

POLITICAL HISTORY OF NORTH & SOUTH INDIA

With Major Changes, Kings & The Monuments

UNIT 04

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SUGNA DYNASTY (185 – 148 BCE)

Soon when the last MAURYA king **Brihadartha** was murdered in 187 BCE by his own commander in chief, **Pushyamitra Sugna** while he was inspecting his troops, The Maurya rule thus came to an end and the **Sugna** dynasty was established as the rulers of Magadha.

It is important to note that Pushyamitra empire extended over only part of the erstwhile Maurya empire, including **pataliputra, ayodhya, vidisha** and some parts of modern day Punjab. The Sugna's are considered Brahmanasin their caste origin and they are referred to in both *Buddhist & brahminical texts* such as **Harshacharita, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, panini's ashtadhyani, kalidasa's malavikaagnimitran, divyavadana and tarantha's** (a Buddhist scholar) account.

The ten Sugna Kings ruled, in all likelihood for a total of 112 years.

SUGNA DYNASTY STRUCTURE

- Brihadratha (last mauryan ruler)
- **Pushyamitra Sugna (founder of Sugna Dynasty)**
 - Formerly the commander in chief of the mauryan army.
 - He performed two Ashvamedha sacrifices, as mentioned in the ayodhya stone inscription of king dhana.
 - His kingdom extended as far as the Narmada river to the south and included cities such as pataliputra, ayodhya and vidisha.
 - He defeated the Bactrian king **Demetrius**. This encounter mentioned in patanjali's works as well as in the kalidas malavikaagnimitran.
- Agnimitra
- Bhagabhadra/ Bhagavata
 - Probably the 5th king kashiputa bhagabhadra or the 9th king bhagavata, as indicated by the notable pillar Besnagar Pillar Inscription of Heliodorus. Heliodorus was the Greek ambassador of the Indo Greek ruler Antialkita of Taxila, who probably stayed at sugna's court.

According to some scholars, the last Kanva ruler **Susharman** was overthrown by a successor of Simuka of the **Satavahana** dynasty. Around the same time, i.e., 200 BCE, we witness invasion by two various groups of people based in central Asia and western China. These were *Indo-Greeks, the Scythians, the Parthians or the Pahlavas and the Kushanas*. They not only changed the political structure of north west India, but also aided in the transmission and transformation of cultural elements of both INDIA and the central Asia region.

THE SCYTHIANS/ SHAKAS

Shaka is the Indian term used for the people called the Scythians, who originally belonged to Central Asia. Interestingly, Patanjali in his Mahabhasya refers to the Shakyas as **Anirvasita (pure) shudras**. The Greeks were followed by the Shakas to India, and they controlled a much larger area as compared to the Greeks. The Shakas advanced into *Bactria, Parthia and the Indus plains*. There were 5 branches of the Shakas who finally settled with their seats of power in different parts of India and Afghanistan.

1. One branch of the Shakas settled in Afghanistan. Prominent rulers of this branch were **Vonones and Spalirises**.
2. The second branch settled in Punjab with Taxila as their capital, **Maues** was their prominent leader.
3. The third branch settled in Mathura, where it ruled for about 2 centuries. **Azilises** was their leader.
4. The fourth branch established its hold over the western India where they ruled until 4th century CE. They ruled maximum period on account of flourishing economy based on the sea-borne trade in Gujarat and thus issued a large number of silver coins.

The prominent ruler was **Rudradaman 1**, belonging to the Shaka Kshatrapas of western region.

5. The 5th branch of the Shakas established its power in the upper Deccan.

The Shakas and Scytho – Parthians ruled through Kshatrapas (governor) or mahakshatrapas (subordinate rulers), who aided a lot in the expansion of empire. For instance, during the reign of Scytho – Parthians ruler Azilises, a kshatrapa rajuvula aided a lot in the eastward expansion of his empire.

It is pertinent to note that these kshatrapas had a more independent status than was a normal administrative governor, since they not only issued their own inscriptions in whatever era they wished to observe, but were also permitted to mint their own coins.

THE KUSHANAS

The Kushanas were also referred to as Yueh-chis (Moon tribe) or *Tocharians* who were one of the five clans (Kuei – shang) into which the Yueh – chis tribe was divided. They were nomadic tribal people who were originally from the steppes of north central Asia. The Kushanas occupied Bactria where they displaced the Shakas, and gradually seized Gandhara, replacing the rule of the Greeks and the Parthians in these areas. Ultimately they set up their authority over the lower Indus basin and the greater part of the Gangetic basin. Their empire extended from the river Oxus to the river Ganga, from Khorasan in central Asia to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh (almost the area of 09 countries of modern time)

Kanishka (78 ce – 101 ce)

- He was the son of Kadphises 2 and is perhaps the most famous king of Kushana dynasty. In his reign the empire reached its zenith. It expanded from central Asia to Afghanistan and north western India, to further east into the Ganga valley and southwards into Malwa region. Included Varanasi, Kaushambi and Shravasti in U.P. and Sanchi in M.P.
- The centre of his this huge empire was Bactria, as evident in the use of the Bactrian language in Kanishka's coin and inscription.
- The famous *Rabatak* inscriptions present valuable information on Kanishka.
- Adopted the title of "Devputra" and has been shown wearing a peaked helmet.
- Kanishka had two capitals:
 - Purushapura: present day Peshwar, he built a giant stupa to house the Buddha's relics in the city.
 - Mathura

He is remembered for 02 major reasons:

1. Started the Shaka era (78 CE), which is accepted as the beginning of his reign, and which is now used by the government of India for its calendar.
2. Held the fourth Buddhist council at Kundalavana (near Srinagar, J&K)

THE SATAVAHANAS

As we discussed that the maurya rule was succeeded by the Sungas and the Kanvas in the north. However, in Deccan and in central India, the Satavahanas succeeded the Mauryas though after a gap of almost 100 years.

The earliest Satvahana inscription belong to the 1st century BCE when they defeated the Kanvas and established their rule over parts of central India. It is also pertinent to note that earliest Satavahana king appeared not in Andhra but in north Maharashtra (the fertile basin of Godavari river), where the earliest coin and inscriptions are found.

The satavahas claimed *Brahmana descent* and performed vedic rituals and worshipped gods like Krishna, Vasudeva, as evident in the *Naneghat cave inscription of Naganika* (1st century BCE).

Gautamiputra Satkarni (c. 106 – 130 BCE)

- It appears initially the shaka kshatrapas of western India succeeded in dislodging the Satavahans from the western and central region, but later the fortunes of satavahans were revived by its most famous ruler Gautamiputra Satkarni.
- He not only defeated shakas but also raised the power and prestige of satavahanas to greater heights. It was considered that under his reign the empire was at its peak.
- His achievements are described and eulogized after his death, during his son Pulumayi 2's reign, in a *Nasik Inscription* (written in prakrit).
- He donated lands to Buddhist monks.
- He assumed the title of rajaraja and maharaja.

The Satavahana's king was represented as the upholder of dharma and he generally strove for the royal and divine ideal set forth in the *dharmashastras*. In order to attribute divinity to kingship most kings were represented as possessors of supernatural powers and of qualities of heroes such as Rama, Arjuna, Bhishm, and so on..

THE THREE EARLY KINGDOMS: THE PANDYAS, THE CHOLAS, & THE CHERAS

The southern end of India peninsula situated south of Krishna river was divided amongst 3 early kingdoms and a large number of chieftains wherein the chieftainship was hereditary. The important *Vendar (Crowned King)* who dominated Tamilakam region during the Sangam Age were the Pandyas in the valleys of Tamrapani (Srilanka), and Vaigai, The Cholas in the lower Krishna valley and the Cheras on the Kerala coast.

Thee kings had their own particular insignia of Royalty such as special umbrella, the drum and the staff.

KINGDOM	CAPITAL
The Pandyas	Madurai
The Cholas	Uraiyur
The Cheras	Vanji/Karuvur

THE PANDYAS

Pandya dynasty, Tamil rulers in the extreme south of India of unknown antiquity (they are mentioned by Greek authors in the 4th century BCE). The Roman emperor Julian received an embassy from a Pandya about 361 CE. The dynasty revived under Kadungon in the early 7th century CE and ruled from Madura (now Madurai) or farther south until the 16th century. The small but important (9th–13th century) dynasty of Pandya of Uchchangi, a hill fort south of the Tungabhadra River, may have originated from the Madura family.

The Pandya kings were called either Jatavarman or Maravarman. From being Jains they became Shaivas (worshippers of the Hindu deity Shiva) and are celebrated in the earliest Tamil poetry. They ruled extensive territories, at times including the Chera (Kerala) country, the Chola country, and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) through collateral branches subject to Madura. The “Five Pandyas” flourished from the 12th to the 14th century and eventually assumed control of all the plains of the extreme south as far north as Nellore (1257). Family quarrels, however, and Muslim invasions, from 1311, culminating in the foundation of the Madura sultanate, weakened Pandya influence. By 1312 control over Kerala was lost, and by the mid-16th century all their territories had passed into other hands.

MAJOR MONUMENTS DURING THE PANDYAS DYNASTY

- The cave temples found in Tirumalaipuram, TiruparanKundram, Anaimalai, Kundrakudi and Kalugumalai are the best monuments of pandya period.
- Meenakshi Temple of Madurai and the Arunganathar Temple in Srirangam are also the wonderful monuments

Important points to be noted:

1. *Pandya ruler built big gopurams at the entrance of the Temples.*
2. *Nakkeerar was the chief Tamil poet of the Pandya Court.*
3. *Chittanavasal cave temple built by Srimaran and Srivallaba pandya*
4. *Andal Composed thiruppavai.*
5. *Adiyarkku nallar ruler wrote commentary on Silappathiharam*
6. *The city of Madurai was known as Tamil Koodal.*
7. *Saint Manikavasagar composed Thiruvagasam and also wrote Thiruchirrambalakovai. (Thiruchittrambalam)*
8. *Cave Temples are found at kalugumalai and Trichy.*

THE CHOLAS

Chola dynasty, Chola also spelled **Cola**, South Indian Tamil rulers of unknown antiquity, antedating the early Sangam poems (c. 200 CE). The dynasty originated in the rich Kaveri (Cauvery) River valley. Uraiyur (now Tiruchchirappalli) was its oldest capital.

The legendary King Karikan was the common ancestor through whom small Deccan and Andhra families called Chola or Coda claimed a connection with the Uraiyur family. The Chola country (Coromandel) stretched from the Vaigai River in the south to Tondaimandalam, the capital of which was Kanci (now Kanchipuram), in the north. Much of Tamil classical literature and the greater Tamil architectural monuments belong to the Sangam period, which also saw a revival of Shaivism (worship of the god Shiva) and the development of southern Vaishnavism (worship of the god Vishnu). Revenue administration, village self-government, and irrigation were highly organized under the Cholas.

From 1216 the Hoysala kings obtained lands in the Chola country, former Chola feudatories threw off their allegiance, northern powers intervened, and the upheaval facilitated the Pandya conquest of the Chola country in 1257. The Chola dynasty ended in 1279.

MAJOR MONUMENTS OF THE CHOLAS

- Situated in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, this World Heritage site comprises the three great 11th and 12th century Chola Temples: the Brihadisvara temples of Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholisvaram, and the Airatesvara temple at Darasuram. The three Chola temples in India are exemplary production in the Dravidian style of temple architecture.
- The Brihadisvara temples are situated at Thanjavur, the ancient capital of the Chola kings. King Rajaraja Chola constructed the Brihadisvara Temple in 10th century A.D., designed by the famous architect Sama Varma. The Cholas were great patrons of art, during their reign, as a result, the most magnificent temples and exquisite bronze icons were created in South India.

- The Brihadisvara temple is crowned by a pyramidal 65-m vimana, a sanctum tower. Its walls are covered with rich sculptural decoration. The second Brihadisvara temple complex built by Rajendra I was completed in 1035. Its 53-m vimana has recessed corners and a graceful upward curving movement, contrasting with the straight and severe tower at Thanjavur. It has six pairs of massive, monolithic dvarapalas statues guarding the entrances and bronzes of remarkable beauty inside.
- The other two temples, Gangaikondacholisvaram and Airatesvara were also built in the age of Cholas and testify their brilliant achievements in architecture, sculpture, painting, and bronze casting.
- The great Temple of Tanjore (Thanjavur) was built between 1003 and 1010 in the reign of the King Rajaraja, of the Chola Empire which stretched all over South India and the neighbouring islands. Surrounded by two rectangular enclosures, the Brihadisvara Temple (built from blocks of granite and, in part, from bricks) is crowned with a pyramidal 13-storey tower, the vimana, standing 61 m high and topped with a bulb-shaped monolith. The walls of the temple are covered with rich sculptural decoration.

THE CHERAS

The Cheras were an ancient Dravidian royal dynasty of Tamil origin. The first to establish an historical ruling dynasty in the area, they ruled wide-ranging areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in south-eastern and south-western India respectively, areas that had been settled since at least 5000 BC, when Neolithic carvings had been left in Edakkal Caves. Chera territory included regions such as Venad, Kuttanad, Kudanad, Pazhinad, and others, encompassing the area between Kanya Kumari in the south to Kasargod in the north (now in the far north of Kerala). Also included in this list are Palghat, Coimbatore, Salem and Kollimalai, although they quite probably did not rule all of these areas at all times as ancient borders could be quite fluid at times. Their core territory was in Kerala, while the later rise of the Pallavas pushed them out of Tamil Nadu. However, they did establish a capital at Vanchi, which was known by the Romans as Muzris after an active sea-borne trade sprang up between the two powers.

Vedic influence seemed to have been minimal before the advent of Brahmanism. The Cheras had no particular religion - even the caste system was absent from their society - but ancestral worship was popular. The war goddess was known as Kottavai, but there existed no structural temples. Instead, images of gods were kept in the open air, probably under a tree (which echoes Indo-European practice in Europe, notably amongst the Celts and Germanics, so it has to be wondered whether the Dravidians copied the practice from similar Indo-European arrivals in northern India or if the practice predated the rise of either group). Unlike the later La Tène Celts, an established priesthood was conspicuously absent from Chera society. Structural temples only came into existence after the arrival of the Brahmins.

THANK YOU