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1. Assess the contribution of the Satavahanas to Deccan's social and cultural development, with special reference to language, art, and religion.

Satavahanas (c. 230 BCE–220 CE):

The **Satavahanas** were a dynasty that ruled over the Deccan region, with their capital at **Patanjali** (modern-day Andhra Pradesh). Their reign marked the early consolidation of power in South India after the decline of the Mauryas. They played a crucial role in political and cultural integration between the northern and southern regions, and their rule is considered a golden period for the Deccan.

Contribution to Deccan's Social and Cultural Development:

Language:

- **Prakrit and Sanskrit** were prominent under the Satavahanas, with inscriptions found in **Prakrit** written in the **Brahmi script**.
- The Satavahanas were instrumental in promoting the **Prakrit language**, which served as a bridge between the north and south. This facilitated communication, trade, and cultural exchange across regions.
- **Example:** Inscriptions of **King Gautamiputra Satakarni** are found in **Prakrit**, reflecting their commitment to indigenous languages.
- **Art:**
- Satavahanas patronized art, particularly **sculpture**, leading to the development of unique **Deccan art styles**.
- **The Amaravati School of Art**, which flourished under the Satavahanas, is famous for its **narrative sculptures** depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha and Jataka tales.
- Satavahana rulers also promoted the construction of **stupas** and **caves** (such as the **Kanheri Caves**), which remain significant cultural landmarks in the Deccan.
- **Example:** The **Amaravati Stupa** contains exquisite relief sculptures illustrating Buddhist themes.

Religion:

- The Satavahanas were **patrons of Buddhism**, evidenced by their support for the construction of stupas and monasteries, such as in **Amaravati** and **Nagarjunakonda**.
- They also promoted **Hinduism**, and **Shiva worship** gained prominence during their rule, exemplified by the inscriptions of **Shiva** on coins and in temples.
- **Example:** **Gautamiputra Satakarni's inscriptions** mention his support for Brahmanism and Buddhism, showing religious tolerance.

Conclusion:

The Satavahanas played a crucial role in shaping the social and cultural landscape of the Deccan. Through their promotion of languages, art, and religion, they facilitated cultural exchanges between North and South India and laid the foundations for the flourishing of regional culture and religion in South India.

2. Based on the accounts of foreign travellers like Nicolo Conti, Abdur Razzak, Domingo Paes, and Duarte Barbosa, discuss the socio-religious and cultural aspects of the Vijayanagara Empire. How do these accounts help in understanding the administration and economy of the kingdom?

The Vijayanagara Empire, which flourished from 1336 to 1646 CE, was a powerful South Indian state that left a deep imprint on India's history. Several foreign travellers visited the empire during its peak and recorded their observations. Their accounts shed valuable light on the social, religious, cultural, administrative, and economic aspects of the empire.

Nicolo Conti (Italy, visited ~1420 CE)

- **Social and Cultural Life:** He was struck by the vastness and population of Vijayanagara. He observed the architectural richness and magnificence of temples that dotted the landscape.
- **Religious Aspects:** He noted a deeply religious society with a dominant Hindu faith, marked by ritualistic practices and temple-centric life.
- **Cultural Observations:** He mentioned the grandeur of festivities and processions and the influence of Brahmins in social life.

Abdur Razzak (Persia, visited ~1443 CE)

- **Urban Planning and Architecture:** He called Vijayanagara one of the most beautiful cities in the world. He marveled at the city's fortifications, wide roads, and the majestic palace complex.
- **Religious Harmony:** He remarked on the religious tolerance in the empire, where both Hindus and Muslims could coexist.
- **Markets and Trade:** He vividly described the vibrancy of the marketplaces filled with luxury goods, jewels, and spices, reflecting an affluent economy.
- **Political Administration:** He noted the presence of a strong king supported by a network of nobles and military commanders.

Domingo Paes (Portugal, visited ~1520 CE)

- **Economic Prosperity:** Paes was amazed by the affluence of the empire, stating it rivaled Rome in wealth. He observed bustling markets with jewels, horses, silk, and spices.
- **Religious Life:** He described the elaborate religious ceremonies, temple festivals, and processions, showing religion's deep influence on daily life.
- **Military Strength:** He observed a large, well-equipped standing army and a disciplined command structure.
- **Governance:** He praised the justice system and the king's interaction with common people during public assemblies.

Duarte Barbosa (Portugal, early 16th century)

- **Trade and Commerce:** Barbosa emphasized the importance of Vijayanagara as a commercial hub. He noted that the empire engaged in international trade with Persia, Arabia, and Southeast Asia.
- **Religious Observations:** He recorded the presence of a deeply hierarchical Hindu society dominated by Brahmins.
- **Administrative Systems:** He mentioned the Nayaka system—feudal lords who managed regional administration and contributed to military service.

Conclusion

These travellers' narratives provide a vivid and multifaceted picture of Vijayanagara's grandeur. Their observations reinforce the empire's reputation as a center of religious tolerance, architectural excellence,

administrative sophistication, and economic prosperity. In the absence of extensive local records, these foreign accounts serve as crucial historical sources for reconstructing the legacy of Vijayanagara.