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REVIEW ARTICLE

A STUDY ON THE ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM AND CULTURE OF PALLAVA DYNASTY

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A Study on the Administration System and Culture of Pallava Dynasty

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Pallava Dynasty was a pastoral tribe who ruled the southern parts of India for almost 500 years. Pallava dynasty conquered the region of Thondaimandalam that was located at Pallavapuri. The Pallava rulers established their kingdom on the ruins of the eastern part of the kingdom of the Satvahanas. They originally worked as officials under the Satvahana rulers, in the course of time they established themselves as local rulers. Very rapidly their kingdom spanned parts of southern Andhra Pradesh and northern Tamil Nadu. Pallavas established their capital at Kanchi which gradually became popular and famous for its temples and as center of Vedic learning.

Pallavas territory extended from Northern Odissi to Tanjore and Trichi in far south. They were great conquerors and left a huge impact in the field of art and architecture. The Pallava Dynasty fought many wars with the Chalukyas (to the northwest) and the Pandyas (to the south). Both of these states - Chalukyas and Pandyas tried their best to stop the Pallavas from rising, but failed. The Pallava Empire continued to live on until the 13th century AD. Around 14th century A.D, the Pallavas defeated the Ikshvakus and spread their territory as far as the River Krishna.

The Pallavas should be specially remembered for their contribution to the cultural, literal, art and archeological history of South India. There was an all pervasive development during this period in literature, music, paintings, religion every walk of life. The Kings of Pallava Dynasty warmly patronised the Sanskrit language. Kanchi became the famous seat of Sanskrit learning In the South. Dandi, Bharavi, Dignaga, the great poet, master of Sanskrit prose and scholar respectively, all came and stayed in Kanchi court. The Tamil literature also received patronage from the Pallava kings. We also know that the Mattavilas Prahasana, the Tamil classic, Tamil Kural were composed in this age. Paintings received patronage of the Tamil kings. The composer of several treatises in music Mahendravarmana was a king of his age.

It should also be remembered that the great religious revival movement which overshadowed the eight century had its first origin in Tamil kingdom. It was

the Pallavas who first completed the Aryanisation of South India for them the Sanskrit language and learning and the Brahminical religion spreaded in the South. The University of Kanchi became the citadel of Aryan-Brahmanical influence in the South. Kanchi was regarded as one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus. Though the Pallava Kings were the worshippers of Vishnu and Siva they showed tolerance to other creeds as well. Many great Saiva and Vishnu Saints and the Vaishnava and Saiva literatures had flourished in this age. Though Buddhism could not dominate the Pallavas, Hiuen-Tsang found many Buddhist monasteries in the Pallava Empire.

Pallava Dynasty was rich in various cultural aspects including dance, art, and music. Evidence of dancing among the Pallavas has been found painted on the walls of temples, caves and depicted by sculptures. Different poses are depicted and there were individual dances as well as group dances for both men and women. Dancing is the form of entertainment frequently employed in the king's court, as well as temples.

Dancing was used as a form of worship; Siva is depicted in the dance called tandava. The principal hobbies of the prince and princesses of the Pallava Dynasty was painting. The walls of the cave temples gave a partial look into this art form and paint can be seen in traces of rich colors. They Pallava dynasty used vegetable colour so the available colors were few, but they included red, yellow, green, and black.

The Kailasanatha temple contains nearly fifty cells around the inner courtyard and each of them shows traces of painting. Music also had a prominent place in Pallava society and songs were not only used to praise deity, but even to praise rulers as well. The songs sang their praises and spoke of their individual genius and skill. Rise of Rashtrakutas had seen the decline of Pallavas. Vijayalaya the Chola king, completely vanquished Aparajitavarma the last Pallava king in 890 AD.

The society in south India is more of caste ridden, like that in north India. The Brahmins (priestly class) and Kshatriyas (warrior class) dominated the people belonging to the lower castes. Their position was on the rise as the rulers began to grant land to temples and important priests. Religion played an important part in the life of the people in the kingdom. Hinduism held sway in the kingdom and Vedic sacrificial rights were common.

The cult of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva became important during the period of Pallava dynasty and Kanchipuram became an important pilgrim center for the Hindu devotees. Kanchipuram, the capital of the Pallavas, also became an important center of Tamil and Sanskrit studies. The temples became not the only places of worship, but they became important cultural and administrative centers where festivals were held and people also gathered in the temples to solve local problems, as the temples governed large areas of land and the people thereof.

ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM:

Simha Vishnu is the founder of Pallava dynasty and is considered to be a very efficient and strong conqueror. After Simha Vishnu death, his son Mahendravarman (571 – 630 CE) became the king. He was a very efficient ruler and a learned man. The construction of the famous cave temple at Mahabalipuram was his initiation. However, the tales of prosperity of Pallava dynasty reached far and wide and Chalukya Pulakesi-II learnt about the richness and abundance of the kingdom. Chalukya attacked the kingdom and defeated Mahendravarman.

In the battle the defeat was the main cause for the death of Mahendravarman. After him Narasimhavarman his son ascended the throne. He vowed to take revenge for the death of his father. He was a well-built man who was also very intelligent. With much planning and tact, he virtually destroyed the kingdom of Chalukya Pulakesi. Later Narasimhavarman continued the construction of the cave temple which was stalled temporarily. Dandin the Sanskrit writer was his court poet. Kailasnatha and Vaikuntha Perumal temple of Kanchi known for beautiful sculptures were extended during the period of Narasimhavaram (700-728 CE). He was given the title of "Mamalla", which could be the reason why Mahabalipuram is also known as Mamallapuram. He got many temples constructed all over his kingdom.

The Pallava Kings did not patronage Tamil language and in their early administrative system they followed the Satavahana style instead of the Tamil style. These evidences strongly supported the theory that the Pallavas were non-Tamil in their origin. But scholars are not unanimous in this regard. They put number of theories about their origin. B.L. Rice called the Pallavas as foreigners, belonging to the Pallava or Parthian race. But this theory had not been accepted by all. Prof. Dubreuil told that Pallava minister of

Rudradamana, Subisakha was the ancestor of the Pallavas of Kanchi. But this theory has not been accepted either. On the other hand, Prof. M.C. Rasanayagam asserted that the Pallavas were the offspring of a Chola prince and a Naga Princess of Manipallavam. Thus Pallava is the name of a dynasty not a tribe or class. Dr. K Aiyanger gave us a third theory where he called the Pallavas as feudatories of the Satavahanas. Prof. Rawlinson and other scholars have stressed on the indigenous southern origin of the Pallava Dynasty. But Prof. K.P. Jayaswall has marked them as a branch of the Brahmin dynasty of the Vaktakas of Northern India. Though there is some substance in this theory nothing definitely can be said about their origin.

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