

## Study Material for Semester- II

### Paper – Mauryan and Gupta Empire (Core-3)

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## A small introduction of Early and Later Satavahana

In the north-western Deccan on the ruins of the Mauryan empire arose the kingdom of the Satavahanas in the first century B.C., with its centre at Pratishthana (modern Paithan in Maharashtra). The Puranas speak only of the Andhra rule and not of the Satavahana rule. On the other hand the name Andhra does not occur in the Satavahana inscriptions. There is a lot of controversy regarding the original home of the Satavahanas.

The kings represented in epigraphic records are mentioned in the Puranas as Andhras, Andhra – bhriyah and Andhrajatiyah. The Aitareya Brahmana speaks of them as the degenerate sons of Visvamitra. Pliny the Elder refers to the Andhras as a powerful race which supplied the king with an army of 1, 00,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 elephants.

The Satavahanas were also called the Andhra dynasty, which has led to the assumption that they originated in the Andhra region, the delta of the Krishna and Godavari rivers on the east coast, from where they moved westwards up the Godavari river, finally establishing their power in the west during the general political confusion on the breaking up of the Mauryan empire.

A contrary opinion has also been put forward that the family originated in the west and extended its control to the east coast, finally giving its name, Andhra, to this region. Since the earliest inscriptions of the Satavahanas are found in the Western Deccan, the later view may be correct. The Andhras held a position of importance as early as the Mauryan period, since they are specifically mentioned by Asoka amongst the tribal people in his empire.

### **Early Satavahanas:**

The founder of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka. He and his successors established their authority from the mouth of the Krishna to the entire Deccan plateau. According to the Puranas, the Satavahana king killed the last Kanva ruler of Magadha and

presumably took possession of his kingdom. The earliest of the Satavahana kings to receive wide recognition was Satakarni I, and this was due to his policy of military expansion in all directions. He is the Lord of the west who defied Kharavela of Kalinga and against whom the latter campaigned. His conquests took him north of the Narmada into eastern Malva, which at the time was being threatened by the Shakas and the Greeks. Satakarni I gained control of the region of Sanchi, and an inscription there refers to him as Rajan Shri Satakarni. His next move was in the southerly direction and on conquering the Godavari valley he felt entitled to call himself Lord of the Southern Regions' (Dakshina – pathapati).

The description of Satakarni I as ('Dakshina -pathapati) in the Nanaghat inscription of Nayanika proves that the Satavahana dominion was not confined to western Deccan alone, but included other areas of the Deccan and beyond Satakarni I performed two Asvamedha sacrifices and one Rajasuya sacrifice.

### **Later Satavahanas:**

After the reign of Satakarni I, the Satavahanas were driven out of the western Deccan by the Shakas of the Kshaharata clan. Coins and inscriptions of the Shaka Chief Nahapana have been found around Nasik, indicating the Shaka dominance in the area towards the close of the first century A.D. or the beginning of the second. But it must have been soon after this that the Satavahanas regained their western possessions, for the coins of Nahapana are often found over-struck by the name Gautamiputra Satakarni, the king who was responsible for re-establishing Satavahana power in this region by driving out the Shakas.

Gautamiputra Satakarni (A.D. 106 -130) is said to have destroyed the power of the Shakas and the pride of the Kshatriyas, promoted the interests of the twice-born and stopped the mixing of the four varnas. His achievements are recorded in glowing terms in the Nasik prasasti by his mother Gautami Balasri. He ruled over a wide area extending from the Krishna in the south to Malwa and Saurashtra in the north and from Berar in the east to the Konkan in the west. To the Buddhists he made munificent donations. His patronage to Brahmanism is revealed by the epithet 'Ekabrahmana'.