

9. Ancient Kingdoms of the South

9.1 The Cher, Pandya and Chola dynasties

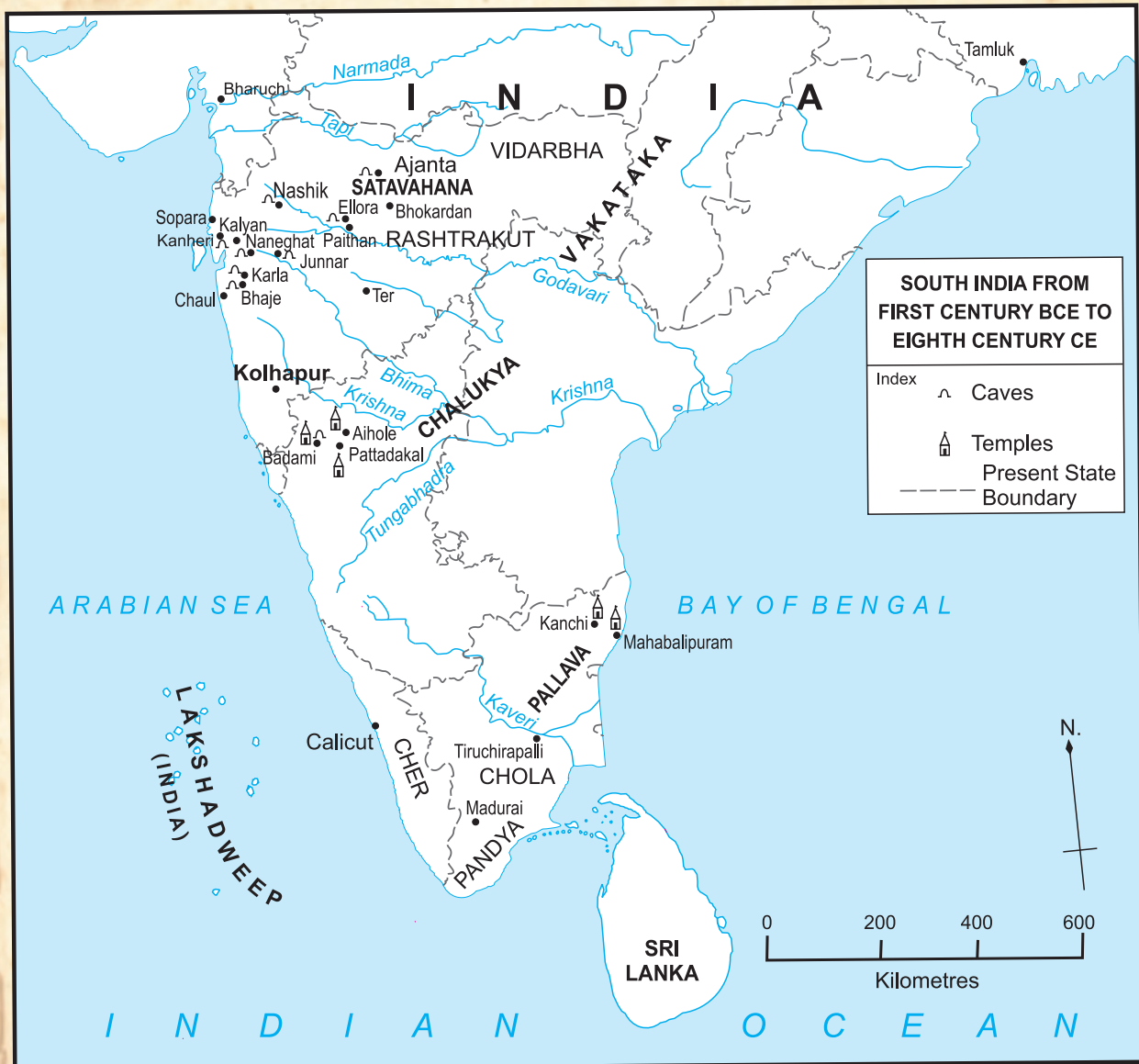
9.2 The Satavahana dynasty

9.3 The Vakataka dynasty

9.4 The Chalukya dynasty

9.5 The Pallava dynasty

9.6 The Rashtrakut dynasty



You can do this.

Mark the important places in South India on an outline map of India.

9.1 The Cher, Pandya and Chola dynasties

Of the many dynasties in South India, three are mentioned in the literature of those times. These are the Cher, Pandya and Chola dynasties. These

dynasties were in power around the fourth century BCE or even before that. They find mention in the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics. They have also been mentioned in the 'Sangham Literature' in Tamil and in the inscriptions of the Maurya Emperor Ashoka. In the 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea', 'Muziris' is mentioned as an important port on the coast of Kerala. This port was in the Cher kingdom and was a major centre for the export of spices, pearls, precious stones etc. to Rome in Italy and to other countries of the west. The Pandya kingdom was a part of today's Tamil Nadu. There was a great demand for their high quality pearls. The capital of this kingdom was Madurai. The ancient kingdom of the Cholas occupied the region of Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu.

9.2 The Satvahana Dynasty

As in the north, after the decline of the Maurya Empire, the local kings in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka also became independent. They established small kingdoms of their own. One of these was the Satvahana dynasty. Pratishthan or the present day Paithan in Maharashtra was their capital. King Simuk was the founder of the Satavahana dynasty. The inscriptions in the Naneghat caves near Junnar in Pune district bear the names of the important persons of this dynasty. Some of the Satavahana kings were known to write their mother's name before their own. For example, Gautamiputra Satakarni.

Of the Satavahana kings, Gautamiputra Satakarni is particularly well known. A stone inscription in a cave at Nashik describes his deeds of valour. He had defeated the Shaka king Nahpana. He is described as 'Tri-samudra-toya-peet-vahan'. 'Toya'



Do you know?

Nane Pass (Naneghat) : The mountain pass, part of Junnar Murbad, joining Pune and Thane districts is known as Naneghat. This 5 km long road was built about two thousand years ago during the rule of the Satavahanas. It used to be one of the main trade routes between the Konkan coast and the Deccan Plateau (Desh). It was used for trade and transport. A carved pitcher (*ranjan*) can still be seen there. Statues of the Satavahana kings and some ancient inscriptions are to be found in the caves at Naneghat. Descriptions of the donations given by the Satavahana kings and queens are to be found in the cave inscriptions.

means 'water'. The title means, 'One whose horses have drunk the water of three seas'. The three seas are the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. During his reign, the empire of the Satavahanas extended from the river Narmada in the north to the Tungabhadra river in the south.

The famous poetic work 'Gatha-Saptashati' in Maharashtri, a Prakrit language, was composed by the Satavahana king Hala. This work provides information about the life of the people during the Satavahana period.

Indian trade increased greatly during the Satavahana period. Paithan, Ter, Bhokardan, Kolhapur were recognised as important centres of trade. During this period, many artistic objects were produced at these places. Indian goods were exported as far away as Rome. Some of the Satavahana coins carry

images of ships. The cave sculptures at Ajanta, Nashik, Karla, Bhaje, Kanheri, Junnar in Maharashtra were carved



A Satvahana coin with a ship's image



The *Chaityagriha* at Karla

during the Satavahana period.

9.3 The Vakataka Dynasty

The power of the Satavahanas began to weaken by the third century CE. Among the dynasties that emerged after that, the Vakataka was a powerful dynasty. It was founded by the king 'Vindhyashakti'. He was succeeded by Pravarsen I. After his death, the kingdom of the Vakatakas got divided. There were two main branches. The capital of the first was at Nandivardhan (near Nagpur) and the capital of the other branch was at Vatsagulm which is today's Washim. Pravarsen I, son of Vindhyashakti, extended the Vakataka kingdom in the north up to Malwa and Gujarat and in the south up to Kolhapur. At that time, Kolhapur was known as 'Kuntal'. We

have read that the Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II had married his daughter Prabhavati to Rudrasen II, the Vakataka king. Varahdev, a minister of the Vakataka king Harishen, was a follower of Buddhism. Cave number 16 at Ajanta was dug at his instance. Some other



A cave at Ajanta

caves at Ajanta were dug and beautified with paintings during Harishena's reign. The Vakataka king, Pravarsen II, composed 'Setubandh' in Maharashtri, a Prakrit language. Similarly, Kalidasa's 'Meghadoot' also belongs to this period.



Bodhisattva Padmapani - Ajanta

9.4 The Chalukya Dynasty

The Chalukya dynasty in Karnataka was a powerful one. The kingdoms of Kadamba, Kalachuri had become powerful after the decline of the Vakatakas. But the Chalukya kings established their dominance over all of them. Pulakeshi I established the rule of

the Chalukya dynasty in the sixth century CE. His capital was Badami which was earlier called 'Vatapi'. The Chalukya King Pulakeshi II had successfully repulsed Emperor Harshavardhan's invasion. The famous temples at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal were built during the Chalukya period.



The temple at Pattadakal

9.5 The Pallava dynasty

The Pallavas were also a powerful dynasty in South India. Kanchipuram in



The *ratha* or chariot temples at Mahabalipuram

Tamil Nadu was their capital. Mahendra Varman was an able Pallava ruler. He expanded the Pallava kingdom. He was also a playwright. His son Narasimhavarman repulsed the attack on his kingdom by the Chalukya king, Pulakeshi II. The famous 'ratha' temples of Mahabalipuram were sculpted during his reign. These temples have been sculpted in single rock.

The Pallavas had a powerful and well-equipped navy. During this period, India came in close contact with the countries of Southeast Asia. Internal and foreign trade flourished. Yuan Chwang had visited Kanchi and recorded that people of all religions received tolerant

and just treatment under the rule of the Pallava kings.

9.6 The Rashtrakuta Dynasty

At the height of their power, the dominion of the Rashtrakuta dynasty extended from the Vindhya mountains up to Kanniyakumari in the south. Their power was first established in Maharashtra by king Dantidurg. Krishna Raja I had the famous Kailas temple carved at Ellora.

Up to now, we have learnt about the different dynasties that ruled ancient India. In the next lesson, we will review the social and cultural life in ancient India.



The Kailas Temple at Ellora (Verul)