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# The Rashtrakutas - Part 1

LESSON 5 OF 13



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# Lesson - 4

## THE RASHTRAKUTAS - I

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## *Rashtrakutas: The Background*

- The origins of the Rashtrakutas and their connection with modern Kannadigas, Marathas and Rajputs is quite unclear.
- The Rashtrakutas were the feudatories of the Chalukyas of Badami (Vatapi).
- Their first capital was Mayurkhandi (Morkhandi, Basavakalyan), Bidar Distt., which was later shifted to Manyakheta (Malkhed) near Wadi in Gulbarga District of Karnataka.
- During the Arab invasion of 730s, the Rashtrakutas played prominent role as the feudatories of the Chalukyas.
- In the Battle of Navsari in 739 AD, Chalukyas inflicted a crushing defeat over the Arabs. Dantidurga, a Rashtrakuta prince came to limelight due to his valour.
- From here onwards, the Rashtrakutas started dominating their overlords, the Badami Chalukyas.
- Dantidurga was the first Rashtrakuta Emperor.

## *Dantidurga*

- His mother was a Chalukya princess from Lata (between Mahi and Tapi in Gujarat)
- The Ellora inscriptions of Dantidurga mention his victory over the Badami Chalukyas in 753 AD, thus initiating the Rashtrakuta Empire.
- Although, the central and southern Karnataka was still held by the Chalukyas.
- He married his daughter to the Pallava emperor, Nandivarman II.
- He helped the Pallavas against the Badami Chalukyas.
- These Badami Chalukyas were therefore sandwiched between the Rashtrakutas from the north and the Pallavas from the south.
- At this time, Kirtivarman II was the Chalukya emperor at Badami.
- Kirtivarman II ruled till 757 AD.
- Dantidurga has claimed to have defeated many rulers of central India and performed Yajnas and took titles like Rajadhiraja, Parameshwar, Maharaja, etc.
- Dantidurga died in 756 AD and was succeeded by his uncle, Krishna I.

# Krishna I

- He vanquished the Badami Chalukyas in 757 AD.
- His rule extended from Narmada to Kaveri, thus covering southern Gujarat, most of Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- At this time, the capital was Mayurkhandi (Morkhandi, Basavakalyan), Bidar Dist
- He too was a great conqueror and assumed pompous titles like Shrivallabh, Prithvi-Vallabh, Akalavarsha, Shubhatunga, Parama Maheshwara, etc.
- He was a great patron of scholars and artists.
- The Kailashnatha Temple of Ellora is usually credited to him.
- He was a Shaiva and built many Shiva temples
- He defeated the Western Gangas of southern Karnataka, Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and Shilaharas of Konkan.
- He died in 774.



## *Govinda II*

- **Some Govinda I was a minor ruler before the imperial Rashtrakutas.**
- **Govinda II was the son of Krishna I, who succeeded him in 774 AD**
- **He neglected his duties and remained indulged in pleasure.**
- **He entrusted the whole administration to his younger brother, Dhruva.**
- **Finding it difficult to manage the empire on behalf of Govinda, Dhruva ascended the throne in 780 AD.**
- **Govinda I tried to regain the throne with the assistance of the mighty neighbours Pallavas, Pratiharas and the Vengi Chalukyas but was unsuccessful.**
- **Dhruva went on to become one of the greatest Rashtrakuta emperors.**
- **Nothing much is known about the later life of Govinda.**

## *Dhruva Dharavarsha*

- He assumed the titles of Kalivallabha and Dharavarsha, while continuing the titles of Krishna I, viz. Shrivallabha, Parameshwara, Maharajadhiraja, etc.
- He was a mighty warrior and a great conqueror.
- The exact details of his campaigns are not known.
- He defeated the Pratihara Emperor, Vatsaraja, and wrested Kannauj from him.
- When Kannauj was invaded by the Pala emperor, Dharmapala, Dhruva defeated him somewhere in the Ganga Plains.
- His victories in the Deccan and south are more clear.
- He defeated the Vengi Chalukya king, Vishnuvardhana IV, in 784 AD.
- He defeated the Pallavas in 785 AD.
- He married the Vengi princess, Shilabhatarika in 786 AD.
- He defeated and imprisoned the Western Ganga king of Mysore Region, Shivamara II, and conquered his domains in 788 AD.
- When Dhruva died in 793, he had subdued much of the India.

## *Govinda III*

- There was a succession struggle between Stambha (Kambarasa) and his younger brother, Govinda III.
- Finally Govinda III, the third son of Dhruva, became the emperor in 793 AD.
- His northern campaign took him to the foothills of the Himalayas, crossing Kannauj, defeating the Pratihara emperor, Nagabhata II.
- He also defeated the Pala emperor, Dharmapala.
- He defeated the Pallava emperor Dantivarman at Kanchi in 803 AD.
- He defeated the Vengi Chalukya king Vijayaditya II and installed Bhima Salki on the throne of Vengi.
- He dominated the Tamilakam, the Chola, Chera and Pandya rulers, thus extending his influence up to Kanyakumari.
- The ruler of Sri Lanka started paying tribute to him.
- Therefore his sphere of influence extended from the Himalayan foothills to Kanyakumari.

## *Govinda III*

- Govinda III held titles such as Prabhutavarsha, Jagattunga, Anupama, Kirthinarayana, Prithvivallabha, Shrivallabha, Vimaladitya, Atishayadhavala and Tribhuvanadhavala.
- His chief queen was Gamundabbe.
- Govinda III died in 814 AD and was succeeded by his son Amoghavarsha, who became the greatest Rashtrakuta emperor.
- After Govinda III, there was an unusual episode in Indian history - 2 great rulers in succession in one century.
- Amoghavarsha had a long reign of 63 years , followed by Krishna II with 37 years, therefore a total of 100 years, from 814 AD to 914 AD.
- So Amoghavarsha's reign began from 814 AD.

## *Amoghavarsha I*

- He made peace with the Western Gangas, through matrimonial alliance through his daughter and overcoming other revolts by 821 AD.
- He moved the capital from Mayurkhandi (Morkhandi) to Manyakhet (or Malkhed, near Wadi in Gulbarga Distt.)
- He assumed the titles of Nrupatunga, Rattamartanda, Atishadhavala, Shrivallabha, Veeranarayana.
- There was a long war with Vengi Chalukyas, with many offensives and defenses. Although there was a matrimonial alliance, the Vengi Chalukyas invaded the Tripuri Kalachuris, Rashtrakuta allies, and captured Vidarbha, including Achalpur.
- Finally Amoghavarsha killed Vishnuvardhana V, the Vengi Chalukya king, and restored peace with his successor Gunaga Vijayaditya in 846 AD.
- He had peaceful relations with the Pallavas.
- Records show that his influence extended as far as the Ganga Valley.

# *Amoghavarsha I*

- Asagavve was his chief queen.
- He was a great patron of art and literature.
- Kannada prospered as a language under him.
- Although he was tolerant towards all the extant religions, it is deduced that he was a follower of Jinasena, a Digambar Jain monk.
- A lot of Jain literature was compiled under his patronage.
- Some temples at Pattadakal are attributed to him.
- Amoghavarsha himself was a notable Sanskrit and Kannada writer.
- One of the earliest Kannada literary works, Kavirajamarga, was probably written by him.
- The Arab traveller Suleiman came to India during his reign.
- He is sometimes known as 'Ashoka of the South'.
- Amoghavarsha's 63 year long reign came to an end in 877 AD, when he is said to have abdicated in favour of his son, Krishna II.

## *Krishna II*

- Krishna II's reign began primarily in 877 AD, but convincingly in 878 AD, when Amoghavarsha died.
- There is a controversy regarding his success against the Vengi Chalukyas.
- It is most likely that he faced defeats at the hands of Gunaga Vijayaditya and his successor Bhima I, but was once successful in taking Vengi.
- He defeated the greatest Pratihara emperor, Mihir Bhoja or Bhoja I and captured a large portion of Gujarat.
- He is said to have a sphere of influence up to the Ganga Valley, while the Central India definitely under his control.
- He had matrimonial alliances with the neighbours. He himself married Mahadevi, a Chedi princess, probably belonging to the Haihaya rulers of Kalachuri.
- His daughter was married to the Chola emperor Aditya I.

## *Krishna II*

- Aditya I dominated a large portion of Tamilakam.
- Aditya I died in 907 AD and a civil war broke out.
- Krishna II tried to interfere in the succession crisis of the Cholas after Aditya I.
- He sided with his grandson Kannara against Parantaka Chola.
- He got defeated by Parantaka Chola at Vallala c. 907 AD. Thereafter Parantaka I became the Chola emperor.
- Hereafter, the Cholas started dominating Tamilakam and the Deccan.
- Krishna II died in 914 AD and was succeeded by his grandson Indra III.

*Next : Lesson - 5*

# THE RASHTRAKUTAS - II

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