



## Conservation of Ancient Buddhist site

**For Prelims:** ASI, Buddhism, Edicts of Ashoka

**For Mains:** Mauryan and Satvahanas, Brahmi Script

### Why in News?

[Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) will conserve the **Ancient Buddhist site** on the bank of Bhima River near Kanaganahalli (forming part of Sannati site) in Kalaburagi district, Karnataka.

- The conservation project will reset the **remains of Maha Stupa retrieved in the excavation to their original positions** without much ornamentation and reconstructing of fallen portions of the Ayaka platforms using newly-fabricated bricks of the same size, shape and texture.

### What are the Findings of the Excavation?

- **Ashokan Edict:**
  - The [Edicts of Ashoka](#) are a collection of **more than thirty inscriptions on the pillars**, as well as boulders and cave walls, attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE.
- **Maha Stupa:**
  - A **Maha Stupa** was discovered which was referred to as **Adholoka Maha Chaitya (the Great Stupa of the netherworlds)** in the inscriptions and, more significantly, the **stone-portrait of Emperor Ashoka**, surrounded by his queens and female attendants.
    - The Maha Stupa is believed to have been developed in three constructional phases – **Maurya, Early Satavahana and Later Satavahana periods** stretching from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. to 3<sup>rd</sup> Century A.D.
    - The Stupa is believed to have been destroyed in an earthquake.
  - Stupa is **one of the largest of its time**, the stone-portrait is considered to be the only surviving image of the Mauryan Emperor which had the inscription '**Raya Asoko**' in **Brahmi on it**.
- **Other Findings:**
  - Sculptural rendering of **Jataka stories**.
    - The Jatakas are an important part of Buddhist art and literature.
    - They **describe the previous existences or births of the Buddha (the Enlightened One) when he appeared as Bodhisattvas** (beings who are yet to attain enlightenment or moksha), in both human and non-human forms.
  - **Satavahana monarchs and certain unique depictions of Buddhist missionaries** sent by Ashoka to different parts.
  - **72 drum-slabs** decorated with a variety of [Dharma-Chakras](#).
  - Sculptures of Yakshas and lion.
    - Yakshas (male nature spirits) are **personifications of the natural world**.
    - Over time they were worshipped as minor gods in both the Buddhist and Hindu

pantheons, often functioning as protectors of the earth's riches, and they became associated with wealth.

- **Brahmi inscriptions** with varied paleographical features.
  - Brahmi script is **one of the oldest writing systems**, having been used in the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia during the final centuries BCE and the early centuries CE.

## Who were Satavahanas?

- In the Deccan, the **Satavahanas established their independent rule after the decline of the Mauryas**. Their rule lasted for about 450 years.
- They were **also known as the Andhras**.
- The **Puranas and the Nasik and Nanaghad inscriptions** remain important sources for the history of Satavahanas.
- The **founder of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka**. The greatest ruler of the Satavahana dynasty was Gautamiputra Satakarni.
- The Satavahanas **patronized Buddhism and Brahmanism**. Brahmanism was revived by the Satavahanas **along with the performance of asvamedha and rajasuya sacrifices**.
- They also **patronized the Prakrit language and literature**.

**Source: TH**

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