

## Chalukyas of Vatapi

### ***Introduction:***

Chalukyas of Badami were the successors of the Vakatakas in western Deccan. They established their capital at Vatapi, modern Badami in the Bijapur district, which forms a part of Karnataka. They ruled over an extensive area in the Deccan for about two centuries from 543 to 753 CE and united whole of south India. Later they branched off into several independent ruling houses, but the main branch continued to rule at Vatapi. Their period has also been important in the history of India for their cultural contribution.

### ***Origin :***

The origin of the name, Chalukyas is not yet clear and is a subject of controversy. The inscriptions do not throw light on it. The literary works are full of legends about their origin. According to Bilhana, the author of Vikramankacharita, the original home of the Chalukyas was Ayodhya. The late Chalukyan inscriptions also lay claim to Ayodhya as their ancestral home. But all this seems to have been done to claim legitimacy and respectability. Some others thought that the Chalukyas were a local Kanarese people who improvised into the ruling Varna under Brahmanical influence. This opinion seems to be more probable, though there is no evidence for this also.

### ***Political History :***

**Pulakesin I** (543 – 566 CE) was the real founder of the Chalukyan kingdom. He was the son of Ranaraga and grandson of Jayasimha. The name Pulakesi probably means 'The Great Lion'. He built a strong fortress at Vapati (Modern Badami) in Bijapur district of Karnataka and declared independence by performing a horse sacrifice. He assumed the titles Satyasraya (the asylum of truth) and Ranavikrama (the valorous in war).

**Kirtivarman I** (566 – 597 CE) the son of Pulakesin I enlarged the ancestral kingdom by waging wars against the Kadambas of Banavasi, the Nalas of Bastar and Mauryas of Konkan. As a result of his conquests a large part of Maharashtra came under his rule. The conquest of Konkan brought the important port of Goa, then known as Revatidvipa, into the growing empire.

**Mangalesa** (597 – 609 CE) : At the death of Kirtivarman, his son Pulakesin II was too young to rule, so his uncle Mangalesa, Kirtivarman's brother held sway as regent. Mangalesa continued the policy of expansion and invaded the territory of Kalachuri king Buddharaja whose dominion extended over Gujarat, Kandesh, and Malwa. He suppressed a rebellion on the part of the governor of Revatidvipa and re-established Chalukyan power in the Konkan. When Pulakesin came of age, Mangalesa did not hand over the kingdom to his nephew but wanted to grab it permanently. Thereupon, Pulakesin II gathered the army, defeated and killed his uncle Mangalesa in the battle and proclaimed himself king in 609 CE.

### ***Pulakesin II (609 – 642 CE) :***

- Pulakesin II was the greatest king of the Chalukya of Badami. His accession to the

throne in the year 609 CE, marks the beginning of an important epoch in the history of Deccan. The Chalukyas who remained until then as a local power, confined to Karnataka and Southern Maharashtra, spread over the whole of the Deccan and became paramount sovereigns of the entire peninsula to the South of the Vindhyas.

- His Aihole inscription, composed by Ravikiriti, narrates his victorious campaigns and of his great qualities. These included victories against the Kadambas of Banavasi, Alupas and Gangas of Mysore. Dhurvinita the Ganga ruler accepted his overlordship and even gave his daughter in marriage to Pulakesin II, and she became the mother of Vikramaditya I. The Mauryas of Northern Konkan for once more reduced to submission by successful attack on their capital Sripuri (on the Island of Elephanta).

- The Latas, Malwas and Gurjaras also offered their submission to him because of their fear of Harshavardhana of Kanauj. After this Pulakesin II defeated the rulers of Kosala, Vishnukundins, Kalinga, Pistapura and the Banas of Rayalaseema. As the Chalukyan empire became too vast to be governed from Badami, Pulakesin made his brother Vishnuvardhana Viceroy in 624 and allowed him to rule the Vengi empire independently.

- His greatest achievement was his victory over Harsha on the banks of river Narmada in 630 CE. Thus the river Narmada became a border line between the two empires. This fact has been recorded in the Aihole Prasasti and also in the writings of Hieun Tsang. The present day Maharashtra, West coast, East coast of Andhra and Gujarat were included in his empire.

- Pulakesin's first expedition against the Pallava kingdom, which was then ruled by Mahendra Varman I was a complete success and he annexed the northern part of the Pallava kingdom. He again invaded the Pallavas, but the Pallavas now under Narasimhavarman I, defeated and killed Pulakesin II and captured Badami.

- Pulakesin II sent a complimentary embassy to the Persian king Khusrau II in 625-626 CE. The reception given to the Persian mission is, in fact, depicted in one of the famous Ajanta cave paintings. The Chinese, Hiuen Tsang paid a visit to the Chalukya kingdom and was highly impressed by the power and efficiency of the administration of Pulakesin II. Hiuen Tsang's description is quite useful in knowing the social and economic conditions of the Chalukyas of Badami.

### ***Vikramaditya I (644 - 681 CE) :***

There was a temporary decline in the fortunes of the Chalukyas after Pulakesin II. However, Vikramaditya I was able to re-establish the glory by driving out the Pallava forces after 12 years. In 668 CE he advanced against Kanchi and defeated the Pallava Mahendrarvarman II, who later died. Thus, Vikramaditya I avenged his father's defeat and death at the hands of the Pallavas. He is also said to humble the power of the Cholas, Pandyas and the Keralas. Pallava king Parameshvaravarman defeated Vikramaditya I in 674 CE at Peruvalanallur.

### ***Vinayaditya (681-693 CE) :***

Vinayaditya succeeded his father Vikramaditya I in 681 CE. He won many wars including his war against king Yashovarman of Kanauj. He was succeeded by his son

Vijayaditya (693-733 CE). He was also a good warrior like his father and defeated his arch rival, the Pallava king, Parameswara. Vijayaditya was succeeded by his son Vikramaditya II (733- 744 CE). He waged several wars including the Arabs in Gujarat and he defeated the Pallava king Nandivarman II, Cholas, Pandyas and Kalabras and erected a victory pillar on the shores of south sea.

***Kirtivarman II (744 – 753 CE) :***

Kirtivarman II was the last representative of this dynasty. The Pallava – Chalukya conflict literally reduced the economic stability of the kingdom. This in turn gave a blow to the political unity of the kingdom. The subordinates started asserting their power and hence the central authority was reduced. The Rashtrakutas, the most powerful feudatories, took the advantage and dethroned the Chalukyas from power. Kirtivarman was defeated by Dantidurga, the founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Thus the Chalukyan empire passed on into the Rashtrakutas.

***Contribution to Indian Culture:***

***Administration:***

The central government under the Chalukyas of Badami exercised a Paternalistic control over the village administration, which was unlike the administrative practice of South India. Thus the main difference between the Chalukyan administration and that of South Indian rulers like Pallavas and Cholas was that the South Indian rulers allowed a great amount of autonomy to the village administration. Village autonomy was absent under the Chalukyas.

The rule of the Chalukyas of Badami was confined to north-western part of the Deccan plateau. This may be styled as ‘Plateau kingdom’. In the plateau kingdoms the water level is at the lowest and also not possible for the excavation of canals and tanks. The state income from land seems to have been very limited, since most of the land was rocky and not fertile. The earnings from the trading activities also were not considerable, since trade and commerce in India during this period was a general decline. Hence the Chalukyas resorted to frequent invasions and plunder of the neighbouring territories. The mutually destructive Chalukya-Pallava conflict can be properly understood only in this background.

The Chalukyas of Badami are said to have been a great maritime power. Pulakesin II had 100 ships in his army. The army of the Chalukyas consisted of a small standing army, but mainly of feudal levies. Army officers seem to have been used in civil administration whenever an emergency arose.

***Religion :***

The contribution of the Chalukyas of Badami in the field of religion, art and architecture is of immense value. The period was an era of the revival of Hindu culture and spirituality. The Vaishnavism, Saivism, *Shakta* cults and Jainism had received generous encouragement both from the kings, queens and the subjects. Importance was too given to Vedic rights and

rituals. Pulakesin I, the founder of the dynasty, performed Asvamedha sacrifice. Quite a few Brahmanical treatises were also composed during this period. It was the popularity of Brahmanism and Puranic religion that gave momentum to the building of temples in honour of Vishnu, Shiva and other gods.

Temples were built in large numbers at Badami, Mahakuta, Pattadakal, Aihole, Alampur and at other places and rock-cut caves were excavated at Badami, Aihole and at other places during this regime. Vikramaditya brought some sculptors from Kanchipuram for constructing temples in his empire.. The temples at Badami include the Melagitti Shivalaya and a group of four rock-cut halls. Aihole is a town of temples and contains around 70 structures. Though they were the staunch followers of Hinduism, they showed admirable spirit of tolerance towards the other religions. Hiuen Tsang mentioned the decline of the Buddhism in western Deccan. But Jainism was steadily on the path of progress. Ravikirti, the court poet of Pulakesin II, who composed the Aihole inscription, was Jain. Similarly Vijayaditya and Vikramaditya gave liberal donations to Jains.

### **Art and Architecture:**

The Chalukyas were the great patrons of Art and Architecture. The early Chalukyas of Badami were responsible for the introduction of a new style of Architecture known “the Chalukyan Style” or the “Vesara” style in the annals of Deccan architecture. Monuments built under this style represent a harmonious combination of Nagara (north Indian) and Dravida (south India) style of architecture.

The Chalukyan monuments represent two phases. Cave temples represent the first phase. Their cave temples are found in Ajanta, Ellora and Nasik. They are monolithic and excavated in slopy hills. They are in Brahmanical dedication and Buddhist in style and technique.

The structural temples built by the Chalukyan kings and their subordinates represent the second phase. The Chalukyan temples in the beginning had flat or slightly inclined roof tops. In the later phases tower like structure (Vimana) has appeared. Pillared Mantapa was added to the four walled Garbhagriha. This is an important development not to be found in Gupta temple architecture. The Durga temple at Aihole is in horse-shoe shaped platform which was an imitation of Buddhist Chaitya. The Virupaksha temple is built on the model of the Kailasanatha temple Kanchi. The sculptors brought from Kanchi were employed in its construction.

The sculptures representing various aspects of Siva and Vishnu in the Chalukyan temples exhibit highest degree of perfection in the art of carving. Here also one can discern the interaction of Nagara and Dravida art traditions.

The Chalukyan kings not only took interest in building temples but also took sufficient interest in extending patronage for the promotion of art of painting. This is very well supported by some of the paintings found in Cave number 1 at Ajanta. The two panels of paintings, one painted on the ceiling and the other on the wall, represent the Persian emperor Khusrau and his queen Shirin and Pulakesin II receiving the return embassy from Persia.

Thus, the Chalukyas of Badami played an important role in the political history of Deccan for nearly two centuries. Their cultural contributions particularly in the fields of polity, religion, art, architecture, painting etc. were sumptuous and substantial.