

# Impact of the Chalukyan Rule on the Subsequent History of Deccan

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## ABSTRACT

The reign of Chalukyas of Badami began a new era in the history of Karnataka as well as in the history of South India. They ruled for over two and a half centuries and they united the whole of South under an empire. A South Indian based kingdom took control and consolidated the entire region between Kaveri and the Narmada rivers. The rise of this empire saw the birth of efficient administration, overseas trade and commerce and the development of new style of architecture.

**KEYWORDS:** Chalukyas, Administration, Army, Guilds, Art and architecture

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## INTRODUCTION

The Chalukyas of Badami, who came to power in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. were in a way the trend setters in the history of Karnataka, nay in the history of Deccan. No doubt there were earlier ruling dynasties in this part of the country like the Sathavahanas and Kadambas in the Deccan and the Gangas in the Mysore Country. But they ruled their kingdoms according to the customs and traditions inherited from their neighbouring and to some extent, preceding ruling houses. Thus the Satavahanas who were the subordinates of the Mauryas, Sungas and Kanvas, carried on their administration and other state activities on the lines of the those north Indian institutions. The Kadambas inherited their statecraft and socio economic traditions through other intermediaries from the Satavahanas. The early Gangas on the other hand had imbibed the political, social and economic traditions that pervaded the society of the earlier times. Under these circumstances, there is very little to distinguish the contributions of these dynasties individually or together to the formation of the culture of Karnataka in particular and Deccan in general.

### Chalukyas of Badami

But we stand on a different footing when come to the time of the Chalukyas of Badami. The period of the Chalukyas of Badami may be considered as the formative period of Karnataka culture. The foundation of a number of administrative institutions, economic traditions, social customs and architectural norms were laid under the aegis of the Chalukya rulers; and they continued to develop and

be improved upon during the later centuries, and supplied the basis for culture till almost the end of the Vijayanagar period. What may be termed the Karnataka culture began to take shape from this period in the various fields-the political, social, literary and also the architecture and sculpture.

To begin with, the Chalukyas adopted the administrative institutions that prevailed in the country before they come to power. But, in course of time, they modified the existing customs or introduced new ones according to the exigencies of the times.

They were responsible for bringing the professions under the purview of the local bodies like the village and town councils. These local bodies had the responsibility of collecting the taxes due to the royal treasury and excise levies on manufactured goods They were armed by the powers granted to them by the central government, powers they assumed for themselves according to the traditions as also powers enjoyed both by themselves and the king. They were infact the intermediaries between the subjects and the king. They were composed the representatives of the people. They encouraged mainly agriculture, trade and industry but arts and crafts also received suitable encouragement at their hands. Inscriptions speak of these bodies which were known to be discharging their duties without personal or communal prejudices purely with the motto of serving the community. They also contain references to the devotion

of the members of these bodies to their duties, their proficiency in education, the use of language and their administrative abilities.

Among the most notable of these village and town councils may be mentioned the institution of Mahajanas. These bodies looked after the public affairs of the communities, the land grants given to the temples and other public utilities. The members of these bodies were generally the learned Brahmanas of the village or town but rare references to non-brahmin members are not wanting. Mahajanas acted as trustees of the common property, the gifts and grants to public institutions. They took steps to propagate education, construct irrigation tanks and canals, build or renovate temples and arrange for regular worship in them. They also looked after the dispensation of justice both civil and criminal, among the subjects, within their jurisdiction. The finances required for the discharge of these duties were collected from the people. The central government appointed Gamundas, Karanas who maintained the village accounts, collected the revenues to the royal treasury and performed such other functions. The powers and duties of these village bodies and the central government are defined by an inscription at Laxmeswar belonging to times when prince Vikramaditya was ruling in that region, Thus Chalukyas made well defined arrangements for local administration, which was continued with modifications in later times.

Turning to the central administration, the Chalukyas were again among the first rulers in Deccan to build an extensive empire. To facilitate the proper administration, they divided the kingdom into various divisions were probably not uniform throughout. They started the practice of calling the provinces after the name of a region followed by a numerical suffix like Puligere-300, Belvola-300, Banavasi-1200 etc. Though there was considerable argument over the connotation of the numerical suffix, now it is agreed among some noted historians and epigraphists that it signifies the number of villages included in that province. If this interpretation is accepted, it becomes evident that it helped the state in the administration of the province especially in revenue affairs. The size of each province was thus well defined. This custom continued down to the Hoysala and Seuna times. Following the earlier custom, they allowed some of the defeated kings to continue to rule their original territories and enjoy full autonomy provided they accepted a nominal suzerainty of the emperor, paid a periodical tribute to the central treasury and assisted the emperor in times of war. But most of the territory was directly ruled by the emperor himself. When the territory became extensive, for administrative convenience they divided the kingdom into provinces, other royal kinsmen or their trusted lieutenants to be provincial governors. They were variously designated as Vishayapathis, Samantas etc. These institutions became regular offices in the later history of Deccan and gave rise to Mandaleswaras and Mahamandaleswaras. The tradition of dividing the territory into Mandalas, Vishayas and such other administrative divisions may be considered to be the contribution of the Chalukyas, particularly in the history of Deccan.

In the field of economic administration also their contribution is noteworthy. The Laxmeswar inscription referred to above speaks of the taxes the local bodies had to pay to the Desadhipatis are Prescribed. These taxes had to be paid in the month of Vaisakha every year. Another tax had to be paid to the Guild probably, of the merchants. The house owners had to pay some taxes according to their status, people had to pay some taxes on occasions of festivities, some others are market dues and tolls. Merauncha, Adityauncha, Unchamanna and Marumanna are some local land taxes, Some tax on salt was also being imposed. Besides these, some taxes were imposed on special occasions. At the time of the conquest of the Bana country by Pulakeshi II, a tax called terepon was imposed on the conquered people. Taxes in kind like oil, sugar, betel leaves were imposed on shops for the use of temples as known from an inscription at Badami of the time of Vijayaditya. Thus varieties of taxes and duties were introduced by these rulers which continued to be collected by the later dynasties.

The Chalukyas were again the first rulers to standardise the weights and measures like the Kula or Kolaga (64 seers) a measure of grain, matter a measure of land which was given the official seal under the name of Rajamana or royal measurement.

The Chalukya rulers built a strong and well organised army which continued to play a pre-eminent roll-the Karnataka bala-the Karnataka army of the Chalukyas which is often mentioned in highly eulogistic terms in the inscriptions of later times. Dantidurga, the founder of the Rastrakuta family, takes pride in having defeated the "Karnatakabalam Ajeyyam". But this force was not disbanded with the fall of the Chalukyas of Badami. It continued its existence for the next two centuries of Rastrakuta rule and ironically enough it is with the help of this very Chalukya Karnatabala that taila brought to earth the Rastrakuta might and hoisted again the Chalukya flag of victory.

With the help of this mighty force, the Chalukyas built up an extensive kingdom-homogeneous state embracing all the divisions that existed in earlier epochs-Karnata, Kuntala, Vanavasa, Gomantaka, Konkana, Punnata, Mahishamandala etc. Thus the Chalukyas of Badami took the credit for a single homogeneous Karnataka country which, though, has undergone many political vicissitudes during the later ages, has, on the whole, retained its wholesome identity as the land of the Kannada speaking people. By this act of political unification, the Chalukyas, nay, that mighty and overawing figure of Pulakesi II, laid the foundations of a nation which has, with great distinction, adorned the history of India through the succeeding ages.

This inspiring wholesome concept of a Karnataka nation and the geographical situation-extending from the Godavari, in the north to the Kaveri in the south, spurred its rulers and the people in its entirety, for greater achievements in the fields.

In the field of social life though they followed the traditional customs of Varnashrama dharma and allowed a respected position to the Brahmins, who served the other

classes by guiding them in the field of religion, learning and a moral and ethical life, we find that other heterodox systems like Jainism and Buddhism were not only tolerated but given considerable patronage. The saints and scholars of these religions were entertained in the royal court and were appointed to high positions, Hieun Tsang testifies to the fact that hundreds of Buddhist monks lived in the court and stupas and viharas were in flourishing condition. The patronage shown to Jainism is well known by the position occupied by Ravikirti and also the Jaina temples that were known to have been constructed under the royal patronage. The Kalamukha sect of Saivism appeared in Karnataka during this period and continued to flourish till the advent of Basava in the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

The kings and the royal court not only gave liberal patronage to the various religious sects but took an active but healthy interest in their proper behaviour and maintenance. This policy of religious toleration, patronage to all religions, regulating their conduct when they went astray are the features that we notice in the history of various dynasties in medieval Karnataka. Rashtrakuta, Kalyana Chalukya, Hoysala, Seuna and Vijayanagar administrations are characterised by this tolerance in their religious outlook. Arya Sanghas and assemblies of Saints were existing which looked after the religious interests of the people. Besides people of different professions had organised their own guilds. Among them existed a school of famous architects and craftsmen the Sarvasiddhi Acharis, which we will have occasion to refer later on. These guilds and senis played a very important role in the socio-economic organisation of the medieval Karnataka. Besides guilds like the "Ayyaholeya Aynurvaru", the five hundred of Aihole controlled and regulated the economic life not only in Karnataka but extended its sway all over South India in later times. Such institutions were founded for the first time during the Chalukya rule.

Again it is during this period that the famous educational institutions like the Agraharas and Brahmapuris became prominent. Though such institutions were first founded under the Kadambas, the rulers of this dynasty extended royal patronage, founded new institutions and thus stabilised them as centres of higher education. These institutions played a very important part in the medieval times in the spread of education. Famous Sanskrit scholars flourished during this period but the greatest contribution of the Chalukya period in the field of learning is their role in the origin and growth of Kannada language and literature. Of course, no famous author or poet in Kannada letters is known to us. But Vijayabhattacharya the wife of Chandraditya, the eldest son of Pulakeshi II is described as proficient both in Sanskrit and Kannada. Her Sanskrit composition Kaumudi Mahotsava is one of the noted works in the field of Sanskrit drama. But her Kannada writers hail her as one of the earliest Kannada writers. She called herself as Karnati, a clear indication of her love for Kannada literature and pride of belonging to the Karnataka heritage, The foundations of Kannada language and literature were securely laid during this period and paved the way for its growth in the later period.

The greatest contribution of the Chalukyas was probably in the field of art and architecture. Temples were no doubt,

built and sculptures were chiselled in the earlier epochs under the Satavahanas, their feudatories and later on under the Kadambas and the early Gangas. But these constructions and images were modelled on their counterparts elsewhere in the country. Very few of these constructions have survived down to our times and hence it was very difficult to know the stylistic and decorative innovations over those of the earlier creations. No doubt, one form of Sikhara in Deccan architecture, the Rekhanagara Prasada, has been attributed to the Kadamba architecture but the actual specimens of this form of Sikhara, available to us, come mostly from the Chalukya times. Very few of the sculptures of allegedly pre Chalukya times have survived. Among them may be mentioned the Buddhist sculptures from Sannathi and the adjoining Andhra country belonging to the times of the Satavahanas and their feudatories. They belong to the general style prevalent all over the country with very few regional characteristics.

But under the Chalukyas of Badami, architecture entered a new vigorous phase. At Badami we see their attempts at evolving a new style of their own in the art of creating the religious edifices. The cave temples on the hillock at Badami represent their efforts at chiselling away the living rock to create the abodes of the Gods. These caves date from the times of Mangalesha and follow the earlier Buddhist models spread all over western Deccan and attained great appreciation everywhere. But in the field of structural temples, we find at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal various evolutionary stages in the building of temples. The Upper Sivalaya at Badami consists of a single-celled sanctum with a very simple uni-storied Sikhara. We find the next step a front porch added to the sanctum in the Lower Shivalaya and further elaborations by the additions of a Mukhamantapa, navaranga, antarala, etc., in other temples. Similarly the use of pillars which themselves undergo evolutionary process, the elaborations by the additions of a mukhamantapa, navaranga, antarala, etc., in other temples. Similarly the use of pillars which themselves undergo evolutionary process, the elaboration of the Sikhara with a series of pyramidal stories laid one above the other, can also be studied here. Of greater interest is the fact that under the Chalukya patronage the architects busied themselves in constructing temples on the model of the contemporary Gupta or Nagara style in the Central and North India on the one hand and Pallava or the Dravidian type of religious structures flourishing to their south. Aihole, the city of temples as it is rightly described, has upwards of a hundred temples belonging not only to the above mentioned two styles but also illustrating the attempts of the architect of bringing about a new style, the Vesara, in which we can see the attempts at a harmonious blending of both the southern and northern styles.

Pattadakal or Kisuvola, the third and one of the most important centres of their creations, is rightly described by Fergusson as the workshop of the Chalukya architecture, where they experimented in the process of evolving the most suitable style of temple to suit their genius. The result is the emergence of the Vesara. While the Sangameshwara, Papanatha, Jambulinga, Kasi Visvesvara and others represent the northern style, the two temples of Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna caused to be

built under the benevolence of Lokamahadevi and Trailokyamahadevi, the queens of Vikramaditya II, represent the magnificence of their workmanship in the Southern style.

The architects responsible for the construction of these numerous shrines had organised themselves into a school or guild known as Sarvasiddhi Achars. Chattara Revadi OVajja was the leader of these architects who built the Virupaksha temple. These master architects had spread the field of their activity not only over Karnataka but had extended it into Tamil country also. Some of them had come from Kanchi at the times of Chalukya Pallava contacts in war and peace.

Thus, the Chalukyas can be credited to have started a distinctive tradition of architecture which evolved step by step in the succeeding epochs. The later Chalukya rulers improved this style of architecture to a great extent and under the Hoysala patronage, it carried the Karnataka architecture to the peak of glory.

### Summary

The Chalukya period may, therefore, be regarded as the period when the Karnataka culture –its political, social, religious, literary and artistic –came to assume a distinctive personality. All that is outstanding and eminent in this Kannada country may be said to have been started under the benevolent eyes of these rulers. A

small province was raised to the status of an empire which, keeping at bay the great Harshavardhana in the north and the tenacious Pallavas in the South, raised itself into a pre-eminent position. The fame of its invincible army was praised in later ages. They were known for their heroic and righteous way of warfare. The Kannada language and literature entered the field and everafter has been making greater and still greater progress. Ultimately two of the greatest personalities among the Kannadigas of all the ages, who stand out as towering personalities, belong to this period-Pulakeshi II-Parameshwara, Dakshinapatheshwara, and his daughter-in-law, the great Sanskrit and first Karnataka Saraswati.

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