

UNIT 130 – UPSC - Indian History - Satvahana Dynasty

India History - Satvahana Dynasty

The Satvahana Dynasty

After the decline of the Mauryan empire the Satvahanas established their kingdom in the Deccan. They were also known as Andhras. They first rose to power in present Maharashtra on the banks of the Godavari. The founder of the Satvahanas was Simuka. But the man who raised it to eminence was Satakarni I. The Satvahana dynasty began its rule in about 40 or 30 BC, and continued until the 3rd century AD.

Satakarni I allied with powerful Marathi chieftain and signalled his accession to power by performing ashvamedhas (horse-sacrifice). After his death, the Satvahana power seemed to have been submerged beneath a wave of Scythian invasion.

AD 80-104: Reign of Gautamiputra

Gautamiputra Satakarni was the famous king during the Satvahana dynasty. He defeated the Sakas (Scythians), Yavanas (Greeks) and Pahlavas (Parthians). His empire extended upto Banavasi in the south, and included Maharashtra, Konkan, Saurashtra, Malwa, west Rajasthan and Vidharbha. His son, Vasishtiputra, ruled at Paithan on the banks of Godavari.

Two other cities, Vijayanti (in North Kanara) and Amravati (in the Guntur district), attained eminence during the Satvahana period. Kings succeeding Gautamiputra lost many of their territories. But the power of Satvahanas revived under Sri Yajna Satakarni, who was the last great king. After him, the empire began to decline.

Some scholars say there were 19 kings of this dynasty which ruled for 300 years, while others say there were 30 kings who ruled for 456 years. The dynasty came to an end about the middle of the third century AD. (after AD 220). Their empire broke up into small states ruled by the Abhiras, Chutus, Ikshvakus, Pallavas.

Extract from the book *A History of India for Children* Administration

The Satvahana empire was divided into provinces called aharas, each under an amatya or minister. They had a large army. Women were prominent in social life, owned property and took part in assemblies.

Religion

The Satvahana rulers were said to be Brahmins. They worshiped Krishna, Vasudeva and other Vaishnava gods. But Buddhism also flourished. They gifted land to Brahmins and Buddhist monks.

Architecture and art

Many Buddhist chaityas (prayer halls) and viharas (monasteries) were carved out of solid rocks. The most famous chaitya is at Karle, in Maharashtra. The Satvahanas used Pratik, a form of Sanskrit, for their inscription and books.

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