

# **PALLAVA DYNASTY**

The Pallavas emerged as a formidable power in the South around the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and were at the height of their power in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. They were able to sustain their rule for about 500 years. They built great cities, centres of learning, temples, and sculptures and influenced a large part of Southeast Asia in culture.

## **Political History of Pallavas**

- The origins of the Pallavas are shrouded in mystery. There are several theories propounded by historians.
- Some historians say they are a branch of the Parthian people (a tribe from Iran) who gradually migrated to South India.
- Some say they are an indigenous dynasty that arose within the Southern region and were a mix of various tribes.
- Some experts believe them to be of Naga origin who first settled around the Tondaimandalam region near Madras.
- Another theory says that they are descendant from a Chola prince and a Naga princess of Manipallavam (an island off Jaffna, Sri Lanka).
- Some others are of the opinion that the Pallavas were feudatories of the Satavahanas.
- The first Pallava kings ruled during the beginning of the 4th century AD. By the 7th century AD, there were three kingdoms in southern India vying for supremacy namely the Chalukyas of Badami, the Pandyas of Madurai and the Pallavas of Kanchipuram.

## **The extent of the Pallava dynasty**

- The Pallava capital was Kanchipuram.
- Their territories at the height of their powers extended from the northern part of Andhra Pradesh to River Kaveri in the South.
- During the seventh century, the Cholas were reduced to a marginal state by the authority of the Pallavas.
- Vatapi (Badami) was occupied by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman who defeated the Chalukyas.
- The Kalabhra uprising was crushed by the Pandyas, Chalukyas and the Pallavas jointly. The Kalabhras were protesting against the numerous land grants (Brahamadeya) to Brahmanas made by the Brahmanic rulers of the three dynasties.

## **List of Pallavas Rulers of Kanchipuram and their contributions**

| Name of Pallavas Rulers of Kanchipuram | Contribution (s)  |
|--|---|
| Simhavishnu                            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Founder of the dynasty</li> <li>2. He was the first Pallava monarch who extended his authority beyond Kanchipuram (Kanchi) in the South.</li> <li>3. A drama written by his son Mahendravarman I in which he was portrayed as a great conqueror in <b>Mattavilasa Prahasana</b> (drunken revelry).</li> </ol>   |
| Mahendravarman I                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He was the son of Simhavishnu, who defeated the Kalabhras and re-established the Pallava kingdom.</li> <li>2. Tamil literature flourished under his rule, with the rise in popularity of <b>Tevaram</b> written by <b>Appar</b> and <b>Sambandhar</b>.</li> <li>3. He was the author of the play <b>Mattavilasa Prahasana</b> and another play called <b>Bhagavadajjuka</b>.</li> <li>4. He built five-celled cave temple at <b>Pallavaram</b>, the <b>Kokarneswarar Temple</b>, and <b>Thirukokarnam</b> of <b>Pudukottai</b>, Tamil Nadu.</li> <li>5. He was initially a patron of the Jain faith but under the influence of the Saiva saint Appar patronised the Saiva faith.</li> </ol> |
| Narasimhavarman I                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He was also known as <b>Mamallan</b> (great wrestler), and <b>Mamallapuram</b> (Mahabalipuram) was named after him.</li> <li>2. He shared his father Mahendravarman I's love of art and completed the work started by Mahendravarman in <b>Mamallapuram</b>.</li> <li>3. During his reign, the Chinese traveller <b>Hiuen Tsang</b> visited Kanchipuram in 640 AD.</li> </ol>   |
| Mahendravarman II                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He was the son of Narasimhavarman I who ruled from 630-668 AD.</li> </ol>   |

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|                      | <p>2. He was succeeded by his son Paramesvaravarman I.</p>  |
| Paramesvaravarman I  | <p>1. He was an efficient and capable ruler, known for his military exploits, his love for poetry and his devotion to Siva, to whom he erected many temples.</p> <p>2. He was succeeded by his son Narasimhavarman II also called Rajasimha in 695 AD.</p>  |
| Narasimhavarman II   | <p>1. He was one of the greatest rulers of Pallavas like Mahendravarman I and Narasimhavarman I.</p> <p>2. He constructed the <b>Shore Temple, Isvara and Mukunda Temples in Mahabalipuram</b>, the <b>Panamalai Temple in South Arcot</b>, plus the <b>Kailasanathar Temple and Vaikuntha-Perumal Temples in Kanchipuram</b>.</p> <p>3. He was a great devotee of Shiva and constructed the Kailasanathar Temple at Kanchipuram.</p> |
| Paramesvaravarman II | <p>1. He ruled from 728 to 731.</p> <p>2. He was killed by the Chalukya king Vikramaditya II.</p> <p>3. He was the last ruler of the Simhavishnu line of Pallavas.</p>  |
| Nandivarman II       | <p>1. He was a Pallava ruler but not from Simhavishnu family lineage.</p> <p>2. He ruled from 720 – 796 AD.</p> <p>3. He built the <b>Vaikuntha-Perumal Temple</b>.</p> <p>4. He was an intellectual with aptitude in many arts like writing, poetry, music and philosophy.</p> <p>5. He is credited with augmenting temple dramatized dance worship like <b>Kutiyattam and Chakyar koothu</b> with many plays of his own.</p>        |
| Dantivarman          | <p>1. He was the son of Nandivarman II.</p> <p>2. He ruled for 51 years.</p>  |

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| Nandivarman III | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He was the son of Dantivarman and grandson of Nandivarman II.</li> <li>2. He was a powerful monarch who tried to reverse the decline that began in the reign of his father.</li> <li>3. He had a powerful navy and maintained trade contacts with Siam and Malaya.</li> </ol> |
| Aparajitavarman | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He was the last ruler of Pallavas Dynasty.</li> <li>2. He was killed by Aditya I (Chola Ruler) in 897 AD at the battle field.</li> </ol>  |

## Capital Town

The town of Kanchipuram was the capital of the imperial Pallavas. **Kanchi** is steeped in history, culture, and art as evidenced in the **Sanskrit** saying '**Nagareshu Kanchi**', meaning the first among **cities**, which glorifies this place. The earliest reference to the city is found in the *Mahabhashya* of **Patanjali** of the 2nd century BCE as *Kanchipuraka*. The Pallava inscriptions from (250–355) and the inscriptions of the Chalukya dynasty refer the city as *Kanchipura*. **Jaina Kanchi** refers to the area around Tiruparuttikunram. The city also finds mention in the classical Tamil language Sangam literature dated 300 BCE like **Manimegalai** and **Perumpuppa ai**. During the British rule, the city was known as *Conjeevaram* and later as *Kanchipuram*. The municipal administration was renamed *Kancheepuram*, while the district and city retains the name *Kanchipuram*.

**Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism and Vaishnavism** had a huge following here. In fact, Buddhism and Jainism had the sway because of royal patronage until the **Hinduism** revival which happened in the 7th and 8th century CE. Chinese **Buddhist** scholar Hieun Tsang travelled here in the 6th century CE and recorded his account on the town while **Marco Polo** noted his views during his visit in the 12th century CE. Bodhidharma, said to be a son of a Pallava king and founder of Chan Buddhism travelled to Canton in **China** around 520 CE. Chan is referred to as Zen in **Japan**. Though Bodhidharma's southern Indian roots remain a subject of debate among Chinese historians, his manuscripts are still preserved in the Shaolin temple, where he is said to have taught martial arts to the monks. The Advaita philosopher Adi Sankara travelled to Kanchipuram and established a monastery that continues to function to this day. Though Adi Sankara's time period is generally referred to as the 8th century CE, the monastery records go back to the 5th century BCE and provide a list of monks who succeeded him to this day.

The Saivite poet Appar of the 7th century CE and a contemporary of Mahendravarman I described the city as a storehouse of immeasurable knowledge and learning. The Chinese scholar Hieun Tsang, too, found the learned people of the city as a unique feature.