



## THE KALYANI CHALUKYAS POLITY ADMINISTRATION AND RELIGION: AN EYE VIEW

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### Abstract

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*The Kalyani Chalukyas were one of the most important dynasties in early medieval South India. They played a key role in shaping the political history of the Deccan after the decline of the Rashtrakutas. Their rise and expansion show how a regional power can slowly grow into a strong empire. The Chalukyas of Kalyani, also known as the Western Chalukyas, revived Chalukya authority in the Deccan after the decline of the Rashtrakutas, ruling from their capital at Kalyani (modern Basavakalyan) for over two centuries. This dynasty is significant for its prolonged struggle with the Chola dynasty over the fertile Vengi region, its transitional temple architecture linking the Chalukyas of Badami with the Hoysalas, and its substantial contribution to Kannada and Sanskrit literature, including works such as the Mitakshara and the Manasollasa.*

### Introduction:

For over a century, the two empires of South India, the Western Chalukyas and the Chola dynasty of Thanjavur fought many fierce wars to control the fertile region of Vengi. During these conflicts, the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, distant cousins of the Western Chalukyas but related to the Cholas by marriage, took sides with the Cholas further complicating the situation. During the rule of Vikramaditya VI, in the late 11th and early 12th centuries, the Western Chalukyas convincingly contended with the Cholas and reached a peak, ruling territories that spread over most of the Deccan, between the Narmada River in the north and Kaveri River in the south. His exploits were not limited to the south for even as a prince, during the rule of Someshvara I, he had led successful military campaigns as far east as modern Bihar and Bengal. During this period the other major ruling families of the Deccan, the Hoysala Empire, the Seuna dynasty, the Kakatiya dynasty and the Kalachuris of Kalyani, were subordinates of the Western

Chalukyas and gained their independence only when the power of the Chalukya waned during the latter half of the 12th century.

**Objectives of the study:**

1. To understand the history of the Chalukyas of Kalyani
2. To examine the types of polity and administration of the Chalukyas of Kalyani
3. To examine the Chalukya period's religious landscape by determining the main religious traditions—such as Buddhism, Vaishnavism, Jainism, and Shaivism—as well as their regional significance.

**A Brief History of the Chalukyas of Kalyani:**

- Tailapa II was succeeded by his son Satyasraya, who claims to have won a victory over a Chola invader.
  - Satyasraya was followed in succession by Vikramaditya V, Jayasimha I, and Jagadekamalla, the last of whom claims to have defeated Paramara Bhoja (ruler of Malwa), the ruler of Chedi, and Rajendra of the Chola line.
- Jagadekamalla was followed by Someshvara I, who ruled from AD 1042 to 1068 with the titles Ahavamalla and Trailokyamalla.
  - Bilhana, in his *Vikramankadevacharita*, states that Someshvara I built the city of Kalyana and made it his capital, though V. Venkataraya Sastry holds that Kalyana already existed during the reign of Jayasimha II and was one of his *Skandhavaras* (military camps).
  - Since Sankaracharya, in his *Soundaryalahari*, mentions Kalyana as a great *Devipitha*, it can be safely surmised that Someshvara I fortified Kalyana and shifted his capital there in the interest of greater safety from invaders.
  - Someshvara I continued the struggle with the contemporary Chola power: while the Chalukyas claimed victory over the Cholas, the Cholas stoutly denied it, and Chola epigraphs instead claim that Someshvara I was defeated at Koppam in AD 1055 and again at Kudalasangamam in AD 1061.
  - It appears that Dharavarsha, the Nagavamsi ruler of Chakrakuta, accepted his supremacy, and the territories of Kosala and Kalinga were occupied by him.
- After Someshvara I, his son Someshvara II became ruler with the title Bhuvanaikamalla and ruled until AD 1076.
  - From Bilhana, we know that Someshvara I had wanted to make his second son Vikramaditya his successor, but after Vikramaditya refused the offer, Someshvara II was made ruler instead.
  - Relations between the brothers subsequently strained as Someshvara II took to evil ways; a civil war broke out, and Vikramaditya emerged victorious to become the ruler.
- Vikramaditya VI had held the title Tribhuvanamalla from AD 1071, even before he assumed sovereignty, and ruled from AD 1076 to 1126.

- He started a new era, the Chalukya Vikrama era, and continued wars against the Cholas.
- Under Vikramaditya VI, the Western Chalukyas convincingly contended with the Cholas and reached their peak, ruling territories that spread over most of the Deccan, between the Narmada River in the north and the Kaveri River in the south. His exploits were not confined to the south — even as a prince, during the rule of Someshvara I, he had led successful military campaigns as far east as modern Bihar and Bengal.
- K.A.N. Sastri argues that both Vikramaditya VI and his Chola contemporary realised their parity in strength and the futility of continued hostilities, and so suspended raids into each other's territories. This view is only partially correct, as Vikramaditya continued his designs against Vengi, while also having to suppress the rebellious ambitions of his subordinates Ballala I and Bittiga Vishnuvardhana of the Hoysalas. After a protracted battle with the Hoysalas, Vikramaditya succeeded in subduing them and made them submissive to him.
- Along with subjugating the Hoysalas, Vikramaditya renewed hostilities against Vengi, and by AD 1118 or 1119, his general Anatapala Dandanayaka gained control over Vengi; for all practical purposes, Chola power disappeared from the rest of Andhra as well.
- Vikramaditya VI patronised Bilhana and Vignaneswara.
- Vikramaditya VI was followed by his son Someshvara III, who ruled from AD 1126 to 1135 with the titles Bhulokamalla and Sarvajna Chakravarti, and who also started a new era named the Bhulokamalla era. He appears to have been a peace-loving ruler and was the author of the *Manasollasa* and *Vikramankabhyudaya* in Kannada.
- Someshvara III was succeeded by Jagadekamalla II, who ruled from AD 1135 to 1151, followed by his son Tailapa III, who ruled from AD 1151 to 1163.
  - As Tailapa III was a weak and incompetent ruler, the Kalachuri chieftain Bijjala gradually usurped power by AD 1157, and Tailapa III died fighting the Kakatiyas.
- Someshvara IV, son of Tailapa III, ascended the Chalukya throne but failed to safeguard Chalukyan power; he was defeated in AD 1190 by the Hoysala Ballala II, bringing an end to the Western Chalukyan power of Kalyani.
  - The death of Vikramaditya VI had already marked the beginning of the dynasty's decline, as subordinate powers — the Kakatiyas of Warangal, the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, and the Kalachuris — took advantage of the weakness of later rulers and prepared to declare independence.
  - The Chalukyas of Kalyani thus disappeared from the arena of political power by AD 1190, during the reign of Someshvara IV.

### Polity and Administration of the Chalukyas of Kalyani:

- The Chalukyas of Kalyani followed a hereditary monarchical form of government, with the king as head of state wielding effective power. They bore the titles Samastabhuvanasraya and Vijayaditya, and their royal insignia was a boar, signifying the *Varahavatara* of Lord Vishnu, protector of the earth.
- Interestingly, Chalukyan queens and other family members actively participated in the administrative process.
  - Queen Lakshmidēvi, wife of Vikramaditya VI, claimed in an epigraph to be ruling from Kalyana.
  - There is further evidence of Lachchala Mahadevi, wife of Someshvara I, and Ketalladevi, another queen of Someshvara I, participating in administration.
- The *Manasollasa* prescribes the qualities expected of ministers — mostly hereditary posts — and recommends that their number be 7 or 8.
- There is a view that Western Chalukyan polity had elements of feudalism, given the existence of graded political intermediaries such as *Samanta*, *Mahasamanta*, *Mahasamantadhipati*, and *Mahamandalesvara*, alongside military officials like *Senapati*, *Dandanayaka*, *Mahadandanayaka*, and *Meghaprachandandanayaka*.
- For administrative convenience, the territory was divided into Rashtra, Vishaya, Nadu, Kampana, and Thana. There is no clear-cut demarcation between Rashtra, Vishaya, and Nadu, except that Vishaya and Nadu were considered smaller units than Rashtra.
- Copper plate charters recording important transactions were addressed to all *Rastrapatis*, *Vishayapatis*, *Gramakutakas*, *Ayuktakas*, *Niyuktakas*, *Adhikarikas*, *Mohat taras*, and others — indicating that channels of communication between ruler and ruled were collective in nature.

### Religion under the Chalukyas of Kalyani:

- The religious atmosphere of this period was one of spiritual conciliation, in which many creeds coexisted on a basis of mutual tolerance.
- The fall of the Rashtrakuta Empire to the Western Chalukyas in the 10th century, coinciding with the defeat of the Western Ganga dynasty by the Cholas in Gangavadi, was a setback to Jainism.
  - Two centres of Jain worship in Hoysala territory continued to be patronised — Shravanabelagola and Kambadahalli.
  - The growth of Virashaivism in Chalukya territory and Vaishnava Hinduism in the Hoysala region paralleled a general decline in interest in Jainism, although the succeeding kingdoms remained religiously tolerant.
- Although the origin of the Virashaiva faith is debated, the movement grew through its association with Basavanna in the 12th century.

- Basavanna and other Virashaiva saints preached a faith without a caste system; in his *Vachanas* (a form of poetry), Basavanna appealed to the masses in simple Kannada, writing “work is worship” (*Kayakave Kailasa*).
- Also known as the Lingayats (worshippers of the *Linga*, the universal symbol of Shiva), the Virashaivas questioned established norms such as belief in rituals and the theory of rebirth, and supported the remarriage of widows as well as the marriage of unwed older women. This gave women greater social freedom, though they were still not accepted into the priesthood.
- The esteemed Hoysala court scholars Harihara and Raghavanka were Virashaivas.
- Saivism and Vaishnavism were the major branches of Pauranic Dharma within present-day Hinduism.
  - Sakti was worshipped as Kollapura Mahalakshmi, and Kartikeya was also worshipped, with Kudidatani in Bellary district as the main centre of his worship.
- Ramanujacharya, head of the Vaishnava monastery at Srirangam, travelled to Hoysala territory and preached the path of devotion (*bhakti marga*).
  - He wrote the *Sribhashya*, a commentary on the *Badarayana Brahmasutra* that critiqued the Advaita philosophy of Adi Shankara.
  - His stay in Melkote resulted in the Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana converting to Vaishnavism, a faith his successors also followed.
- The impact of these religious developments on the culture, literature, and architecture of South India was profound, inspiring important works of metaphysics and poetry over the following centuries.
  - Akka Mahadevi, Allama Prabhu, and a host of Basavanna’s followers — including Chenna Basava, Prabhudeva, Siddharama, and Kondaguli Kesiraja — wrote hundreds of *Vachanas* in praise of Lord Shiva.
- The decline of Buddhism in South India had begun in the 8th century with the spread of Adi Shankara’s Advaita philosophy; however, Buddhism continued to flourish at Belagave and Dambal.
- There is no mention of religious conflict in the writings and inscriptions of the time, suggesting that the religious transition was smooth.

### Conclusion:

The history of the Kalyani Chalukyas shows how a powerful dynasty can rise from political instability and create a strong empire. Their expansion, military strength, and cultural contributions make them a key topic in medieval Indian history. The Kalyani Chalukyas were a politically strong and culturally rich dynasty. Their wars with the Cholas, efficient administration, stable economy, and cultural patronage left a lasting impact on the Deccan region. They balanced power, encouraged urban growth, and maintained social order, making them one of the most significant dynasties of early medieval South India.

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