

THE DECCAN AND THE SOUTH

During the Kushan Dynasty, an indigenous power, the Satavahana Kingdom (first century BC to third century AD), rose in the Deccan in southern India. The Satavahana, or Andhra Kingdom was considerably influenced by the Mauryan political model, though the power was decentralised in the hands of the local chieftains who used symbols of Vedic religion and upheld the varnashra-madharma. The rulers, however, were eclectic and patronised Buddhist monuments, such as those in Ellora (Maharashtra) and Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh). Thus, the Deccan served as a bridge through which politics, trade and religious ideas could spread from the north to the south. Farther south, the three ancient Tamil kingdoms—Chera (in the west), Chola (in the east), and Pandya (in the south)—frequently involved in internecine warfare to gain regional supremacy. They are mentioned in Greek and Ashokan sources as lying at the fringes of the Mauryan Empire. A corpus of ancient Tamil literature, known as Sangam (academy) works—including Tolkappiyam, a manual of Tamil grammar by Tolkappiyar—provides much useful information about their social life, Tamil is the oldest among the spoken and literary languages of South India and the earliest literature of this language is known as the Sangam literature. Tamil tradition tells us about three literary assemblies (Sangam) which met at Madurai under the Pandyan kings. The Sangam literature preserves folk memory about the society and life in South India between the third century BC and third century AD.

Dravidian social order was based on different ecological regions rather than on the Aryan Varna paradigm, though the Brahmins had a high status at a very early stage. Segments of society were characterised by matriarchy and

matrilineal succession—which survived well into the nineteenth century—cross-cousin marriage and strong regional identity. Tribal chieftains emerged as kings as people moved from pastoralism towards agriculture. Agriculture was sustained by irrigation from rivers, small-scale tanks (as man-made ponds are called in India) and wells. There is also evidence of brisk maritime trade with Rome and south-east Asia.

Sangam literature

Sangam Literature is a primary source which is used to gain knowledge about the early history of the ancient Tamil region. Many ancient kings and princes have a mention in ancient Sangam poems and their existence has also been proved through archaeological evidences. The history of the southern kingdoms like the early Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras can be found through the Sangam literature.

As an ancient academy, the Sangam met after a fixed interval in the city of Madurai under the able aegis of the Pandya kings which also helped Tamil poets and authors. According to an estimate, this period lasted between 100 BCE and 300 BCE.

The period of Sangam literature deals with war, governance, love, trade, etc. which also has the oldest expanded Tamil literature.

But a great part of the Tamil literature related to the Sangam period had been lost. The presently available literature from the Sangam period is just a shade of the rich wealth produced during this golden age of Tamil Civilization.

In the Sangam literature the Tamil language had become a strong medium of literary expression. Because of the expansion of the Tamil language social life could easily be portrayed in literature.

Many archaeologists who were involved in

examining the Chera inscription found in south-western Tamil Nadu have disclosed name of three generations of rulers from the Chera clan. These names are also found in some of the Sangam anthology Pathiruppathu'. Palaeographic analysis of the inscriptions has revealed its age to be within the first two centuries of the common era.

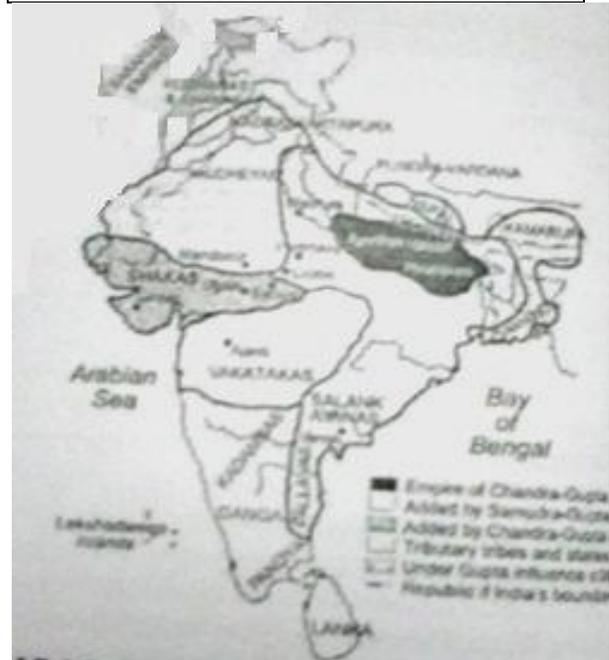
The Sangam age ended around the third Century CE with the invasion of Kalabhras from the north.

★ Two Calendars in India

Today's Indian Republic, apart from having two names for the country (India and Bharat), has two systems of dating, one the familiar Gregorian calendar of BC-AD and other based on the Shaka era, which is reckoned to have begun in AD 78. Although called Shaka (father than Kushana), this era is supposed by many to correspond with the Kanishkun era. Others have tried to match Kanishka with another Indian era, the Vikrama, which began in 58 BC. This seems much too early. On the other hand, the latest scholarship, based on numismatic correlations between Kushana and Roman coins, pushes Kanishka's accession way forward to about AD 128.

Discoveries of Roman gold coins in various sites attest to extensive South Indian links with the outside world. As with Patallputra in the north east and Taxila in the north-west (in Pakistan), the city of Madurai, the Pandyan capital (in Tamil Nadu), was the centre of intellectual and literary activities. Under royal patronage, poets and bards assembled at successive concourses and composed anthologies of poems, most of which have been lost. By the end of the first century BC, South Asia was criss-crossed by overland

trade routes, which facilitated the movements of Buddhist and Jain missionaries and other travellers and opened the area to a synthesis of many cultures.



MAP 1.8 Kingdoms in India

★ Some Notable Kingdoms of the Post-Mauryan Period

- (i) **Sungas** Pushyamitra Sunga, a staunch Brahmin, captured the throne after assassinating the last Mauryan king Brahadratha in 184 BC. He performed two famous Ashvamedha yajnas to promote orthodox Brahminical faith during his rule. The last Sunga king was assassinated by his Brahmin Minister Vasudeva Kanva.
- (ii) **Kanvas** Founded by Vasudeva, the Kanva Dynasty survived till 28 BC after succeeding the Sungas. The four main rulers of the Kanva Dynasty were Vasudeva, Bhumimitra, Narayana and Susman. The last Kanva king was

- deposed b Satavahans.
- (iii) **Satavahans** The first ruler, Simuka, destroyed the Sungas power and made Pratisthana the capital, on the banks of Godavari. They fought often with the Sakas, till Gautamiputra Satakarni (AD 106-130) destroyed the power of the Sakas and many other Kshatriya rulers to establish Satavahan rule in the Deccan and central India (also identified as Andhras). The dynasty came to an end by the middle of the third century AD and its last ruler was Shri Yajna Satakani.

GK Study Materials [PDF Download](#)

All subject Study Materials [PDF Download](#)

2018 Current Affairs Download – [PDF Download](#)

Whatsapp Group  [Click Here](#)

Telegram Channel  [Click Here](#)

Join Us on FB  **: English –**

[Examsdaily](#)

Follow US on  **Twitter - [Examsdaily](#)**