



CHALUKYAS & RASHTRAKUTAS

Class 11th Tamil Nadu Book

Chapter 12

LESSON 12

SOUTH INDIAN KINGDOMS – II

CHALUKYAS AND RASHTRAKUTAS

Learning Objectives

Students will acquire knowledge about

- 1. The achievements of Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II.*
- 2. Administration, social life and art and architecture under the Chalukyas.*
- 3. Political history of the Rashtrakutas.*
- 4. Administration and society under the Rashtrakutas.*
- 5. Art and architecture of the Rashtrakutas.*

Besides the Pallavas, the Western Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan constitute important political forces. Both these kingdoms had their rivals in the far south, namely the Pallavas and later the Cholas. Their period has also been important in the history of India for their cultural contributions.

Chalukyas (543 – 755 A.D.)

The Western Chalukyas ruled over an extensive area in the Deccan for about two centuries after which the Rashtrakutas became powerful. The family of Western Chalukyas had its offshoots like the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and the Chalukyas of Kalyani. Pulakesin I was the founder of the Chalukya dynasty. He established a small kingdom with Vatapi or Badami as its capital.

Pulakesin II (608-642 A.D.)

The most important ruler of this dynasty was Pulakesin II. The Aihole inscription issued by him gives the details of his reign.

He fought with the Kadambas of Banavasi and the Gangas of Mysore and established his suzerainty. Durvinita, the Ganga ruler accepted his overlordship and even gave his daughter in marriage to Pulakesin II. Another notable achievement of Pulakesin II was the defeat of Harshavardhana on the banks of the river Narmada. He put a check to the ambition of Harsha to conquer the south. In his first expedition against the Pallavas, Pulakesin II emerged victorious. But he suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Narasimhavarman I near Kanchi. Subsequently, the Chalukya capital Vatapi was captured and destroyed by the Pallavas. The most important event in the reign of Pulakesin II was the visit of Hiuen Tsang to his kingdom.

The successor of Pulakesin II was Vikramaditya. He once again consolidated the Chalukya kingdom and plundered the Pallava capital, Kanchi. Thus he had avenged his father's defeat and death at the hands of the Pallavas. Kirtivarman II was the last of the rulers of the Chalukyas. He was defeated by Dantidurga, the founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty.

Administration and Social Life under the Chalukyas

The Chalukya administration was highly centralized unlike that of the Pallavas and the Cholas. Village autonomy was absent under the Chalukyas. The Chalukyas had a great maritime power. Pulakesin II had 100 ships in his navy. They also had a small standing army.

The Badami Chalukyas were Brahmanical Hindus but they gave respect to other religions. Importance was given to Vedic rites and rituals. The founder of the dynasty Pulakesin I performed the *asvamedha* sacrifice. A number of temples in honour of Vishnu, Siva and other gods were also built during this period. Hiuen Tsang mentioned about the decline of Buddhism in western Deccan. But Jainism was steadily on the path of progress in this region. Ravikirti, the court poet of Pulakesin II who composed the Aihole inscription was a Jain.

Art and Architecture

The Chalukyas were great patrons of art. They developed the *vesara* style in the building of structural temples. However, the *vesara* style reached its culmination only under the Rashtrakutas and the Hoysalas. The structural temples of the Chalukyas exist at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal. Cave temple architecture was also famous under the Chalukyas. Their cave temples are found in Ajanta, Ellora and Nasik. The best specimens of Chalukya paintings can be seen in the Badami cave temple and in the Ajanta caves. The reception given to a Persian embassy by Pulakesin II is depicted in a painting at Ajantha.



CAVE TEMPLE AT AJANTA

The Chalukya temples may be divided into two stages. The first stage is represented by the temples at Aihole and Badami. Among the seventy temples found at Aihole, four are important.

1. Ladh Khan temple is a low, flat-roofed structure consisting of a pillared hall.
2. Durga temple resembles a Buddha *Chaitya*.
3. Huchimalligudi temple.
4. The Jain temple at Meguti.



Cave Temple at Badami

Among the temples at Badami, the Muktheeswara temple and the Melagutti Sivalaya are notable for their architectural beauty. A group of four rock-cut temples at Badami are marked by high workmanship. The walls and pillared halls are adorned by beautiful images of gods and human beings.



Virupaksha temple at
Pattadakal

The second stage is represented by the temples at Pattadakal. There are ten temples here, four in the northern style and the remaining six in the Dravidian style. The Papanatha temple is the most notable in the northern style. The Sangamesvara temple and the Virupaksha temple are famous for their Dravidian style. The Virupaksha temple is built on the model of the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram. It was built by one of the queens of Vikramaditya II. Sculptors brought from Kanchi were employed in its construction.

Rashtrakutas (755 – 975 A.D.)

The Rashtrakutas were of Kannada origin and Kannada language was their mother tongue. Dantidurga was the founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. He defeated the Gurjaras and captured Malwa from them. Then he annexed the Chalukya kingdom by defeating Kirtivarman II. Thus, the Rashtrakutas became a paramount power in the Deccan.

His successor Krishna I was also a great conqueror. He defeated the Gangas and the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. He built the magnificent rock-cut monolithic Kailasa temple at Ellora. The next important king of this dynasty was Govinda III. He achieved victories over north Indian kingdoms.

His successor Amoghavarsha I (815- 880 A.D.) ruled for a long period of 64 years. He had lost control over Malwa and Gangavadi. Yet, his reign was popular for the cultural development. He was a follower of Jainism. Jinasena was his chief preceptor. He was also a patron of letters and he himself wrote the famous Kannada work, *Kavirajamarga*. He had also built the Rashtrakuta capital, the city of Malkhed or Manyakheda.

Among the successors of Amoghavarsha I, Krishna III (936-968 A.D.) was famous for his expeditions. He marched against the Cholas and defeated them at Takkolam. He marched further south and captured Tanjore. He went as far as Rameswaram and occupied it for sometime. He built several temples in the conquered territories including the Krishneswara temple at Rameswaram. Throughout his reign he possessed the Tondaimandalam region including the capital Kanchi. After his death, the power of the Rashtrakutas declined.

Administration

The Rashtrakuta Empire was divided into several provinces called *rashtras* under the control of *rashtrapatis*. They were further divided into *vishayas* or districts governed by *vishayapatis*. The next subdivision was *bhukti* consisting of 50 to 70 villages under the control of *bhogapatis*. These officers were directly appointed by the central government. The village administration was carried on by the village headmen. However, the village assemblies played a significant role in the village administration.

Society and Economy

The Hindu sects of Vaishnavism and Saivism flourished during the period of Rashtrakutas. Yet, they did not affect the progress of Jainism under the patronage of Rashtrakuta kings and officers. Almost one third of the population of the Deccan were Jains. There were some prosperous Buddhist settlements at places like Kanheri, Sholapur and Dharwar. There was harmony among various religions. There was a college at Salatogi, situated in modern Bijapur district. An inscription gives details of this educational centre. It was run by the income from the endowments made by the rich as well as by all the villagers on occasions of functions and festivals.

The economy was also in a flourishing condition. There was an active commerce between the Deccan and the Arabs. The Rashtrakuta kings promoted the Arab trade by maintaining friendship with them.

Cultural Contributions

The Rashtrakutas widely patronized the Sanskrit literature. There were many scholars in the Rashtrakuta court. Trivikrama wrote *Nalachampu* and the *Kavirahasya* was composed by Halayudha during the reign of Krishna III. The Jain literature flourished under the patronage of the Rashtrakutas. Amogavarsha I, who was a Jain patronized many Jain scholars. His teacher Jinasena composed *Parsvabhudaya*, a biography of Parsva in verses. Another scholar Gunabhadra wrote the *Adipurana*, the life stories of various Jain saints. Sakatayana wrote the grammar work called *Amogavritti*. The great mathematician of this period, Viracharya was the author of *Ganitasaram*.

The Kannada literature saw its beginning during the period of the Rashtrakutas. Amogavarsha's *Kavirajamarga* was the first poetic work in Kannada language. Pampa was the greatest of the Kannada poets. His famous work was *Vikramasenavijaya*. Ponna was another famous Kannada poet and he wrote *Santipurana*.

Art and Architecture

The art and architecture of the Rashtrakutas were found at Ellora and Elephanta. At Ellora, the most remarkable temple is the Kailasa temple. It was excavated during the reign of Krishna I. It is carved out of a massive block of rock 200 feet long, and 100 feet in breadth and height. The temple consists



**KAILASA TEMPLE
ATELLORA**

of four parts - the main shrine, the entrance gateway, an intermediate shrine for Nandi and mandapa surrounding the courtyard. The temple stands on a lofty plinth 25 feet high. The central face of the plinth has

imposing figures of elephants and lions giving the impression that the entire structure rests on their back. It has a three-tiered *sikhara* or tower resembling the *sikhara* of the Mamallapuram *rathas*. In the interior of the temple there is a pillared hall which has sixteen square pillars. The Kailasa temple is an architectural marvel with its beautiful sculptures. The sculpture of the Goddess Durga is shown as slaying the Buffalo demon. In another sculpture Ravana was making attempts to lift Mount Kailasa, the abode of Siva. The scenes of Ramayana were also depicted on the walls. The general characteristics of the Kailasa temple are more Dravidian.

Elephanta is an island near Bombay. It was originally called Sripuri. The Portuguese after seeing the large figure of an elephant named it Elephanta. The sculptural art of the Rashtrakutas reached its zenith in this place. There is a close similarity between the sculptures at Ellora and those in Elephanta. They might have been carved by the same craftsmen. At the entrance to the sanctum there are huge figures of *dvara-palakas*. In the walls of the prakara around the sanctum there are niches containing the images of Shiva in various forms - Nataraja, Gangadhara, Ardhanareesvara and Somaskanda. The most imposing figure of this temple is *Trimurthi*. The sculpture is six metre high. It is said to represent the three aspects of Shiva as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer.

Learning Outcome

After learning this lesson the students will be able to explain

1. The political history of the Chalukyas of Badami.
2. Art and architecture of the Chalukyas.
3. Achievements of the Rashtrakuta rulers.
4. Cultural contributions of the Rashtrakutas.
5. Literary developments during the Rashtrakuta rule.

MODEL QUESTIONS

I. Choose the correct answer.

1. Aihole inscription was issued by
 (a) Amoghavarsha I (b) Pulakesin II
 (c) Govinda III (d) Dantidurga
2. Who among the following defeated the Cholas at Takkolam?
 (a) Pulakesin II (b) Amoghavarsha I
 (c) Vikramaditya I (d) Krishna III

II. Fill in the blanks.

1. was the capital of Rashtrakutas.
2. The founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty was
3. Sripuri was renamed as Elephanta by

III. Match the following.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ravikirti | a) Vikramasenavijaya |
| 2. Amoghavarsha I | b) Ganitasaram |
| 3. Pampa | c) Aihole inscription |
| 4. Viracharya | d) Kavirajamarga |

IV. Find out the correct statement. One statement alone is right.

- a) Ellora is an island near Bombay.
- b) The Kailasa temple is at Ellora.
- c) The temples at Ellora were built during the Chalukya rule.
- d) The Kailasa temple at Ellora was built by Pulakesin II.