

11th History Lesson 4 Notes in English

4. Cultural Development in South India

Introduction

- The political history of south India during the sixth century to ninth century CE was marked by conflicts between the **Chalukyas of Badami (also known as Western Chalukyas)**, and the **Pallavas of Kanchi**.
- At the same time, the period also saw great advancements in the field of culture and literature. It also broke new grounds in areas like devotional literature, art and architecture.
- The Bhakti movement, which impacted the entire sub-continent, originated in the Tamil country during this period.

Sources

- Inscriptions on copperplates, on temple walls and pillars form a major source of historical information for this period. Inscriptions issued by **Chalukyas in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit languages, and Pallavas in Tamil and Sanskrit**, recording land grants to Brahmins, as well as the royal and the non-royal gifts made to religious establishment are equally important sources.
- The Aihole inscription of Pulikesin II composed by his court poet **Ravikirti in Sanskrit** is among the most important of Chalukyan inscriptions.
- **Kavirajamarga**, a work on poetics in **Kannada, Vikramarjuna-vijayam**, also called Pampa-bharata, by Pampa in Kannada, which were all of a later period, and **Nannaya's Mahabharatam in Telugu** also provide useful historical data.
- However, pride of place must go to Tamil literature. The Bhakti movement which originated in South India found its greatest expression in the songs composed by the Azhwars and Nayanmars.
- The poems of the Vaishnavite Azhwars were later compiled as the Nalayira Divya Prabhandam. **The Saiva literature was canonized as the Panniru Tirumurai.**
- The Thevaram, composed by Appar (Thirunavukkarasar), Sambandar (Thirugnanasambandar) and Sundarar; and Thiruvavasagam by Manickavasagar are prominent texts which are read as sacred literature to this day. Periyapuram written by Sekizhar, in a later period, also provides much historical information.
- The Mathavilasa Prahasanam written by Mahendravarman I in Sanskrit, is an important source for the Pallava period.
- Many inscriptional sources including the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta and the Aihole inscription of the Chalukya king Pulakesin II provide details of **Pallava - Chalukya conflict**.

- The Kuram copper plates of Parameshwaravarman and the Velurpalayam copper plates of Nandivarman III record their military achievements.
- Coins help us to understand the economic condition of the period. Buddhist sources such as Deepavamsa and Mahavamsa, written in Pali, the accounts of Chinese travellers Hiuen Tsang and Itsing give us details about the socio-religious and cultural conditions of the Pallava times.
- The ninth and tenth century writings of Arab travellers and geographers such as **Sulaiman, Al-Masudi, and Ibn Hauka** also tell us about the socio-political and economic conditions of India of this period.
- The sculptures in the temples in **Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal** reflect the culture of the times.

Chalukyas and Pallavas

Chalukyas

- There are two Chalukya families: Chalukyas of Badami (Vatapi) and Chalukyas of Kalyani. This lesson concerns only the Chalukyas of Badami. Chalukya dynasty emerged as a strong power with its founder **Pulikesin I (c. 535-566 CE)** fortifying a hill near Badami.
- He declared independence from the Kadambas. It is said that he conducted yagnas and performed the asvamedha sacrifice. The capital Badami was founded by **Kirtivarman (566-597)**.
- Pulikesin I's grandson **Pulikesin II (609-642)**, after defeating Mangalesha, proclaimed himself as king, an event that is described in the Aihole inscription.
- One of the most outstanding victories of Pulikesin II was the defeat of Harshavardhana's army on the banks of the Narmada. The kings of Malwa, Kalinga, and eastern Deccan accepted his suzerainty.
- His victories over **Kadambas of Banvasi, and Gangas of Talakad (Mysore)** are also worthy of note.
- However, his attempt to attack Kanchipuram was thwarted by Mahendravarma Pallava. This led to a prolonged war between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas. **Narasimha Varman I (630-668)**, the Pallava King, attacked and occupied Badami.
- Pulikesin II died in the battle. Pallava control over Badami and the southern parts of the Chalukya empire continued for several years. In the mideighth century, the Badami Chalukyas were overpowered and replaced by the Rashtrakutas.

Chalukya Administration



State

- The king was the head of the administration. In dynastic succession primogeniture was not strictly followed.
- Generally, the elder was to be appointed as yuvaraja while the king was in the office. The heir apparent got trained in literature, law, philosophy, martial arts and others. Chalukyan kings claimed to rule according to dharma-sastra and nitisastra.
- **Pulikesin I (543-566)** was well-versed in manu-sastra, puranas, and itihisas. In the beginning, the Chalukya kings assumed titles such as **Maharajan, Sathyasrayan and Sri-Pritivi-Vallaban**.
- After defeating **Harshavardhana**, **Pulikesin II** assumed the title of Parameswaran. Bhattarakan and Maharajathirajan, soon became very popular titles. In the Pallava kingdom,

kings took high-sounding titles such as **Dharma maharajaadhi raja, Maharajadhiraja, Dharma maharaja, Maharaja.**

- In the Hirahadagalli plates the king is introduced as the performer of agnistoma, vajapeya and asvamedha sacrifices.
- The wild boar was the royal insignia of the Chalukyas. It was claimed that it represented the varaha avatar of Vishnu in which he is said to have rescued the Goddess of the Earth. The bull, Siva's mount, was the symbol of the Pallavas.

Royal Women

- **Chalukya dynasty of Jayasimhan I** line appointed royal ladies as provincial governors. They also issued coins in some instances.
- **Vijya Bhattariga**, a Chalukya princess, issued inscriptions. Pallava queens did not take active part in the administration of the kingdom, but they built shrines, and installed images of various deities, and endowed temples.
- The image of Queen Rangapataka, the queen of Rajasimha, is found in the inscription in Kailasanatha temple in Kanchipuram.

The King and His Ministers

- All powers were vested in the king. Inscriptions do not specifically speak of a council of ministers, but they do refer to an official called maha-sandhi-vigrahika.
- Four other categories of ministers are also referred to in the epigraphs: **Pradhana (head minister), Mahasandhi-vigrahika (minister of foreign affairs), Amatya (revenue minister), and Samaharta (minister of exchequer).**
- Chalukyas divided the state into political divisions for the sake of administration: Vishayam, Rastram, Nadu and Grama. Epigraphs speak of the officials like vishayapatis, samantas, gramapohis and mahatras. Vishayapatis exercised the power at the behest of the kings.
- Samantas were feudal lords functioning under the control of the state. Grampohis and gramkudas were village officials. Mahatras were the prominent village men.

Provincial and District Administration

- Generally, the king appointed his sons as the provincial governors. The governors called themselves raja, **marakka-rajana and rajaditya-raja-parameswaran.**
- Some governors held the title maha-samanta and maintained troops. The chief of vishaya was vishayapati. In turn, vishaya was divided into pukti. Its head was pogapati.

Village Administration

- The traditional revenue officials of the villages were called the nalakavundas. The central figure in village administration was **kamunda or pokigan** who were appointed by the kings.

- The village accountant was karana and he was otherwise called gramani. Law and order of the village was in the hands of a group of people called mahajanam.
- There was a special officer called mahapurush, in charge of maintaining order and peace of the village. **Nagarapatis or Purapatis** were the officials of the towns.

Religion

- The Chalukyas patronised both **Saivism and Vaishnavism**. They built temples for Siva and Vishnu.
- Brahmin groups were invited from the Gangetic regions and settled to perform regular pujas and conduct festivals and ceremonies in the temples.
- Notable Chalukya rulers like **Kirtivarman (566-597), Mangalesa (597-609), and Pulikesin II (609-642)** performed yagnas. They bore titles such as parama-vaishana and parama-maheswara.
- Chalukyas gave prominent place to Kartikeyan, the war god. Saiva monasteries became centres for popularising Saivism. Chalukyas patronised heterodox sects also and lavishly donated lands to the Jain centres.
- Ravikirti, the poet-laureate of Pulikesin II, was a Jain scholar. In the reign of **Kirtivarman II (744-755)** a Jain village official built a Jain temple in a place called Annigere. The **prince Krishna (756-775)** appointed **Gunapatra, a Jain monk**, as his master.
- Pujyapatar the author of Jainentriya-viyakarnam was a Jain monk, a contemporary of **Vijayadityan (755-772)**.
- According to Hiuen Tsang, there were many Buddhist centres in the Chalukya territory wherein more than 5000 followers of the Hinayana and Mahayana sects lived.

Literature and Education

- Chalukyas used Sanskrit in pillar inscriptions such as in Aihole and Mahakudam.
- A seventh-century inscription of a Chalukya king at Badami mentions Kannada as the local prakrit, meaning the people's language, and Sanskrit as the language of culture.
- A chieftain of Pulikesin II authored a grammar work Saptavataram in Sanskrit.

Chalukya Architecture

- Historically, in Deccan, Chalukyas introduced the technique of building temples using soft sandstones as medium.
- In Badami, two temples are dedicated to Vishnu and one each to Siva and to the Jaina tirthankaras. Their temples are grouped into two: excavated cave temples and structural temples.
- Badami is known for both structural and excavated cave temples. Pattadakal and Aihole are popular for structural temples.

Aihole (Ayyavole)

- Built in **634**, Aihole, the headquarters of the famous medieval Ayyavole merchants' guild was an important commercial centre. About seventy temples are located in Aihole. The earliest stone-built temple is Lad Khan temple.
- Its unique trait is a stucco pillar with a big capital distinct from northern style. A temple dedicated to the goddess Durga was built on the model of Buddha Chaitya. It stands on a raised platform in the form of semi-circle.
- Another temple, dedicated to the same goddess is called **Huccimalligudi**, which is rectangular in shape. Chalukyas also built Jain temples.
- Megudi Jain temple is illustrative of the evolution of temple architecture under the Chalukyas. The mandapa-type caves are preserved at Aihole.

Badami (Vatapi)

- There are four caves in Badami. The largest cave temple built by Mangalesa is dedicated to Vishnu.
- The reclining posture of Vishnu on the snake bed and Narasimha are exquisite examples of Chalukya art.
- Irrespective of religion, architectural features share a common style. It establishes the technical importance and the **secular attitude of both patron and architect**.

Pattadakal

- Pattadakal, a quiet village in **Bagalkot district of Karnataka**, is famous for its exquisite temples. Pattadakal was a centre for performing royal rituals.
- The Virupaksha temple was built at the order of queen Lohamahadevi to commemorate the **conquest of Kanchipuram by her husband Vikramaditya II**. The unique feature of the structural temple built by Rajasimha at Mamallapuram was adopted here by the Chalukyas.
- Monuments are generally associated with the rulers who built them. However, here we also have signatures of the architects who conceived the edifices and the skilled craftspeople who created them.
- The east porch of the Virupaksha temple has a Kannada inscription eulogizing the architect who designed the temple.
- The architect was given the title **Tribhuavacharya (maker of the three worlds)**. Several reliefs on the temple walls bear signatures of the sculptors who carved them. At the south-eastern corner of the village is the Papanatha temple.
- Similar to the Virupaksha temple in its basic plan, it has a shikara in the northern style. The outer walls are richly decorated with many panels depicting scenes and characters from the Ramayana.

- The eastern wall has a short Kannada inscription, giving the name of the **architect Revadi Ovajja**, who designed the shrine. In Pattadakal, Chalukyas built more than ten temples which demonstrate the evolution in Chalukya architecture.
- On the basis of style these temples are classified into two groups: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian.

Painting

- Paintings are found in a cave temple dedicated to Vishnu in Badami. Chalukyas adopted the Vakataka style in painting.
- Many of the paintings are of incarnations of Vishnu. The most popular Chalukya painting is in the palace built by the **King Mangalesan (597-609)**. It is a scene of ball being watched by members of royal family and others

Pallavas



- There is no scholarly consensus about the origin of the Pallavas. Some early scholars held the view that the word Pallava was a variant of Pahlava, known as Parthians, who moved from western India to the eastern coast of the peninsula, during the wars between the Sakas and the Satavahanas in the second century CE.
- But many scholars today regard them native to south India or “**with some mixture of north Indian blood**”. The Pallavas were associated with Tondaimandalam, the land between the north Pennar and north Vellar rivers.
- Simhavishnu is believed to have conquered the Chola country up to the Kaveri and consolidated his dynastic rule, started by his father Simhavarman. Simhavishnu,

vanquishing the Kalabhras, conquered the land up to the Kaveri, thereby coming into conflict with the Pandyas.

- Simhavishnu's successor **Mahendravarman I (590-630)**, whom **Appar**, converted from Jainism to Saivism, was a patron of arts, and a poet and musician in his own right. During Mahendravarman's reign, the army of Pulikesin II annexed the northern part of Pallava kingdom and almost reached the Pallava capital of Kanchipuram.
- Subsequently, during the reign of Narasimhavarman I (630-668), the Pallavas managed to settle scores by winning several victories over the Chalukyas with the aid of their ally Manavarman, a Sri Lankan prince, who later became ruler of the island kingdom.
- The climax was Narasimhavarman's invasion of the Chalukyan kingdom and his capturing of the Badami.
- Narasimhavarman claims to have defeated the Cholas, Cheras and Kalabhras. Two naval expeditions despatched to help Manavarman were successful, but this Sri Lankan ruler subsequently lost his kingdom. The Pallava-Chalukya conflict continued during the subsequent decades, with some intermittent peace.
- During the reign of his grandson, **Paramesvaravarman I (670-700)**, **Vikramaditya** of the Chalukya kingdom invaded the Pallava country. Paramesvaravarman fought against him with the support of the Gangas and Pandyas.
- As a result, the Pallavas came into conflict with the Pandyas in the south. In the early ninth century, the Rashtrakuta king, Govind III, invaded Kanchi during the reign of the Pallava Dantivarman.
- **Dantivarman's son Nandivarman III** aided by western Gangas and Cholas, defeated the Pandyas at the battle of Sripurambiyam or Thirupurambiyam. Aparajita, grandson of Nandivarman III, lost his life in a battle fought against Aditya I of the Chola kingdom who invaded Tondaimandalam.
- This sealed the fate of the Pallavas. Thereafter, control over Tondaimandalam passed into the hands of the Cholas.

Pallava Administration

- Under the Pallavas, kinship was held to be of divine origin and was hereditary. The king took high-sounding titles, some of which, such as **maharajadhiraja**, were borrowed from north Indian traditions.
- The king was assisted by a group of ministers, and in the later Pallava period this ministerial council played a prominent part in state policy.
- Some of the ministers bore semi-royal titles and may well have been appointed from among the feudatories.
- Distinctions are made between amatyas and mantrins. While a mantri is generally understood to be a diplomat, amatya is a counsellor. Mantri Mandala was a council of ministers.

- Rahasyadhikrita was a private secretary of the king. Manikkappandaram-Kappan was an officer in charge of the treasury (**Manikka - valuables; Pandaram - treasury; Kappan - keeper**).
- Kodukkappillai was the officer of gifts. They were central officers under the Pallava king. Kosa-adhyaksa was the supervisor of the Manikkappandaram-kappan. Judicial courts were called Adhikarna Mandapa and judges called Dharmadhikarins.
- Fines are mentioned in the Kasakudi plates of Nandivarman Pallava as **Karanadandam (fine in superior/ higher court) and Adhikaranadandam (fine in district level)**.
- The governor of a province was advised and assisted by officers in charge of districts who worked in close collaboration with local autonomous institutions, largely in an advisory capacity.
- They were built on local relationship of caste, guilds, craftsmen and artisans (such as weavers and oilmongers), students, ascetics and priests.
- There were assemblies of villagers and also representatives of districts. General body meetings of the assembly were held annually, and meetings of smaller groups were responsible for implementing policy

Land Grants

- Land ownership was with the king, who could make revenue grants to his officers and land-grants to Brahmans, or else continue to have land cultivated by smallscale cultivators and landlords.
- The latter was the most common practice. Crown lands were leased out to tenants-at-will. The status of the village varied according to the tenures prevailing. The village with an inter-caste population paid land revenue.
- The **brahmadeya villages** were donated to a single Brahman or a group of Brahmans. These villages tended to be more prosperous than the others because no tax was paid.
- There were devadana villages, donated to a temple, and the revenue was consequently received by the temple authorities and not by the state.
- The temple authorities assisted the village by providing employment in the service of the temple. This last category of villages gained greater significance when in later centuries the temples became the centres of rural life. During the Pallava period the first two types of villages were predominant.

Village Life

- In the village, the basic assembly was the sabha, which was concerned with all **matters relating to the village, including endowments, land, irrigation, cultivated, punishment of crime**, the keeping of a census and other necessary records.
- Village courts dealt with petty criminal cases. At a higher level, in towns and districts, courts were presided over by government officers, with the king as the supreme arbiter of justice.

- The sabha was a formal institution but it worked closely with the urar, an informal gathering of the entire village. Above this was a district council which worked with nadu or district administration.
- Villages populated entirely or largely by Brahmans preserved records of the functioning of assemblies and councils.
- The link between the village assembly and the official administration was the headman of the village.

Tank Irrigation

- A special category of land, **eripatti or tank land**, was known only in south India. This land was donated by individuals, the revenue from which was set apart for the maintenance of the village tank.
- Rainwater was stored in the tank so that land could be irrigated during the annual long, dry spell. The tank, lined with brick or stone, was built through the cooperative effort of the village, and its water was shared by all cultivators.
- The maintenance of these tanks was essential to the village. Practically every inscription from the **Pallava period** pertaining to the rural affairs refers to the upkeep of the tank. Next in importance came wells.
- Water was distributed by canals, which were fitted with sluices to regulate the water level and prevent overflowing at the source.
- The distribution of water for irrigation was supervised by a special tank committee appointed by the village. Water taken in excess of allotted to a particular cultivator was taxed.

Revenue and Taxation

- Land grants recorded mainly on copperplates provide detailed information on land revenues and taxation.
- Revenue came almost exclusively from rural sources, mercantile and urban institutions being largely unplanned.
- Two categories of taxes were levied on the village. The land revenue paid by the cultivator to the state varied from **1/6th to 1/10th** of the produce, and was collected by the village and paid to the state collector.
- In the second category were local taxes, also collected in the village but utilized for services in the village itself.
- The tax money was spent for repairing irrigation works, illuminating the temple, etc. When the state land tax was inadequate, the revenue was supplemented by additional taxes on **draught cattle, toddy-drawers, marriage parties, potters, goldsmiths, washermen, textile-manufacturers, weavers, brokers, letter-carriers, and the makers of ghee.**

- The loot and booty obtained in war added to the revenue of the state. Pallava considered war to be very important and a series of sculptures depicting the important events connected with the reign of **Nandivarama Pallava**, notably **Pallava troops attacking a fort are seen in the Vaikunta Perumal temple at Kanchipuram**.
- This fort is depicted in the sculptures as having high ramparts with soldiers attacking it and elephants standing near it.

Pallava Army

- Much of the state revenue went to maintain the army. The king maintained a standing army under his direct control.
- The army consisted of foot-soldiers, cavalry and a small force of elephants. Chariots were by now almost out of use and in any case were ineffective in the hilly terrains, as much of the fighting took place there.
- Cavalry, though effective, was expensive, as horses had to be imported. The Pallavas developed a navy and built dockyards at **Mamallapuram and Nagapattinam**.
- However, the Pallava navy was inconsiderable compared to the naval strength of the Cholas who succeeded them.

Trade

- Kanchipuram was an important trading centre in the Pallava period. The merchants had to obtain license to market their goods. Barter system generally prevailed but later the Pallavas issued gold and silver coins.
- Merchants had their own organizations such as Manigramam. In **foreign trade, spices, cotton textiles, precious stones and medicinal plants were exported to Java, Sumatra, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, China and Burma**.
- Mamallapuram was an important seaport. Traders founded guilds and called themselves as sudesi, nanadesi, ainurruvar and others. Their main guild functioned at Aihole. Foreign merchants were known as Nanadesi.
- It had a separate flag with the figure of bull at the centre, and they enjoyed the right of issuing vira-sasanas.
- The jurisdiction of this guild stretched over entire south-east Asia. The chief of this guild is registered in the inscriptions as **pattanswamy, pattnakilar, and dandanayaka**. **Its members were known as ayyavole-parameswariyar**.

Maritime Trade

- Unlike in the Ganges plain, where large areas were available for cultivation, the regions controlled by the Pallavas and the Chalukyas commanded a limited income from land.
- Mercantile activity had not developed sufficiently to make a substantial contribution to the economy.

- The Pallavas had maritime trade with south-east Asia, where by now there were three major kingdoms: **Kambuja (Cambodia), Champa (Annam), and Srivijaya (the southern Malaya peninsula and Sumatra).**
- On the west coast, the initiative in the trade with the West was gradually passing into the hands of the foreign traders settled along the coast, mainly Arabs. Indian traders were becoming suppliers of goods rather than carriers of goods to foreign countries, and communication with the west became indirect, via Arabs, and limited to trade alone.

Society

- Brahmins as learned scholars in literature, astronomy, law and others functioned as the royal counsellors.
- Not only were they in the teaching profession, they were also involved in agriculture, trade and war.
- They were exempted from paying taxes and capital punishment. The next important social group which ruled the state was called sat-kshatryas (quality kshatriyas).
- Not all the kshatryas were of warring groups; some of them were involved in trading as well.
- They also enjoyed the right to read the Vedas, a privilege denied to lower varnas. The trading group maintained warriors for protection and founded trade guilds.
- The people who were at the bottom of the society worked in agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicraft works.
- People engaged in scavenging, fishing, dry-cleaning and leather works were positioned outside the varna system.
- Most scholars agree **that Aryanisation or the northern influence on the south picked up pace during the Pallava period.** This is evident from the royal grants issued by the kings.
- The caste structure had firmly established. Sanskrit came to be held in high esteem. Kanchipuram continued to be a great seat of learning. The followers of Vedic religion were devoted to the worship of Siva.
- Mahendravarman was the first, during the middle of his reign, to adopt the worship of Siva. But he was intolerant of Jainism and destroyed some Jain monasteries.
- Many of the **great Nayanmars and Alvars, Saiva and Vaishanava poet-saints lived during his time. Buddhism and Jainism lost their appeal.**
- However, Hiuen-Tsang is reported to have seen at Kanchi one hundred Buddhist monasteries and 10,000 priests belonging to the Mahayana school.

Growing Influence of Brahmanism

- Perhaps the most obvious sign of the influence of Aryan culture in the south was the pre-eminent position given to Brahmins.
- They gained materially through large gifts of land. Aryanisation is also evident in the evolution of educational institutions in the Pallava kingdom.

- In the early part of this period education was controlled by Jains and Buddhists, but gradually the Brahmins superseded them. The Jains who had brought with them their religious literature in **Sanskrit and Prakrit**, began to use Tamil.
- Jainism was extremely popular, but the competition of Hinduism in the succeeding centuries greatly reduced the number of its adherents.
- In addition, **Mahendravarman I** lost interest in Jainism and took up the cause of Saivism, thus depriving the Jains of valuable royal patronage.
- The Jains had developed a few educational centres near **Madurai and Kanchi**, and religious centres such as the one at Shravanabelagola in Karnataka. But a vast majority of the Jaina monks tended to isolate themselves in small caves, in hills and forests.

Monasteries and Mutts

- Monasteries continued to be the nucleus of the Buddhist educational system and were located in the region of Kanchi, and the valleys of the Krishna and the Godavari rivers.
- Buddhist centres were concerned with the study of Buddhism, particularly as this was a period of intense conflict between orthodox and heterodox sects.
- But Buddhism was fighting a losing battle. Royal patronage, which the Buddhists lacked, gave an edge to the protagonists of Vedic religions.
- Apart from the university at Kanchi, which acquired a fame equal to that the Nalanda, there were a number of other Sanskrit colleges.
- Sanskrit was the recognized medium, and was also the official language at the court, which led to its adoption in literary circles.
- In the eighth century the mathas (mutts) became popular. This was a combination of a rest house, a feeding-centre, and an education centre, which indirectly brought publicity to the particular sect with which it was associated.

Growing Popularity of Sanskrit

Mahendravarman I composed **Mathavilasa Prahasanam** in Sanskrit. Two extraordinary works in Sanskrit set the standard for Sanskrit literature in the south: **Bharavi's Kiratarjuniya** and **Dandin's Dashakumaracharita**. **Dandin of Kanchipuram**, author of the great treatise on rhetoric **Kavyadarsa**, seems to have stayed in Pallava court for some time.

Rock-cut Temples

- Mahendravarman I is credited with the introduction of rock-cut temples in the Pallava territory. **Mahendravarman claims in his Mandagappattu** inscription that his shrine to Brahma, Isvara and Vishnu was made without using traditional materials such as brick, timber, metal and mortar.
- Mahendravarman's rock temples are usually the mandapa type with a pillared hall or the mandapa in front and a small shrine at the rear or sides.

Ellora – Ajanta and Mamallapuram

- Aurangabad district in Maharashtra is the centre of the groups of caves in Ellora and Ajanta.
- The Ellora group of caves are famous for sculptures while the Ajanta group of caves are famous for paintings.
- The dates of these temples range from c. 500 to c. 950 CE. But the activity of creating cave temples may have started two hundred years earlier.
- The first cave temple was created for the Ajivikas. Some of the temples are incomplete.

Ellora

- The rock-cut cave temples in **Ellora are in 34 caves**, carved in Charanadri hills. Without knowledge of trigonometry, structural engineering, and metallurgy, the Indian architects could not have created such exquisite edifices.
- The patrons of these caves range from the dynasties of **Chalukyas to Rashtrakutas**. The heterodox sects first set the trend of creating this model of temples.
- Later, orthodox sects adopted it as a medium of disseminating religious ideologies. These temples were linked to Ajivikas, Jainism, Buddhism, and Brahmanism.
- The earliest temples are modest and simple with no artistic claims. But, the later temples are elegant edifices.
- Mural paintings in Ellora are found in five caves, but only in the Kailash temple are they preserved.
- Some murals in Jain temples are well preserved. Not only animals, birds, trees, flowers are pictured elegantly, but **human emotions and character - greed, love, compassion are depicted with professional skill**.

Heterodox I / Buddhist caves

- There are **12 Buddhist caves**. Every Buddhist cave temple is of a unique model in architecture.
- Some are modest; while others are double-storeyed or triple-storeyed. The plans of the caves demonstrate that these were designed as religious centres where monks stayed and the disciples were trained in religious treatises and scriptures.
- The main hall in the centre and the cubical rooms on either side were used as monasteries for teaching and preaching.
- This is attested by a figure, in cave number six, of man reading a manuscript on a folding table. The panels in these caves portray scenes from the life of the Buddha. Three different characters are identified by the sculptures in the caves.
- The central figure is Buddha found in three sagacious postures: **meditating (dhyana mudra), preaching (vyakhyana mudra) and touching the earth by index finger of right hand (bhumi-sparsha mudra)**.

Goddesses

- Buddhist caves represented goddesses by way of the carved images of **Tara, Khadiravanitara, Chunda, Vajradhat-vishvari, Mahamayuri, Sujata, Pandara and Bhrikuti**.
- In cave twelve, a stout female figure is depicted wearing a waistband and headgear of a cobra. **Khadrivani-tara** also holds a cobra in one of her hands in the same cave.

Heterodox II / Jain caves

- A few Jain caves are also seen in Ellora group and are distinct from others. But they are incomplete.
- The figures of **Yakshamatanga, Mahavira, Parsvanatha, and Gomatesvara** are surrounded by attendants.

Caves of Vedic Religions

- The earliest caves in these groups are modest and simple. Mostly, they are square-shaped except **Kailasanatha cave (cave-16)**, which is a massive monolithic structure, carved out of a single solid rock.
- This temple is said to represent Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva. The temple is two storeyed and the Kailasa temple is on the first one.
- The lower storey has carved life-size elephants, which looks like they are holding up the temple on their backs.
- The temple exterior has richly carved windows, images of deities from the Hindu scriptures and Mithunas (amorous male and female figures).
- Most of the deities to the left of the temple entrance are Saivite and the deities to the right of the entrance are Vaishnavite.
- The courtyard has two huge pillars with the flagstaff and a Nandi mandapa. The wedding ceremony of SivaParvati, the attempted lifting of the **Kailasa mountain by Ravana**, and the destruction of Mahisasura by the goddess Durga are beautiful specimens.
- Weapons and musical instruments of the gods are also depicted through the panel sculptures.
- An interesting sculpture is that of the river goddess Ganga mounted on a crocodile and the river goddess Yamuna mounted on a tortoise.

Ajanta

- The Ajanta caves are situated at a distance of about **100 km north of Aurangabad in Maharashtra**.
- Totally 30 caves have been scooped out of volcanic rocks. Though chiefly famous for mural paintings, there are some sculptures too.

- The Hinayana sect of Buddhism started the excavation of caves in Ajanta. The patrons were the kings who ruled the Deccan plateau during the period **c. 200 BCE to 200 CE**.
- Inscriptions speak of the patrons who range from kings to merchants. First phase of the caves belong to the period from c. 200 BCE to 200 CE. The second phase started from **c. 200 CE to 400 CE**.

Paintings

- Ajanta caves are the repository of rich mural paintings. Paintings of the early phase are mostly in caves nine and ten, which belong to the period of the Satavahanas. The authors of Ajanta paintings followed ingenious techniques.
- First, they plastered the ridged surface of the volcanic rock. This plaster was made of **vegetable fibres, paddy husk, rock-grit, and sand**. This surface was overlaid with a thin layer of lime, ready to receive the pigment.
- Recently it was noticed that a stretch of cloth was reinforced on the surface for the application of pigment.
- The colours were extracted out of natural objects and minerals. The prominent colours used are black, red, white, yellow, blue and green.
- The aesthetic features of the paintings are garland, necklaces, headgear, ear-rings and the perfection of the movements of the human hands. The story panels are attractive and informative.
- Scenes from the **Jataka stories and select episodes** from the life history of Buddha are the central theme of the paintings.
- The celestial figures of **Kinnaras, Vidyadharas and Gandharvas** are depicted in paintings and sculptures. In the paintings of the later period Bodhisattva is shown in larger relief.
- Though a variety of human moods are presented, the dominant ones are of compassion and peace.
- Light and shadow are intelligently used. Human figures depicted in different colours have been interpreted to mean that they are from different ethnicities.

Architecture and Sculpture

- Architecturally, Ajanta caves are grouped into two: **chaityas and viharas**. The chaityas have vaulted ceilings with long halls.
- In the rear end of the halls the statue of Buddha is seen. The sculpture of Buddha in the garbagriha is in the classical model.
- His image is the embodiment of benevolence. Heaviness is the general character of the sculptures.
- Sculptures of Yakshis and Hariti with children are significant. Bodhisattva carved out independently is another important feature. The popular **Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara** is depicted in painting and sculpture.

Mamallapuram

- The iconic Shore Temple of **Pallavas at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram)** was constructed during the reign of **Rajasimha (700-728)**.
- The temple comprises three shrines, where the prominent ones are dedicated to Siva and Vishnu. The exterior wall of the shrine, dedicated to Vishnu, and the interior of the boundary wall are elaborately carved and sculpted.
- In southern India, this is one amongst the earliest and most important structural temples.
- Unlike other structures of the region, the Shore Temple is a five-storeyed rock-cut monolith. The monolithic vimanas are peculiar to Mamallapuram. The Rathas there are known as the Panchapandava Rathas.
- The Arjuna Ratha contains artistically carved sculptures of Siva, Vishnu, mithuna and dwarapala.
- The most exquisite of the five is the Dharmaraja Ratha, with a **three-storied vimana and a square base**.
- **The Bhima Ratha is rectangular in plan and has beautiful sculptures of Harihara, Brahma, Vishnu, Skanda, Ardhanarisvara and Siva as Gangadhara.** The most important piece of carving in Mamallapuram is the Descent of the Ganga (**variously described as 'Bhagirata's Penance' or 'Arjuna's Penance'**).
- The portrayal of puranic figures with popular local stories reveals the skill of the artists in blending various aspects of human and animal life.
- The sculptural panel in the Krishna mandapa, where village life with cows and cowherds is depicted with beauty and skill, is yet another artistic wonder to behold.

Conclusion

- Rock-cut temples were common in the Pallava period. The structural temples and the free-standing temples at **Aihole and Badami in the Deccan and at Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram** provide testimony to the architectural excellence achieved during the period.
- The Deccan style of sculpture shows a close affinity to Gupta art. Pallava sculpture owed a lot to the Buddhist tradition. Yet the sculpture and the architecture of the Deccan and Tamil Nadu were not mere off shoots of the northern tradition.
- They are distinctly recognizable as different and have an originality of their own.
- The basic form was taken from the older tradition, but the end result unmistakably reflected its own native brilliance.

Devotional Movement and Literature

Tamil Devotionalism

- The emergence of regional polities in south India necessitated the establishment of states based on a certain ideology.
- In the context of the times religion alone could be the rallying point.
- The Pallavas of Kanchipuram in north and the Pandyas of Madurai in south of Tamil country patronised the religious movement of Bhakti, spearheaded by the elite and the wealthy merchant class.
- The local temple became the nucleus of this movement. Bhakti became the instrument to touch the hearts of people emotionally, and mobilize them.
- Bhakti cult as a religious movement opened a new chapter in the history of Tamilnadu in the early medieval period.
- A strong wave of Tamil devotionism swept the country from the sixth through the ninth centuries. The form was in hymns of the Nayanmars and the Azhwars.
- The saints of Saivism and Vaishnavism simplified the use of Tamil language with the application of music.
- They brought the local and regional ethos into the mainstream. **Azhwars (totally 12) and Nayanmars (totally 63)**, came from different strata of Tamil society, such as artisans and cultivators.
- There were women saints as well like Andal, an Azhwar saint. The poet **Karaikkal Ammaiyar (Tilakawathi)**, and the **Pandya queen Mangayarkkarasiyar** were prominent female Nayanmar saints.
- The refashioning of Saivism and Vaishnavism by the Bhakti saints effectively challenged Buddhism and Jainism. The influence of the Bhakti movement is still discernable in Tamilnadu.

Sources

Hymns of Thevaram corpus; **Nalayiradivya prapandam**; **Periyapuranam**; **Tiru-thondarthogai**; **Manickavasakar's Tiruvasagam**; Hymns engraved on the walls of temples. Miniature sculptures in the circumambulation of temples; paintings in the temples.

Bhakti as Ideology

- The term Bhakti has different connotations. It includes service, piety, faith and worship. But it also has an extended meaning. It is an enactment of emotion, aesthetics and sensitivity.
- Bhakti hymns have three major themes: First and foremost is the idea of devotion to a personal god.
- The second is a protest against orthodox Vedic Brahmanism and the exclusiveness of the Brahmans in their access to divine grace and salvation.
- The third is the outright condemnation of Jains and Buddhists as heretics.

Bhakti and the Arts

- Originating with folk dancing, the choreography of temple dancing became highly sophisticated and complex renderings of religious themes as apparent in the final form.
- From the Pallava period onwards trained groups of dancers were maintained by the more prosperous temples. Classic scenes from **puranas, and itihisas** were sculpted on the walls of the temples, in bronze and stone.
- Subsequently, artists were attached to the temples with state patronage in order to promote the fine arts like music, dance and others.
- Religious hymns set to music were popularized by the Tamil saints, and the singing of these hymns became a regular feature of the temple ritual.
- The veena was probably the most frequently used instrument. Sometime around the fifth century CE, it was replaced in India by a lute with a pear-shaped body.
- Some two centuries later it took the form in which it is found today-a small gourd body with a long finger-board.

Azhwars and Nayanmars

Azhwars

- Azhwars composed moving hymns addressed to Vishnu. They were compiled in the *Nalayira Divviiyaprabandham* by Nadamuni, at the end of the ninth century.
- Nadamuni who served as a priest at the Ranganatha temple in Srirangam is credited with compiling this work comprising four thousand poems.
- **Periyalvar lived in Srivilliputtur** during the reign of Pandyan king Maravarman Srivallabha in the ninth century. The themes are mostly Krishna's childhood. Krishna is the hero in Andal's hymns.
- Her songs convey her abiding love for Krishna. **Nammalvar, from Kurugur (Alvar Tirunagari), now in Thoothukudi district**, is considered the greatest amongst Alvars.
- Nammalvar authored four works that include the *Tiruvaymoli*. Vaishnava devotees believe that his hymns distil the essence of the four Vedas.
- From the twelfth century, the Vaishnava hymns were the subject of elaborate and erudite commentaries.

Nayanmars

- The prominent Saiva poets include Tirunavukarasar (Appar), Tirugnanasambandar and Sundarar, and Manikkavasagar. Nambi Andar Nambi compiled their hymns into an anthology of eleven books, towards the end of tenth century.
- The first seven books, commonly known as **Thevaram, contain the hymns of Sambandar (I to III), Appar (books IV to VI) and Sundarar (book VII) and Manikkavasagar (book VIII)**.
- **Sekkilar's Periyapuramam is the twelfth thirumurai of the Saiva canon**. It is a hagiography of the sixty-three Nayanmars but contains an undercurrent of historical information as well.

- This collection of **12 books** is named Panniru Tirumurai. The Periyapuram relates many stories about Nayanmars and the miraculous episodes in their lives.

Impact

- The devotional movement manifested itself as a great social transformation. The apogee of its movement was the coming up of temples that became prominent in the Tamil landscape.
- Temples, in later Chola times, became great social institutions. Politically, the Bhakti movement prompted the rulers to establish the settlements for the invited Brahmin groups from the north of the Indian sub-continent.
- Royal members, local administrative bodies and individuals initiated the **calendrical celebrations** and festivals to be conducted in the temples for which they started making endowments to meet their expenditure.
- It directly speeded up the emergence of state in Tamil country and indirectly integrated the different social groups into the religious fold through the instrumentality of temple institutions.
- Over the centuries the Bhakti movement spread all over India, and resulted in a transformation of Hinduism.

Adi Sankara (788-820)

- Bhakti or devotional movement incorporated different sections of the society into mainstream politics through the motto of service, surrender and sacrifice.
- Every layman could understand this motto because Bhakti literary canons were composed in Tamil in simple syntactic and semantic style.
- But, with the arrival of **Adi Sankara Bhakti** discourse began in Sanskrit in a philosophical mode.

Advent of Adi Sankara

- Against the background of the emerging pan-Indian need for an ideology to evolve statehood, a new doctrine was expounded by **Sankara from Kaladi, Kerala**.
- With his new doctrine of Maya (illusion) he held debates with his counterparts from different sects of religions and won over them.
- Fundamentally, Sankara's Advaita or non-dualism had its roots in Vedanta or Upanishadic philosophy. His attempts to root out Buddhism and to establish **smarta (traditionalist)** mathas resulted in the establishment of monasteries in different places viz., **Sringeri, Dvaraka, Badrinath, and Puri**, which were headed by Brahmin pontiffs.
- Sankara looked upon Saiva and Vaishnava worship as two equally important aspects of the Vedic religion.
- Monastic organization and preservation of Sanskrit scriptures were the two major thrusts of Sankara school.

Sri Ramanujar (1017-1138)

- **Sri Ramanujar, a native of Sriperumpudur**, underwent philosophical training under Yataavaprakasara in Kanchipuram in Sankara school of thought.
- The young Ramanujar did not agree with the teachings of his guru and was fascinated by the teachings of the Srirangam school of thought.
- Yamunacharya who once found him in Kanchi invited him to Srirangam. But as soon as he reached Sri Rangam, Yamunacharya passed away. Ramanujar was then declared the head of monastery in Srirangam.
- He took control of monastery, temple and united the sect with efforts at modifying the rituals in temples. **Ramanuja was a teacher-reformer and a great organiser.**
- He challenged the monist ideology of Adi Sankara and in his effort to widen the social base to include social groups other than Brahmins.
- Described as qualified monism, his philosophy of Visishtadvaita influenced many thinkers and developed into a separate tradition.
- A century after his death, there was a schism which developed into two separate schools under **Vedanta Desikar and Manavala Mamuni**. Ramanuja took interest in propagating the doctrine of Bhakti to social groups outside the varnashrama system.
- He influenced some temple authorities to permit the social groups outside the varnashrama system to enter into temple at least once a year.
- It is believed that due to the perceived threat to their religious faith and existence, Ramanujar had to leave his place of residence.

Conclusion

- The developments in south India that took place during this time facilitated the fusion of north Indian and south Indian traditions and paved the way for the evolution of a composite Indian culture.
- The popularity of the bhakti cult in various parts of India was inaugurated by the Tamil devotional cult, indicating that 'maximum of common characteristics was beginning to merge in the various regions of the sub-continent'.
- Quoting **M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat**, we can sum up the significance of bhakti ideology as 'the cementing force bringing together kings, Brahmin priests and the common people in a harmonious manner to strengthen the rule of the newly established Hindu kingdoms based on the caste system.'

More to Know:

1. In 1879, eleven plates held together by a ring of copper, its two ends soldered and stamped with a royal seal depicting a bull and a lingam (the Pallava symbol) were discovered in **Urukattukottam, near Puducherry**. It records a grant of a village made in the twenty-second year of the king

Nandivarman (753 CE). The inscriptional text commences with a eulogy of the king in Sanskrit, followed by the details of the grant in Tamil, and a concluding verse in Sanskrit.

2. About the Cheras

Though the Kerala region seems to have been under the rule of the Chera Perumals during the period from sixth to ninth century little is known about its history until the beginning of the ninth century.

3. Aihole Inscription of Pulikesin II

The Megudi temple at **Aihole (in Karnataka)** stands on top of a hill. On the eastern wall of this Jaina temple is a **19-line Sanskrit inscription (dated to 556 Saka era: 634-635)**. The composer is a poet named Ravikriti. The inscription is a prashasti of the Chalukyas especially the reigning king Pulikesin II, referred to as Sathyasraya (the abode of truth). It highlights the history of the dynasty, defeat of all his enemies, especially Harshavardhana

4. From Kuram Copper Plate (Line 12)

The grandson of Narasimhavarman, (who arose) from the kings of this race, just as the moon and the sun from the eastern mountain; who was the crest-jewel on the head of those princes, who had never bowed their heads (before); who proved a lion to the elephant-herd of hostile kings; who appeared to be blessed Narasimha himself, who had come down (to earth) in the shape of a prince; who repeatedly defeated the Cholas, Keralas, Kalabhras, and Pandyas; who, like Sahasrabahu (i.e., the thousand-armed Kartavirya), enjoyed the action for a thousand arms in hundreds of fights; who wrote the (three) syllables of (the word) vijaya (i.e., victory), as on a plate, on Pulikesin's back, which was caused to be visible (i.e., whom he caused to turn his back) in the battles of Pariyala, Manimangala, Suramara, etc., and who destroyed (the city of) Vatapi, just as the pitcher-born (Agastya) (the demon) Vatapi.