Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi and his Successors

- The Sātavāhanas made a complete recovery under Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi, aptly called ‘the greatest of the Sātavāhanas’.
- The main source of information about him is the Nasik cave inscription of the nineteenth regnal year of his son and successor, Vāsishṭhīputra Pulumāvi.
- After consolidating his power in the initial years of his reign, Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi made a concerted effort to destroy the power of the Kshaharāta Kshatrapas.
- The Nasik cave inscription informs us that he uprooted the Śaka rulers.
- This information is corroborated by literary and numismatic evidence.
- The commentary on a gāthā in the Jaina Āvasyakasūtra relates that the Sātavāhana king, through one of his ministers, induced the Śaka ruler to spend all his wealth on charity.
- When the royal treasury was empty, he attacked the Śaka ruler, and defeated and killed him.
- That the defeated Kshaharāta ruler was Nahapāna, is shown by the Jogeltembi hoard, which has some 9,000 silver coins of Nahapāna, struck by Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi.
- The Nasik cave inscription also states that Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi put to the sword, or drove out the Śakas, Yavanas, and Pahlavas.
- The Śakas might have belonged to the Kshaharāta family.
- But it seems more likely that these Śakas, mentioned together with the Yavanas and the Pahlavas, belonged to the Vidarbha or Kārddamaka branch of the Western Kshatrapas.
- The Yavanas appear to be a people of Greek origin, who had settled in Maharashtra, and whose donations are recorded in some inscriptions from places like Kanheri.
- Nothing definite is known about the identity of the Pahlavas mentioned in this inscription.
- The Nasik cave inscription also refers to the victory of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi over some confederacies of his enemies.
- It has been suggested that the Śakas, Yavanas, and Pahlavas, all of foreign stock, had made common cause with the Kshaharāta Kshatrapas.
- Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi defeated them in the course of his struggle against the Kshaharāta Kshatrapas.
- In the Nasik cave inscription, Gotamī Balaśri gives a list of the provinces, over which her son exercised authority.
- These include:
  - Ākara (eastern Malwa)
  - Avanti (western Malwa)
  - Anūpa (Narmada valley)
Thus, it appears that, as a result of his successes against the Kshaharāta Kshatrapas, Gautamīputra Śatakarni not only re-established Śaṭavāhana authority over the territories of Ākara, Avanti, Anūpa, Vidarbha, Asika-Asaka-Mulaka, Aparānta, which had been wrested from them by the Western Kshatrapas, but also added to the Śaṭavāhana kingdom, the Kshaharāta provinces of Kukura and Suraṭha.

The Nasik cave inscription also lists the hills and mountains situated within the dominions of Gautamīputra Śatakarni.

These include:
- Vijha (eastern part of the Vindhyas)
- Achchhavata (Rikshavat)
- Pārīchāta (the Aravali and the western part of the Vindhyas)
- Sahya (the northern parts of the Western Ghats)
- Macha-Sirīṭana-Malaya (the southern part of the Western Ghats)
- Mahīda (Mahendra in the Western Ghats), and
- Chakora (the southern part of the Eastern Ghats).

Interestingly, by mentioning Gautamīputra Śatakarni as lord of Mahīda, Gotamī Balaśri seems to be claiming her son’s authority over Kaliṅga, and by mentioning her son as lord of Chakora, Gautamīputra Śatakarni’s authority over the Andhradeśa.

The inscription also claims that ‘his chargers had drunk the waters of the three oceans’.

The Nasik cave inscription praises Gautamīputra Śatakarni in conventional style.
- It compares him to Rāma, Keśava, Arjuna, and Bhīmasena in prowess; to Nābhāga, Nahusha, Janamejaya, Sagara, Yayāti, and Ambariṣha in lustre, and to Vāyu, garuḍa, the siddhas, the yakshas, the rākshasas, the chāraṇas, the moon, the sun, the asterisms, and the planets in his battle skills.
- He administered his kingdom along the guidelines laid down by the śāstras.
- He maintained varṇāśramadharma.
- He worked tirelessly for the welfare of his subjects.
Successors of Gautamiputra Sātakarṇi

- According to the purāṇas, Gautamiputra Sātakarṇi was succeeded by his son, Vāsisṭhīputra Pulumāvi, who ruled for 28 or 29 years.
- The findspots of his inscriptions—Nasik, Karle, and Amaravati, give us an idea of the extent of his dominions.
- The Śātavāhanas had lost some of the northern provinces of their empire to the Kārddamaka Kshatrapas during the reign of Vāsisṭhīputra Pulumāvi, or even towards the close of the reign of Gautamiputra Sātakarṇi.
- But the discovery of the inscription of Vāsisṭhīputra Pulumāvi at Amaravati, and that of a large number of his coins at the same site and in its surroundings, testifies to the extension of Śātavāhana authority towards the south, as far as the river Krishna, during his reign.
- The next Śātavāhana rulers in the puranic lists are Śivaśī Śātakarṇi and Śivaskanda Śātakarṇi.
- The last great Śātavāhana ruler was Yajña Śātakarṇi.
- His inscriptions have been discovered from Nasik, Kanheri, and Chinna Ganjam in the Krishna district.
- His coins are reported from the districts of Krishna and Godavari in Tamil Nadu, Chandrapur (earlier, Chanda) in Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, northern Konkan, Baroda, and Saurashtra.
- This shows that he ruled over most of the territories he had inherited from his predecessors.
- According to the purāṇas, he ruled for 19 years.

- The Śātavāhana empire seems to have disintegrated after the reign of Yajña Śātakarṇi.
- Purāṇas, epigraphs, and coins reveal the existence of some Śātavāhana rulers, like Vijaya Śātakarṇi, Chandraśī, Rudra Śātakarṇi, and Pulomā.
- They seem to have ruled in the period, when the power of their family was on the decline.