UNIT 8: POST GUPTA POLITY

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Chalukyas

8.4 Pallavas

8.5 Cheras

8.6 Pandyas

8.7 Cholas

8.8 Deccan Polity

8.9 Society, Trade and Commerce

8.10 Pushyabhutis

8.11 Harshavardhana of Thaneswar

8.12 Relation of Harshavardhana with Kamarupa Kingdom

8.13 Let Us Sum Up

8.14 Further Reading

8.15 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.16 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- know about the emergence of the Chalukyas in the post Gupta era
- discuss about the rise of the Pallavas in the post Gupta era
- describe about the Cheras
- know about the Pandyas of Madura
- estimate about the emergence of the Cholas in the post Gupta era

8.2 INTRODUCTION

After the downfall of the Gupta Empire, the provinces and feudatory states declared their independence and number of new political powers

emerged both in northern and southern India. However, inspite of their conflicts, these rulers had an administrative (polity) structure for providing stability to their reigns. This resulted in peace and prosperity in the Deccan society and provided impetus for the development of trade and commerce in Southern India. The structure of the Deccan polity, social condition, and developments made in the field of trade and commerce will be now studied in this unit.

Further, we will also study the Pushyabhutis, a political power which emerged in the Northern India during early medieval India. In this unit the main focus will be on the famous king Harshavardhana of the Pushyabhutis and his relationship with king Bhaskaravarman of the Varman dynasty who ruled over the kingdom of Kamarupa.

8.3 CHALUKYAS

The Chalukyas were one of the most important regional powers amongst others that emerged in southern India in the post Gupta era. From the mid 6th century C.E. the Chalukyas had replaced the Vakatakas as the major power in the Deccan. The Chalukyas claimed descent from the lunar race but opinion differs regarding their origin. The Chalukyas ruled over four different regions of India at different periods of time. They were as such known as the Chalukyas of Badami, the Chalukyas of Vengi, the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Chalukyas of Anhilwada. Anhilwada is located in western India, so we will not study in details about the Chalukyas of Anhilwada in this unit because this unit deals with the major political powers of Southern India only.

● CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI

The Chalukyas began their base at northern Mysore at Vatapi or Badami and the adjacent Aihole. From here they moved northwards and then they annexed the former kingdom of the Vakatakas, which was centered round Nasik and the upper Godavari. The Chalukya power at Badami had a humble beginning under

Jayasimha and his son Ranaraga. It is said that after defeating the Rashtrakuta king Indra, Jayasimha established his authority at Badami and marked the beginning of the political history of the Chalukyas. Pulakesin I

(550-566 C.E.) was the third ruler of the Chalukyas of Badami and he was the real founder of the Chalukya dynasty of Badami. He made Vatapi or Badami as his capital. He adopted the title of "Vallabhashvara" and also performed the 'Ashvamedha' sacrifice. He was succeeded by Kirtivarman I. By defeating the Mauryas of North-Konkana and the Nalas of Nanavadi, Kirtivarman I extended his kingdom. He invaded the territories of Bihar and Bengal in the north and the Chola-Pandya region in the south. He was succeeded by his brother Mangalesa. Mangalesa began to rule as a regent because Pulakesin II (the son of Kirtivarman I) was a minor. Mangalesa defeated the Kalachuris of Chedi and established the authority of the Chalukyas over the entire areas between the western and eastern seas. Soon a civil war started between Mangalesa and Pulakesin II when the former refused to hand over the power to the later. In this fight Mangalesa met his death.

Pulakesin II after defeating his uncle Mangalesa, ascended to the throne in 609 C.E. He raised the power and prestige of the Chalukyas of Badami. He adopted the title of Satyashraya. The western Gangas and the Alupas in the south and the Latas, Malavas and Gurjaras in the north accepted the suzerainty of Pulakesin II. He even defeated Harshavardhana. His first expedition against the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I was a great success and he annexed Vengi. Pulakesin II appointed his brother Vishnuvardhana as Yuvaraja to govern that area. This marked the beginning of the Eastern Chalukyas or the Chalukyas of Vengi. Unfortunately Pulakesin's second invasion against the Pallavas ended in failure. In about 642 C.E. the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I occupied the Chalukya capital at Badami. Probably in this fight Pulakesin II was killed. Pulakesin II sent an ambassador to Iran in 625 C.E. and in

return the Iranian king Khusrau II also sent an ambassador to the Chalukya capital Badami. In about 641 C.E. the famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited the kingdom of Pulakesin II. Pulakesin II also encouraged art and architecture and also promoted religion and learning. His court poet Ravi Kirti wrote his eulogy in the Aihole inscription.

Pulakesin II was succeeded by his son Vikramaditya I. He restored the power of the Chalukyas by regaining the territories which were earlier lost to the Pallavas. He even plundered the Pallava capital Kanchi. He was succeeded by his son Vinayaditya, whose region was generally peaceful and prosperous. The next ruler of the dynasty was Vijayaditya. His region was the longest, the most prosperous and peaceful one. Vikramaditya II succeeded him. It is said that Vikramaditya II had overrun Kanchi three times. In around 740 C.E. he completely routed the Pallavas which marked the end of the Pallava supremacy in southern India. He also resisted the Arab invasion of south Gujarat. The last ruler of the Chalukyas of Badami was Kirtivarman II. He was defeated by one of his feudatories, Dantidurga. Thereafter Dantidurga founded the Rashtrakuta dynasty which finally put an end to the Chalukya dynasty of Badami.

The Chalukya rulers of Badami had immense contribution in the field of art, architecture and temple-building. They had developed the Deccan or Vesara style in the building of structural temples. They also had perfected the art of stone building without mortar. Under their patronage, the Buddhists, Jainas and Brahmanas competed with each other in building cave temples. A large number of temples were constructed under the patronage of the Chalukya rulers of Badami. These temples represented various architectural styles. Some of the temples constructed during that period were the temples at Aihole and Badami, the Ladh Kan temple, the Durga temple, the Hucimaligudi temple, the Jain temple at Meguti, the

Melagitti Sivalaya, the Papanath temple and the Virupaksha temple etc.

● CHALUKYAS OF VENGI

Pulakesin II, the famous Chalukya king of Badami conquered many places on the bank of the river Godavari and in Andhra Pradesh. He appointed his younger brother Vishnuvardhana as the viceroy of these newly conquered territories. But very soon this viceroyalty developed into an independent kingdom with Vengi as its capital under Vishnuvardhana. Thus Vishnuvardhana was the founder of a new dynasty known as the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. Vijayaditya I (746-764 C.E.) was the next important ruler of this dynasty. During his time the western Chalukyas of Badami were overthrown by the Rashtrakutas. Vijayaditya III was the greatest monarch of the Eastern Chalukya dynasty. He followed a policy of aggressive imperialism and during his time the kingdom extended from the Mahendragiri in the north to the Pulicat luke in the south. He defeated the Rashtrakuta king Krishna II. The kings of Kalinga and Kosala accepted the suzerainty of Vijayaditya III. He was succeeded by a number of weak successors during whose reign Vengi became a part of the Chola Empire. Vimaladitya, one of the rulers of the Vengi dynasty married Kundavai, the daughter of Rajaraja Chola I. Thus began the process of the Chola- Chalukya matrimonial alliances which finally resulted in the merger of the two dynasties under Kulottunga, son of Rajendra Narendra of Vengi and Princess Amangadevi (daughter of Rajendra Chola I). With his death in 1075 C.E. the Eastern Chalukya dynasty came to an end.

● CHALUKYAS OF KALYANI

In 974-975 C.E. the Rashtrakutas were overthrown by Taila II who belonged to the Chalukya dynasty. Thereafter he established a new dynasty with Kalyani as the capital. This dynasty came to be known as later Chalukyas or Chalukyas of Kalyani. Taila II waged a

war with the Paramaras and defeated the Paramara king Munja. Later on Munja was put to death. From the time of Taill II, the Chalukya-Chola struggle became a regular feature.

One of the most powerful rulers of the Chalukyas of Kalyani was Somesvara I. He defeated the Chola king Rajadhiraja I in a battle at Koppam in which the Chola king lost his life. However Somesvara I was defeated by Chola king Rajendra II who was the successor of Raadhiraja I in the battle of Kudal Sangamam. Somesvara I conquered north Konkan and invaded Gujarat and Malava and also received the submission of Parmara Bhoja. Vikramaditya VI was the last great ruler of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. He killed his elder brother Somesvara II and ascended to the throne in 1076 C.E. On the time of his coronation, Vikramaditya VI withdrew the Shaka era and introduced the Chalukya- Vikram era. He fought many wars against the Hoysalas of Dwarsamudra, the Kakatiyas of Warangal, the Yadavas of Devagiri and the Kadambasa of Goa. His region also witnessed the development of Chalukyan art and literature. His gave patronage to Bilhana, the author of Vikramankacharita and Vijnanesvara, the author of Mitaksara. In the 12th century C.E. the rule of the Chalukyas of Kalyani came to an end.

8.4 PALLAVAS

The Pallavas were one of the most important powers of South India. They replaced the Ikshvakus from the Krishna-Guntur region. After the fall of the Satavahanas, the Pallavas made themselves the masters of the entire region from Krishna to the Palar River with Kanchi as their capital. A variety of opinions exist regarding the genealogy and chronology of the Pallavas. The term Pallava means ‘creeper’, and is a Sanskrit version of the Tamil word ‘tondai’, which also carries the same meaning. Probably the Pallavas were a local tribe who established their authority in the Tondainadu

or the land of creepers. The earliest records of the Pallavas are inscriptions in Prakrit, Sanskrit and Tamil languages.

Simha Vishnu (575-600 C.E.) was one of the most powerful rulers of the Pallava kingdom. He waged war against the Cholas, the Pandyas and their allies. During the last quarter of the 6th century C.E. he extended his power up to the Kaveri River. He was succeeded by his son Mahendravarman I (600-630 C.E.). He was a dramatist, musician and a poet. He was the author of a play, 'Mattaritasa-Prahasana'. He suffered several defeats at the hands of Chalukya king Pulakesin II. Pulakesin II even occupied Vengi and appointed his brother Vishnuvardhana as the viceroy of that area. Later on Vishnuvardhana started the line of the Eastern Chalukyas with Vengi as the capital.



Vatapikonda means the "Conqueror of Vatapi"

Narasimhavarman I (630-660 C.E.) was the son and successor of Mahendravarman I. His surname was Mahamalla. He not only resisted the second invasion of Pulakesin II, but also killed him and thereafter captured the Chalukyan capital Vatapi or Badami. After this success he won the title of 'Vatapikonda'. During his reign the famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited Kanchi in 642 C.E. He was a great lover of art.

The Chalukya king Vikramaditya I defeated and killed the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman II (668-670 C.E.). The next Pallava ruler Parameshwaravarman I (670-680 C.E.) lost his capital Kanchi to Chalukya king Vikramaditya I, soon recovered it. Parameshwaravarman I was succeeded by his son and successor Narasimhavarman II (680-720 C.E.). He is also known as Rajasimha. His period is marked by peace and prosperity. The famous Kailasanatha temple of Kanchi and the Shore temple at Mahamallapura were constructed by him. He is said to have sent embassies to China. Maritime trade flourished during his reign.

The next Chalukyan ruler Parameshwaravarman II (728-731 C.E.) faced the combined attack of Chalukyas and the Gangas and he was killed in that attack. During the reign of Pallava king Nandivarman II (731-795 C.E.), the Chalukya king Vikramaditya II invaded and captured the Pallava

capital, but withdrew from Kanchi without destroying it. Nandivarman II constructed the Vaikuntaperumal temple at Kanchi.



LET US KNOW

After the death of Parameshwaravarman II there was no direct heir to the Pallava throne. So the council of ministers appointed a descendent of Bhimavarman, a younger brother of Simhavishnu as the new ruler of the Pallava dynasty. After ascending to the throne, he came to be known as Nandivarman II.

Aparajita was the last ruler of the Pallavas. He was defeated by Aditya Chola I in the early 10th century C.E. Thus the Imperial Cholas overthrew the Pallavas and this marked an end to the Pallava rule.

The Pallava rulers greatly contributed in the field of art, architecture and literature. A large number of temples were constructed by the Pallava rulers which are known for their architectural beauty. Amongst such temples mention may be made of the rock-out temples at Bhairavakonda, the Anantesvara temple at Undavalli, the Rathas of Mahabalipuram, the Shore temple of Jalashayanaswami, the Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram, the Vaikuntaperumal temple at Kanchi, the Muktesvara temple and the Matangesvara temple at Kanchi etc. The best example of Pallava sculpture is the 'Descent of the Ganga' or Arjuna's Penance at Mahabalipuram.

The Pallava capital Kanchi was a great center of Sanskrit learning and Sanskrit was the official language of the Pallavas. Both Bharavi, the author of Kiratarjuniyam and Dandin, the author of Dasakumarcharitam, lived in the Pallava court.

8.5 CHERAS

The Cheras emerged as a political power in southern India in the post Gupta era. The Cheras were also known as Keralas and they belonged to the Dravidian stock. The kingdom of the Cheras roughly covered the modern district of Malabar, the states of Travancore and Cochin, the Kongu

region that includes Coimabatore and the southern portion of Salem. Some fine natural ports like Muziris and Vaikkarai were also under the Chera kingdom. Very little is known about the history of the Cheras and their earliest reference was found in the II Rock Edict of Asoka. This Rock Edict mentions about the Keralaputas or Keralaputras (Cheras) along with the Codas (Cholas) and the Pandyas as a frontier power (in the south). Unfortunately the early history of the Cheras before Senguttuvan is remained in obscurity. Senguttuvan was a powerful Chera king and he achieved several victories against his neighbours. His successor had waged wars with the Cholas and the Pandyas who even captured him. But he ultimately managed to escape. After him for a few centuries the history of the Cheras remained in darkness. Once again they came to the forefront in the 8th century C.E. when one Chera king fought with the Pallava Paramesvaravarman. The Chera rulers had to face the aggression of the Pandyas during the later part of the 8th century C.E. Even the Pandya rulers like Maravarman Rajasimha I and Nedunjadayan Varaguna I conquered Kongudesa and Venada (south Travancore) from the Cheras.

The Cheras had a cordial relationship with the Cholas and it is said that the famous Chola king Parantaka I had married a Chera princess. But towards the end of the 10th century C.E. Chola king Rajaraja I subjugated the Chera ruler and destroyed their fleet at Kandalur. This deteriorated the Chera-Chola relationship. The Cholas continued to dominate the Cheras until the beginning of their decline in the 12th century C.E. Taking advantage of the declining power of the Cholas one Chera king Virakerala succeeded in asserting his independence.

In the 13th century C.E. the Pandyas under Jatavarman Sundara Pandya reduced the Cheras to subservience. But taking advantage of the conflict between Malik Kafur (the powerful general of Alauddin Kaliji) and the Pandyas, the Chera king Ravivarman Kulasekhara increased his power. But very soon the growing aggressive activities of the Cheras were checked by the Kakatiya king Rudra I. The later rulers of the Chera dynasty had no notable achievements and soon they disappeared as a major political power in southern India.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Which ruler of the Chalukyas adopted the title of "Vallabhashvara"?

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Q.2. Who was the founder of the Chalukyas of Kalyani dynasty?

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Q.3. What is the meaning of the term 'Pallava'?

.....

Q.4. Who was the author of a play, 'Mattaritasa-Prahasana'?

.....

Q.5. Which Pallava ruler constructed the famous Kailasanatha temple of Kanchi and the Shore temple at Mahamallapura?

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8.6 PANDYAS

The Pandyas also emerged as a power in South India in the post Gupta era. Their kingdom roughly comprised the present districts of Madura, Ramnad and Tinnevely in south India. Madura was the capital of the Pandya kingdom. In the early times the Korkai port was the chief commercial centre of the Pandya kingdom. And later on Kayal became the main centre of trade and commerce of the kingdom.

The earliest references of the Pandya kingdom were found in the Arthasastra of Kautilya, in the Mahavamsa, in the writings of Megasthenes, in the Hathigumpha inscription, in the writings of Strabo, in the Periplus, in the Geography of Ptolemy and in the II and III Rock Edicts of Asoka etc. The II and III Rock Edicts of Asoka described the Pandyas as an independent people on the southern frontiers of his kingdom. However for a long time the chronological and detail history of the Pandyas remained in obscurity. Probably due to the growing power of the Pallavas, the power of the Pandyas got undermined and in the 6th century C.E. the Kalabhras occupied the Pandya kingdom. However towards the end of the 6th century C.E. or the

beginning of the 7th century C.E., the Pandya king Kadungon ousted the intruders and revived the Pandya power. But not much information is available about him.

The next notable ruler of the Pandya kingdom was Arikesari Maravarman who ruled in the middle of the 7th century C.E. He was identified with Nedumaran or the legendary Kun Pandya. During the reign of the Arikesari Maravarman and his successors Koccadayan Ranadhira, Maravarman Rajasimha I and Nedunjadayan Varaguna I, the Pandya kingdom continued to expand on all sides at the expense of the Cholas, the Keralas and other neighbours. Nedunjadayan Varaguna I even annexed Venada (south Travancore). His son and successor Sri-Mara-Ari-Vallabha (815-862 C.E.) defeated a combined force of the Pallavas, Gangas and the Cholas at Kudamukku (Kumbakonam). However the Pandya king Varagunavarman or Varaguna II was defeated by the Pallava king Aparajitavarman in about 880 C.E. in the battle of Sri-Purambiyam (Tiruppurambiyam) near Kumbakonam.



Maduraikonda means the "Captor of Madurai"

The rise of the Cholas gave another blow to the Pandya kingdom. It is said that the Pandya king Maravarman Rajasimha II allied himself with the ruler of Ceylon, attacked the Chola king Parantaka I. But Parantaka I not only successfully repulsed him but also seized the Pandya territories and assumed the title of 'Maduraikonda' to commemorate his victory. Thereafter Maravarman Rajasimha II fled to Ceylon from where he tried to regain his position. But all his efforts ended in failure. From this time onwards the Pandya Kingdom lost their independence and remained under the Chola dominance till the beginning of the 13th century C.E. However from time to time the Pandya rulers tried their level best to throw off the Chola supremacy and regain their lost power and prestige. But all these efforts of the Pandya rulers failed.

The accession of Jatavarman Kulasakhara in 1190 C.E. was a turning point to the fortunes of the Pandyas. From his time onwards the recovery of the Pandya power and prestige began and for a century or more they maintained political dominance in southern India. His successor Maravarman Sundara Pandya I (1216-1238 C.E.) defeated the Cholas and burnt the towns of Tanjore and Uraiyur. In such a situation, Narasimha II

Hoysala came forward for the help of the Chola king Rajaraja III. This deteriorated the relationship between the Pandyas and the Hoysalas.

Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-1272 C.E.) was one of the most powerful rulers of the Pandya kingdom. He crushed the Chola authority in south India and occupied Kanchi. He also subdued the Chera country, Kongudesa and Ceylon. In addition to this, he occupied the fortress of Kannanur-Koppam from the Hoysalas. Even he defeated the Kakatiya Ganapati of Warangal and Kopperunjinga, the Pallava chieftain of Sendamangalam. Thus Jatavarman Sundara Pandya rapidly expanded the Pandya kingdom and soon they emerged as one of the most powerful powers of Southern India. To mark his supreme position, Jatavarman Sundara Pandya even assumed the title of 'Maharajadhiraja-Sri-Paramesvara'.

Maravarman Kulasekhara was another powerful ruler of the Pandyas. He won some military successes against the Malainadu and Ceylon. He also built a palace at Jayangondasolapuram. But his last days were very tragic. There was a fratricidal struggle between his illegitimate son Vira Pandya and his legitimate son Sundara and both of them were co-rulers with their father (Maravarman Kulasekhara) since 1296 C.E. and 1303 C.E. respectively. It is suspected that Maravarman Kulasekhara was murdered. The dispute between the two brothers provided a golden opportunity to Malik Kafur, the general of Alauddin Khalji to lead an expedition to Madura in 1310 C.E. He plundered and looted the wealth of Madura. A few years later Alauddin Khalji again sent a strong force against the Pandya kingdom under Khusru Khan. The Chera king Ravivarman Kulasekhara and the Kakatiyas of Warangal also took the advantage of the prevailing chaotic situation in the Pandya kingdom. Thus weakened by all sides, the Pandya kingdom soon disintegrated and disappeared from the scene.

8.7 CHOLAS

After the decline of the Pallavas the imperial Cholas came to the forefront towards the close of the 9th century C.E. The founder of the Chola Empire was Vijayalaya who was a feudatory of the Pallavas of Kanchi. Taking advantage of the Pallava-Pandya conflict he increased his power

and captured Tanjore in 850 C.E. His son and successor Aditya I defeated the Pallava king Aparajita in around 903 A.D. and annexed a greater portion of the Pallava kingdom. By the end of the 9th century C.E., the Cholas had completely defeated the Pallavas. The Pandyas were also defeated by the Cholas. The Rashtrakutsa king Krishna II gave his daughter in marriage to Aditya. Aditya I was succeeded by his son Parantaka I in 907 C.E. who enhanced the power and prestige of the Cholas. He conquered Madurai by defeating the Pandya ruler Rajasimha II and thereafter he assumed the title of "Maduraikonda". However the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna III inflicted a crushing defeat upon Parantaka I at the battle of "Tokkolam" in 949 C.E. As a result of this defeat the Cholas had to cede Tondamandalam to the Rashtrakutas. This conflict gave a serious setback to the rising power of the Cholas and it took some time to recover from this. With the accession of Parantaka II the revival of the Chola power began. He recovered Tondamandalam.



Gangaikondachola means 'The Chola conqueror of Ganga'

The power of the Cholas reached its zenith during the reign of Arumolivarman, who was the successor of Parantaka II. He crowned himself as Rajaraja I in 985 C.E. His reign witnessed the territorial expansion of the Chola kingdom along with a well organized administration. He possessed a powerful standing army and navy and with the help of this he defeated the Chera, Pandyas, Ceylon and the Chalukyas of Vengi. After defeating the Ceylonese king Mahinda V, Polonnaruva became the capital of Chola province in North Ceylon. He also annexed Mysore, Tanjore and Maldives to his empire. Rajaraja I built the magnificent Shiva temple of Brihadeshwara or Rajaraja temple at Thanjavur. The construction of this temple was completed in 1010 C.E. He was succeeded by his son Rajendra I in 1014 C.E. Rajendra I followed the expansionist policy of his father and made extensive conquests in Ceylon. He also defeated Mahipala, the Pala ruler of Bengal in 1022 C.E. and to commemorate the occasion, he assumed the title of "Gangaikondachola". Rajendra I built his new capital near the mouth of the Kaveri and called it "Gangaikondacholapuram" (the city of the Chola conqueror of the Ganga). With his strong naval force, Rajendra I

invaded Malaya Peninsula, Srivijaya Empire, Java and the neighbouring islands and thereby controlled the overseas trade route to China. For political as well as commercial purposes he sent two diplomatic missions to China.

Rajendra I was succeeded by his son Rajadhiraja I in 1044 C.E. He suppressed the rebellious Pandyas and defeated the hostile forces in Ceylon and subjugated their territory. After sacking Kalyani, he performed Virabhisheka (coronation of the victor) at Kalyani and assumed the title of Vijayarajendra to celebrate his victory. He died in a battle with the Chalukyan king Somesvara I at Koppam. Rajendra II succeeded his brother Rajadhiraja I and defeated Somesvara I in the battle of Kudal Sangamam. Virarajendra I (1063-1070 C.E.), the next ruler of the Chola Empire defeated the Chalukyas and erected a pillar of victory on the banks of Tungabhadra.

Virarajendra I was succeeded by Kulottunga I (1070-1122 C.E.), the great-grandson of Rajaraja I. He defeated the rulers of Kerala and the Pandya Kingdom. During the reign of Kulottunga I, the Ceylonese king Vijayababu overthrew the Chola authority in Ceylon. Kulottunga I maintained cordial relations with Sri Vijaya and also sent a large embassy of 72 merchants to China. He was titled “Sungam tavirtta” (he who abolished tolls).



LET US KNOW

Kulottunga I was the son of Rajendra Narendra of Vengi and the Chola princess Ammangadevi (daughter of Rajendra Chola I). As a result of this Kulottunga I united the two kingdoms of Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and the Cholas of Thanjavur.

Kulottunga I was succeeded by weak rulers and there was a clash between the Cholas and the later Chalukyas over the over lordship of Vengi, the Tungabhadra doab and the Ganga country. By the end of the 13th century C.E. the power of the Cholas started to decline. In 1297 C.E. the Pandya king Sundara seized Kanchi and the place of the Cholas was taken over by the Pandyas and the Hoysalas. This marked the end of the Chola power.

The Cholas had a hereditary monarchy and the king was the head of the administration. The council of ministers aid and assist the king in the smooth running of the administration. There were several other officials who used to play an effective role in the administrative matters of the state and they were paid by assignments of land called 'Jivitas' according to their status. The Cholas had a very strong army which was consisted of the infantry, cavalry and the elephants. They also paid special attention to their navy. The land tax was the main source of income of the Chola government.

For better administration, the whole Chola Empire was divided into 'Mandalam' or provinces which were further divided into 'Valanadudus' (divisions), 'Nadus' (districts) and 'Kurrams' (villages). The village was the basic unit of Chola administration. The Cholas were best known for their local self government at the village level. To look after the affairs of the village, each village had an assembly. There were three assemblies called the Ur, Sabha or Mahasabha and Nagaram. Ur was the general assembly of the village which consisted of all the taxpaying residents of an ordinary village. Sabha or Mahasabha was an exclusively Brahmin assembly of the brahmadeya village which functioned largely through its committees called the variyams. The Nagaram was the assembly of the merchants and were found more commonly in the trading centers. There was a close contact between the central authority and the local bodies.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6. Which Pandya ruler assumed the title of 'Maharajadhiraja-Sri-Paramesvara'?

.....

Q.7. Who was the founder of the Chola Empire?

.....

8.8 DECCAN POLITY

The polity or the administrative structure of the Deccan rulers under different political power houses or dynasties in the early medieval India seems to be very interesting and politically significant. It is because of the fact that in those days of scanty and slow means of communication it was quite remarkable that they could rule for long periods over extensive territories. Infact, the machinery of administration under different ruling dynasties remained more or less the same in its different aspects, except that its parts or constituents varied with the time. Official designation of the functionaries also changed, but their functions never changed.

There was no non-monarchical form of government. All the ruling dynasties of South India believed in hereditary monarchy. Law of primogeniture was followed. The eldest prince was anointed by the king as *yuvaraja* in his own life time. At the death of the king, the *yuvaraja* used to succeed the deceased king. Sometimes, if a younger prince was found to be having more ability and capability for governance, the claim of the eldest prince used to pass over to the younger prince. In case, the king used to be a minor, a near relation used to act as *regent*.

For their administrative convenience, the Deccan rulers used to divide their kingdom or *rajya* into a number of provinces. The provinces were called *bhukti*, *bhumi*, *mandala* or *mandalam*. The provinces were again sub-divided into divisions called *kottams* or *valanadu* which were subsequently divided into districts called *nadu*. Every *nadu* used to have a group of villages under its jurisdiction which were collectively called as *kurram*. The villages were at the lowest level of administration and were called as *grama* or *gramam*.

A host of officials, the central, provincial and local of high and low category were there to carry out the administration. It was sometime very difficult to differentiate between the civil and the military officials. Other then these officials, there were functionaries like the *mantrins* (ministers) and *amatyas* (counselors) to assist the king in running the administration. But,

probably, there was nothing like *mantriparishad* (council of ministers) to advise and guide the king, indicating that the Deccan rulers enjoyed arbitrary powers thereby reigning as absolute authority. The Deccan rulers also had feudatories called *mahasamantas* or *samantas* who provided personal attendance to them and assisted them in military campaigns.

At the bottom of the administrative structure of the Deccan rulers, there existed village assemblies in the form of *sabha* or *mahasabha,* providing uniqueness to the entire polity. These village assemblies were under the supervision of the imperial officials, but they enjoyed full authority in the management of rural affairs. For efficiently performing the task, the village assemblies used to assign their responsibility of upkeep and improvement of temples, tanks, public baths, gardens, fields, etc to various sub-committees. Elaborate rules were devised for the election of the member to these village assemblies. A member was elected for one year only.



Regent: an interim sovereign authority.

In this way the Deccan rulers maintained law and order in the state which they considered as their primary duty. They also undertook works of public utility to promote the prosperity of people. Though the rulers were aggressive in their foreign relations, yet they were very much anxious to preserve peace and security within their kingdoms.

8.9 SOCIETY, TRADE AND COMMERCE

- **Society**

The Deccan society during the early medieval India was organised on the basis of the caste system. The society was divided into a number of social groups or castes. Each caste was hereditary and constituted an occupational group. Apart from the four main castes, there were sub-castes like the Kaikolas, the Chattis, the Kammalas and others.

Brahmanas occupied a privileged position in the society. They enjoyed both religious authority and economic power. They were given lighter punishments for committing any kind of offence. The main duties of the Brahmanas included learning and teaching of the Vedas and performing

rituals and ceremonies. Some of them too served as chief priests of the temple. A few of them got themselves engaged in trade.

The position of women was not at all satisfactory in the society. They were inferior to men both in theory and practice. The practice of Sati and child marriage was prevalent. The women who did not perform sati were considered sinful and such women had to live a much degraded life. The women were not allowed to own property. They were not recruited as soldiers, ministers, ambassadors or other advisers of the king. This indicates that the women had no say in the matters of state craft.

There were different kinds of marriages prevalent in the society. The people were accustomed to good food, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Dresses of different forms and qualities were worn by the people. Stitched garments were also in use in a limited manner. Ornaments were too worn by women and they loved perfumes. The people had different means of entertainment to enjoy their leisure time. They also believed in such superstitions the dreams of omens, ghosts, and spirits and were very much afraid of them.

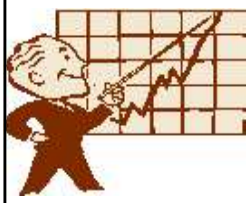
- **Trade and Commerce**

Trade and commerce was in a fairly flourishing condition in the Deccan during the early medieval India. Maritime facilities available in the region greatly facilitated the development of commercial activities. Not only was there a coastal trade among the different parts of India, but a regular mercantile traffic was also carried on between India on the one hand and the Eastern and Western countries on the other. The Deccan traders also had a regular commercial intercourse with the Indian colonies beyond the sea.

With trade being in such a flourishing tradition, the manufactures in the Deccan produced goods for consumption in the local market as well as for this export to the foreign countries. Superior quality textiles, metal wares, salt and pottery were produced for export as they had a ready market outside. Besides, spices, precious stones, sandal wood, pearls, ivory, camphor, etc were also exported. Some of the famous ports in the Deccan were Mahabalipuram, Kaveripattanam, Korkai, Shaliyur, etc.

The merchants having a profitable trade used to organise themselves into guilds or corporations for regulating their business. Small guilds were known as *nagaram* and the large guilds were known as *manigramam*. Each guild used to have its chief and members in corporate capacity. They were free to administer their internal affairs as the State did not interfere much with them.

The guilds bought goods from the manufacturers and used to sell them in the market. The large guilds ventured in foreign trade and received state protection in case any competing power tried to destroy their trade. These guilds sometimes even acted as banks where money could be deposited at a certain rate of interest.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q8: The provinces were called as what under the Deccan system of polity?

……

Q9: For how many years a member of the village assembly was elected under the Deccan system of polity?

……

Q10: Name any two sub-castes of the Deccan society.

……

Q11: Who occupied a privilege position in the Deccan society?

……

Q12: Name any two famous ports of Deccan India.

……

Q13: Small guilds were known in the Deccan as.

……

8.10 PUSHYABHUTIS

One of the ruling dynasties that emerged in Northern India during the early medieval India was the Pushyabhutis. The founder ruler of this

dynasty was Pushyabhuti after whom the dynasty was named. The Pushyabhuti rulers initially ruled from Thaneswar (Haryana) and later on from Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh). The early rulers of this dynasty, namely, Pushyabhuti, Naravardhana, Rajyavardhana I and Adityavardhana assumed the title of Maharaja which probably indicates that these rulers were feudatory rulers under the imperial Guptas.

Prabhakaravardhana, son of Adityavardhan was the first important ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty as he ruled independently assuming the title of *Maharajadhiraja*. He defeated the Hunas, the ruler of Gurjara, and the king of Malwa. He also established matrimonial relationship with the Maukharis, a powerful ruling dynasty of Kannauj by giving in marriage his daughter Rajyashree in marriage to the Maukhari king Grahavarman. Prabhakaravardhana had two sons Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana, both of whom ruled one after another over the Pushyabhuti kingdom.

At the death of Prabhakaravardhana, his eldest son Rajyavardhana ascended the throne of Pushyabhutis in 605 C.E. Almost at the same time king Devagupta of Malwa and king Sasanka of Gauda formed an alliance and attacked Kannauj. The king Devagupta of Malwa successfully led this campaign against Kannauj killing its ruler Grahavarman, captured queen Rajyashree and occupied the kingdom. At this Rajyavardhana decided to take revenge of the killing of his brother-in-law, rescue his sister Rajyashree and recover Kannauj. He immediately marched against king Devagupta of Malwa leaving his brother Harshavardhana at the capital to look after the kingdom. In a fierce battle he killed Devagupta and recovered Kannauj. But king Sasanka of Gauda, the ally of deceased king Devagupta, treacherously murdered Rajyavardhana and once again occupied Kannauj.

The sudden death of Rajyavardhana forced his brother Harshavardhana to sit at the throne of Thaneswar at a very young age of 16 in 606 C.E. The reign and achievements of Harshavardhana who emerged as the greatest king of the Pushyabhuti dynasty will be discussed in the next sub-section.

8.11 HARSHAVARDHANA OF THANESWAR

Harshavardhana had to encounter many problems immediately after his accession. He, at first, released his sister Rajyashree and restored her back the kingdom of Kannauj by driving away Sasanka from there. At the request of his sister, Harshavardhana also had to take the responsibility of administering the kingdom of Kannauj as no rightful heir to the throne was there. As such, Harshavardhana united the kingdom of Thaneswar and kingdom of Kannauj into one which greatly strengthened his position. He even transferred his capital from Thaneswar to Kannauj as it was located in a more central place to administer the entire kingdom.

With his newly acquired power and position, Harshavardhana started his conquests. He brought most of Northern India, namely, Punjab, Malwa, Magadha, Orissa, and Mithila under his control and thereby assumed the title of *Siladitya*. Then he turned his attention towards Western India where he defeated the king of Valabhi, but had to face defeat at the hands of Pulakesin II, the Chalukya ruler of Badami. Being defeated, Harshavardhana had to turn towards eastern India where he founded an ally in king Bhaskaravarman of Kamrup who helped him in his successful campaign against king Sasanka of Gauda. Harshavardhana successfully occupied parts of the Gauda kingdom.

The successful expeditions of Harshavardhana, except the one against Pulakesin II, proved his military prowess and also testify the vastness of his kingdom. To rule such a vast kingdom, Harshavardhana organised a decentralised system of administration with elements of feudalism in it. The king was the centre of administration and was assisted by the crown prince. The majority part of the territory conquered by him was ruled by the feudatories. Even princes of royal blood were appointed as Viceroys of provinces. Several ministers and other officials were also there to assist in the administration. In order to supervise the administration, Harshavardhana maintained contact with the public opinion through his officers and by his own tours.

Harshavardhana was also a man of considerable literary interests and talents. Despite of his duties as a ruler, he wrote three plays, *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarshika*, and *Nagananda*. His court was a magnificent one being adorned by great luminaries like Banabhatta, Mayura, Bhartrihari and others. Harshavardhana was even the chief patron of the Nalanda University where during that period 10,000 students from all parts of India and abroad studied. In religious matters, he was liberal and secular. He was a born Hindu and worshipped Lord Shiva. But later on he accepted Buddhism and changed over to its Mahayana form being influenced by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who visited his kingdom. Harshavardhana also exchanged diplomatic missions with China.

8.12 RELATION OF HARSHAVARDHANA WITH KAMRUPA KINGDOM

The relationship of Harshavardhana with the kingdom of Kamrupa was very much cordial. A friendly relationship, rather an alliance, was established between king Bhaskaravarman and king Harshavardhana. This friendship proved to be equally beneficial for both the rulers in strengthening their respective political positions. Further, Bhaskaravarman, on the basis of this relation, could play an important role in the political history of Northern India in the first half of the 7th century C.E.

Bhaskaravarman ascended the throne of Kamarupa in c.600 **C.E.** and ruled till c.650 **C.E.** for a period of fifty years. He was the most illustrious of all the Varman rulers. At the time of his accession, the glory of the kingdom of Kamarupa was greatly undermined with the loss of Pundravardhana and the defeat at the hands of Mahasenagupta and Sasanka. Bhaskaravarman could not tolerate the rise of Sasanka of Gauda.

It was under such a situation that Bhaskaravarman sought the friendship of king Harshavardhana who too had enmity with king Sasanka of Gauda. Bhaskaravarman sent an embassy to Harshavardhana under Hamsavega with valuable items for seeking the latter's alliance against their common enemy. Harsha too was in need of an ally and he heartily welcomed the offer and thus, was formed an offensive and defensive alliance between the two independent monarchs of Northern and Eastern India.

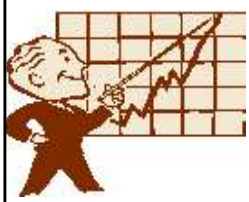
The combined forces of Harshavardhana and Bhaskaravarman probably launched an attack upon Sasanka. From the West, Bhandi, the cousin and general of Harshavardhana attacked Gauda. While from the East, Bhaskaravarman fell upon him. Unable to face the combined attack, Sasanka fled away to Orissa where he continued to rule till c.619-620 C.E. With this victory, Gauda with its capital city of Karnasuvarna came into the possession of Bhaskaravarman. To commemorate the occasion, he issued from his victorious camp at Karnasuvarna the famous *Nidhanpur grants* reconfirming the land grants made by Bhutivarman in Pundravardhana.



LET US KNOW

To make friendship with Harshavardhana, king Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa sent his ambassador Hamsavega, who met Harshavardhana with rich presents like *Abhoga* (umbrella of Varuna), crest jewels, pearl necklaces, silken cloth, manuscripts on aloe bark, drinking vessel, etc.

By forming an alliance with Harshavardhana, Bhaskaravarman not only recovered the lost glory and possession of the kingdom of Kamarupa, but also carried the political glory of Kamarupa to a point not reached ever before. Later, Bhaskaravarman too participated in the religious assembly at Kannauj and religious convocation at Prayaga arranged by Harshavardhana. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang visited the kingdom of Kamarupa and stayed at the court of king Bhaskaravarman. The Chinese pilgrim was very much pleased with the hospitality of Bhaskaravarman and with the peace and prosperity prevailing in the kingdom of Kamarupa.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q14: Who was the founder ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty?

……

Q15: At what age did Harshavardhana ascend the throne of Thaneswar?

……

Q16: Who united the kingdom of Thaneswar and kingdom of Kannauj?

……

Q17: Who was Pulakesin II?

……

Q18: Who was the chief patron of the Nalanda University?

……

Q19: When did Bhaskaravarman ascended the throne of Kamarupa?

……

Q20: Who was Bhandi?

……

Q21: Name the capital city of the kingdom of Gauda.

……



8.13 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt

- The emergence of the Chalukyas in the post Gupta era. They were one of the most important regional powers of south India. They ruled over four different regions of India at different periods of time. They were as such known as the Chalukyas of Badami, the Chalukyas of Vengi, the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Chalukyas of Anhilwada.
- The Chalukya power at Badami had a humble beginning under Jayasimha and his son Ranaraga. Pulakesin I (550-566 C.E.) was he was the real founder of the Chalukya dynasty of Badami. He made Vatapi or Badami as his capital. Pulakesin II raised the power and prestige of the Chalukyas of Badami. But in about 642 C.E. the

Pallava king Narasimhavarman I occupied the Chalukya capital Badami and in this fight Pulakesin II was killed.

- Pulakesin II was succeeded by his son Vikramaditya I. He restored the power of the Chalukyas by regaining the territories which were earlier lost to the Pallavas. He even plundered the Pallava capital Kanchi. The last ruler of the Chalukyas of Badami was Kirtivarman II. He was defeated by one of his feudatories, Dantidurga. Thereafter Dantidurga founded the Rashtrakuta dynasty which finally put an end to the Chalukya dynasty of Badami.

- The polity or administrative structure of the Deccan under different ruling dynasties during the early medieval India had been more or less similar despite the geographical variations in territory. It was a monarchical form of government with hereditary monarchy and the law of primogeniture being followed. For administrative convenience, the kingdom was divided into a number of administrative units. There were **mahasamantas**, **samantas**, **mantrins**, **amatyas**, and others to assist the king. The village assemblies in the form of sabha or mahasabha were at the bottom of the Deccan polity.
- During the early medieval India, caste system prevailed in the Deccan society. Apart from the four castes, there were various sub-castes in the society. Position of women was inferior to that of men. The people were very much fond of food, dress, ornaments and amusements.
- Trade and commerce flourished greatly in the Deccan during the early medieval India. Trade was carried on with the foreign countries of both East and West as well as Indian colonies outside. Many ports were there from where textile, metal wares, spices, ivory, etc were exported. The merchants having profitable business used to organise themselves into guilds.
- The Pushyabhuti dynasty emerged in Northern India during the early medieval India. The founder ruler of this dynasty was Pushyabhuti after

whom the dynasty was named. The Pushyabhuti rulers initially ruled from Thaneswar (Haryana) and later on from Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh). Prabhakaravardhana was the first important ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. The most illustrious ruler of this dynasty was Harshavardhana, the youngest son of Prabhakaravardhana.

- Harshavardhana ascended the throne of Thaneswar at a very young age of 16 in 606 C.E. and had to face various problems, which he successfully encountered. He was a good warrior and administrator also had interest in literature and wrote three plays.
- Harshavardhana established friendly relationship with king Bhaskaravarman of Kamrupa. Both were in need of an ally and as such they entered into an offensive and defensive alliance. The combined forces of Harshavardhana and Bhaskaravarman probably defeated king Sasanka of Gauda, their common enemy. By forming an alliance with Harshavardhana, Bhaskaravarman carried the political glory of Kamarupa to a point not reached ever before.



8.14 FURTHER READING

1. Chandra, Sathish(2007) *A History of Medieval India*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi
2. Chattopadhyaya, B.D.(1994) *The Making of Early Medieval India*, OUP
3. Maiti, Provatansu (2000): *Studies In Ancient India (Pre-Historic Age-1206* C.E.*),* Sreedhar Publishers, Calcutta.



8.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question no 1: The provinces were called as *bhukti*, *bhumi*, *mandala* or *mandalam* under the Deccan system of polity.

Answer to the question no 2: A member of the village assembly was elected for one year only under the Deccan system of polity.

Answer to the question no 3: The Kaikolas and the Chattis.

Answer to the question no 4: The Brahmanas occupied a privilege position in the Deccan society.

Answer to the question no 5: Mahabalipuram and Shaliyur.

Answer to the question no 6: Nagaram.

Answer to the question no 7: Pushyabhuti.

Answer to the question no 8: 16.

Answer to the question no 9: Harshavardhana united the kingdom of Thaneswar and kingdom of Kannauj.

Answer to the question no 10: The Chalukya ruler of Badami who defeated Harshavardhana.

Answer to the question no 11: King Harshavardhana.

Answer to the question no 12: Bhaskaravarman ascended the throne of Kamarupa in c.600 C.E.

Answer to the question no 13: The cousin and general of Harshavardhana.

Answer to the question no 14: Karnasuvarna.



8.16 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) VERY SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q.1. Who was “Vishnuvardhana”?

Q.2. Who was the founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty?

Q.3. Who assumed title of ‘Vatapikonda’?

Q.4. Who was the last ruler of the Pallavas?

Q.5. Who was the author of Dasakumarcharitam?

Q.6. Who is the author of the” Arthasastra”?

Q.7: Who used to be anointed as Yuvaraja by the king under the Deccan system of polity?

Q.8: Name the two social evils which were present in the Deccan society.

Q.9: Name any two items exported from the Deccan ports.

Q.10: Who was the first important ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty?

Q11: What title was assumed by king Harshavardhana?

Q12: Name the Chinese pilgrim who visited the kingdom of Kamarupa.

B) SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q.1. Name two temples constructed under the patronage of the Chalukya rulers of Badami.

Q.2. Name two temples constructed by the Pallava rulers.

Q.3. Name two natural ports which were under the Chera kingdom.

Q.4. Who was Malik Kafur?

Q.5. What is "Ur"?

Q.6: How did the village assemblies function under the Deccan system of Polity?

Q.7: What position was enjoyed by women in the Deccan society?

Q.8: How did the guilds form by the merchants of Deccan did function?

C) LONG QUESTIONS (Answer each question in between 300-500 words)

Q.1. Write in details about the emergence of the Chalukyas as one of the major political powers of south India in the post Gupta period.

Q.2. Discuss about the political history of the Pallavas.

Q.3: Discuss the Deccan system of Polity.

Q.4: Write a note on the society of Deccan during early medieval India.

Q.5: Describe the emergence of Pushyabhutis in Northern India.

Q.6: Critically estimate the reign of king Harshavardhana?

Q.7: Examine the relationship between king Harshavardhana and king Bhaskaravarman of Kamrupa.

*** ***** ***