Kasu*, *Kanam*, *Pon* and *Ven Pon*. These coin types have not been discovered. In Deccan inscriptions refer to *Kahapanas* which were local silver coins and *Suvarnas* which were gold coins of Romans or Kushanas. Besides these, coins of lead, potin, copper mixed with tin and other metals, copper, silver and punch marked coins were prevalent.

Large number of Roman coin hoards have been found in many parts of peninsular India. They can be dated between first century BCE and third century CE. These coins were mostly in gold and silver. Copper coins were also in use, but they were rare. Some scholars believe that Roman coins were used as bullion. Imitations of Roman coins were also current in south India especially on the Coromandal coast where there were some trading stations.

The large number and variety of coins issued in this period bears testimony to the flourishing conditions of trade and affluence. The Kushanas were interested in trade with the Roman empire. Their coins were fashioned after Roman gold coins. One particular type of gold coin of Vima Kadphises was equal in weight with the contemporary Roman gold coins.

In case of silver coins, those from the lower Indus were probably issued from the royal mint but the silver coin called *purana* mentioned in the Mathura inscription of Huvishka (106 CE) were probably issued by private moneyers. B.N. Mukherjee suggests that the Kushanas took active interest in controlling the monetary system of lower Indus since this region was commercially important for Indo-Roman trade. On the other hand, copper coins were required for day-to-day transactions. The Kushana copper coins followed the Drachm standard of the Greeks. The Kushana coins are found not only in India but also outside, as for example, in Ethiopia. This indicates the participation of Kushanas in international trade.

Thus, this period occupies a significant place in the history of Indian trade. For the first time it gained an international character. The maritime trade in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal came to be interlinked with the trade in the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Describe the commercial organization of this period in 10 lines.

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- 2) What were the main items of export and import?

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- 3) Write in detail about any three ports of this period

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- 4) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x).

- a) Sisupalgarh was an urban centre in Andhra. ()
- b) Cast copper coins are found in the urban centres of this period. ()
- c) Satanikota was a Kushana urban centre. ()
- d) In ancient south India, Roman gold coins were used exclusively as ornaments. ()
- e) There were no local coins in use in this period. ()
- f) Punch marked coins have been found both in north and south. ()
- g) The relationship between monasteries and traders was not friendly. ()
- h) The kings of this period harassed prominent traders and merchants for money. ()

5.10 SUMMARY

Trade and commerce expanded in the period between 200 BCE to 300 CE. The trade was carried in different ways. Small level exchange was not altogether done away with. The rulers participated actively in local, regional and international trade. Facilities like transportation, storage and shipping existed to facilitate trade. Different types of coins were in use. The Indo-Roman trade was so profitable for India that large quantities of Roman gold coins flowed into India. A large number of centers of trade, towns, ports and cities emerged and nearly all of them were connected with overland routes and even by river routes. The vibrant trade activity makes this period one of the most prosperous in Indian history.

5.11 KEY WORDS

Punch-marked coins: in manufacturing these coins, the metal was beaten into flat sheets and then cut into strips. The blank sheets were cut into desired weights. The blank pieces were square or rectangular in the first instance. For getting the actual weight the edges were clipped. So, most of the coins are irregular in shape. Symbols were stamped over them with punches; each punch having one distinct symbol.

Administered trade: this refers to trade in which existed centers of trade offering facilities like those of anchorage, storage, civil and legal protection, and agreement on the mode of payment.

Nigama: a guild of traders or artisans.

Potini: an alloy of copper and tin.

Numismatics: Scholars who are experts in the study of coins.

5.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See Section 5.5
- 2) a) × b) √ c) × d) × e) × f) √ g) ×

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See Section 5.6
- 2) See Section 5.8
- 3) See section 5.7
- 4) a) × b) √ c) × d) × e) × f) √ g) × h) ×

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