Legitimation of power and shaping of Dominant Ideology in Ancient India - Shatavahana State A Study

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Abstract

States always claim that They are welfare states. They try to legitimise their positions in the name of democracy, socialism, communism, development, progress etc. Every State Justifies it's rule by saying it is 'for the people' Rulers always look for variety of justification to provide ethical basis to their power They always of used their power for manipulation of institutions groups and their belief systems

Ancient state systems also always looked for justification and legitimation for their existence This article particularly focuses on how the Shatavahana state (Ist Century B. C to 3rd Century A. D) made use of vedic rituals, land grants to religious people and patronage to Buddhist - monks for the Justification and legitimation of their rule in Ancient Deccan.

Introduction

Administrative efficiency and control over territories were not the only bases of the political system in early India. Power includes coercion, domination and manipulation. Authority is also a form of power. But it enjoys legitimacy and is associated with obedience of the subordinates. Rulers always look for a variety of justifications to provide a moral basis to their power. Legitimation was necessary for the societies undergoing state formations. Legitimation of power and shaping of dominant ideology were complex ever changing and dynamic processes. Rulers always exercised their authority for the manipulation of institutions, groups and their belief systems. In early history Deccan Satavahanas also participated in and patronized activities and events that strengthened their legitimacy as upholder of the social order".

Perhaps it is through their ideological form that the Satavahanas were most successful. The ideological power was great enough to legitimize and guarantee the continuance of the unequal redistribution of wealth between the ruled and the rulers. States ideologies were obviously designed for the justification and perpetuation of the state and basic division of the society into two main strata. Next to the tributary relationship the ideological relationship was the most common ever present relationship between groups of the ruled and the rulers. It afforded chief compensation for the economic burdens resulting from exploitation".

Satavahanas made use of Vedic religion and Buddhism to legitimize and perpetuate their rules. Vedic rituals are best suited to perpetuate division in the society

and to legitimize and justify the dynasty. According to R. S. Sharma Satavahanas were non-Aryan people with matrilineal traces, and one of the carliest dynasties to be Brahmanised". Satavahanas claimed in their inscriptions that they were Brahmanas and they had a great responsibility of preventing the intermixture of the four varnas. The Näsik inscription of the mother of Gautamiputra Satakarni celebrates her son's outstanding character and accomplishments. Gautamiputra Satakarni is referred to as "Sole archer (ekadhanudharasa) a hero (ekasurasa), sole Brahmana (eka brahmana); who humbled the pride and arrogance of the kshatriyas (Khatiyadapamanamadana) who prevented the intermixture of the four varnas (vinivatitachatuvana sakarasa). It is interesting that the Satavahanas who boasted of having stopped the contamination of the four varnas were anxious to take a bride from a Saka family. The discrepancy between theory and practice was subordinated to political expediency". Nānāghāt inscriptions give the names of Vedic sacrifices performed by Satakarni I and Nāganikā. These Vedic sacrifices are useful to attribute divine qualities to kingship. These attempts to woo the Brahmana may be attributed to the ruling family's need to legitimize their status and the authority of the state. This need to acquire legitimacy would become crucial in a situation where a society was making a transition from a tribal structure to a varna structure.

Table
Sacrifices performed by queen Naganika and sacrificial fees

Agnyadheya	12 cows, 1 horse
Anvärumbhaniya	1,700 cows, 10 clephants, 280 water pots, 17silver pots
Angarika	11,000 cows, 1000 horses, Villages, 24,400 Kärshäpanas etc
Rajasiya	A cart, good garment, 1 horse, 1 horse chariot,101 cows
Asvamedha	I horse with silver trapping gold ornaments, I village 14,000 Kärshäpanas, elephants, cows, least
Saptadasatiratra	1 horse, 10000 Kärshäpanas, 20,000 cows etc
Bhagaladasaratra	10,001 Kärshapanas
Gargatiratra	301 garments
Gavamayana	1,101 cows, 101 Kärshapanas, 100 garments
Aptoryama	—-------
Angirasamayana	1,101 cows, etc.
Satatirātra	1,100 cows

Angirasatirätra	1,002 cows
Chhandomapava mānatirātra	Fee 1,001 a 2
Trayodasätiratra	Cows
Dasarātra	1,001 cows

Source: V.V. Mirashi, The History and Inscriptions of the Satavahanas and Western Ksatrapas, P 15,16

Satavahana inscriptions claim that Satavahana queens led a pious life according to Dharma. Nānāghat cave inscription of Naganikā describes her as one "who observes fasts of a month (at a stretch) who lives in her home like a recluse, who leads a chaste life, who is adept in the performance of vows, initiatory ceremonies and sacrifices"

Nasik cave inscription of Vasisthiputra Pulumāvi says that Gautami Balaśri- as one "who is devoted to truth, charity, forgiveness, and non-violence, who is always engaged in penance, self control, restraint and fasting, who fully follows the mode of life the wife of a royal sage.

Another special feature of the period was the stress on divine aspects of the kingship. Now rulers began to be compared to gods. Nasik inscription of Vasishthiputra Pulumāvi praises Gautamiputra Satakarni in these words "whose prowess was like that of Rama, Keśava, Arjuna and Bhimasena, whose luster resembled Nahaga, Nahusha, Janamejaya Sagara, Yayāti, Rāma and Ambarisha"

The Satavahanas, although not Buddhist, were generous in their sponsorship of Buddhist monasteries and communities of monks. Almost all the early caves so far found in the Deccan and dedicated to Buddhism were excavated during the Satavahana period. King Kanha appointed a Mahāmātra at Nasik to look after the comforts of the Buddhist monks. Gautami Balasri presented a cave to the monks of the Bhadayaniya sect. Her son assigned to the monks of Tekirasi hill a field of 200 nivartanas. Both mother and the son made gifts of a field of 100 nivartanas to the monks living on the Tiranhu hill. Pulumāvi II made a gift of a village for the support of the Mahāsanghika monks living in the caves of Valuraka.

Mahābhojas and Maharathis also patronised Buddhism. Mahābhoja Skandapalita, son of Mahāboji Vijaya, at Kuda, Kumāro Kanabhoja at Mahād, Mahārathi Kausikiputra at Bhaja, Mahāboja-Bakika Mahadevi and Mahārathini Samadinika at Bedsa and Agimitaonika at Kärle made liberal donations to Buddhist monks.

Satavahanas wanted the peaceful consolidation of newly settled lands with the co-operation of monastic establishments. Gautamiputra Satakarni declares in his Nasik inscription that Ajakalakiya field in the village of Western Kakhadi previously owned by the Usavadata should be granted to the Tekirasi monks. Probably his aim was to establish a 'religious zone' in conquered areas which has to be respected by opponents also. Religious centres had to be respected by the king's opponents and this may have helped in the creation of buffer zones in areas of strategic importance.

The Buddhist monks must have preached peace and rules of good conduct, respect and loyalty towards royal authority and social order to the people 10. H. P. Ray says that Satavahanas rulers were able to recognize the advantages in conceding to the Buddhist ideology which had been responsible for the protection of trade. This had resulted in a symbiotic relationship between the Satavahana political structure and the Buddhist order. The royal patronage provided to the expanding trade which was inter linked with the Buddhist ideology, further supported it through institutions like monasteries and quickened the pace of urbanisation in early Deccan.

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