

11. Kingdoms in South India

11.1 Important kingdoms in South India

11.2 Administrative system, trade, social life

11.3 Literature, art, architecture

In this lesson we will be introduced to the kingdoms in South India, their administrative system, trade etc.

11.1 Important Kingdoms in South India

Chola, Pandya and Chera dynasties :

Chola, Pandya and Chera were the ancient ruling powers in South India. The kingdoms in South are mentioned in Megasthenes' 'Indica', Panini's grammar and inscriptions of Ashoka. Ancient Tamil literature, known as 'Sangham' literature, is believed to be one of the main sources of history of South Indian rulers.

For Additional information :

South India has a great contribution in the history of India and its culture. Due to the cultural exchange between North India and South India, the Indian culture became diverse and still remained united. The people living in South India spoke Dravidian languages. Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Telugu are the four main languages in the Dravidian group of languages. 'Brahui' language spoken in Baluchistan is a part of the Dravidian group of languages.

Chola Dynasty : The Chola Kingdom was established in first century C.E. Chola dynasty originated in Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli (Tamilnadu). This province was known as 'Cholamandala' (Coromandel is an anglicised form of 'Cholamandala'). To the south of Cholas, the Pandyas had

established their rule from Pudukkottai to Kanyakumari. Towards their west, the Cheras had created their kingdom in Kerala. They are mentioned as 'Kedalaputra' (*Keralaputra*/ Sons of Kerala) in contemporary literature. These kingdoms were in constant conflict with each other to establish political supremacy.

In many stories of Sangham literature, we find mention of the first Chola king 'Karikala'. He brought together eleven small kingdoms and built a strong army and by defeating the Chera and Pandya kings, he established the Tamil dominance.

Some kingdoms arose to the north of Krishna-Tungabhadra rivers. Among them Satavahanas were most powerful.

Vakataka dynasty : The power of Satavahanas started growing weaker from the 3rd century C.E. Vakatakas took advantage of this situation and established independent rule. Vindhyashakti was the founder of Vakataka kingdom. After Vindhyashakti, King Pravarasena I ascended the throne. He expanded the Vakataka Empire to Malwa in the North and from Gujarat to South upto Kolhapur, Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh). Kolhapur was known as 'Kuntala' at that time. Pravarasena I performed four Ashwamedha sacrifices and took up the title 'Samrat'.

After Pravarasena I, the Vakataka kingdom got divided and two main branches were created. Among them, Nandivardhan (Nagardhan-Ramtek, Nagpur district) was the capital of one branch. The capital of the second branch was at Vatsagulm, i.e. modern Washim (Washim district).

Prabhavatigupta, daughter of Gupta emperor Chandragupta II, was married to



Vakataka king Rudrasen II. This is already mentioned earlier. Varahadev, minister of Harishena, was a follower of Buddhism. Cave no.16 of Ajanta was excavated at his instance. The excavation of other caves at Ajanta and the murals were done during the reign of Harishena.

Vakataka king Pravarasena II composed 'Setubandha' in Maharashtri Prakrit. Among many of Kalidasa's classical works, 'Meghadoota' deserves special mention. References to historical geography of Vakataka period occurring in this poetic work are important.

Chalukyas : During the rule of Harshavardhan in North India, the Chalukya dynasty ruled in the south for approximately 200 years. Jaising was the founder of this dynasty. In the beginning of 6th century C.E.

he established his capital at Vatapi (Badami). His grandson Pulakeshi I was the first important king of the Chalukyas. He built the fort of Badami. He performed the Ashwamedha sacrifice and took up the title of 'Maharaja'. He also took titles like 'Prithvivallabha' and 'Satyashraya'. After Pulakeshi I, his son Kirtivarman I came to power. During his reign, he conquered the Kadambas of Vanvasi (Karwar) and Mauryas of Aparanta (North Konkan) and expanded his rule. Kirtivarman was a patron of art. The beautiful caves at Badami were created by him.

Pulakeshi II was the greatest king of the Chalukyan dynasty. He performed the Digvijaya and strengthened the power of Chalukyas. His achievements are described in the eulogy (prashasti) composed by poet

Ravikirti. He defeated the Kadamba kings, Maurya, Nala, Kalchuri, Rashtrakuta, Lat, Malav and Gurjara dynasties and established the Chalukyan rule over Vidarbha and other parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka. The expedition of Harshavardhan to conquer the southern states was resisted by Pulakeshi II. He defeated Harshavardhan thereby acquiring great fame. After his victory he took up the title 'Parameshwara'. With the conquest in south, his empire extended from Narmada to Kaveri and from east coast to the west coast. His fame had reached beyond India as well. During this period Badshah Khosrow Parvez ruled in Iran. It is said that he had sent his ambassador to the court of Emperor Pulakeshi. The Pallavas of Kanchi defeated Pulkeshi II. Vikramaditya, the son of Pulakeshi II, in turn defeated the Pallavas. The struggle between Chalukyas and Pallavas continued over prolonged period of time. The last king of Chalukyas, Kirtivarman, was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king Dantidurg.

Pallavas : Around 6th century C.E. to 9th century C.E., the Pallavas were known as the most powerful rulers in South India. Historians vary in their views regarding the origin of the Pallavas. Some copperplates of the Pallavas are found. There is a mention of Simhavarman and Shivaskandavarman Pallava who ruled over the regions of eastern coast. Kanchi was the capital of the Pallavas. We get a detailed information of the Pallava dynasty beginning from the reign of Simhavishnu. He conquered the province of Cholas and extended his rule from Krishna to Kaveri. After Simhavishnu, his son Mahendravarman ascended the throne. He was a great scholar. He wrote the Sanskrit play 'Mattavilasa'. He wrote books on subjects like music, dance, sculpture, painting etc. These art forms received patronage under him. During his reign, several temples were built at Tiruchirapalli, Chingalput and in east and west Arkat district. The war between

Pallavas and Chalukyas took place during his period. His son Narsimhavarman defeated the Chalukyan Emperor Pulakeshi II. During Narsimhavarman's region, many temples were built at Mahabalipuram. It includes the monolithic temples (Rath Mandiras) as well. Yuan Chwang, the well-known Chinese traveller, was in his court for a certain period of time. The literary works by Narsimharvarman are important as major source of Pallava history. The Pallava rule ended in 9th century C.E. The Chola king, Aditya, defeated the Pallavas and destroyed it.



Yudhistira Rath Temple at Mahabalipuram

Rashtrakutas : Dantidurga was the first powerful king of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. The rule of Rashtrakutas was spread from Vindhyan ranges to Kanyakumari in the south. After Dantidurga, his uncle Krishna I became the king. He uprooted Chalukyas rule. The famous Kailas temple at Ellora is ascribed to Krishna I. The succeeding Rashtrakuta rulers became influential in North India as well. Amoghvarsh was a capable king of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Amoghvarsh composed the texts entitled 'Ratnamalika' and 'Kavirajmarg'. He established a new city at Manyakheta (Malkhed) near Solapur. The Rashtrakuta dynasty declined because of the attacks by Parmars and Chalukyas of Kalyani.



Kailas Temple at Ellora

Shilaharas : There were three branches of this dynasty – Shilaharas of south Konkan, north Konkan and Kolhapur. They called themselves as ‘Tagarapuradhiswar’ (Tagar-Ter, Osmanabad district). Jimutvahan is considered as the founder of all the three branches. They ruled for almost three hundred years as the feudatories of Rashtrakutas and later the Chalukyas.

1. Shilaharas of South Konkan - ‘Sanafulla’ established the south Konkan branch of Shilaharas. His son, Dhammiyar set up the village of Vallipattana and built a fort there. Later King Adityavarma expanded his kingdom from Thane to Goa. Rattaraj was the last ruler of this dynasty. The history of this dynasty is known with the help of one of the copper plates found at Kharepatan.

2. Shilaharas of North Konkan - Kapardi established the north Konkan branch of Shilaharas. Rulers of this branch were initially the feudatories of the Rashtrakutas. Their capital was at Sthanak (Thane). Aparajita was another important king of this branch. He ruled for around thirty five years. Chittaraj followed Aparajita as king. His brothers fought for their claim to the throne. Taking advantage of this, the Shilaharas

of Kolhapur and Kadambas captured some of the regions in North Konkan. Mummuni, brother of Chhittaraj, built the huge temple of ‘Amreshwar Mahadev’ at Ambarnath. This is considered as the beginning of the Bhoomija style of temple architecture in Maharashtra.

3. Shilaharas of Kolhapur - The modern districts of Satara, Sangli, Ratnagiri, and Belgaum were included in this kingdom.

Jatiga established the Kolhapur branch of Shilaharas. Bhoj II was the important king of this dynasty. The cities of Kolhapur, Valivade and Panhala were the capitals of this kingdom. The Shilaharas of Kolhapur are credited with the creation of the magnificent ‘Koppeshwar Mahadev’ temple at Khidrapur.

Gonds : The Gond dynasty was established at Chanda (Chandrapur) during the Yadava period. Kol Bheel was the founder of this dynasty. He brought the people of Gond tribe together and encouraged them to rebel against the Naga dynasty. He established the capital at Sirpur. In the later period Khandkya Ballal Singh built a fort at Ballarpur and shifted the capital from Sirpur to Ballarpur. The temple at Achaleshwar was constructed during his period. Nilkanth Shah

was defeated by Raghuji Bhosale of Nagpur and the Gond territories were merged in his kingdom. Sixty two Gond kings ruled for many centuries in Devgad, Nagpur and Chandrapur in Maharashtra.



Queen Durgavati

The struggle of Queen Durgavati of

the Gond dynasty, against the Mughals is considered important. After the death of her husband, Duragavati fought against in Mughal emperor Akbar. She was not ready to surrender to him. Instead she preferred death.

Yadavas : Yadava dynasty is one of the important dynasties of mediaeval Maharashtra. Bhillam V (1185-93 C.E.) is the important king of the Yadava dynasty. He expanded the kingdom by defeating the Kalachuris. He established his capital at Devgiri and got himself coronated. In the later period Singhan was an important ruler of this dynasty. He defeated the Hoysalas, Shilaharas and expanded the rule of Yadavas.

In 1294 C.E. Alauddin Khalji attacked south India. Ramadeva, the Yadava king was defeated by Khalji. From here onwards the Yadava rule began to decline. In 1307 C.E. Alauddin sent his commander Malik Kafur to carry out a campaign over Devgiri. He defeated the Yadavas. Yadavas accepted a feudatory status to Delhi. In 1310 C.E. Yadava king Shankardev was killed by Malik Kafur. In 1318 C.E. the rule of Yadavas was brought to an end by the Delhi Sultanate.

The Yadava period has a special importance in the history of Maharashtra. During this period there was notable development in the cultural sphere of Maharashtra. The Mahanubhav and Warkari sects had a beginning in the Yadava period. During this period, Patan in Khandesh, Solotagi in Karnataka and Paithan in Maharashtra become important learning centres. During the same period, Sanskrit texts were written on subjects like Dharmashastra, 'Purva Mimansa' (philosophical text), Nyaya and Vedanta. The critical work on Yajnyavalkya by Aparark, 'Chaturvargachintamani' are among the important Sanskrit texts. 'Sangitaratnakara', text based on Indian music, by Sharangdev is considered relevant even today.

'Lilacharitra' written by Mhamimbhatta of the Mahanubhava sect, 'Viveksindhu' by Mukundaraj, 'Bhavarthdipika' by Dnyaneshwar belong to this period. Similarly the composition of saint poets like Namadeva, Janabai, Chokhoba of the Varakari sect composed poems, which are known as 'Abhangas'. Many temples were built in this period. They are generally referred to as 'Hemadpanti' temples. The Gondeshwar temple at Sinnar and the temple complex at Anjaneri are the finest example among the temples built during this period. An important feature of the Hemadpanti temples is that no mortar is used. Instead the stones are interlocked with the help of mortise and tenon. During this period, the crucial forts of Ankai and Tankai were constructed.



Gondeshwar Temple at Sinnar

11.2 Administrative system, trade, social life

In the administrative systems of South Indian dynasties there were officials such as 'Mahadandanayaka', 'Rashtrika', 'Deshadhikrta', 'Amatya', 'Ayukta', etc. The council of officers in the Chola kingdom was called 'Udankuttam'. The kingdom was divided into many provinces. These provinces were known as 'Mandalam'. A member of the royal family was the chief of the Mandalam. There were many officers under him such as 'Vishayapati', 'Deshadhipati', 'Deshadhikrut', 'Rashtrika', etc. The administration of the Southern kingdoms was very efficient. Every order issued related to state affairs recorded down and no action was taken unless authenticated by the concerned officer. Village autonomy was an important feature of the state administration in South India. The 'Gramasabha' (village

council) looked after the entire administration of the village. The head of the Gramasabha was known by different names such as 'Gramabhojaka', 'Gramakuta' etc. head of the Gramasabha was elected by the villagers or sometimes appointed by the king. A council similar to Gramsabha functioned at district and provincial level. Land revenue was the main source of income for the state. Apart from it the excise tax, professional tax, pilgrimage tax were the sources of income.

In the kingdom of Cholas, Pandyas, Cheras, Vakatakas, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Pallavas, Shilaharas and Yadavas many professions requiring specialised skills were practiced. Ivory was obtained from the Malayagiri jungle. The Cholamandalam provinces were well-known for excellent quality textiles. Plain and coloured cotton cloth as well as silk clothes was produced in this province. In the Chera kingdom was known the fine cloth produced there. It was one of the important commodities in the Indo-Roman trade. It is mentioned in the travel accounts of Marco Polo. The trade and

For Additional information : Coins of South India-

During the Mauryan period the Maurya coins were in circulation in South India. After the decline of Mauryas the Pandya kings issued their own punch marked coins. The images like sun, horse, stupa, tree, fish were carved on it. On the Chera coins, there used to be bow and arrow on one side and image of an elephant on the other. On the Chola coins the symbol of tiger as the royal emblem of Cholas is depicted. The Chola coins were made of gold, silver and the legends on it was inscribed in Devnagari script. The coins belonging to Chalukya king Rajaraja are issued in three metals-gold, silver and copper, with the image of Rajaraja and a tiger. Due to the trade with Rome, many Roman coins are found in this area. It is seen that the seals of Indian rulers are reprinted on these coins and again brought into circulation.

industries in South India flourished during this period. Cities like Paithan, Tagar (Ter), Nashik etc. flourished because of it.

The goods produced in rural areas were brought for sale in the cities. The market place used to be located in the centre of the city. The merchant guilds (Shreni) in South India played an important role in trade and the social system.

11.3 Literature, art, architecture

The tradition of writing poetry and grammar was prevalent in south India from ancient times. The 'Sangham literature' is supposed to be most ancient in the Tamil tradition. This literature is one of the main sources of political history of South India. It is believed that three 'Sanghams' (Council) were held.

This period was important from the point of view of Sanskrit literature. Kalidasa composed the 'Meghdoot' at Ramtek in Vidarbha. During the Vakataka rule, compositions in Prakrit language were created. Pravarsena II, the Vakataka king, wrote the well-known composition named 'Setubandha'. 'Harivijaya' was composed by Sarvasena, the founder of Vatsagulm branch of Vakatakas.

Two styles of architecture are seen in South India, one is the 'Dravida' style and other is the 'Vesara' style of architecture.

The Dravida style of architecture emerged and developed in the regions from Krishna river to Kanyakumari. The important feature of Dravida architecture identified by construction of Shikhara. In this type the storeys reduce in size as the Shikhara rises. Kailasnath and Vaikuntha Perumal temples at Kanchi, Brihadeshwara temple at Tanjore are some of the excellent examples of Dravida style of architecture.

The Chalukyas built temples at places like Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal etc.

During the Rashtrakuta period the world famous 'Kailasa' temple was created.

The metal statues of the Chola period



Bronze statue of Nataraj Shiva

are the best among Indian metal sculptures. Among them the most famous is the bronze statue of Nataraj Shiva.

During the Vakataka period the sculptural art and paintings reached its zenith. The Ajanta cave no. 1, 2, 16, 17, and 19 were carved out during this period. It seems that the artists had good knowledge about the details of physiology and nature.

Till now we studied the cultural and political history of India. Ancient India had established cultural relations with far away countries.

In the next two lessons we will study about the cultural relations between India and other countries.

Exercise

Q.1 (A) Choose the correct alternative and complete the sentence.

- (1) The name of the well-known king of Vakatak dynasty was
 (a) Sarvasena (b) Pravarasena
 (c) Jaising (d) Chandragupta
- (2) After the conquest in South, Pulakeshin II took up the title of
 (a) Parameshwara (b) Vishayapati
 (c) Deshahapati (d) Satyajay
- (3) Kalidasa composed at Ramtek in Vidarbha.
 (a) Shakuntal (b) Meghdoot
 (c) Malavikagnimitra (d) Harivijay
- (4) The world famous Kailasa temple was built during the period.
 (a) Chalukya (b) Pallava
 (c) Cher (d) Rashtrakuta

(B) Fine the incorrect pair and write the correct ones.

- (1) Setubandh – Panini
- (2) Harivijay – Sarvasena
- (3) Indica – Megasthenes
- (4) Sangit Ratnakar – Sharangdev

Q.2 Find the odd man out in the group.

- (1) Ancient kings in South India – Chola, Pandya, Maurya, Cher

- (2) Examples of Dravidian style – Rajarajeshwar temple, Elephanta caves, Halebid temples, Badami temples

Q.3 Explain the following statements with reasons.

- (1) A strong rule of the Chalukyas was created in south India
- (2) Yadava period has a special importance in the history of Maharashtra.

Q.4 Write short notes.

- (1) Administrative system in South India
- (2) Coins in South Indian dynasties

Q.5 Answer the following question in brief with the help of points given below.

Describe the rule of Shilahara dynasty.

- (a) Founder
- (b) Shilahara of south Kokan
- (c) Shilaharas of north Kokan
- (d) Shilaharas of Kolhapur

Activity

Visit the Kailasa temple at Ellora and prepare a detailed note.

