

THE SUNGAS (PART-1)

B.A.(HISTORY)PART-1, PAPER-1

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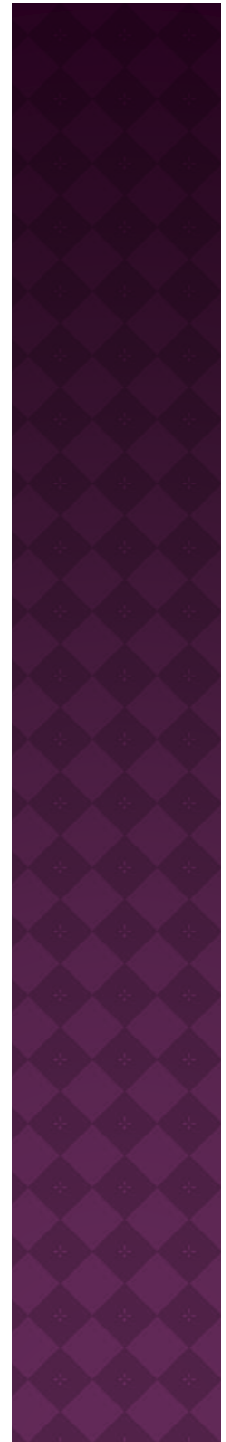
INTRODUCTION

Pushyamitra rose to the power at Pataliputra by c. 187 B.C. He was a Commander-in-Chief of the Maurya empire, occupied the Magadhan throne after killing his master Brihadratha, the last imperial Maurya who was too weak to protect his inherited throne. Thus he established the rule of a new dynasty at the centre of the empire that had been under the Imperial Mauryas.

The constant threat of Greeco-Bactrian invasion in the North -Western frontiers of the empire seems to have paved the way towards Pushyamitra's accession to power. Because, the last Maurya had failed to offer an effective resistance due to his personal and territorial limitations.

INTRODUCTION

Further the king's passive policy created a sense of insecurity among his subjects at a time when various power-centers and provincial units of the empire had shaken off their allegiance to the weak central authority and the secession of regions of the erstwhile empire reduced the imperial body politic to the status of a mere kingdom. In the background of emergence of small independent states and threat of foreign invasions Pushyamitra's coup d'état may be considered.



ORIGIN

A number of conflicting opinion has been put forward by the scholars as to the origin and place of origin of Pushyamitra and his successors.

❖ **Ashtadhyayi of Panini:**

Sungas are connected with the Vedic Brahmana family of Bhardwaja, as much the same narrated in the Puranic geneologies of the chief Brahmana family.

❖ **Divyavadana:**

Pushyamitra is presented as lineally descended from the Mauryas and consider him a last king of the Maurya dynasty

ORIGIN

❖ Foreign origin:

Sunga dynasty was Persian , worshipper of the Sun, 'Mitra'.

❖ Kshatriya origin:

Some scholars have connected the Sungas with the family of Bimbisara and thereby indicated their Kshatriya origin

Pushyamitra hailed from west:

It is generally accepted by most of the scholars that it is with the kingdom of Vidisa that the Sungas were especially associated in literature and inscriptions.

ORIGIN

We may now conclude that Pushyamitra was a Sunga whom Panini connected with the Vedic Brahmana family of Bharadwaja. As the two peoples, Vitahavya and Vitihotras, being of the Bhardwaja gotra, belonged to the territory which, under the Mauryan empire, was in the viceroyalty of Ujjaini, it is with the kingdom of Vidisa forming a part of this region that the Sungas were especially associated in the literature and epigraphic sources. It is quite possible that Pushyamitra belonged to one Brahma-Kshatra family and his military profession was due to his family tradition than to any extra circumstances.

ORIGIN

It might have been possible that Pushyamitra found a place in the Mauryan administration under the viceroyalty of Avanti in the latter part of the post-Asokan period. In a growing situation created by mutual bickering among the scions of imperial Maurya family, by the secession and revolting attitude of the different regions of the empire and the constant threat of foreign aggression, Pushyamitra began to cherish his ambitions and to step up to the power ladder. He succeeded in his mission.

(To be continued)

