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**POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE PALLAVAS, THE
RASHTRAKUTAS AND THE CHOLAS
PART-1**

INTRODUCTION

The period from 300 AD to 750 AD marks the second historical phase in the regions south of the *Vindhyas*. In the first phase we notice the ascendancy of the *Satavahanas* over the Deccan and that of the Sangam Age Kingdoms in Southern Tamilnadu. In these areas and also in *Vidarbha* from 3rd Century to 6th Century AD there arose about two dozen states which are known to us from their land charters.

In Northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha (Berar) the *Satavahanas* were succeeded by the *Vakatakas*. Their political history is of more importance to the North India than the South India. But culturally the Vakataka kingdom became a channel for transmitting Brahmanical ideas and social institutions to the South.

INTRODUCTION

The Vakataka power was followed by that of the *Chalukyas of Badami* who played an important role in the history of the Deccan and South India for about two centuries until 753 AD when they were overthrown by their feudatories, the Rashtrakutas.

The eastern part of the Satavahana Kingdom, the Deltas of the Krishna and the Godavari had been conquered by the *Ikshvaku dynasty* in the 3rd Century AD. They left behind many monuments at Nagarjunakonda and Dharanikota. The Ikshvakus were supplanted by the Pallavas. The authority of the early Pallavas extended over Southern Andhra and Northern Tamilnadu and set up their *capital at Kanchi*. The Kadambas of Banavasi, the Gangas of Mysore, the Salankayanas of Vengi, the Vishnukundis of Indrapura, the Kalabhras of Tamilnadu were the important contemporary rulers of the early Pallavas.

INTRODUCTION

Eventually *by the middle of 6th Century AD* the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai emerged to be the *three major states*. The main interest in the political history of South India from 6th to 8th Century AD centers round the *long struggle between the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Chalukyas of Badami for supremacy to control the fertile tracts*.

The Pandyas who were in control of Madurai joined this conflict as a poor third power. Political conflict was, however, no obstacle to cultural growth. A vast and many sided Hindu revival checked the spread of Jainism and Buddhism, created a great volume of soul-stirring devotional literature and advanced philosophic speculation. Numerous instances of the performance of Vedic sacrifices by the kings were found. Under the stimulus of this religious impulse, remarkable advances were registered in Architecture; Sculpture, Painting and Music.

THE PALLAVAS

The Pallavas were one of the greatest dynasties of South India. They played significant role in the political, social and cultural history of South India.

Origin of the Pallavas : There are many views regarding the origin of the Pallavas. *B.L. Rice* and others identified the Pallavas with Pahlavas or Parthians. But there is no evidence for the migration of the Parthians into the South. Many others have sought to connect them with Jaffna, identified with the island of Manipallavam mentioned in the *Manimekalai*. According to them the Pallavas were descended on one side from the Cholas and on the other from the Naga rulers of the Jaffna. *K.P. Jaiswal* argues that the Pallavas belonged to the clan of Vakatakas as both of them belong to same gotra.

THE PALLAVAS

S.K. Aiyangar states that the Pallavas were a family of feudatories of the Satavahanas. This theory has been accepted by many of the historians. He argued that the Pallavas migrated to Tamil Country from the southern parts of Satavahana empire. The Pallavas used Prakrit and Sanskrit, in their inscriptions, patronized Brahmanism and their inscriptions have been found both in Tamil and Andhra region. In the ancient Tamil literature they are mentioned as non-Tamils. *It is thus evident that the Pallavas were originally the rulers of the Andhra region. After the end of the Satavahana rule, the Pallavas asserted not only independence but also moved to Tondamandalam and settled there. From this region they extended their sway over the entire Dravida country with Kanchi as their capital.*

EARLY PALLAVAS

Pallavas rose to the power during the later part of the Ikshvaku rule in Andhra. Pallava king, Simhavarma defeated the Ikshvaku king Rudrapurushadatta in 300 AD and established Pallava rule in Coastal Andhra, which was known at that time as 'Karmarashtra' and started as a political power in south India. It is believed that Simhavarma (280- 335 AD) was the founder of this dynasty and Sivaskandavarman who ruled probably about the beginning of the fourth century AD seems to have been the greatest of the early Pallavas. His dominions extended from the Krishna to the South Pennar and up to the Bellary district. He had performed several Vedic sacrifices. Vishnugopa was the next important Pallava ruler. During his reign Samudragupta invaded South India and defeated him. The 'Allahabad Pillar Inscription' mentions that during the

EARLY PALLAVAS

annexation of Samudragupta during 345-350 AD. Vishnugopa was the Pallava ruler of Kanchipuram. The Pallava kingdom was attacked by the Chola king Karikala Chola during the time of *Trilochna Pallava (350 – 360 AD)*. This resulted in establishing Karikala's authority over some parts of the Andhra region.

Nandivarman I was the *last of the early Pallava kings*. During his time the Pallava kingdom experienced the invasion of the Kalabhras.

(To be continued)