

Satavahana Dynasty - Important Rulers of Satavahana Empire [UPSC History Notes]

The reign of the Satavahana Dynasty began in the mid-1st century BCE and came to an end in the early 3rd century CE. The area of the Satavahana Dynasty is debated where some historians argue that the Satavahanas initially established their hold over the area around Pratishthana (modern Paithan) in the western Deccan, and expanded from there into the eastern Deccan, Andhra, and the western coast. The topic is important for Ancient History preparation in the [IAS Exam](#). Read on to know about the Satavahana empire, its rulers and coinage for UPSC preparation.

Origin & Development of the Satavahana Dynasty

The [Sunga dynasty](#) came to an end in around 73 BC when their ruler Devabhuti was killed by Vasudeva Kanva. The Kanva dynasty then ruled over Magadha for about 45 years. Around this time, another powerful dynasty, the Satavahanas came to power in the Deccan area.

The term “Satvahana” originated from the Prakrit which means ” driven by seven” which is an implication of the Sun God’s chariot that is driven by seven horses as per the Hindu mythology.

The first king of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka. Before the emergence of the Satavahana dynasty, a brief history of the other dynasties are mentioned below:

Kanva Dynasty:

- As per the Puranas, there were four kings of the Kanva dynasty namely, Vasudeva, Bhumimitra, Narayana and Susarman.
- The Kanvas were Brahmins.
- The Magadha Empire had diminished by this time considerably.
- Northwest region was under the Greeks and parts of the Gangetic plains were under different rulers.
- The last Kanva king Susarman was killed by the Satavahana (Andhra) king.

Read in detail about the [Kanva Dynasty](#) at the linked article.

Chedi Dynasty:

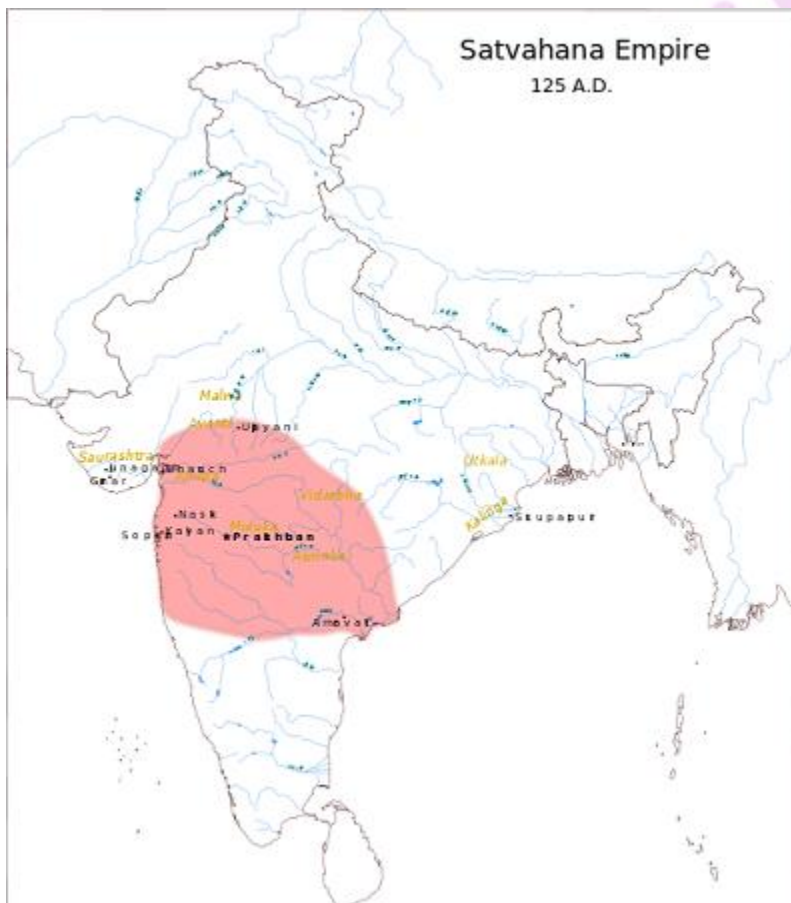
- The Cheti or Chedi dynasty emerged in Kalinga in the 1st century BC.
- The Hathigumpha inscription situated near Bhubaneswar gives information about it.
- This inscription was engraved by king Kharavela who was the third Cheti king.
- Kharavela was a follower of [Jainism](#).
- Other names of this dynasty are Cheta or Chetavamsa, and Mahameghavahana.

Facts about Satavahanas Dynasty

- The Satavahana rule is believed to exist **between early 1st Century BCE and 3rd Century CE.**
- They are referred to as **Andhras in the Puranas.**

- The Satavahana kingdom chiefly comprised of **modern-day Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra**. At times, their rule also included parts of Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.
- Their capital cities varied at different times. **Pratishthana (Paithan) and Amaravati were the capital of Satavahana Dynasty.**
- **Simuka was the founder** of the Satavahana Dynasty.
- They were the **first native Indian rulers to issue their own coins with the portraits of the rulers**. This practice was started by Gautamiputra Satakarni who derived the practice from the Western Satraps after defeating them.
- The **coin legends were in Prakrit language**. Some reverse coin legends are in Telugu, Tamil and Kannada.
- They **patronised Prakrit** more than Sanskrit.
- They supported both **Buddhism and Brahminism** although they were Hindus and claimed Brahminical status.
- They successfully defended their territories against foreign invaders and had many **on-going battles with the Sakas (Western Satraps)**.

The Satavahana Dynasty map is given below:



Important Rulers of the Satavahana dynasty

Satakarni I (70- 60 BC)

- Satakarni I was the third Satavahana king.
- Satakarni I was the first Satavahana king to expand his empire by military conquests.
- He conquered Kalinga after the death of Kharavela.
- He also pushed back the Sungas in Pataliputra.
- He also ruled over Madhya Pradesh.
- After annexing the Godavari Valley, he assumed the title of 'Lord of Dakshinapatha'.
- His queen was Nayanika who wrote the Naneghat inscription which describes the king as Dakshinapathapati.
- He performed Ashvamedha and revived Vedic Brahmanism in the Deccan.

Hala

- King Hala compiled the Gatha Saptashati. Called Gaha Sattasai in Prakrit, it is a collection of poems with mostly love as the theme. Around forty of the poems are attributed to Hala himself.
- Hala's minister Gunadhya composed Brihatkatha.

Gautamiputra Satakarni of Satavahana Dynasty (106 – 130 AD or 86 – 110 AD)

- He is considered the greatest king of the Satavahana dynasty.
- He defeated the Greeks, Pahlavas (Indo-Parthians) and the Sakas.
- His kingdom ran from Krishna in the south to Malwa and Saurashtra in the north and from Berar in the east to the Konkan in the west.
- He defeated Nahapana, an important king of the Western Satraps.
- He is also called Ekabrahmana.
- His mother was Gautami Balasri and hence his name Gautamiputra (son of Gautami).
- He was succeeded by his son Vasisthiputra Sri Pulamavi or Pulamavi II.

Administration of the Satavahana dynasty

The administration of the Satavahana dynasty was entirely based on the Shastras which has the following structure:

1. Rajan or the king who is the ruler
2. Princes or Rajas who had their names inscribed on coins
3. Maharathis, who had the power of granting villages and also had the privilege of maintaining marital relations with the ruling family.
4. Mahasenapati
5. Mahatalavara

The inscription of the ruler Guatamipurna Satakarni threw some light on the bureaucratic structure of administration. However, clarity on the detailed structure is still awaited by historians.

Economy of Satavahana Empire

Agriculture was the backbone of the economy during the rule of Satavahana kings. They also relied on trade and production of various commodities within and outside India.

Satavahana Coin

Some important points related to Satavahan coinage are mentioned below:

1. The coins of Satavahanas were excavated from Deccan, western India, Vidarbha, western and Eastern Ghats etc
2. Most of the coins in the Satavahana dynasty were die-struck.
3. Cast-coins too existed in the Satavahana empire and there were multiple combinations of techniques that were used to cast coins.
4. There were silver, copper lead and potin coins in the Satavahana empire.
5. The portrait coins were mostly in silver and some were in lead too. Dravidian language and Brahmi script were used on portrait coins.
6. There were punch-marked coins too that were circulated alongside the Satavahana dynasty.
7. Importance of maritime trade was derived from the image of ship present on the Satavahana coins.
8. Many Satavahana coins bore the names of 'Satakarni' and 'Pulumavi.'
9. Satavahana coins were of different shapes – round, square, rectangular etc.
10. Many symbols have appeared on the Satavahana coins, main of which are:
 - Chaitya Symbol
 - Chakra Symbol
 - Conch Shell symbol
 - Lotus symbol
 - Nandipada symbol
 - Ship symbol
 - Swastik symbol
11. Animal motifs were found on the Satavahana coins.

Religion & Language of Satavahana Kingdom

The Satavahanas belonged to Hindu religion and Brahmanical caste. But, the interesting fact is their generosity towards other caste and religion which is evident from the donations made by them towards the Buddhist monasteries. Many Buddhist monasteries were constructed during the rule of the Satavahana dynasty.

The Language used during that period was "Prakrit" which is a modern version of the Indo-Aryan Language. Political inscriptions also threw some light on the rare use of Sanskrit Literature.

The decline of the Satavahanas

- Pulamavi IV is considered the last king of the main Satavahana line.
- He ruled until 225 AD. After his death, the empire fragmented into five smaller kingdoms.

Also Read | [NCERT Notes: Decline of the Mauryan Empire](#)

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