

Sungha Dynasty

- The Sunga Dynasty came into power after the decline of the Mauryan Empire in around 185 BCE.
- The Sunga Empire included territories from the river Ganga up to the Narmada Valley, Vidisha, and parts of Northern India.
- Initially, the capital of the empire was Patliputra but later it was shifted to Vidisha.

Sunga Dynasty

- The Sunga Dynasty ruled East India from 185 BCE to 73 BCE.
- This dynasty succeeded the Mauryas in the Magadha region.
- The major reasons for the decline of the Mauryan Empire were the death of Ashoka, Foreign invasions in North West, Regional powers such as Kalinga became independent.
- Sunga belonged to the Brahmin family of the Bharadvaja clan.
- They held the viceroyship of the Ujjain region during Mauryan rule.
- The Sunga empire included Ganga valley up to Narmada River, Parts of Northern India, and Vidisha.
- The capital of the Sunga dynasty in the initial period was Pataliputra.
- Later the capital was changed to Vidisha.
- The major cities of the Sunga Dynasty included Ujjain, Saket, Sanchi, Mathura, and Kapilavastu.
- The information about the Sunga dynasty can be found in Gargi Samhita, Patanjali's Mahabhasya, Divyavadana, Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitram, and Bana's Harshacharita.

Sunga Dynasty: Important Rulers

Pushyamitra Sunga

- The founder of the Sunga Dynasty was Pushyamitra Sunga.
- He was a Brahmin and army chief under Brihadratha, the last Mauryan King.
- After defeating Brihadratha in an internal revolt, Pushyamitra established Sunga Empire in 180 BC with its capital at Pataliputra.

- Pushyamitra encountered attacks from Greek kings Menander and Demetrius and emerged victorious in the battles.
- The details of these battles are found in Gargi Samhita and Malavikagnimitram.
- He also defeated Kharavela, Kalinga king in a battle.
- Pushyamitra also conquered the Vidarbha region.
- Divyavandana's book describes Pushyamitra as the destroyer of Buddhist monasteries and their places of worship.
- Pushyamitra Sunga was a follower of Buddhism. Although some historians portray him as anti-Buddhist, there is no authoritative evidence to the claims made.
- He renovated Buddhist stupas at Sanchi and Barhut and also built a stone gateway at Sanchi.
- He was known to perform Vedic sacrifices like Vajapeya and Rajasuya. Also, as per the Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva, he performed Ashvamedha or horse sacrifice.
- Patanjali, a Sanskrit grammarian, was patronized by Pushyamitra Sunga.
- Puranas state that Pushyamitra Sunga's reign lasted for 36 years.

Agnimitra

- Agnimitra was the son of Pushyamitra Sunga.
- He ruled the Sunga Empire from 149 BC to 141 BC.
- By the time Agnimitra succeeded to the throne, the Vidarbha region broke away from the Sunga empire and became independent.
- He is mentioned in Kalidasa's most acclaimed poem Malavikagnimitram.
- After Agnimitra, his son Sujyesta and his son Vasumitra succeeded to the throne.

Sunga Dynasty: Later Rulers

- The details of Vasumitra successors are not known.
- Historians came up with different names such as Andhraka, Vajramitra, Ghosha, and Pulindaka, etc.
- Heliodorus, the Greek ambassador stayed at the court of King Bhagavat.

- Bhagavat was identified with Kasipurra Bhagabhadra of Vidisha pillar inscription.
- Devabhuti was the last known Sunga King. As per Bhanabhatta, he was killed by his minister, Vasudeva Kanva.
- Thus, after the decline of the Sunga dynasty, the Kanva dynasty was established at Magadha that ruled from 73 to 28 BC.
- Canvas rule lasted only for four generations.
- The fall of Kanvas rule was followed by the rise of independent regions such as Ayodhya, Mathura, Kausambi, and Ahichchhstra.

Influence of Sunga Dynasty

- Sungas revived Brahmanism and Bhagavatam.
- Along with the rise of Brahmanas, the caste system was also revived under Sungas. This is evident in Manusmriti, where Brahmin's position is reassured in the 4 fold society.
- The major development of Sungas was the emergence of mixed castes and the integration of foreigners into Indian society.
- During the Sunga period, the Sanskrit language gained prominence and became the language of the court. Most of the Buddhist works were also composed in Sanskrit.
- There was an increase in the use of human figures and symbols in art and architecture during the Sunga period.
- Sunga art replaced Mauryan's usage of wood with stone in the railings and gateways of Buddhist stupas.
- Bharhut inscription exhibits the life of Indians and their attitude towards the world.
- Temple building has begun during Sungas. One such notable example is the Vishnu temple at Vidisha.