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## An eye view on enormous monarch of Kanchi Pallavas

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### Abstract

Kanchipuram was capital of the Pallava kingdom, the Pallavas who left behind magnificent sculptures and temples, established the foundations of medieval South Indian architecture. The sources for the history of the Pallavas may be classified as native and foreign sources. The literary sources for the study of Pallavas include both Tamil and Sanskrit literature. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta mentions about the Pallava king Vishnu Gopa. The Aihole Inscription of the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II gives details about the Pallava Chalukya conflict. The Kenthoor Stone Carving of Keethivarman also belonged to the Pallava period, apart from these popular inscriptions, there exist hundreds of Pallava inscriptions throughout South India. They depict the military achievements of the Pallava kings. These inscriptions also explain the social and economic conditions of the Pallava period. The copper plates of the Pallava period remain useful historical sources. The coins of the Pallava period remain important sources to study the economic conditions of this period.

**Keywords:** pallava and kanchi

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### Introduction

Pallava dynasty, was an Indian dynasty that existed from 275 A.D. to 897 A.D., and their line of rulers in southern India whose members originated as indigenous subordinates of the Satavahanas, as Mahrathis' and Mahasenapatis' in the Deccan, moved towards Andhra, and then to Kanchipuram (then Kanchi a glorious city), in Tamil Nadu state, India, where they became rulers. The Pallavas were the emperors of the Dravidian country and rapidly adopted Tamil ways. Their rule was marked by foreigner travellers and pilgrims and a limited amount of settlement in Southern Asia, but they inherited rather than initiated Tamil interference with Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Their genealogy and chronology are highly disputed, the first group of Pallavas was mentioned in Prakrit records, which tell of King Vishnugopa, who was defeated and then liberated by Samudra Gupta, the emperor of Magadha, about the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, a Pallava king, Simvisnu, is mentioned in the Sanskrit Lokavibhaga as reigning from 575 A.D.

During the rule of Mahendravarman I (571-630 A.D.), and Narsimhavarman I (630-668 CE), Pallava emerged as the major power and dominated the Southern parts of Andhra Region and northern parts of the Tamil region for about 600 years until the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, so they were also known as later Pallava or Imperial Pallava. Throughout their reign they were in constant conflict with both Chalukyas of Badami in the north and the Tamil kingdoms of Cholas and Pandyas in the south. Pallavas are most noted for their patronage of architecture, the finest example being the Shore Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Mammallapuram under the Mahendravarman I. Some of the most ornate monuments at Mamallapuram, especially those dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, were constructed under his rule, he was also a great patron of art and architecture and is known for introducing a new style to Dravidian architecture, which the noted art historian Jouveau Debreuil referred to as "Mahendra style." Mahendravarman also wrote plays, including *Mattavilasa-prahasana*. Kanchipuram was capital of the Pallava kingdom, the Pallavas who left behind magnificent sculptures and temples, established the foundations of medieval South Indian architecture. Chinese traveller Xuanzang visited Kanchipuram (Kanchi) during Pallava rule and praised the city in his texts.

### Sources for the study of Pallavas

The sources for the history of the Pallavas may be classified as native and foreign sources. The native sources may further be classified as literary and archaeological sources. The literary sources for the study of Pallavas include both Tamil and Sanskrit literature. They provide a lot of information about the Pallavas. In Tamil literatures it consisted of the songs composed by Azhalvars and Nayanmars. They had lived during the Pallava period. The compositions of Azhalvars are known as Nalayira Divya Prabhandam. The songs of Nayanmars are compiled into Panniru Thirumurais. These works describe the social and religious life of the people during the Pallava rule. The Periyapuram written by Sekizhar is also another important literary source for this period. In Sanskrit literature sources, the work Avani Sundari Katha written by Dandin and the Loga Vibagam written by Sarva Nandi provide a lot of information about the importance of Simhavishnu and his rule, The famous Pallava monarch Mahendravarman I he wrote the Mathavilasa Prakasanam in Sanskrit language. It provides information regarding the social and religious condition during the Pallava period. Instead of literary sources we do have

some materialistic sources with the help of Archaeology. Here we got Copper plates, inscriptions, monuments and coins remain the important archaeological sources for the study of the Pallavas. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta mentions about the Pallava king Vishnu Gopa. The Aihole Inscription of the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II gives details about the Pallava Chalukya conflict. The Kenthoor Stone Carving of Keethivarman also belonged to the Pallava period, apart from these popular inscriptions, there exist hundreds of Pallava inscriptions throughout South India. They depict the military achievements of the Pallava kings. These inscriptions also explain the social and economic conditions of the Pallava period. The copper plates of the Pallava period remain useful historical sources. The Kuram Copper Plates issued by Parameshwaravarman and the Velurpalayam copper plates of Nandivarman III record their military achievements. The temples, sculptures and other monuments of the Pallava period also provide valuable historical information. The coins of the Pallava period remain important sources to study the economic conditions of this period.

These all were the indigenous sources, but foreign travellers and pilgrims as mentioned about Indian kings and their reign. So, the foreign sources for the Pallava period include the Sri Lankan books, namely, Deepavamsa and Mahavamsa. These books are written in Pali language and they describe about the relationship between the Pallava kings Narasimhavarman I and the Sri Lankan king Manavarman. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang had visited the Pallava kingdom and his travel accounts are known as Siyuki. He had given a detailed account of the capital city of the Pallavas, Kanchipuram, he also mentioned about the huge Buddhist Viharas in Kanchi and described the social and economic conditions of the Pallava kingdom. The Ikshvaku dynasty or majorly known as Solar dynasty or Suryavamsa of the Krishna in Guntur region were overthrown by the Pallavas. The term Pallava means creeper, and is a Sanskrit version of the Tamil word tondai, which also carries the same meaning. The Pallavas were possibly a local tribe who established their authority in the Tondainadu or the land of creepers, but some says that the Pallavas could be the ancestors of Greeks, the Parthians. Parthians were also denoted as Palhavas, which is very similar to Pallavas. Another description shows that Pallavas possibly the governors of Satavahanas. Kanchi was never ruled by the Satavahanas during the emerge of Early Pallavas, but ruled by the Basaro-Naga. Here, it is not clear that, how Pallavas emerged to city of Kanchi. Because during the Ptolemy period around 80 AD, Kanchi was not a prominent city and sources shows it also ruled by the Pandias, so it is possible that Nagas' served under Pandias. Due to lack of clearance with this foreign sources we stuck to indigenous sources.

The earliest records of the Pallava inscriptions are in Prakrit language, later inscriptions followed in Sanskrit and subsequently in both Sanskrit and Tamil. The Prakrit inscriptions were made when the Pallavas were still a local dynasty ruling at Kanchipuram (200-575 A.D.). The latter inscriptions had carried by what historians have called the Imperial Pallavas (570-800 A.D.) when the dynasty controlled Tamilnadu and became the first Tamil dynasty of real consequence. The Pallava Dynasty was one of the South Indian ruling dynasties which gained prominence after the eclipse of the Satavahanas dynasty, whom the Pallavas served as feudatories, they were great patronage of architecture, the finest example is the Shore Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Mahabalipuram. They developed the Pallava script from which Grantha ultimately descended that gave rise to several other Southeast Asian scripts.

### **Early Pallavas: Their Origin and Entity**

The scholars are generally of opinion that the Pallavas were not indigenous to the Kanchi region. Thus Prof. S. K. Aiyanger says, "The Pallavas seem nevertheless have been foreigner to the locality as far as evidence takes us at present". But a question emerged is: When did the Pallavas attain political supremacy in the kanchi region? As we know in the middle of the second century A.D., when Ptolemy is known to written his Geography, the Kachi region was being ruled by the Nagas. Therefore the Pallavas could not have rules as a recognised political power in the same locality before the middle of the second century of the Christian Era. Early Pallavas have risen to prominence certainly before the middle of the fourth century A.D. which was contemporary to Samudragupta's Allahabad Pillar inscription. And this inscription recorded and mentions a name Kancheyaka Visnugopa with the Gupta king in 330-375 CE, here Gupta king came in conflict during his South Indian campaign. This Visnugopa, ruler of Kanchi has been unanimously taken to have belonged to the Pallava family. And also at the same time period, the grants name Mayidavolu and Hirahadagalli grants assigned by the Pallava ruler name Sivaskandavarman, and the British Museum grant dated in the reign of a Pallava king name Vijaya Skandavarman. All these grants are written in Prakrit and are unanimously taken to be the earliest available epigraphic records of the Pallavas. Hence, Pallavas emerged in the first half of the fourth century A.D. The Pallavas therefore seem to have attained political supremacy in the Kanchi region after the middle of the second but before the beginning of the fourth century of the Christian Era. Then, question comes: Who were the Pallavas and how they became a Political element and how they overthrown Nagas from Kanchi?

The evidences of posts of governors or Maharathi or Mahasenapati, were given to the failies of Guptas and the Nagas. A Nashik inscription mentions an officer named Siva-Gupta, and the Karle inscriptions refer to Gupta and Sivaskanda-Gupta. One evidence shows that Naga chief named Skanda-naga was ruling Bellary District, Karnataka during the reign of Pulumavi, who possibly the last Satavahana king of the main line. So, it is a possibility that Pallavas originally were executive officers under the Satavahana Kings, like the Guptas and Nagas were given. It is certainly possible they were given charge of the government of districts with titles like Maharathi and Mahasenapati, which literally means Governor.

The Pallavas were also compared with the foreign rulers Parthian, because in Indian context they were mentioned as Palhavas. The Palhavas known from the inscriptions and coins to have been ruling in North-Western India in the beginning of the Christian Era. In the time of the Periplus, "Parthian princes who were constantly driving each other out, were occupying the valley of the Indus, so this people possibly pushed a little down to the south when they came in conflict with the Satavahana King Gautamiputra Satakarni, who was famous for the defeat of Saka, Yavana and Palhava. Junagarh inscription of Rudradamana we got a name of Palhava governor named Suvisakha, son of Kulaipa. And Kulaipa was ruling the district of Anarta and Saurashtra under that great Saka king. If, as it appears, the region of the Pallavas is not far from the Satavahana kingdom. If the Palhavas really clashed with the Satavahanas at the time of Gautamiputra Satakarni, what happened if the Palhavas took offices in the government of the Satavahanas and if, the Satavahana government accepted the services of individuals from neighboring tribes, then anything in this suggestion It is not impossible. That, the Palhavas were employed by the Satavahana kings and eventually formed a princely state after the fall of the later Satavahanas to the south of the kingdom. Genealogy of Early Pallava Kings.

Verse sixth of the Velurpalaiyam inscription says that Virakurcha, son Cuta-Pallava obtained the insignia of royalty along with the hand of a Naga princess. We know that Nagas were the rulers of the Kanchi, before the rise of the Pallavas in that locality, it is therefore possible that Virakurcha married the heiress of the last Naga king, and thus he became the first Pallava king of the Kanchi and around districts. Some very late inscriptions of about the 11<sup>th</sup> century mentions a king name Trilochana as the earliest ancestor of the Pallavas. He is also called Trinetra, Trinayana, Mukkanti-Pallva, etc. which is similar to a mythical deity Shiva, and considered as the founder of Telugu-Pallva. Later it was known the name Trilochana has been progenitor of the Kadambas in some Kadamba inscriptions at contemporary time. All the early Pallava records deny the possibility of the existence of any such early king name Trilochana-Pallava. The name Trilochana seems to have passed from the Kadamba inscriptions of the west to the Pallava inscriptions of the east. Second is name of the father of Virakurcha who was possibly the first king of the family was Cuta-Pallava. And successor of the Virakurcha was Skandasisya, who came in conflict with a king named Satyasena, which is denoted in verse seven of the Velurpalaiyam. It was Satyasena in any way connected with the Palakkaka Ugrasena of the Allahabad pillar inscription, who possibly ruled sometimes a seat of Pallava government at Palakkada, in the Nellore region. Another successor of Virakurcha was Kumaravisnu, denoted in verse eighth, who is credited with the seizure of Kanchi.

### Political History

Amongst the latter groups of Pallava rulers, Simha Vishnu's (575-600 A.D.) career was long and eventful. He waged war against the Cholas, the Pandyas and their allies. He put an end to the Kalabhra interregnum in Tondaimandalam (Kanchi region) and extended his kingdom southward up to the Kaveri delta. He was also known as Avanisimha. A sculptural representation of this war-like king, attended by his two queens is found in bas-relief in the northern niche of a cave temple, known as the Adivaraha Mandapa at Mahabalipuram. His son and successor, Mahendravarman II (600-630A.D.) was the most remarkable of the Pallavas monarch. An ardent Jain in his earlier life, he was later persuaded by one Appar, a Saiva saint, to worship Siva. He was contemporary of Harshavardhana and was also a dramatist, musician and poet of same standing. He was the author of a play, *Mattaritasana-Prahasana* (The Delight of the Drunkards) and was also associated with the so-called 'musical inscription' at Pudukkottai. His various *birudas* such as *Mattavilasas*, *Gunabhara*, *Vichitra-chitta*, *Lattankura* and the like, seem to allude to those accomplishments. He introduced the cave style of architecture. Mahendravarman-I suffered severe defeats at the hands of Chalukya Pulakesin - II. The territory of Vengi was lost to Pulakesin who sent his brother, Vishnuvardhana, there to start the line of the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. Narasimhavarman I, surnamed Mahamalla (630 -668 A.D.), the son and successor of Mahendravarman I am considered the greatest of the Pallava rulers. He is credited with repelling the second invasion of Pulakesin II, killing him and capturing the Chalukyan capital Vatapi and won thereby the title of *Vatapikonda* (conqueror of Vatapi). It was possibly in his struggle with Pulakesin II that he received aid from the Simhalese Prince Mana-Vamma whom he afterwards assisted in securing the crown of Ceylon. Hiuen Tsang visited Kanchi about the year 642 A.D. during the reign of Narasimhavarman I. He was an ardent lover of art and consecrated cave-temples at different places such as Trichinopoly and Pudukkottai. His name is, however, best known in connection with the so-called Rathas of Mahabalipuram. The original name of the place, Mahamallapura commemorates its royal founder, Mahamalla, i.e., Narasimhavarman I. Mahendravarman II (668 - 670 A. D.) ruled for a very short period, since he was killed by Vikramaditya I the Chalukya king. The Pallava power began to dwindle during the reign of Narasimhavarman's grandson Parameshwaravarman I (670-695A.D.) He lost his capital (Kanchi) to the Chalukya prince Vikramaditya I, but seems to have recovered it soon. The reign of his son and successor Narasimhavarman II (700 - 720 A.D.) is marked by peace and prosperity. He is also known as Rajasimha. Besides the well-known Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi, he built the Shore temple at Mahamallapura. He is also said to have sent embassies to China, and maritime trade flourished during his reign. Parameshwaravarman II (728-731 A.D.), the next king faced the combined attack of Chalukyas and the Gangas in which he was killed. As there being no direct heir to the throne, the council of ministers appointed a member of the collateral branch of the family (descendent of Bhimavarman, a younger brother of Simhavishnu) who reigned as Nandivarman II (731-795A.D.) The Chalukya king, Vikramaditya II again invaded and captured the Pallava capital during his reign but withdrew from Kanchi without destroying it. His co structured the Vaikuntaperumal temple at Kanchi. Somehow, the Pallava's rule continued upto the ninth century A.D. However

their authority during the ninth century was no longer that of a major power. The last of the Pallavas, Aparajita was defeated by Aditya Chola I by the early tenth century A.D.

### **Religion Under Pallavas**

We have studied that during the post-Sangam period, Buddhism and Jainism began to spread into the Tamil country. They became popular during the Kalabhra rule. After the establishment of the Pallava rule, both Saivism and Vaishnavism had been revived. The Pallava kings had patronized both these religions. They had built temples and made land grants to them. Hence both these religions flourished during the Pallava period. The spread of the Bakti Movement had provided further stimulus to them.

### **Bakthi Movement**

The Bakthi Movement, which had spread in South India during Sixth and Seventh centuries A.D., made a tremendous impact in the social and cultural life of the people. The term, Bakti means Devotion to God. True Bakti was considered as more valuable than mere rites and rituals. During the Pallava period Alvars and Nayanmars preached the cult of Bakti among the people. There was no caste disparity in the Bakti Movement. Even those who belonged to low-caste had also become Bakti Saints. For example, Nandhanaar, Kaalathi Nayanar Thiruppaanazhalvar belonged to lower caste. Yet, they were treated and respected as saints. Therefore, all castes and communities had equally followed Bakti or devotion to god. There were two important aims for the Bakti Movement one was “to meet the challenges posed by Buddhism and Jainism” and second was “to spread Saivism and Vaishnavism”

### **Saivism**

The followers of Lord Siva were known as Saivaites. During the Pallava period, the Saiva saints, Nayanmars had preached Saivism. There were sixty-three Nayanmars. The most important among them were Thirunavukkarasar, Thirugnanasambandar, Sundarar, and Manickavasagar. The hymns composed by the first three were called Thevaram, Manickavasagar composed Thiruvagasam. His hymns were popular for devotional recitation. There were also women saints like Karaikkal Ammaiyar. The other important sects of Saivism were Kalamukhas and Pasupathas.

### **Vaishnavism**

The devotees of Lord Vishnu were called Vaishnavaites. Azhavars preached Vaishnavism during the Pallava period. There were twelve Azhavars. Those who lived in the Pallava kingdom were Poigai Azhavar, Pey Azhavar, Bhudhathazhavar and Thirumangai Azhavar. The first three had composed Nanmugan Thiruvanthathi. The other Azhavars like Nammazhavar, Periazhavar and Thirumangai Azhavar also contributed to the growth of Vaishnavism. The only woman among the twelve Azhavars was Andal. She had composed Thiruppavai and Nachiyar Thirumozhi. The hymns of Alvars have been compiled into Nalayira Divya Prabandam. Saivism and Vaishnavism had become popular among the people due to the spread of the Bakthi Movement. Azhavars and Nayanmars had composed their songs in Tamil and contributed to the growth of Tamil literature.

### **Literature**

Sanskrit was the official language of the Pallavas and Kanchi, the Pallava capital, was a great centre of Sanskrit learning. Both Bharavi and Dandin, the authors of Kiratarjuniyam and Dasakumarcharitam respectively, lived in the Pallava court. Dandin was also the author of the text “Avanti Sundari Kathasara”. Pallavas were orthodox Brahmanical Hindus and their patronage was responsible for the great reformation of the medieval ages. Most of the Pallava kings were devotees of Siva, the exceptions being Simhavishnu and Nandivarman who were worshippers of Vishnu.

### **Conclusion**

The Pallavas were the notable rulers of South India, they were also the part of a prominent forces, before the imperial power of Chera, Chola, Pandya. They were the contemporary to the more greater powers of the time. The search for a Pallavan inscriptions are running by the most of the scholars. The Pallavas no doubted ruled with valour, and defended their borders time to time. Also expeditions over neighbouring countries was not stopped. The Early imperial Pallavas conquered Ceylon, which means the navy was far better than our knowledge. Due to lack of chronological evidences, this history will be hidden on dark side, but the information we got from the famous historians and writer, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and Prof. S.K. Aiyenger. The works of Aiyenger was mainly referred by the historians for reading of Pallava History, but Sastri has no rival for his works over Cholas. Early Pallavas history is not in a Chronology, we only get their information through a poem, in which Mahavamsa and other Tamil poem which were patronage under Pallavas, and shows name related to the kings of Early Cholas, but no ways to prove it. Many of the later Pallavan History can be referred from the Cholas periods, as well as from Pandyas history. The Pandyas and Pallavas emerged as the allies in many battles, also Pallavas given vassals to many kings in Tamil Nadu. Their main ruling area was upper side of the Kaveri river, towards south of it Pandyas were the prominent rulers as contemporary to the many Pallava Kings. The Western Gangas were always a enemy of Pandyas and Cholas, which was ally of the AparajitaVarman. But both the pandyas and

Cholas enjoyed the power under Pallava. In case of Chola, the Vijayalaya Chola was a soldier in the Pallavan army, later he and his successor Aditya I emerged as the superpower in Tamil region. The remarkable events in Pallava dynasty were, the great love towards music, art, and architecture. Because every ruler had interest in music and poem. Every ruler of this lineage flourished and encouraged the art, music, architecture, Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu literature flourished during their reign. But their dynasty end in late 9<sup>th</sup> century, with the emergence of another superpower in Tamil region or Tondai-Nadu.

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