

Study Material for Semester- II  
Paper – Mauryan and Gupta Empire (Core-3)  
Given By- Suwendu Saha, (Assistant Prof) Dept. of History,  
Bidhan Chandra College, Asansol

## **Religious Condition, Literature and Architecture of Satvahana Period**

### **Religious Condition:**

During the Satavahana period, both Hinduism and Buddhism spread rapidly. The Satavahana rulers were the followers of Brahmanism. They performed Aswamedha Yajnas and gave donations to Brahmanas. Indra, Surya (The Sun God), Chandra, (the Moon God), Vasudeva, Krishna, Pasupati and Gauri etc. were various Gods and Goddesses worshipped by the people. Shaivism and Vaishnavism were most popular form of Hinduism. Beautiful temples were built. The Brahmins occupied the highest position in the society.

The Satavahana kings were Brahmanas but they showed tolerance towards other faiths such as to Buddhism as well. They gave similar donations to Buddhism as they did for the Hinduism. Consequently, Buddhism too spread in this period. At many places, the Buddhist caves, chaityas and stupas were built.

Almost all the caves in the south belonged to the Buddhists. Sometimes, grants of land were made for the maintenance of these chaityas, viharas and stupas as well as for the monks or bhikshus. In this period, there were several sects of Buddhism in the south and various classes of monks were always busy to preach the Buddhist doctrines.

One significant development of this period was the admission of the foreign races of the Sakas, Greeks, Kushans and Abhiras to the folds of Hinduism or Buddhism. They became an integral part of the Indian society. They were quite tolerant and exchanged gifts on religious festivals and other occasions.

### **Literature:**

The Satavahana rulers were lovers of literature. Under their patronage, great progress was made in the field of literature. Most of the Satavahana rulers were themselves learned and had special interest in literature. In this period, the Prakrit language and literature developed significantly.

They extended patronage to the Prakrit language and wrote most of their inscriptions in that language. The Satvahana King Hala was a poet of high order. He composed 'Gatha Saptasatf in Prakrti.

It has 700 shloakas. He also patronized several scholars who lived in his court. Gunadhya, the great scholar who wrote 'Brihat Katha' lived in his court. Another scholar Sarva Varman wrote a treatise on the Sanskrit Grammar.

### **Architecture:**

Marked progress was made in the field of architecture as well. The Satvahana rulers took interest in building caves, viharas or monasteries, chaityas or large halls with a number of columns and stupas.

Most of the rock caves in the Deccan were cut during this period. These caves were big and beautiful. The caves, monasteries, chaityas and stupas of Orissa, Nasik, Karle and Bhuj are fine specimen of contemporary architecture and decoration.

Chaitya was a large hall with a number of columns. The Vihara had a central Hall. One could enter this hall by a doorway from a varandah in front. The Chaitya of Karle was most famous. It is 40 metres long, 15 metres wide and 15 metres high. It has rows of 15 columns on each side.

Each of these columns is built on a stair like square plinth. Each pillar has a capital figure of an elephant, a horse or a rider on the top. The roof-tops are also decorated with elegant carvings. The viharas were meant as places of residence for the monks. At Nasik, there are three viharas carrying the inscriptions of Gautmiputra and Nahapana.

The most famous of these monuments are the stupas. Among them the Amravati Stupa and the Nagarjunakonda Stupa are most famous. The stupa was a large round structure built over some relic of the Buddha.

The Amravati Stupa measures 162 metres across the base and its height is 100 feet. Both these stupas are full of sculptures. The Nagarjunakonda town contains not only the Buddhist monuments but also some ancient Hindu brick temples.

Many sculptures were made during this period. Most of the sculptures of this period depict scenes from the life of the Buddha. At Amravati, there is a beautiful scene showing Buddha's feet being worshipped. The scene, showing Buddha preaching at Nagarjunakonda, is pervaded with serenity and calm.

Source - [www.historydiscussion.net/empires/satavahana-dynasty-rulers-administration-society-and-economic-conditions/736](http://www.historydiscussion.net/empires/satavahana-dynasty-rulers-administration-society-and-economic-conditions/736)