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## UNIT 5 POLITIES FROM 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY CE TO 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CE

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Indian sub-continent witnessed a prolonged flux in the post-Mauryan period with no major territorial organisation or major political power exercising control over large territories like that of the Mauryas (who were indigenous) or Kushanas, the latter being of central Asian origin. The Guptas were the first indigenous ruling family after the Mauryas to emerge as a powerful dynasty with a large territorial base in north India from the fourth to the sixth centuries CE. They were also the first major dynasty to have recorded their ventures (the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta) into south India as invaders raiding the eastern regions of the peninsula right down to the southern extremity of Andhra, encountering rulers like Hastivarman of Vengi (Salankayana) and Visnugopa of Kanci (Pallava) probably establishing a line of control meant to be a show of their prowess and dominance in a changing socio-political scene. With the Guptas also emerged the first state with a dominant Brahmanical- Puranic ideology and social institutions establishing the *Varna* hierarchy. A rich literary tradition in classical Sanskrit developed and norms were evolved to create a new order in socio-political organisation based on texts like the *Dharma Sastras*, which sought to establish the Brahmana- Kshatriya dominance.

Peninsular India seems to have been influenced by these changes in varying degrees during the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, with the Deccan ( Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra regions) marking a transition from the intensive commercial and urban economy of the early historical period (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) towards a new agrarian order and a dominant Brahmanical socio- political organisation. The Tamil region, on the contrary, had no clear political configurations and was in a constant state of flux after the decline of the traditional Sangam chiefdoms of the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas. Till the sixth century CE, i.e. till the emergence of the Pallavas and Pandyas as the two important kingdoms the Brahmanical tradition remained one of the competing ideologies for socio- political organisation.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE signalled the death knell of a great power, the Kushanas in the northern part of India and in the north western borderland of the subcontinent (about 262 CE). With the decline of the Kushanas, the political scenario was dominated by numerous independent indigenous powers like the Malavas, the Yaudheyas, the Arjunayanas and the Madrakas in eastern Punjab and Rajasthan, the Nagas in the Western Uttar Pradesh, the Maghas at Kausambi and a number of small 'tribal' states and forest kingdoms in the south of Uttar Pradesh. These powers, however, could not prevent the rise of the Guptas in the middle Ganga valley. The period from 300-600 CE is marked by the domination of the imperial Guptas for nearly two hundred and fifty years over north India.

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## 5.2 THE RISE OF GUPTA POWER

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The foundation of the Gupta power by Chandragupta I seems to have brought the middle Ganga valley and the region around Pataliputra back to political limelight. During the rule of the Kushanas, the seat of power was Mathura in the Ganga Yamuna doab. This shift of geo-political focus is particularly important as being firmly rooted to the middle Ganga valley, the Guptas sought to exterminate rivals in the Ganga-Yamuna doab, upper Ganga valley, Punjab and Haryana, central India and Malwa plateau and tried to expand in the lower Ganga regions. The various powers of the Ganga basin were mostly monarchical. On the other hand with the exception of Nepal in the north, it was surrounded on all the three sides by a ring of states which were mostly gana samgha (translated as republican or oligarchical and often also as 'tribal'). These gana-samghas were not guided by Brahmanical ideology of monarchy and were an alternative to monarchy but gradually the gana-samgha political tradition had to succumb to the impact of monarchical state system.

In the initial phase of the rise of the Gupta power we find that Chandragupta I, who laid the foundation of the Gupta empire, married into the Lichchhavi family, once an old, established gana-samgha of north Bihar (Vaishali in Muzaffarpur). The non- monarchical character of the lichchhavis was known at least since 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE This marriage is attested by a gold coin where we have the representation of the Gupta monarch along with the Gupta queen Kumaradevi whose Lichchhavi origin is evident from the legend Lichchhavayah. The marriage finally resulted in the incorporation of the Vaishali region in the Gupta territory. The discovery of Gupta seals from the Vaishali excavations points to the creation of provincial administration and a head quarter in Vaishali. The legend in one of the seals read [V]aisalyadhithan- adhikarana and has been translated as 'the chief of the government of Vaishali (city Magistrate?).' Though the Guptas never

directly conquered the non-monarchical clan in north Bihar, the seals indicate the penetration of Gupta monarchical polity in Vaishali which was a territory of strategic importance.

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### 5.3 THE GANA-SANGHA “TRIBAL” POLITIES

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The Gana-samgha tradition was very much present in the greater portions of the ‘tribal’ belt of Central India, Rajasthan and eastern Punjab prior to the Gupta rule. From the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta we learn that non-monarchical groups like the Malavas (Jaipur area, Rajasthan), Arjunayanas (located in the Delhi- Jaipur- Agra triangle), Yaudheyas (Bharatpur, Rajasthan), Madrakas (between the rivers Chenab and Ravi in Pakistan), Abhiras (in western Deccan around Nasik), Prarjuna, Kakas (near Sanchi), Sanakanikas (near Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh), and Kharaparikas (possibly in the Damoh district, Madhya Pradesh), paid homage and tribute to Samudragupta. Thus it appears that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, Samudragupta’s conquest resulted in the dissolution of a number of gana-samghas in north India. Though these were not directly conquered and incorporated in the Gupta realm by Samudragupta, they no longer figured in any evidence since the time of Chandragupta II. It needs to be mentioned that though the final blow to the gana-samgha polity, which had held its own as an alternative to monarchy, was dealt by Samudragupta, the structures of some early gana-samghas were already undergoing processes of change. These changes were the result of an overall change in the politico-economic scenario. Their location upon important networks of communication also accelerated the process of change. Most of these non-monarchical clans struck coins and the non-monarchical character of their polity is indicated by the legends on their coins and seals.

#### 5.3.1 Yaudheyas and Malavas

The coins of the Yaudheyas on which the word gana occurs are assignable to the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. At the same time during this period, the Bijaygadh inscription and a seal speak of a Maharaja-Mahasenapati and the seal adds Mahakshatrapa to it, as the head of the Yaudheya republic. The assumption of the Mahakshatrapa title was perhaps the result of their close association with the Sakas and Kushanas. The Yaudheyas in this period became a part of the vast network of commerce and the discovery of thousands of their copper coins and coin moulds from Rohtak in Haryana and from Sunet in Ludhiana district of the Punjab bear testimony to this. Thus the use of the title Maharaja may indicate an inclination towards monarchical polity within the broader framework of non-monarchical polity as they continued to use the term gana, though its character had necessarily changed. With regard to the Malavas we have a very interesting inscription from Nandsa (in eastern Rajasthan) dated CE 226. It records the performance of Ekashashtiratna sacrifice by a scion of the royal Malava family. The Malavas were claiming a status as high as the Ikshvakus. This may be taken as a step towards construction of genealogy which is associated with the Brahmanical legitimation of monarchical power. It is interesting to note that the rulers do not bear any title like maharaja or rajan. It would appear that the republican traditions were still strong among the Malavas and no regal titles were permitted to their rulers even when they had established hereditary dynasties ruling at least for three generations. With their gaining tributary status during Samudragupta’s time, the area ruled by the Malavas saw the

rise of two branches of the Aulikara ruling house in the Dasapura area (present Mandasore in Rajasthan), one group acknowledging the Gupta suzerainty and the other remaining independent. The presence of the Aulikara ruling house marked the end of the non-monarchical Malava ganas.

### 5.3.2 Sanakanikas

Transformation of non-monarchical polity into monarchical set up could be seen in the case of the Sanakanikas too. The Sanakanikas were enlisted in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription with the other 'tribal' states. But during the time of Chandragupta II we have an inscription referring to a Sanakanika maharaja who was a vassal of Chandragupta II. It is evident from the inscription that both the father and grandfather of this Sanakanika maharaja were also designated maharaja in the inscription. So perhaps even during the time of Samudragupta, when the Sanakanikas finally pledged to pay tribute to the Gupta sovereign, the process of transformation had already begun.

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## 5.4 MONARCHICAL SET-UP: SAMATATA AND KAMARUPA

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In the case of the peripheral regions of the Gupta empire as mentioned in the Allahabad inscription we find that the rulers of the region are referred to as simply narpatas of a particular region without even mentioning their names. It is a pointer to the fact that these rulers were merely chiefs and so did not gain enough attention from the Gupta ruler to be referred to by name. One may particularly cite the case of Samatata which perhaps was experiencing rudimentary form of monarchical set up in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE but finally by 6<sup>th</sup> century CE Samatata definitely experienced monarchical set up as mentioned in the Gunaigarh copper plate dated 507 CE, Maharaja Vainyagupta was ruling in the region. Finally in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, Samatata emerges as an independent monarchical set up, its kings being given the designation of Samatatesvara or Lord of Samatata. A similar process of consolidation of monarchical state structure is also seen in Kamarupa in upper Assam. Kamarupa was also one of the frontier states of Samudragupta in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE and perhaps the incipient monarchical state was put under a ruling family by the Gupta emperor. From the genealogical account given in the Nidhanpur copper plate of Bhaskarvarman we learn that Pushyavarman was the first historical ruler of Kamarupa and he may be placed in about 350 CE or a little earlier. Interestingly Pushyavarman out of his loyalty and devotion to his Gupta overlord named his son and daughter in law Samudravarman and Dattadevi or Dattavati. Though Kamarupa was comparatively a small frontier kingdom in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, it appears that king Narayanavarman performed two Asvamedha sacrifices which evidently indicates some increase in the power of the family under him. Perhaps he threw off the yoke of the Guptas around that time. Kamarupa became powerful under the next king Bhutivarman in about the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. but even then he was simply called maharaja. The transition from nrpati to maharaja indicates the gradual crystallisation of the monarchical state structure. As for the kingdom of Davaka, located in the valley of the Kapili river in modern Nowgong district, Assam, we have reference to its existence in CE 428 from the Chinese account of an embassy sent in that year by the king of Ka-Pi-Li. But this kingdom which was a part of the Gupta empire was incorporated within the kingdom of Kamarupa perhaps during the time of Bhutivarman.

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## 5.5 FOREST CHIEFS

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The Gupta emperor also reduced the forest chiefs (atavikarajas) to the position of his servants (paricharakikrta). These forest chiefs may conveniently be located in the present Baghelkhand region. It is obvious that this region was initially outside the purview of a complex state society. With the penetration of Gupta power in this region, emergence of a state structure following the pattern of the Gupta administrative system can be noticed. This is reflected from the Khoh copper plate inscription of Sarvanatha dated 512 CE, belonging to the Uchchakalpa family and another Khoh copper plate inscription of Samkshobha dated 529 CE belonging to the Parivrajaka family. Both of these ruling houses were feudatories of the Guptas. Thus the pre-state atavika society ends up being transformed into a monarchical set up. With monarchical set up, the social structure naturally became more complex and Brahmanical or Sastric norms were championed. The Parivrajaka rulers in the atavika area boasted to have upheld and maintained the varna organisation (varnasrama dharma-sthapana niratena). A complex social structure can be seen with the creation of agraharas or revenue free settlements in favour of religious donees. The expansion of agriculture and the advent of the agricultural society is closely linked with the gradual hardening of the varna- jati organisation. The Brahmanical or Sastric norms were instruments which provided some integration in a society with increasing inequality of access to resources, status and power. The transition from incipient to a mature state was also made possible by the incorporation of the autochthonous cults into Brahmanical belief systems and also the patronage of the dominant autochthonous deities by kings. The monarchical polity was expanding and the final annihilation of the gana samgha system of polity was taking place. It is interesting to note here that not a single Dharmasastra text, discusses the constitution of the republics and this silence testifies to the Brahmanical opposition to republics. On the other hand theoretical treatises of this period display a mature understanding of the elements of a monarchical state.

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## 5.6 NATURE OF STATE UNDER THE GUPTAS

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A distinct feature of the monarchical system under the Guptas was the greater use of the concept of the divinity of the ruler. Thus Samudragupta is considered as equal to Kuvera, Varuna, Indra and yama (dhanadavarunendrantakasama), as a being beyond comprehension (achintyapurusha) and as a deity residing in the terrestrial world (lokadhamadeva). Manu's dictum that the king was a great deity in human form is thus translated here.

From the reign of Chandragupta-I onwards the Guptas took the title of Maharaja Dhiraj as is known from inscriptions, coin legends and seals. The other titles mentioned in the Gupta coins and inscriptions are paramarajadhiraja, rajadhirajarishi and rajarajadhiraja. In the Allahabad pillar inscription Samudragupta is regarded as God living on Earth. In the genealogical accounts he is referred to as Kuber, Indra, etc. Hereditary succession was established in this period though the emperor chose the heir apparent. The Guptas adopted the policy of administrative decentralisation. Several powers conquered by the Guptas were allowed to function independently. They were subjugated but were not incorporated into the empire. These feudatories paid tribute to the Guptas but at times some of them did not mention Guptas as their suzerain in their official records. The practice of land grants and also grants of villages started under the Satavahanas and continued under the Guptas. These grants carried with

them administrative rights which led to the decentralisation of administrative authority. Rights of subinfeudation were given to the land donees. Visti (force labour) was applied to all classes of subjects.

The disintegration of the Gupta Empire was followed by the rise of monarchical states while the ganas faded into oblivion. These states derived legitimacy from Brahmanical Puranic ideology and varnasharam dharma. The monarchical state, represented by the emergence of ruling monarchical lineages, had covered all nuclear regions and had progressed well into peripheral areas by the end of the Gupta period.

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## 5.7 RISE OF FEUDATORIES AND DISINTEGRATION OF GUPTA EMPIRE

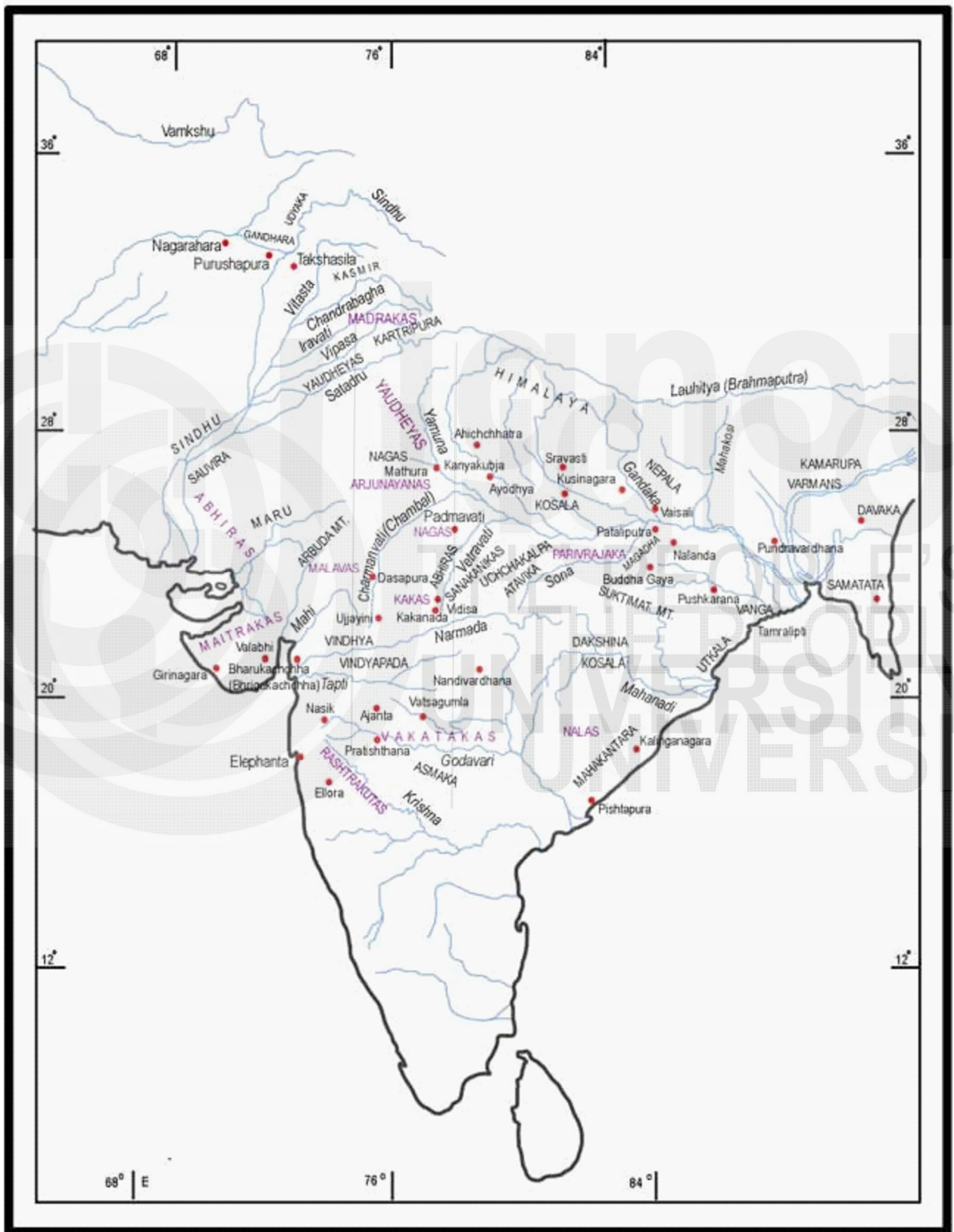
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The Gupta empire divided into provinces and feudatory domains, was internally weakened by quarrels in the royal household. Hereditary succession in the high official posts as well as in the families of the feudatory rulers resulted in the tendency to concentrate power in the hands of certain groups which naturally threatened the stability of the empire. Ultimately the empire, smarting under the effect of the Huna invasions, could not effectively check the growth of the power of the feudatory families. Vishnugupta was the last of the imperial Gupta monarchs. The empire virtually ceased to exist by the middle of the sixth century CE. However the vestiges of the empire could have continued in an outlying province like Kalinga. The Sumandala inscription of the year 250(CE 569/70) refers to the rule of Prithivi-vigraha in Kalinga rashtra in the Gupta kingdom. We do not know who was Prithivivigraha's overlord. The rest of the century was marked by the rule of Manas in the north and Sailodbhavas in the south.

The Aulikaras and the Maukharis, who had earlier served the Guptas were causing serious trouble to the Gupta monarch. The record of the Maukhari chief Anantavarman from the Gaya district, palaeographically datable to about the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE does not either attribute to him the title of a paramount sovereign or refer to the rule of the Guptas. It appears that Anantavarman declared de facto independence, owing perhaps a nominal allegiance to the Guptas. The Risthal inscription of Prakashadharman dated CE 514/515 and Mandasore inscription of Yashodharman dated 531/32 CE, the Aulikara rulers, suggest that this family had a great role in stemming the Huna menace in India and weakening the existing Gupta kingdom. The Maukharis probably extended their power to the region of Uttar Pradesh and established their capital at Kanauj. They and the family of Krishnagupta, known as the later Guptas became the two principal powers contending for supremacy in India during the second half of the sixth century CE. An emerging political force about this time was the dynasty of Pushpabhuti at Thanesar in the Ambala district, Haryana. The Maitrakas of Valabhi, who had been ruling as feudatories from the last quarter of the fifth century, became independent in the second half of the sixth century and gained importance by the end of that century. The Gurjaras founded a small kingdom in the Jodhpur area of Rajasthan by about the middle of the sixth century CE. Another principality around Broach was carved out by the Gurjaras in about the last quarter of the same century. In the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, the Sassanians, the local ruling families of the Punjab area, the group of Kidara and the Hunas dominated in different areas in different times.

Thus the period under review is marked by the spread of monarchical polity. The political scenario cannot be viewed in terms of a centralised power wielding authority over large territories. Even the superior political power and position of the Gupta empire

did not lead to the establishment of a paramount political power in the subcontinent. At the close of the sixth century north India experienced the emergence of a number of ruling houses who were originally vassals of the Guptas in different areas. Though the strength and power of all these ruling houses varied, some of them made their presence felt and at the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> century north India saw the rise of some very important powers like the Pushyabhutis, the Maukharis, the Later Guptas. The Maitrakas were powerful in Western India and in eastern India Bengal emerged for the first time as a power to reckon with in north Indian politics under Sasanka of Gauda.



MAP 3: Guptas and Vakatakas (based on R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol.III, pt. II CE 300-985, New Delhi, 1982.

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## 5.8 NATURE OF POLITIES AND THEIR SOCIAL ORIGINS IN SOUTH INDIA: EVIDENCE OF PURANIC AND EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

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In order to understand the nature of the polities and the social origins of the ruling families which emerged in peninsular India, it is necessary to correlate the evidence from inscriptions with the Puranic material. The importance of epigraphic sources which are increasingly available from the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE and become more numerous in the early medieval period has been emphasised for reconstructing the historical processes of the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. However the importance of early Puranic texts (albeit with some interpolations) for the historical processes in the Deccan and Andhra for the period 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Along with inscriptional evidence needs to be recognised as the Brahmanical polities of the period invariably followed the Puranic tradition and religious ideology for legitimising their emergence to power and territorial authority. However, the concept of territory had not quite crystallised into cognisable regions with clear limits or boundaries, which could be claimed by any one of the ruling families that are known from the epigraphic sources, the exception being the Vakatakas and Kadambas of Maharashtra and Karnataka respectively and to an extent the Visnukundis of the Andhra region. It becomes necessary, therefore to adopt a historical geography approach to study the peninsular regions in order to situate the ruling families in their respective zones, which were constantly fluctuating due to conflicting interests among them.

Ruling lineages claiming Brahmana origin or connections with the gotras that are recognised in the gotra lists of the *Srauta Sutras* emerged in peninsular India, conspicuously in the Deccan plateau and Andhra plains. This is reflected in the inscriptions of the ruling families. A new term Brahmakshatra/Brahmakshatriya, occurring only once in the corpus of inscriptions, represents a rather dubious category of social status, which is claimed by a few of the ruling families like the Visnukundi and the Pallavas, indicating either the assumption by Brahmanas of Kshatriya functions and status, creating monarchical states with territorial bases or the local clan or 'tribal' chiefs combining the functions of priest and ruler being described by the term Brahmakshatriya and claiming territorial authority. In the process they may well have been influenced by the evolution of monarchical states in the north and the Dharmasastric model of the institution of kingship.

In the *Puranas*, the Vamsanucharita sections list the progenitors of the gotras as descendants of the Ikshvaku or Ila lineages. The epic and Puranic sources refer to the Kshatropeta dvijas and occasionally to the Brahma Kshatriya. The Kshatropeta dvijas who, according to the Puranas were brahmanas endowed with kshatra qualities, may be the same as the Brahmakshatriya of the mid- first millennium CE and early medieval inscriptions. Some of the lineages with gotra identities cannot be covered by the category of Brahma Kshatriya. It seems to be an extra constitutional category which evolved over time (also found in early medieval Rajput inscriptions). There are several explanations of the term. That the "brahmakshatriyas were originally brahmana families which changed over to the profession, life and status of kshatriya in course of time; that the Brahma Kshatriya was a halfway house resulting from matrimonial alliances between kshatriyas and brahmanas ; that the Brahma Kshatriya was a transitional status which was seized upon by the new royal families before they could formulate a pure kshatriya origin, particularly in the early medieval period. In the early medieval period-

brahmaksatriya was a special category of brahmanas who had taken up the duties of the Ksatriya varna without being relegated to a lower status. The Brahma Kshatriya category was an important social category that was constructed for the sake of certain brahmana families which acquired temporal power, but continued to subscribe to their earlier brahmana identity. This category has also been turned down as pure fabrication by some historians.

It is also possible that the social category of brahma-kshatriya might have had its origin among the non-brahmanical descent groups and clans of the Deccan quite independent of the societal processes visible in the epic-Puranic tradition. It would be difficult to envisage a strict separation of the political and religious spheres of activity in such societies. Perhaps in the case of the Brahatphalayanans and the Ananda gotrins (of the Andhra region), brahma- kshatriya represents the brahmanical version of the vestiges of a non- brahmanical institution i.e., 'the priest-chief'. Therefore the social category of the brahma- kshatriya might have had multiple origins in the post- Satavahana Deccan.

That they were more numerous in the Deccan and southern India is admitted by all historians, Karnataka in particular where the early Kadambas began their political career. In the Andhra region the Visnukundis claimed the status of the Brahma kshatriya. Vikramendravarman is described by the Tummalagudem Plates (CE 557) as endowed with the brilliance of Brahma Kshatriya. It is noteworthy that none of the ruling families of this period claimed connections with Chandravamsa (Lunar) or Suryavamsa (Solar) lineages.

The totemic name of the clan or the name of some fictitious ancestor might have been brahmanised to resemble a gotra term. The Brahatphalayanans ruled over present day Gudivada taluk and adjoining parts of Krishna and Guntur districts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century CE and the name Brahatphalayana might have been a lineage or family name which acquired the status of a gotra as it was a popular practice among contemporary lineages to mention their gotras in their inscriptions. The Kandara Kula, who came to be called Ananda gotrins, had possible non- brahmanical origins and the transformation of their social identity as rulers might have been provided by the Vedic – Puranic brahmanas, some of whom might have been the donees of the brahmadeya charters. The Anandagotrins performed the Hiranyagarbha mahadana, which is believed to be a device used by post-Satavahana ruling lineages for acquiring a new noble birth or even as caste for the first time as suggested by I.K. Sarma. This ritual may be treated as a ceremony for rejuvenating the persona of the ruler as suggested by D.D. Kosambi and not for changing the caste or varna.

The social origins of the dominant ruling lineages also point to the influence of the Bhargavangirasa Brahmanas (elite groups) on the formation of post- Satavahana polities in the Deccan and Andhra regions. It appears that the Puranic references provided the ideological foundation for the ascendancy of at least some of the Bhargavangirasa brahmana families to temporal power in the Deccan in the mid- first millennium AD.

Major dynasties like the Vakatakas of both Nandivardhana and Vatsagulma branches are said to belong to the Visnuvridha gotra. The Vatsagulma branch also had the matronymic Haritiputra. The Ajanta cave inscription of Harisena claims Brahma origins for the Vakatakas and the founder Vindhyasakti is called a dvija. The Vakatakas, who, according to K.M. Shrimali had a 'tribal' origin, also seem to be Bhargavangirasa brahmanas of the Visnuvridha gotra. The early Kadambas claimed to belong to the Angirasa gotra. The Kadamba Kula is also described as a dvija kula with the rulers

assuming matronymics like Haritiputra and the gotra, Manavya and are said to have followed the path of the three Vedas. The Western Gangas are said to be of the Jahnaveya kula and the Kanvayana gotra. The Early Pallavas were of the Bharadvaja gotra and trace their descent through Angirasa, Drona and Asvatthama.

All four (gotras of the Vakatakas, Kadambas, Western Gangas and Pallavas) belong to the Bhargavangirasa group of Brahmana gotra in the *Srauta Sutras* but are recognised as Kshatropta dvija families of Bhargava and Angirasa in the *Puranas*. In the *Mahabharata*, which was earlier than the Puranas, the motive of interpolations was the construction of the image of the brahmana warrior hero. Asvatthama, one such brahmana warrior was cursed to wander (as a terrifying brahmana warrior) alone on the face of the earth in uninhabited countries. His wanderings could have been the basis of the claims by some local ruling families as a possible dynastic ancestor, e.g. the Pallavas. Such claims were often made in a specific context.

The Brahmana claims made by the Kadambas in their early records are indicative of the fact that they were Kshatriyised brahmanas. (Manavya gotra) and were respected as both Brahmanas and Kshatriyas. The Kadambas also claimed to be Angirasa brahmanas, guided on the one hand by the warrior brahmana image of Rama Jamadagnya, while assimilating, on the other hand, the locally popular cult of Karttikeya and the Matr-ganas, as also some epithets and family name of their predecessors perhaps for greater acceptance. Thus the stock references to Mahasena- Karttikeya and the Matr-ganas as tutelary deities is significant, considering the beliefs of scholars that they were Vedic brahmanas. The Vishnukundis of the Andhra region, who came half a century later than the Kadambas also claimed brahma kshatriya identity, may also have had a probable brahmana origin.

The Salankayanas of the same gotra claimed to be worshippers of Chitraratha svamin or the Sun god and may have had links with the Maga brahmanas of Sakadvipa (Sind?). Chaturvaidyasalas or Ghatikas of a later period, which were centres of Brahmanical learning were established by them.

In the mid- first millennium CE there was a proliferation of brahmanical ruling lineages and the adoption of gotras must have been occasioned by a necessity to validate repeated transgressions of the *Smriti* injunctions or the Dharmasastric theoretical axiomatisation or model of what a varna based society should be like. Hence the construction of the Puranic category of the Kshatropeta dvijas and the Itihasa – Puranic tradition rationalising these very transgressions within the theoretical model of the Smriti tradition.

The epic motif of the brahmana warrior hero personified by Rama Jamadagnya primarily has greater implications for the societal processes that occurred during the post-Satavahana period. There was thus a preponderance of the Bhargavangirasa brahmanas, who were rulers as well as beneficiaries or donees.

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## 5.9 HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PENINSULAR INDIA

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Based on the mid-first millennium CE inscriptional evidence, there is an overall consensus that the period was marked by the emergence and prevalence of polities with a predominantly agrarian base in a manner hitherto unprecedented on both sides of the Vindhyas.

## 5.9.1 The Andhra Region

### The Ikshvakus

Taking up the various ruling families in the Andhra region, as far as possible in a chronological order, the earliest were the Ikshvakus of Vijayapuri (Nagarjunakonda). The Ikshvakus who succeeded the Satavahanas in the Andhra region—the Krishna valley (Krishna and Guntur districts) are known from archaeological, inscriptional and numismatic evidence as representing the transition towards a Brahmanical socio-political order.

Nagarjunakonda is situated on the left bank of the River Krishna in the present Palnad Taluk in Guntur district. The only spatial aggregate clearly identifiable as a territorial entity in the Ikshvaku inscriptions is Kammaka rashtra (later Kamma rashtra in Pallava inscriptions), which included large parts of Prakasam district and southern parts of Guntur district. Other inscriptions attest to Ikshvaku control over parts of Guntur district (Jaggayyapeta, Kudurapura, Gurzala, Uppugundur referring to Dhannakataka or Amaravati) and also parts of Krishna district (inscription from Halura). Thus the Ikshvakus controlled large parts of the coastal districts of modern Andhra Pradesh including Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam districts. Their influence extended even to Kurnool and Cuddapah districts.

They also exercised control over specific communities like the Pukiyas (Mahatalavaras) with whom they had matrimonial relations, and the Hiramnakas. The Pukiyas probably occupied the area on either bank of River Gundlakamma between Srisailem in the west and Bay of Bengal on the east. The Hiramnakas were residents of Hiranya rashtra represented by parts of modern Kurnool and Cuddapah districts and are known from a few coins.

The Ikshvaku rule over Nagarjunakonda (Vijayapuri) was interrupted by brief spells of control by other chiefs like the Mahatalavara, Mahagramaka, Mahadandanayaka Sivasen (b) a of the Kausika gotra and the Peribideha family. On the north west frontier of the Ikshvaku domain, in central Deccan (parts of Medak, Karimnagar and Warangal districts) coins of a Sebaka assignable to the 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE were found suggesting the presence of chiefly families in various parts of Andhra around the core of the Krishna valley.

Archaeological evidence from Nagarjunakonda, both Buddhist and Brahmanical monuments (Astabhujasvamin and Puspabhadrasvamin temples), apart from Roman coins (of Hadrian), excavations at Yelesvaram on the banks of Krishna opposite Nagarjunakonda, Vaddamannu and Kesanapalli in Guntur district, Ghantasala in Krishna district, Veerapuram in Kurnool district, Nelakodapalli in Khammam district (where only their influence reached), coins in Anantapur district, the Tenali hoard (Guntur district) in Duvvuru in Nellore district point to the extent of their control as most of the discoveries are well within the territory of the Ikshvakus known from their inscriptions. The Ikshvakus were followers of the Brahmanical tradition, while at the same time the women of the royal household came from chiefly families patronising the Buddhist religion. The Ikshvakus themselves promoted Buddhist centres on account of the continuous trading and commercial activities in Andhra region till about the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

## **The Brahatphalayanans**

The Brahatphalayanans are known from a lone Copper Plate record of Raja Jayavarama, which is a brahmadeya grant of Pamtura gama in Kudurahara. Kudurahara is represented by parts of the present Gudivada taluk in the Krishna district indicating that the Brahatphalayanans controlled the area in and around Gudivada taluk.

## **The Salankayanas**

The Salankayanas ruled over parts of West Godavari and Krishna districts. The units referred to in their inscriptions are: 1) the Kanira ahara, a unit larger than a village, wherein was situated the grant village of Mulakalapalle (either in Nidadavolu taluk of west Godavari district or Mulagalampalle in Polavaram taluk of the same district), which covered the area stretching from Polavaram upto Tanuku taluk in west Godavari district; 2) Vacada Visya, perhaps part of West Godavari district not far from Guntupalli. Vengipura identified with Peddavegi in West Godavari district was their centre of power. There were several agraharas in the same district created by the Salankayanas; 3) Another unit called the Kudrahara Visaya contained the villages of Chinnapura (Chintapura) pallika and Kompore (Kommaru in Mandavalli taluk of the Krishna district) and Kuruvada grama (= Kuruvada or Kunda in Gudivada taluk of the same district) and Videnura pallika in the same unit. Thus large parts of Krishna district also came under the Salankayanas; 4) Natapati or Nadattapati (also Nata Visaya?), yet another unit included parts of Krishna and Guntur districts in the lower Krishna valley.

Excavations at other individual sites like Elura (Eluru in West Godavari?) and Ghantasala in Krishna district show evidence of maritime trade or contacts during the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The Buddhist caityas and Viharas in Guntupalli dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to the period of the Salankayanas show that parts of these two districts, West Godavari and Krishna districts were under their control.

## **Ananda Gotrins**

The territory under the Anandagotrins seems to have covered southern parts of Guntur and adjoining Prakasam districts as indicated by their Copper Plate charters referring to villages like Chezarla in Guntur district.

## **The Pallavas**

The early Pallava charters record grants of land in the eastern districts of Andhra Pradesh, while later inscriptions point to a southward movement from Guntur through Prakasam, Nellore districts and beyond, which was also a major artery of trade and communication.

Andhapata is a term which occurs for the first time in one of the early Pallava grants referring to such a route of communication. It relates to the grant of Viripara= Vipparalapalle on the bank of the tributary of River Vogeru in Narasaraopet taluk in Guntur district. Apata may be taken as a route and Andhapata may be one such route connecting Amaravati with its hinterland. The officers to whom these grants were addressed were the Vyapata and the Ayukyaka.

The various units mentioned in the Pallava records are:

Satahanirattha, perhaps the same as Satahanihara, Karmma or Karmmaka rashtra.

(present day taluks of Addanki and Darsi in Prakasam district). A unit called Kavacakara bhoga is located within Kamma rastra.

Munda rastra, in which the grant village called Uruvapalli grama was located seems to have covered large parts of present day Nellore taluk around the Penneru river flowing through Cuddapah and Nellore districts, which is the same as Suprayoga flowing through Hiranya rastra. Munda rastra is represented by Kovur, Nellore, Ravur, Butchireddipalem and Venkatagiri taluks of the Nellore district.

Sendraka rajya= present day districts of Hassan and Chikmagalur in Karnataka.(also mentioned in Kadamba and Ganga inscriptions).

Nadattapati (Vesanta grant), a portion of the larger Nata Visaya included Talluru and Guntur taluks.

Adeyaru rastra in which Udayendiram and Kanchivayil were located is represented by Gudiyattam taluk of North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu.

Grants of land outside the Nellore- Prakasam and Guntur area included the Vengo rastra which may be the area around Vengadam or Tirupati, the well known Vaisnava pilgrimage centre.

Hiranya rastra= present day Cuddapah and Kurnool districts covering the banks of River Kanderu.

Unattached place names are known from other inscriptions such as Manchikallu in Palnad taluk in Guntur district, while Kanchi, which was the place of issue of early Pallava charters is the present Kanchipuram in north Tamil Nadu.

None of the rulers belonging to the collateral line of the Pallava dynasty claimed connection with Kanchipuram, but the rulers of the main line did issue charters from places other than Kanchipuram like those located on the banks of the river Nudgali and Tambrapasthana in Andhra Pradesh. The Early Pallavas were on the move frequently. It would appear that the early Pallavas were a pastoral clan with ruling chiefs constantly seeking a territorial base. The shortlived regional bases occupied by them were subjected to inroads by the Visnukundis and the Telugu Codas into their early regions and caused shifts in their base . Simultaneously the involvement of the Pallavas in the internecine struggles of the early Kadambas and Western Gangas also led to a major shift in their territorial base. The Pallavas of the main line seem to have acquired a stable base in the Tondai region with Kanchipuram as the capital during the last decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE perhaps at the expense of the collateral line. The territory lost to the Visnukundias and Telugu Codas were re- annexed by the time of Mahendravarman I in early 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.

**The Visnukundis**— Of the six dynasties of the Andhra region, the Visnukundis were the only outsiders to the Krishna- Guntur- Prakasam area. Known as Sriparvatiyas they seem to have begun their political career from the Srisailam hills in the Kurnool district. The Srisailam area along with Mahubnagar- Nalgonda was known to the early Puranas as the Rsika country.

The units known from their inscriptions are: 1) Velpuru Desa in which the Skandhavara (military camp?) of Velpuru was located comprised of the Ipur taluk and parts of the adjoining taluks of the Guntur district. 2) Guddadi/ Kuddavadi visaya or Kudavada,

identified with Gudivada in the Peddapuram taluk and Vilembadi identified with Velampalem in the Ramachandrapuram taluk (River Tulyabhaga) of the East Godavari district. Their inscriptions are also found in places in the Krishna and Prakasam districts. 3) Plakki rastra mentioned in the Ramatirtham plates comprised of the present day districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam district up to Anakapalli taluk. 4) Natapati known from the Chikkulla plates comprising of Jaggayyapeta, Nandigama taluks and the adjoining parts of the Krishna district. 5) Vaiyerakara represented by the northern parts of East Godavari district and Tundi (Tuni) in Tuni taluk in southern Visakhapatnam district and Akiveedu in a taluk of the same name in West Godavari district. Places on the banks of the Krishna occur in many of the records.

The Visnukundis started their political career from the Mahbubnagar- Nalgonda-Srisailam area and later they appear to have established control over West Godavari district, which was the stronghold of the Salankayanas earlier. They seem to have gained parts of northern Guntur and Krishna district at the expense of the Anandagotris and the early Pallavas and a firm base also in East Godavari district and moved northwards to Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam districts. They pushed the Pallavas to Tondai region and occupied Kamma rastra in the Prakasam district.

Typical copper coins of the Visnukundis with a squatting lion symbol are known suggesting the possible continuity of trade activities on the eastern coastal regions, though less intensive than in the early historical period. The discovery of 787 coins from Tangutur in Nalgonda district and other finds in the Deccan and further south, apart from the Roman coins of the later Byzantine period, indicate that the extent and geographical spread of trade contacts in this period, which scholars like R.S. Sharma have characterised as one of 'urban decline', was considerable and hence the theory of 'urban decline' needs to be re-assessed in the context of regional variations in the intensity of trade activities and contact with the outside world.

The Puranic religion was patronised by the Visnukundis and brick temples were erected for the Puranic deities like Vinayaka, Harihara and Sakti. Vengi or Pedda Vegi might be considered as one of the main centres of activity after the decline of the Salankayanas. Brahmanical cave shrines at Vijayavada, Undavalli and Mogalrajapuram have also been attributed to the Visnukundis.

It appears that there was a hierarchy of preferred areas among the six dynasties. The nucleus of this area was the Krishna river on either bank now represented by the modern districts of Guntur and Krishna in which the regions of Andhapata, Natapati and Kudurahara were located. The second area of attraction was the lower Godavari valley and the Rayalasila area. The main contenders for this region were the Salankayanas and Visnukundis. The Ikshvakus and Pallavas also sought to extend their influence over the Rayalasila area. The last area, i.e., the northern coastal districts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam attracted only the Visnukundis. The southern coastal districts of Prakasam and Nellore were coveted mainly by the Pallavas. The location of some of the donated villages on the banks of the smaller rivers like the Penneru and the Tulyabhaga may be a result of either conscious agrarian expansion from the nuclear areas or alternatively, the earlier proto-historic sites with other kinds of resources were now sought by the new ruling families.

The concentration of the territorial bases of the dynasties on the Andhra coastal plains is primarily due to the fertility of the region. Metal may well have been another resource

for which new settlements emerged in the Mahbubnagar – Nalgonda area of the Plateau and the discovery of Visnukundi coins at a few places might be indicative of their attempts to procure iron from the Telengana region. Cotton also may have been imported from the Telengana region. The Hiranya rastra and Vengo rastra of the early Pallavas are also located in an iron bearing zone in the Rayalasila region. Brahmadeyas begin to appear in this region too. Copper was yet another metal from the Plateau region. Trade in metal and/or implements seems to have been an important economic activity.

### 5.9.2 Karnataka

#### Ananda Satakarnis of Banavasi

Vaijayanti or Banavasi in the Sirsi taluk of Uttara Kannada district has been associated with the Kadambas at least from the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE as indicated by the Talagunda (Sthanakundura in the Shikarpur taluk of Shimoga district) inscription of the Kadamba Santivarman. However, even before the Kadambas, evidence of an earlier ruling family, which may be called the Ananda Satakarnis, i.e. local chiefs ruling over the region around Vaijayanti known as Vanavasa in the late second- third century CE, i.e., is available. They assumed the title 'rajan'. A few coins of Raja Cutukulananda and Raja Mudananda found in unstratified contexts in Banavasi and epigraphic evidence suggest that the Ananda Satakarni rulers controlled the Vanavasa country comprising Uttara Kannada district and adjoining parts of Shimoga and Belgaum districts, Dharwad and Chitadurga districts in Karnataka.

This was a period when Sanskrit was being introduced in the Deccan as the main language of the royal charters and inscriptions thus replacing Prakrit, which was still being used in the Early Pallava records. The Cutukula (Ananda) Satakarnis ruling Vaijayanti before the Kadambas, known from a Banavasi inscription, seem to be different from the Ananda gotrins of the Andhra region. Cutukulanand may also have been Bhartiyas or subordinates (servants) like the Maharathis under the Satavahanas and the Mahatalavaras under the Ikshvakus.

The Early Kadambas of Banavasi are known from the Talagunda panegyric and the founder of this dynasty, Mayuravarman, defeated the frontier guards of the Pallavas and occupied the tough and forested terrain extending up to the Ghats and Sriparvata. He is believed to have had control over central Karnataka and much beyond up to the region of Tungabhadra, i.e., the Malaprabha river in the north flowing through Belgaum and Bijapur districts. He seems to have levied taxes on the Brhatbanas and controlled other rulers such as the Gangas, Punnatas, Kongalas, Pandyas and Alupas. The Punnatas are located in the region of Mysore and adjoining parts watered by the Kaveri and Kabini and probably allied with the Western Gangas. The Kongalas are found originally in Kodagu area and owed allegiance to Kadamba Ravivarman. The Kadamba territory thus extended up to Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu.

The other units or cognitive regions known from the Kadamba records are:

- 1) Antarmalaya rajya, which comprised of the Uttara Kannada Ghats and swampy lands along the Kanara coast where the rivers descend the Ghats.
- 2) Mogalur Visaya, i.e., the Bagewada taluk in the Bijapur district.
- 3) Asanda Visaya, represented by parts of Chikmagalur district and the adjoining Chitaldurga district.
- 4) Suddikundura Visaya- present Dharwad taluk and district.
- 5) Mahisa Visaya, also mentioned in some

Western Ganga charters, represented by the Madhugieri taluk in Tumkur district. 6) Sendraka Visaya (also Sindaka Visaya) — parts of Chikamagalur, Hassan and Mysore districts. 7) Vallavi Visaya— within Sendraka Visaya— parts of Hassan and Mysore districts. 8) Pankti pura Visaya— parts of Dhrawad and Shimoga districts. 9) Karvannaga Visaya— parts of Siris and Siddapur taluks in Uttara Kannada district. 10) Tahare Visaya— modern Belur taluk of Hassan district, which also formed a part of Sendraka Visaya. The Early Kadambas emerged in the Hanagal taluk of Dharwad district and do not seem to have had control over any part of Mysore.

There were two branches of the Kadambas and neither had any clearly defined domain. The rulers of the collateral branch had issued charters recording land grants within the territory controlled by the main branch and also controlled their capital Vijayanti after the death of Harivarman the last ruler.

Gudnapura— 5 km away from Banavasi seems to have been the royal residence at least under Ravivarman of the main line. Banavasi and Hanagal contain the remains of some early temples. That there was important trading activity is known from the Byzantine coins in gold which have been found in the Kadamba region.

The core areas of Kadambas were the modern districts of Shimoga, Uttara Kannada, Belgaum and Dharwad and parts of Dakshina Kannada district. They extended up to Raichur, Bellary and parts of Chitaldurga districts. The Kadambas had to contend with the Early Pallavas and Western Gangas for control over Hassan and Chikmagalur districts.

### Early Western Gangas

A fairly clear idea of the territorial limits of the Western Gangas can be obtained from their inscriptions. Yet many places remain unidentified. The units known from their inscriptions are: 1) Paruvi Visaya, (Paruvi=Parigi in Gauribidanur taluk of Kolar district) comprising of present day Hindupur taluk in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh and the adjoining taluk of Gauribidanur in Kolar district. 2) Kulungijya rajya around modern Kunigal, a taluk headquarter in Tumkur district. 3) Morasa nadu— modern Mandya district. 4) Perura Visaya — around Herur in Sira taluk of Tumkur district and Hiriya taluk of Chitaldurga district. 5) Kaivara visaya — modern Sidlaghatta and Chintamani taluks of Kolar district. 6) Maragare/ Maruk(g)are Visaya — Madhugiri taluk of Tumkur district the confluence of a small stream with Jayamangali, a tributary of the Penneru. which comprised of Tumkur, Madhugiri, Gubbi and adjoining parts of Kunigal taluk of Tumkur district. 7) Kuvalala/ Kolvalal visaya/rastra — area around modern Kolar taluk in the same district. 8) Mudukottura visaya—modern Bangarpet taluk and adjoining parts of Kolar and Mulbagal taluks in Kolar district. 9) Vallavi visaya in Sendraka rajya, also called asta sahasra visaya, the earliest division with a numerical suffix. (Sendraka visaya seems to have been larger than other divisions like Vallavi and Devalage visayas). 10) Korikunda bhoga/ visaya—Malur taluk in Kolar district and probably adjoining parts of Hoskote taluk in Bangalore district. 11) Pudoli visya/ Pudal nadu rastra—Hodali visya in Ganga epigraphs- Srinivasapur taluk and adjoining parts of Kolar district. 12) Ganje nadu — perhaps in Kolar itself. 13) Vanne visaya—located near Tumkur? 14) Punnata and Pannada—the area watered by the Kaveri and Kabini i.e., modern Mysore district and adjoining parts of southern Karnataka. Punnata was rich in mineral resources and forest wealth – timber, beryl, elephants and ivory— and it might have been a bone of contention among the brothers of Durvinita in late 6<sup>th</sup>

century CE 15) The Perura adhishtana, where a garden land for 500 *karsapanas* was donated to the temple of Arhat in Perur is represented by modern Herur.

As most of the early charters of the Western Gangas refer to place names in Kolar, Anantapur, Tumkur and Mandya districts, it seems to be their original homeland. The core area of the early Western Gangas was represented by the present day districts of Kolar, Tumkur, Mandya and parts of Bangalore in Karnataka and Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh. Due to competition from early Pallavas and early Kadambas over Hassan and Chikmagalur districts towards the end of the fourth and beginning of the sixth centuries CE, they appear to have moved into the area around modern Mysore district in Karnataka and controlled parts of Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu.

The respective domains of the Ananda Satakarnis, Kadambas and Western Gangas are situated in the 'meso-region' known as the Karnataka plateau, which is a part of the peninsular uplands macro-region.

It is not surprising that Banavasi or the erstwhile Vijayanti had developed into an urban and religious centre on account of its proximity to the intersecting Ghat routes in Sirsi taluk.

Banavasi, the core area of activity under the Ananda Satakarnis and early Kadambas belonged to the Malnad region which is a hilly and heavily forested country. But an attempt to control the adjoining maidan region is clearly visible with the discovery of the coins of the former and in some land grants of the latter in the region. The dynasties of Karnataka did not have the resources of a fertile deltaic region for their expansion (as in Andhra Pradesh). None of the records mention the 'bhumi-chidra nyaya' as the guiding principle of the lands granted. All grants to Brahmanas, Jains and Buddhists were made in villages already settled and well populated.

The Kadamba and Ganga inscriptions allude to some sort of a mercantile organisation variously termed as *Tuviyal* or *Tuthiyalla* in this area which was controlled by Brahmanas. That there was inter-regional trade is attested to by the reference to the *Manigramma sreni* in Hassan plates in Peruru adhishtana (Melkote plates of Ganga Madhavavarman III).

### 5.9.3 Maharashtra and North Karnataka

#### The Vakatakas

The Vakatakas were a major ruling family of the period from the fourth to the sixth centuries CE, who were directly influenced by the changing political configuration in north India under the Guptas. They not only had close political ties and matrimonial relations with the Guptas but also for the first time introduced Gupta political structures in peninsular India.

Their original home lay in the Vindhyan region of Madhya Pradesh. Moving down to the eastern districts of Maharashtra, probably in the wake of Gupta expansion, they acquired the Puranic description, *Vindhyakas*. The main centre of the Vakatakas i.e., Pravarapura, modern Paunur, is situated about 10 km from Wardha. Vatsagulma or Basim, which was the centre of a branch of the Vakatakas, is the headquarters of a Tahsil in Akola district in Maharashtra.

The regions which are known from their inscriptions include : Supratistha ahara was situated in Warora, Yavatmal and Hinganaghat tahsils of Chanda, Yavatmal and Wardha

districts respectively. Asi bhukti included Morsi and the adjoining parts of Achalpur tahsils in Amaravati district. Pakanna rastra is represented by parts of Wardha and Amaravati districts i.e., the banks of river Wardha.

Aparapatta of Vennatata or Bennakata represents parts of Gondia tahsil in Bhandara district, Umred taluk of Nagpur district and some portions of Balaghat district in Madhya Pradesh.

Bhojakata rajya, in which a grant village Chammanka (Chammk) was located, covered parts of Amaravati and Chandor tahsils of Amaravati district. Chammak in Achalpur tahsil of Amaravati district is itself situated on the bank of river Madhu, another name for the Chandrabhaga.

Bennakarppara bhoga on the river Benna is represented by the area around Amgaon on the eastern bank of the Wainganga.

Arammi rajya may be Amla in Wardha district and included parts of Nagpur district. Varuccha rajya covered parts of Chhindwara district in Madhya Pradesh.

Krsnalesalikataka was probably in the present Amaravati district. Uttarapatta was located on the north and north east of river Wainganaga in Bhandara district.

Nagarakataka was the region around Mangrul in Akola district. Anarttapura bhukti covered large parts of Dhule district. The extent of most of these regions or units mentioned in the Vakataka inscriptions is difficult to determine.

Several margas are mentioned in the Vakataka inscriptions suggesting that the regions around important routes to the Deccan came within the authority of the Vakatakas. Padmapura— purva marga seems to have included Wardha and Nagpur districts. The Padmapura apara marga marked the area around Masoda in Katol tahsil of Nagpur district, which lay to the west of Padmapura purva marga. Varadakhataka marga was in Lohanagara bhoga, which covered the adjacent parts of Amaravati district and Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. Yasapura marga may be located in Nagpur tahsil and Sundhati of the Sundhati marga might be Samanapur near Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh. Nandikada Uttara marga represented the adjacent parts of Akola, Parbhani and Nanded districts. The location of others like Gepuraka marga is difficult to ascertain.

Archaeological evidence from Paunar i.e., Pravaraपुरा, apart from a few coins and dilapidated temples (including Jain temples), archaeological evidence from Tharsa (Nagpur district), Bhokardan (Aurangabad district) and Vakataka temples (Varaha, Bhogarama and Kapotarama temples) at Ramtek (Nagpur district) known as Ramagiristhana in copper plate inscriptions are significant as some of the earliest indicators of the importance of the Puranic religion and the Brahmanical tradition that the Vakatakas adopted and promoted in peninsular India. The Mahayana caves at Ajanta excavated under the patronage of the Basim branch of the Vakatakas point to the flourishing state of Mahayana Buddhism in the Deccan which continued to be important till the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Titles like Dharmamaharaja and Matronymics like Haritiputra (especially adopted by the Basim branch) suggest that while they were influenced by the Gupta political traditions, they carried some of the earlier symbols of the regional ruling families of peninsular India. However it is important to note that they claimed to be Brahmanas of Visnuvrudha gotra and worshipped Puranic deities like Siva and Visnu.

The entire expanse of the territories controlled by the Vakatakas at different points of time throughout their political career is situated within the 'macro-region' known as the Peninsular Uplands. Later the core area shifted to the 'first order' region known as the Vidarbha plain, a part of the 'meso-level' Maharashtra region, i.e., Wardha—Penganga plain and Upper Godavari valley east. The territories of the two families were spread over complex ecological zones unlike their contemporaries elsewhere in the Deccan.

The escarpments of the Vindhyan sediments — became a traditional socio-cultural boundary between north and south India. The Vakatakas began their political career in a transitional zone i.e., the Tapti—Purna river system and Basim, the catchment area of the Godavari.

The southward movement of the Vakatakas may not have been solely due to the pressure exerted by the expansionist regime of their contemporaries—the Guptas. The shifting of territorial base would have been prompted by the need to control an economically viable ecological niche that could be exploited over a long period of time.

The theory of urban decline after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE in the whole subcontinent has influenced the approach to the study of the Vakataka expansion and territorial base in the Deccan, although scholars like K.M. Shrimali are not oblivious to the existence of some form of trade and industry in their domain. Hence it has been argued that there was a burgeoning of rural settlements in the territories controlled by both the branches of the Vakataka lineage and that a large number of immigrant brahmanas (e.g. the beneficiaries mentioned in the Chammak copper plates) settled in these regions. However, no reference to the original home of the donees is made in the records. There is also no direct evidence of Brahmanas from the northern plains being brought into these areas as is often claimed in the early medieval inscriptions (6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE). Yet Brahmanas seem to have moved within the region and received plots of land in already settled villages. In most settled areas only a few new plots and villages were donated. Most villages (e.g., the Thalner plates of Harisena) are traceable in the Tapti-Purna valley in Dhule district, Maharashtra. There is no reference in the Vakataka charters to the setting up of new villages by residents of abandoned towns and cities. None of the donated villages were demarcated on the basis of 'bhumicchidra nyaya' or 'avaniradhra nyaya' as was the custom for denoting new settlements in later periods.

The westward expansion of the Vakatakas visible in the grants of Pravarasena II and his successors is indicative of the attempts to integrate already existing settlements through the institution of brahmadeya, but not the creation of new ones in all cases.

The territory of the Vakatakas in general and Vidarbha in particular, was not untouched by the influences of Sanskritic culture in the pre-Vakataka period, especially from the mid-first millennium BC and more particularly from the Mauryan period. The occurrence of the Northern Black Polished Ware and Punch Marked Coins in excavations, the reference to Vidarbha in the *Aitareya Brahmana* show evidence of Vedic, Buddhist and Puranic religious presence.

### 5.9.4 The Tamil Region

Contrary to the Deccan and Andhra regions, the Tamil region has no evidence of clear socio-political configurations from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. After the decline of

the Sangam chiefdoms of the three major ruling families—the Cera, Cola and Pandya, probably due to the decline in maritime trade and constant flux in the cultural traditions, as also the reference to a people called the Kalabhras in later inscriptions and traditions as the intruding elements, subverting the early historical socio-political order, no polities emerged or no monarchical organisation came to be established in the Tamil country till the occupation of Tondai nadu (northern Tamil region) by the Pallavas moving from the Andhra region with their Brahmanical leanings and Puranic religious traditions in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE and the simultaneous rise to power of the Pandyas, claiming descent from the Sangam Pandyas but largely transformed by the influence of Brahmanical traditions and new institutional forms like the Brahmadeya and the temple. Often called the Kalabhra interregnum and also the dark age in conventional historiography, Tamil history of the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE shows no evidence of the crystallisation of polities and social organisation of the early medieval type of polities under the Pallavas of Kancipuram and the Pandyas of Madurai.

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## 5.10 GENERAL REMARKS ON THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PENINSULAR INDIA

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The nuclear regions where early dynasties such as the Vakatakas emerged to power are thus not mere geographical regions. They represent a historical category and developed due to historical processes and hence they are not a given geographical or ecological zone per se.

The geographical sense prevalent during the period is indicated by units larger than a single settlement such as the margas, bhogas, visaya, rastras and rajyas. They varied in size and some were inherited from the Satavahanas and others evolved due to the creation of agrarian settlements or integration of existing ones. There is very little evidence for an organised or centralised administrative apparatus imposed from above and no clearly demarcated units. It would be futile to construct hierarchies of administrative divisions on the basis of the analysis of suffixes like rastra, visaya, bhoga, desa, bhukti etc. often used interchangeably. There were no bureaucratic centres in the post-Satavahana polities that went about the task of organising land revenue and tax administration in their respective spheres of influence. There is evidence of the gradual integration of some areas into a regional unit with one of the settlements as the centre. (e.g., Kudurahara under the Salankayana) No fixity was attained by some of the divisions of this period.

Some of the spatial units found in the epigraphs and Puranic texts of this period may be classified as ‘naively given’, i.e., one which is recognised as a meaningful territorial entity by its inhabitants or by other people to whom it is of some concern. Spatial aggregates like Dakshinapatha, Andhra, Vanavasa etc. would qualify as ‘naively given’ regions during the mid- first millennium CE. Vanavasa—also a naively given region—specific topographical feature rather than a people or a route of trade. Punnata—‘naively given’ (Ptolemy refers to it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE). It attracted the Western Gangas. Vidarbha also seems to be a ‘naively given’, although it was known much earlier.

The Pallava records refer to Andhapatha i.e., a route of trade and communication in Andhra connecting the lower Krishna valley urban centres to the Telengana region.

The land grant charters of this period bear testimony to the struggle among several ruling lineages for control over this fertile region.

Titles like Kadambanam Dhrama Maharaja, Vakatakanam Maharaja and Pallavanam Maharaja could well have been chiefs of lineages rather than a particular territory. While the Western Ganga inscriptions refer to the janapada, which may indicate the territory controlled by them, the Pallavas describe their domain as constituting a paura janapada. All this would point to the lack of crystallisation of territory related identities prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

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## 5.11 SUMMARY

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The decline of Kushanas in north India was accompanied with the rise of Gupta power. The Guptas had to contend with the power of a number of gana sangha polities and chiefdoms. The forest chiefs were also subjugated by the Guptas. The emergence of feudatories was a result of the policy of administrative decentralisation and practice of sub infeudation of land rights. The Gupta empire disintegrated in the sixth century CE and several ruling houses emerged which had been vassals of the Guptas. Gupta state was based on the dominant Brahmanical- Puranic ideology and the concept of Varna hierarchy. The socio-political organisation was legitimized by and based on the Dharmashastric tradition. On the basis of Puranic and epigraphic evidence the social origins and nature of polities in south India between 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century CE has been discussed. Several polities with a predominantly agrarian base emerged in Peninsular India in this period. The historical geography of these polities has been traced on the basis of archaeological evidence. It has been suggested that there was no organised or centralised administrative apparatus in these polities.

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## 5.12 GLOSSARY

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<b>Agrahara</b>	: Grant of village
<b>Ahara</b>	: District
<b>Aiteraya Brahamana</b>	: Text on sacrificial rituals which are appendices to Vedas
<b>Autochthonous</b>	: Indigenous
<b>Avaniradhra Nyaya</b>	: A term used in the land grants (inscriptions) in Maharashtra in the 6 <sup>th</sup> century CE
<b>Bhukti</b>	: Province
<b>Bhumi Chhidra Nyaya</b>	: A term used in the inscriptions found in Gujarat and Maharashtra between 5 <sup>th</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> century CE which was based on the maxim of fallow land.
<b>Dharmashastra</b>	: Hindu text of instruction on morals and law
<b>Dvija</b>	: Twice born
<b>Hunas</b>	: Central Asian Tribe also known as white Hunas.
<b>Jati</b>	: Castes which emerged due to hypergamous or hypogamous marriage among dvija castes

<b>Karsapanas</b>	: A silver coin.
<b>Kidara</b>	: The Kushana king who ruled over Kabul and upper Sindh valley
<b>Mahabharata</b>	: Epic literature
<b>Nuclear Region</b>	: Core Region
<b>Puranas</b>	: Sacred text which form part of Smriti literature
<b>Sassanians</b>	: Dynasty of Persia.
<b>Smritis</b>	: A class of literature comprising law books, Epics and Puranas
<b>Srauta Sutra</b>	: Text on sacrificial Ritual.
<b>Sreni</b>	: Guild
<b>Tehsil</b>	: A unit smaller than a District.

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### 5.13 EXERCISES

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- 1) Trace the rise of the Gupta power in north India in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE How would you characterise Gupta polity?
- 2) Discuss the nature and social origins of polities in south India between 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century CE

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## SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS BLOCK

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R.S.Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*;

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