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### **Samudragupta(350-375A.D)**

He was one among the greatest rulers of the Gupta Empire. In the fourth Shloka of Prayag Prashasti there is an evidence of appointment of Samudragupta as the successor of the royal throne by Chandragupta I. In the inscription of Vakatakas also Samudragupta is mentioned as the successor of Chandragupta I. The Airand inscription also mentions the same fact about his succession. But many contemporary historical texts doubts about the unopposed succession of Samudragupta. Aryamanjushremulkalpa states that there occurs a war of succession Katch and Samudragupta. It is believed that Samudragupta was not the elder son of Charndragupta I. Katch was the elder son and due to him being the elder son Katch was legally to be his successor. But , realizing the inclination of Chandragupta towards Samudragupta Katch minted a few of his coins even before Chandragpta's death.

Chandragupta I wanted to appoint his skilled son to be the next ruler of the Gupta Empire. Thus, by realizing the forthcoming war of succession Chandragupta declared Samudragupta as his successor in his open assembly. Hence, Samudragupta killed his elder brother Katch and ascended the throne. On the other hand historians like Allen, Smith, Fleet, etc considered Katch to be the real name of Samudragupta.

## **Military Expeditions of Samudragupta:**

The most important source of Samudragupta's military expedition is the Prayag Prashasti. It was written in Sanskrit language in Champu style by Harisena. The 7<sup>th</sup> line of this Prashasti mentions about the Digvijaya of Samudragupta.

According to the Prashasti his Digvijaya was based on the policy of 'Dharnibandha' (to gain victory over the entire earth). According to it Samudragupta adopted the policy of Digvijaya over the area of Aryavarta (from Vindhya range to Himalayan range). Whereas, he adopted the policy of Dharmavijaya in South India. Thus, the rulers of South India accepted the supremacy of Samudragupta and were established as the subordinate states. Following are the policies adopted by Samudragupta for his expeditions:

- **Policy of Prasambhodarana:**

This policy was adopted by Samudragupta for the Aryavarta area. Through this policy he forcefully annexed the northern states through violence and power. He attacked twice on the northern states. The first expedition is mentioned in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> stanza of Prayag Prashasti. Thus, this is known as the first battle of Aryavarta. In this battle he won over four states. The second expedition is mentioned in the 21<sup>st</sup> stanza of Prayag Prashasti and this is known as the 2<sup>nd</sup> battle of Aryavarta. In this battle he won over nine states.

- **Policy of Grahanamokshanugrahana:**

This policy was adopted by Samudragupta for the South Indian states or the states of Dakshinapatha (Vindhya range to Krishna-Tungabhadra rivers). Under this policy he won over the Southern states but returned it to their local rulers. The expedition of Dakshinapatha is mentioned in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> stanza of Prayag Prashasti. Under this policy of Grahanamokshanugrahana he defeated 12 states of Dakshinapatha and forced their rulers to accept his supremacy. According to Hem Chandra Rai Chaudhari it is the policy of Dharmavijaya which is also mentioned in the Raghuvansha of Kalidasa about the expedition.

- **Policy of Parichakikarana:**

This policy was adopted against the tribal community i.e the Aatwik tribes or the local tribal rulers who were spread in the areas between Mathura and Narmada rivers. Under this policy he made the Aatwik states his servants (paricharak). The victory of Samudragupta over 18 tribal states and transforming them into the servants is mentioned in the 21<sup>st</sup> stanza of Prayag Prashashti . After defeating these Aatwik tribes Samudragupta carried out his expedition of Dakshinapatha so that this tribes do not become the obstacles in the path of his expedition.

- **Policy of Sarvakardanakaranpranamagamana:**

This policy of Samudragupta was adopted towards the frontier states according to which the defeated ruler had to pay taxes, follow the orders, do charity and had to do hospitality of Samudragupta periodically. This expedition of Samudragupta on the frontier state is mentioned in the 22<sup>nd</sup> stanza of Prayag Prashashti. It indicates that frontier states consisted of two categories 9 republic states and 5 monarchies who were scared of the power of Samudragupta and accepted his supremacy.

- **Policy of Atmanivedanakanyopayadanagarurdamak:**

This policy was mentioned in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> stanza of Prayag Prashashti which was adopted for the foreign powers by Samudragupta. Scared and influenced by the victory of Samudragupta the foreign rulers surrendered. The Srikankan ruler Meghvarman requested for the friendship of Samudragupta. Meghvarman got permission of Samudragupta to build a monastery for Buddhist monks. This information is derived from the book of Chinese traveler Van Huen Tse. Huen Tsang too witnessed this monastery and named it Mahabodhi Sangharam. Besides Singhal(srilanka) other foreign territories like Java, Malaya, Sumatra or South Asia also accepted his supremacy. Thus, Samudragupta extended the empire which he got in legacy from Chandragupta I and made Patliputra the capital of his empire.

There is a mention of a few administrative post of Samudragupta in Prayag Prashashti such as:

- **Department of Sandhivigrahika:**  
He was the minister of battles and treaties. He was the head of foreign department. Harisena was the Sandhivigrahika of Samudragupta.
- **Department of Khadyatapakik:**  
He was the head of the royal kitchen. During Samudragupta this department was headed by Dhruvbhuti, father of Harisena.
- **Department of Mahadandanayaka:**  
He was the head of police department and Chief Justice of judiciary cases. This post was headed by Harisena.
- **Kumaramatya:**  
They were the ministers belonging to higher posts. In the Gupta inscription a common term Kumaramatya is used for number of ministers such as Vishayapati, governor, Commander-in-chief, ministers of the court, etc. Harisena is also considered as one of the Kumaramatyas .

Apart from these above information there is no available information about the administration of Samudragupta. It seems that Samudragupta could get no time for figuring about the nature of administration due to his continuous indulgence in wars.

### **Ashwamedha Yajana:**

After his victories expedition Samudragupta performed. It seems that he performed this ceremony after the Prayag Prashasti had already been written because of this it has not been mentioned in the Prayag Prashasti. In the Bhitari Inscription of Skandagupta, Samudragupta is quoted as the person who restarted the Ashwamedha Yajana which was left to be practiced long back. This Ashwamedha types of coins of Samudragupta proved him to be performing Ashwamedha Yajana. In the front side of the coin a horse is portrayed to be tied with the holy thread. And in the back side the word “Ashwamedha Prakramah” is

inscribed. In the Pune copper plate inscription of Prabhavati Gupta also Samudragupta is considered to be practicing numerous Ashwamedha Yajana.

### **Coins of Samudragupta:**

The coins issued by Samudragupta also throws light on his life and his works. Samudragupta issued 6 types of gold coins Garur types of coins, dhanurdhar type of coins, Ashwamedha type of coins, Vyaghrahananta type, Parshuram type, Vinavadan type of coins.

V.A Smith in his Early History of India called Samudragupta as Napoleon of India due to his bravery and warrior skills. In Prayag Prashashti Samudragupta is indicated as the great man in the Prayag Prashashti. In this Prayag Prashashti Samudragupta is considered as the god of humans, in the case of wealth he is considered to be Lord Kuber, his power is compared to Lord Indra and his intellect is compared to Lord Brihaspati. Samudragupta was himself a great poet and thus became famous as Kaviraj. He was a great musician thus, is compared to Lord Brihaspati and Narada for his musical skills. It is clear that he was skilled in playing Veena from the Vinavadan coins of Samudragupta also reflects his love for music. Samudragupta was a versatile king, he was a great ruler in every aspect and thus, began a new era in India history.