

**Study of the Golden Period
200BC to 500 AD**

Economy and Politics

Bhavani Vankineni

Summary: The Golden Period

Economy

- The economy was **stable**. There was enough food for all; there was a **surplus**
- Society encouraged **creative expression**, which led to various styles and patterns
- **Trade** was widespread, unified the subcontinent

Political administration

- The political system was **decentralized** into various regions and administrative units
- The king was chartered to **serve the people**. The royalty collected **taxes** and took care of the military and infrastructure
- Political **peace** was maintained due to economic prosperity

Administrative Roles

Title	English		Title	English
<i>Raja</i>	King		<i>Yuvaraja</i>	Crown prince
<i>Senapati</i>	Chief, armed forces		<i>Parishad</i>	Council
<i>Nagarika</i>	Town manager		<i>Pauravya vaharika</i>	City overseer
<i>Mantri</i>	Minister		<i>Karmika</i>	Works officer
<i>Samnidhatr</i>	Treasurer		<i>Karmantika</i>	Director, factories
<i>Antapala</i>	Frontier commander		<i>Antar vimsaka</i>	Head, guards
<i>Dauvarika</i>	Chief guard		<i>Gopa</i>	Revenue officer
<i>Purohita</i>	Chaplain		<i>Karanika</i>	Accounts officer
<i>Prasastr</i>	Administrator		<i>Nayaka</i>	Commander
<i>Upayukta</i>	Junior officer		<i>Pradeshtri</i>	Magistrate
<i>Sunypala</i>	Regent		<i>Adhyaksha</i>	Superintendent

Qualities of a King and administrative councilors per Kautilya's Arthashastra

The King – “In the happiness of his people lies his own happiness”

The King is one who has the highest qualities of

- Leadership
- Intellect
- Rajdharma

Leadership (Per Kautilya)

Leadership qualities that attract followers

- Ability to lead the army
- Self discipline
- Righteousness
- Gratitude
- Promotes welfare(**yogakshemam**) of his people at all times

Intellect (Per Kautilya)

Intellectual qualities include

- A keen and sharp mind
- The ability to grasp quickly; a strong memory
- Being able to accept guidance from councilors
- Having the foresight to wait for the right opportunities

Rajadharma

Rules of rajadharma that a king should follow

- Welfare of people always comes first
- Impose moderate taxes on people
- Justice in rewarding and punishing
- Check public opinion of his people
- Conduct himself with dignity at all times
- Have the ability to practice self-control

Duties of a Minister (per Kautilya)

Karaneshu Mantri –

- Has the ability to advise the king during critical times
- Is loyal to king
- Is logical
- Is amicable
- Is well trained in all arts

Political quotes of Kautilya

- One should not act against the ruler
- A clever politician should not cause a rift between two kingdoms
- The weak ruler should seek refuge in the strong
- In case of many enemies, enter into treaty with only one
- Kautilya's Arthashastra provides detailed instructions on how to control the state, organization of the national economy, and conduct of war

Political system

During the Golden Period,

- Political freedom of the kingdom was well established.
- Safety of the people was met by practicing ***duties of the rulers (rajadharmā), science of political ethics (nitishastra)***.
- Administration of justice was delegated to king's court. The councilor (**pradvivaka**) acted as the King's chief legal advisor. Punishment was imposed based on written laws.
- Judicial standards were set, and judges were impartial and honest. Evidence was collected for criminal and civil cases. Society weighed in on a person's conduct and righteousness.



Map of Satavahana Empire

Satavahana Administration

- The Satavahana kingdom was the first formidable political entity on the Indian Deccan peninsula. They established peace in this region, resisting foreign invaders after the decline of the Mauryan empire.
- A peculiar feature of the Satavahana administration was the *presence of feudatories of different grades*. The highest class was that of princes bearing the kingly title *raja*; next in rank was the *maharathi* and *mahabhoja*. The empire was marked by urban centers, royal inscriptions, and the issuance of state coins with images of the rulers.

Satavahana Administration (contd.)

- Although monarchical, the king had no absolute power. The administration of the Empire was decentralized and powers were divided into convenient administrative units. Although these units were administered on a common system, they were not under rigid central control.
- The **kingdom** (**janapada**) was the highest political unit, and was divided into **districts** (**aharas**), and then further subdivided into **villages** (**grámas**).
- There were other representatives like great chamberlain store-keepers treasurers and dutakas who carried royal orders.

Khāravela Empire



The Hathigumpha inscription



Khāravela Empire

- Khāravela kingdom includes present day Puri, Cuttack and districts of Odisha.
- Although **Khāravela** was a Jain, he was tolerant towards all other religions - just like **Aśoka**.
- At **Udayagiri** Hill, he constructed majestic rest houses for Jaina Sramanas, Brahmanical Rishis, and Buddhist Samghayanas.
- The **Hātigumphā** inscription credits him for military victories, patronage of arts, repairer of all shrines and worshiper of all religious orders. Based on these inscriptions he was one of the strongest rulers of Kalinga.

Magadha Empire



Magadha Kingdom coin



Magadha Empire

- The Magadha kingdom includes present day Patna, Jehanabad, Nalanda, Aurangabad, Gaya and parts of Bengal. This kingdom enjoyed an advantageous geographical position, bounded by river Ganges on the North, river Champa on the east, Vindhya hill ranges on the south. Once served as capitals, both **Rajagriha** and **Pataliputa** are situated at very strategic points.
- Iron deposits were situated close to Rajagriha, the earliest capital of Magadhas.
- Magadhas were the first to use elephants on a large scale in wars.
- Ambitious rulers like **Bimbisāra**, **Ajātaśatru** and **Mahāpadmananda** established Magadha as a powerful kingdom.

Chola and Pandya Empire



Pandyans emblem of two fishes



Chola and Pandya Empires

- The Chola kingdom occupied the region of the Kaveri delta and the adjoining area. **Kānci** was also part of the Cholas kingdom. **Madurāi** was the port and served as the capital of the Pandya kingdom.
- **Korkai** served as the trade center. Traders profited from trade with the Romans.
- The famous Chola king, **Karikala**, built big irrigation channels, and embankments along the river Kaveri.
- The Pandyas were wealthy and prosperous. Councils were given wider powers to levy local taxes and to exercise judicial functions.
- Literary assemblies called as '**Sangam**' were established.

Administration

- The most important element in district administration was the governor (**nagaraka**) who was responsible for preserving law and order, revenue collection, street cleanliness, maintenance of troops and secret agents, prevention of fire, flood, famine and plague.
- Districts were divided into village units. The village headman (**grāma bhojaka**) had the powers over the villagers: he fined them for minor offenses, and expelled them for serious offenses. His responsibilities were to defend the village from bandits and cattle raids, to settle disputes.

Tax system

- Although a successful government needs a full treasury, taxes were justified as a return for the protection granted by the King.
- Various taxes were collected, but in moderation. A basic land tax called **bhaga** (share) was a fixed proportion of the crops produced. Taxes were also paid on livestock, dairy produce, goods like pots, textiles. Trade was taxed by export and import duties. Merchants paid road taxes when travelling from place to place -these were used for the upkeep of roads. A tax officer (**Antapala**) was in charge of collecting taxes.
- Various exemptions and remissions were granted. Taxes were exempted on villages that supplied soldiers (**áyudhíya**). In times of serious financial distress, the King was justified to raise taxes.

Economy

- Agriculture was the main occupation. Co-operative irrigation was practiced. Cattle were used for plowing fields. Crops and vegetables cultivated included:
 - ❑ Rice, pulses, pepper, saffron, gourds, pumpkins, sugarcane
- Land was distributed among individual holdings and was divided into
 - ❑ Cultivated lands - fruit groves, sugarcane plantations
 - ❑ Grazing lands
 - ❑ Lands for supply of firewood
- Loans were given on security, mostly with gold items.
- Money was stored underground in homes.

Economy (contd.)

- The State regulated the economic life, and controlled trade prices, weights and measurements; it owned salt pans, mines and pearl fisheries. New towns sprang near the coast, like in the Godavari delta, or in ports of Broach, Cochin.
 - ❑ Ports – Burkacha, Sopara, Kalyani, Masolian, Viyayapuri, Godavari
- Trade was inland, foreign, and marine.
 - ❑ Trading centers – Paithan, Nasik, Vinukonda, Dhanyakataka, Sopara, Kalyani, Mausala, Broach, Ghantasala
- The road network helped in trade expansion.
 - ❑ Roads – Grand trunk road, Silk road, Khyber Pass

Grand trunk road

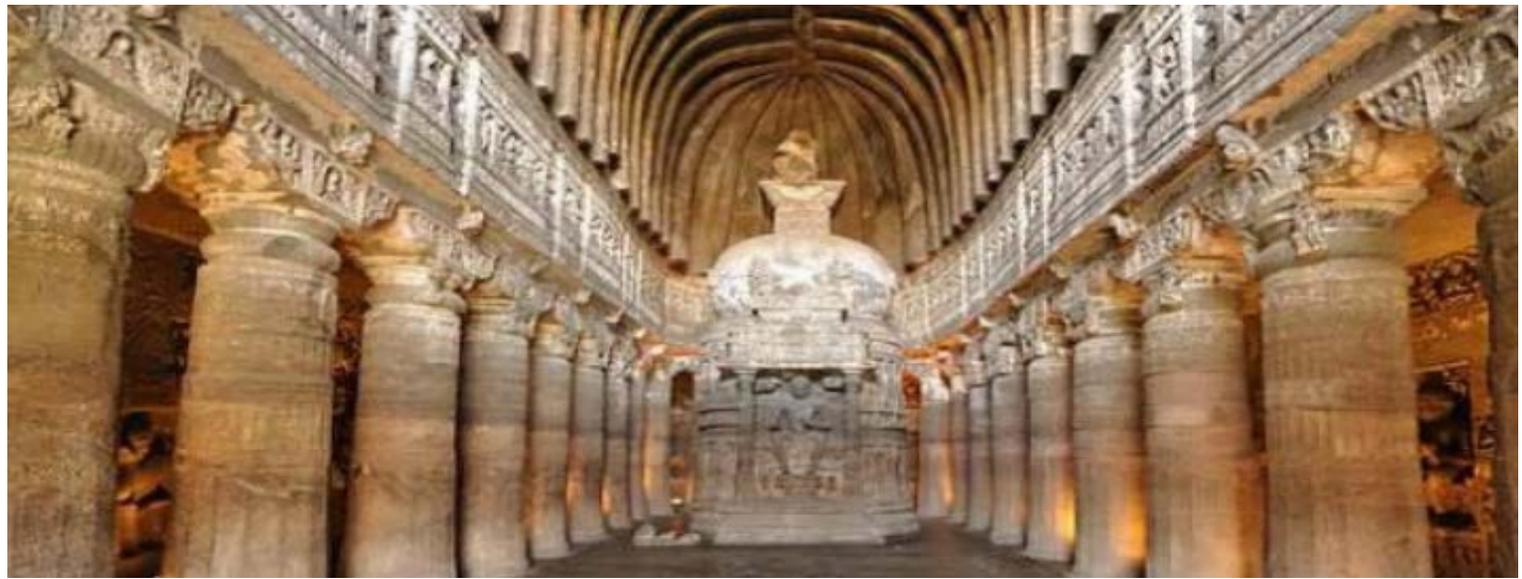


Trade exports and imports

- Objects of arts and crafts were traded.
- The barter system was used.
- Use of coins for business transactions was introduced in this period.
- Exported items included
 - ❑ Agricultural products: Grains, sugarcane, millets, spices, tamarind
 - ❑ Forest Products– sandalwood, rosewood, teak, medicinal herbs, ivory
 - ❑ Metals – Gold, Silver, Copper
 - ❑ Marine products - pearls, corals, conch shells
 - ❑ Textiles, muslin, bangles
- Imported items included
 - ❑ Arabian horses, Chinese porcelain and silk, Roman jars, tortoise shell from Southeast Asia

Trade route





Creativity

- ❑ During this period, the two great Epics, the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata**, were compiled. **Mahabhasya** by Patanjali was composed exposing the grammatical principles.
- ❑ Buddhist, Jain literatures blossomed. Yoga sutras were written.
- ❑ Merchants prospered in towns and had money to spare. They donated money to Buddhist monasteries. This money was used to build the stupas. ***Thus, concluding that excess wealth contributed to creativity.***

Economy and Politics

Books referred

- The wonder that was India - A.L.Basham
- Kautilya's Arthashastra R.Shamasastri
- The Age of the Satavahanas - Ajay Mitra Shastri

Thank You