



Chalukya Vikramaditya – I (655 A.D. - 682 A.D.)

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Abstract

Vikramaditya I proved to be a great ruler like that of his father (Pulakeshin II), he recovered his father's throne and restored order in the fractured kingdom. Vikramaditya I defeated the Pallavas and even captured the Pallava capital Kanchi. He became the emperor of the Southern kingdom bounded by the three seas.

Keywords:

Chalukyas;
Pulakeshin II;
Vikramaditya I;
Chalukya-Pallava Conflict;
Battle of Paruvelanallur;
Gujarat branch of
Chalukyas.

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1. Introduction

The mighty king of the Chalukyas – Pulakesin II who had defeated Harshavardhana and also Pallavas . Then he himself fell a victim to the Pallava fury. An inscription on a rock behind the temple of Mallikarjuna in Badami dated in the 13th regnal year of Narasimhavarman attests to this day the retribution that fell on Pulakesin II. The enemy occupied Badami, and according to the inscriptions of Pallavas, Narasimhavarman destroyed it. This should have occurred in 642[1]. Chalukyan Kingdom was dismembered and a large part of it was annexed to the Pallava dominions[2]. But Vikramaditya I defeated the Pallavas and established Chalukyan Supremacy.

2. Successors of Pulakesi II

Pulakesin had four sons[2] Aditya Varma, Chandraditya, Vikramaditya, Dharasraya-Jayasimha Varman. The last of them established the Gujarat branch of the Chalukya family[3]. Chandraditya was ruling over Savanavadi and Aditya Varman ruled over district near the confluence of Krishna and Tungabhadra[4]. A daughter of Pulakesi is also mentioned in the copper plates of Hosur[5]. Her name is stated as Ambera. According to Mujumdar, Vikramaditya was also ruling in some part of the Chalukyan kingdom before his accession to the throne[6]. The titles assumed by these brothers as Maharajadhiraja indicates that they should have been independent kings, without a central authority. It is also possible that they should have taken the cudgel against Vikramaditya, since he was considered as Pulakesi's "Priyathanaya"[7] and as he had received the dignity of heir apparent before ascending the throne [8]. One more elder brother of Vikramaditya is also

mentioned, namely, Ranaraga Varma[9]. It is possible that he might have been the same as Chandraditya[9]. Pulakesi II himself had appointed his sons as Viceroy[10].

Near about thirteen years the Chalukya empire remained in a disintegrated state without a central authority to exercise control. The Pallava king Narasimhavarman appears to have repaired to his kingdom after the victory and occupied some parts of the Chalukya territory including Badami. The sons of Pulakesi did, in getting rid of Pallavas? But neither conquest nor annexation was intended by the invader except punishment[11]. It is believed that Chalukya throne remained vacant during 642 to 655 A.D. Apparently Pallavas were not in occupation of the entire Chalukya kingdom. But there were several claimants to the throne although none of them succeeded.

Thirteen years after this Pallava interregnum in Chalukya history emerges Vikramaditya I as if from obscurity in 655 A.D.[12] He was a great soldier like his father and a talented organiser whose administration lasted for more than two and a half - decades. He bore the title “satyasraya Sri Prithvivallaba Maharajadhiraja Parameshwara” (as seen from the Talamanchi Plates)[13] and SriVallabha[2]. The later appears to have been used only by Vikramaditya I[14]. He was well versed in politics of the day and clearly understood the task ahead of him. He was well educated under the guidance of his preceptor Meghacharya who was learned in the Vedas with their Angas and Upa-angas and he had received considerable amount of administrative training as a Viceroy under Pulakeshi II[13].

Vikramaditya's immediate concern was to retrieve the fortunes of his father liberate the country from the foreign yoke, the Pallavas who had concealed the royalty of his father and re-establish the orderly government and restore the confidence of the people. In this venture he was helped by his horse Chitrakanta and his companion was his sword alone[15]. It is also stated in his Talamanchi Plates that he had many wounds concealed under his armour. He should have received from his brothers. Vikramaditya's son and grandson Vijayaditya rendered laudable services as seen from the inscriptions. On the basis of an inscription, K.A. Neelakanta Sastri thinks that Ganga Durvineetha, Grandfather of Vikramaditya I helped him in restoring the kingdom[16]. He also gives the following reasons for the help rendered by him, viz., interest in his widowed daughter and her son; hostility to Pallavas who had destroyed his son-in-law and his kingdom and loyalty to the suzerain power, Chalukyas[17]. Dharasraya Jayasimha Varman was his brother who assisted him. He must also have received allegiance and considerable help from the Banas[18] and Sendrakas who were his feudatories. In restoring the kingdom to its original greatness Vikramaditya I had to fight against his kinsmen and against the foreign intruders as indicated in the Kurnool Plates. ‘Svavamsajam-Lakshminim. It means the former was his patrimony from which his relations sought to shut him out, the latter meaning the right to Empire which belonged to Chalukya dynasty[1], both of which were upheld by Vikramaditya engaging in wars against king after king and country after country. However, Panchamukhi writes that there are no evidences to say about the succession dispute between Vikramaditya and his brothers. But this can be explained by referring to the Kurnool Plates which contain a significant variation in the description of Vikramaditya's activities before his accession, i.e. ,”Chitrakanthakya-Divyasvena-Sarvan-Dayadan Vijitya[19].” “Sakala mahamandaladhirajyo” . It suggests that Vikramaditya's opponents were his own relatives(dayadas) or at least his relatives were among his opponents. Another circumstantial evidence that can be adduced to substantiate this is that his relatives did not assist him in freeing the Chalukyan kingdom from the enemies which is indirectly evidenced in many inscriptions and conspicuous by the absence of any such inscriptions to the contrary. Naturally the question arises as to why they did not assist him? It is obvious that there was no love lost between them or lack of patriotism or their self – centered interests were predominant. Therefore, before the capture of the Chalukyan throne by Vikramaditya, a number of struggles should have preceded[20] and he should have been victorious in all of them.

3. Chalukya-Pallava Conflict

Inscriptional evidence, although clear about the Chalukya-Pallava conflict during the period of Vikramaditya, is conflicting in as much as each claims the victory over the other. F. Heras pointed out that they meant two different campaigns at different dates[21]. Dharasraya mentions only one achievement of Vikramaditya, the subjugation of the Pallavas (Navasari Plates). From the manner in which the inscription reads, it is opined that the event was actually in progress at the time of the

grant. It is further strengthened by the Hosur Plates which state that he was in a large military camp in Malliyur to the west of Kanchipuram during 670-71 A.D. At that time Kanchi had not yet been captured.

The Gadwal Plates 670-74 A.D. of Vikramaditya give us the chronological account of his eastern campaign. First of all the capture of Kanchi is noted. Then at the time of making this grant he was encamped at Uracapura in the Cholika province. Uracapura in the Cholika province cannot be any other place but Uraiyur, the ancient capital of the Cholas, near Trichinopoly. Then Pallava records speak of the Chalukyan defeat at Peruvalanallur, a village in Lalgudi Taluk, in Trichinopoly District. It is possible that at the time issuing the Gadwal Plates, he had not suffered any defeat.

Giving an account of the capture of Kanchi, Heras writes that Parameshwaravarman's army advanced and checked the progress of Vikramaditya whose army (if we trust the Kuram Plates) consisted of several lakhs. Probably the Pallava army did not go far from the capital according to the custom. Yet Pallavas were defeated. Such a defeat preceded the capture of Kanchi as evidenced by the Sorab grant which reveals that Vikramaditya received the city of Kanchipura immediately after defeating the lord of the Pallavas, while Gadwal Plates aver that Vikrama defeating Esvarapotaraja seized Kanchi. Parameshwaravarman escaped and probably retired to Andhradesa. Chalukyas crossed the whole Pallava kingdom and camped at Uracapura in the Chola dominions from where the Gadwal Plates were issued. This did not mean an irretrievable catastrophe to the Pallavas except that the work at the monoliths ended as a result of this war[22].

Parameshwaravarman I, who escaped to Andhradesa does not seem to have been pursued by the Chalukyan army since Vikramaditya is found at Uracapura after the capture of Kanchi. At Badami in the absence of Vikramaditya, his son Vinayaditya and grandson Vijayaditya were maintaining peace[23]. Vinayaditya is also said to have waged a war against the pallavas and assisted his father. This indicates that the conquest of Kanchi was not decisive and Vinayaditya should have fought against the Pallavas away from Kanchi. Therefore, it leads us to believe that the Pallava chief in Andhradesha should have revived the confederacy. However, Parameshwaran had not yet been thoroughly vanquished as the Pallava records claim to have defeated Vikramaditya shortly afterwards. Possibly the Chalukyas did not guess that Pallavas would organise themselves so soon to wreak their vengeance and they were resting on their temporary victory while a surprise attack should have been delivered on Chalukyas at Paruvelanallur.

4. Battle of Paruvelanallur

Parameshwaravarman made decisive preparations for an attack on the Chalukyan king. He was not aided by any other king in this venture. Kuram Plates describe the Pallava army on the occasion. They record that "the disc of the sun was caused to assume the likeness of the circle of the moon through the mist of the dust, that was produced by the marching of countless troops of men, horses and elephants which was terrible through the thunder like sound of drums which teamed with unsheathed swords that resembled flashes of lightning, in which elephants were moving like clouds, and which resembled an unseasonable appearance of the rainy season, in which tall horses looked like billows, in which elephants caused distress on their path just as sea monsters produce whirl pools in which conches were incessantly blown, and which resembled the gaping ocean, which was full of swords and shields just as of rhinoceroses, creepers and Varna (trees) which was crowded with heroes who possessed bows and mighty elephants, as it is were crowded with grass and with sundry kinds of trees in which confused noises were raised and which appeared to be a forest."

Vikramaditya did not fail to offer a battle to the Pallava king. But he was unsuccessful. It is evidenced by Kuram Velur Paliyam and Udayendiram Plates of Parameshwaravarman I, Nandivarman III and Nandivarman Pallavamalla respectively. Kuram Plates further explain that Vikramaditya unaided took to flight covered only by a rag. Vikramaditya is also said to have defeated the 'Trairajya'. Many scholars have identified 'Trairajya' with the Pallavas. A close examination of the meaning of the Talamanchi Plates reveal that before the accession of Vikramaditya to the throne the Chalukyan kingdom had suffered under the 'Rajatraya' and it is well known that the Chalukyas were defeated by the Pallavas during the closing years of Pulakesi

II. It is reasonable therefore, to believe that the Pallavas should have been in possession of or dominating the Chalukyan kingdom and not Chera, Chola and Pandya.

5. Gujarat Branch of Chalukyas

Just as we notice the branching of their family during the reign of Pulakeshi II (Eastern branch), so do we notice the Gujarat branch of the family taking shape during the reign of Vikramaditya I. The Nausari Plates[24] of Dharasraya Jayasimhavarman (671 A.D.) point out that, that prince owed his allegiance and prosperity to the kindness of his elder brother Vikramaditya I. This grant was made by the son of Dharasraya. In an undated inscription found at Arkatavemula in the Proddatur taluk, certain Bhupaditya appears as a subordinate to Srivallabha Maharajadiraja Parameshwara Bhattaraka[25]. It is generally believed that Srivallabha title is of the Chalukyan family. Since no body except Vikramaditya I. Bhupaditya helped his master in reducing the chiefs of the Perbanavamsa ruling in the neighbourhood.

6. Summary

The Chalukya empire which had reduced in size after Pulakeshi's death, rised its head with the advent of Vikramaditya I. He defeated the Pallavas and even the Master of the Mahamalla dynasty. Cholas, Pandyas and Keralas again accepted the overlordship of the Chalukyan emperor as we notice the branching of their family during the reign of Pulakeshi II (Eastern branch), so do we notice the Gujarat branch of the family taking shape during the reign of Vikramaditya I.

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