

THE PALLAVAS (PART-2)

B.A. (HISTORY) PART-2
PAPER-3

DR. MD.NEYAZ HUSSAIN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR & HOD
PG DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
MAHARAJA COLLEGE, VKSU , ARA (BIHAR)

ORIGIN OF 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.

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.Jayaswal argues that the Pallavas belonged to the Clan of the Vakatakas as both of them belong to same gotra.

ORIGIN OF 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 upto the Bellary district. He had performed several Vedic sacrifices. Vishnugopa was the next important Pallava ruler. During his reign Samudra Gupta invaded South India and defeated him.

EARLY PALLAVAS

The 'Allahabad Pillar Inscription' mentions that during the annexation of Samudragupta(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)

IMPERIAL PALLAVAS

Simhavishnu (575 – 590 AD) :

Simhavishnu was the first ruler of this line. Simhavishnu defeated the Kalabhras and laid foundation for the establishment of the “Age of the Imperial Pallavas”. He also defeated the rulers of Chola, Pandya and Chera kingdoms. He was the master of the entire region between the Krishna and the Kaveri. He was a worshiper of Vishnu and had the title Avanishimha (lion of the earth). According to a literary tradition, great poet Bharavi visited his court.

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Mahendravarman I (590 – 630 AD) :

Simhavishnu was succeeded by his son Mahendravarman I. He was a versatile genius. He was not only a soldier and statesman, but also a religious reformer, an architect, a poet and a musician. Mattavilasa, Chitrakarapuli, Vichitrachitta, Gundabhara and Lalitankura were the titles assumed by him. The long drawn Pallava-Chalukya conflict began during this period.

Mahendravarman I was defeated by Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II at a place called Pullalur near Kanchi. Pulakesin II almost reached the Pallava capital, but Mahendravarman purchased peace by ceding their

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Northern provinces to the Pulakesin II. Mahendravarman I was a follower of Jainism but converted to Saivism under the influence of Tirunavukkarasu or Appar. He studied music under Rudracharya and composed exercises for the practice of students on a variety of Vina known as Parivadini. He has authored the Sanskrit work '*Mastavilasa Prahasanam*'. He was a great builder of cave temples. The rock cut caves at Mandagapattu, Dalavanur and Tiruchirapalli were excavated during his time.

The Jain paintings found in the rock cut caves at Sittannavasal located in the present Pudukkottai region are attributed to him. His title Chitrakarapuli reveals his talents in music.

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Narasimhavarman I (630 – 668 AD):

Narasimhavarman I was the greatest of the Pallavas who raised the power and prestige of the dynasty to an amazing height. He had the title *Mahamalla* or *Mamalla* which means ‘great wrestler’. The Pallava-Chalukya conflict that was started by his father was successfully continued by him. He wanted to take revenge the defeat of his father at the hands of Chalukyan ruler Pulakesin II. He defeated Pulakesin II, in three battles including that at Manimangalam near Kanchi in 642 AD. Pulakesin II lost his life and hence Narasimhavarman assumed the title Vatapikonda (the conqueror of Vatapi).

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Another notable achievement of Narasimhanvarman I was his novel expedition to Srilanka, to reinstate the Sinhalese prince Manavarman. During his reign Hiuen Tsang visited the Pallava capital Kanchi and noted that Buddhism and Jainism flourished in the city besides Hinduism. He also noted that it was the birth place of the celebrated Dharmapala, who became the abbot of the great Vihara of Nalanda. According to his account the people of Kanchi esteemed great learning and Ghatika of Kanchi served as a prominent centre of learning. Besides he was a great builder having constructed Mamallapuram and created the Monolithic Rathas (Rock-cut Rathas) during his reign.

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Mahendravarman II (668 – 670 AD) :

Mahendravarman II ruled for a very short period of two years, since he was killed by Chalukya king Vikramaditya I. He also captured Kanchi, the capital of Pallavas and ruled over it for a short period.

Paramesvaravarman I (670 – 695 AD) :

The Pallava, Chalukya conflict continued during the reign of Paramesvaravarman I. After many reverses Paramesvaravarman I finally won a decisive victory over the Chalukyas and their ally, the Gangas. Paramesvaravarman I was called Ugradanda and ‘destroyer of the city of Ranarasika’ in an inscription of his son, Ranarasika was a title of Vikramaditya I. Paramesvaravarman I was a devotee of Siva and built Siva temple at Kuram near Kanchi.

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Narasimhavarman II (695 – 722 AD) :

Paramesvaravarman I was succeeded by his son Narasimhavarman II. He had the title 'Rajasimha'. He enjoyed a peaceful reign and credited with the construction of large and beautiful temples like the Shore temple at Mamallapuram and the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi. He had the titles like Shankara Bhakta and Agamapriya. He was also a great patron of Art and letters. The famous Sanskrit scholar Dandin is said to have adorned his court. He sent embassies to China and the maritime trade flourished during his reign.



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Paramesvaravarman II (728-731 AD) :

Narasimhavarman II was succeeded by his son Paramesvaravarman II. The Pallava kingdom again had to face defeat and humiliation during his reign. The Chalukya, Vikramaditya II attacked Kanchipuram and the Pallava king had to buy peace at a heavy price. However, he was killed in a war with the Ganga king, an ally of the Chalukyas.

Nandivarman II (731 – 795 AD) :

Paramesvaravarman II died without any heir to the throne. After the death of Paramesvaravarman II the Simhavishnu line of Pallava kings came to an end. A mild war of succession was started in between the various branches of Pallavas. But the samantas and the

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learned people of the Ghatika of Kanchi selected Nandivarman Pallavamalla, who belonged to a collateral branch of the Pallavas, as the king. There was a renewal of conflict between the Pallavas and Chalukyas. Vikramaditya II invaded the Pallava kingdom, defeated Nandivarman and captured Kanchi. The Chalukyan king, the Vikramaditya II, after scoring victory over the Pallava king, entered Kanchi – the city of Temples. He was wonderstruck by seeing the architectural grandeur of the Kailsanatha temple, the gem of the Dravidian style of Architecture. Nandivarman was a worshipper of Vishnu and a great patron of learning. During his reign, several old temples were renovated and new ones like the Vaikuntaperumal temple at Kanchi were constructed. The celebrated Vaishnava saint Tirumangai Alvar was his contemporary.

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End of Pallavas rule

Vikramaditya II 's attack and the temporary occupation of Kanchi may be regarded as the beginning of the end of the Pallava supremacy over South India. The Pandyas, the western Gangas and the Rashtrakutas attacked the Pallava kingdom. Dantidurga, the founder of the Rashtrakuta Kingdom, defeated Nandivarman, but the latter offered his daughter Reva in marriage to former and saved temporarily the collapse of the Pallava Kingdom.

The Pallava rule lasted till the end of the 9th Century AD. Dantivarman (795 – 846 AD), Nandivarman III (846 – 869 AD), Nripatunga (869 – 899 CE) were the other rulers.

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Aparajitavarman (903 AD), was the last Pallava king. The Chola king Aditya I defeated the Aparjitavarman and seized the Kanchi region. With this, the Pallava domination over South India came to an end.

(To be continued)

