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Earliest Sanskrit Inscriptions in South India found in A.P.

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Why in News

The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has discovered the **earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India** which is also an **earliest epigraphic evidence** (Epigraphy is the study of ancient inscriptions) for the **Saptamatrika cult**.

- Saptamatrikas are a group of **seven female deities** worshipped in **Hinduism** as personifying the energy of their respective consorts.
- Another inscription in **Prakrit language and of Brahmi characters** belonging to the **1st century A.D.** was also found.

Key Points

- **Inscriptions related to Saptamatrika:** The found inscription records the **construction of a Prasada (temple), a mandapa and consecration of images** by a person named Kartika at the temple of **Goddess Saptamatrika** at Tambrape.
- **Location:** Tambrape is the **ancient name of Chebrolou, Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Earlier References to Saptamatrika:** Earlier references to Saptamatrika worship have been found in the early Kadamba copper plates and the early **Chalukyas and Eastern Chalukya** copper plates **dated around 600 A.D.**
- **Language and Characters:** All the available records proved that the found inscription (also known as **Chebrolu inscription**) is in **Sanskrit and in Brahmi characters.**
- **Issued by: Satavahana king Vijaya in 207 A.D.**
So far the **Nagarjunakonda inscription of Ikshavaku king Ehavala Chantamula** issued in the 4th century A.D. was considered the earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India.

Satavahanas

- In the Deccan, the Satavahanas established their independent rule after the decline of the Mauryas. Their rule lasted for about **450 years**.
- They were also known as the **Andhras**.
- The Puranas and the **Nasik and Nanaghad inscriptions** remain important sources for the history of Satavahanas.
- The **founder** of the Satavahana dynasty was **Simuka**. The greatest ruler of the Satavahana dynasty was **Gautamiputra Satakarni**.
- There was remarkable progress in the fields of trade and industry during the Satavahana rule. The greatest port of the Satavahanas was **Kalyani on the western Deccan** and **Gandakasela, Ganjam on the east coast** were the other important seaports.
- The Satavahanas **patronized Buddhism and Brahmanism**. Brahmanism was revived by the Satavahanas along with the performance of asvamedha and rajasuya sacrifices.
- They also **patronized the Prakrit language and literature**.

Source: TH