

## Component-I (A) – Personal details:



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Subject: **Indian Culture**

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- Content for Post Graduate Courses



Paper : **Indian Epigraphy**

Module : **Aihole Inscription of Pulakesin II**



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये



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### Component-I (B) – Description of module:

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| Subject Name      | Indian Culture   |
| Paper Name        | Indian Epigraphy   |
| Module Name/Title | Aihole Inscription of Pulakesin II   |
| Module Id         | IC / IEP / 35  |
| Pre requisites    | Knowledge of the History of the Early Chalukyas and Sanskrit Language  |
| Objectives        | This inscription narrates how the powerful chalukyas of Badami were and their sway over Karnataka. It gives detailed account of the genealogy and the King Pulakesin II political Exploits annexing new territories, making new feudatories including the defeat of the emperor Harsha. In the end it records the construction of Jinendra Temple. |
| Keywords          | Sanskrit, Southern Characters, Jinendra, RavikirtiBharata War, Kaliyuga, Kalidasa and Bharavi, Alankara Sastra, Asvamedha, Pulakesi II, Harsha and Vatapi (Badami)   |

#### E-text (Quadrant-I) :

##### 1. INTRODUCTION :

In the annals of South Indian history in general and particularly in Karnataka history the Aihole Inscription of Pulakesin II occupies a unique place. Apart from being a great historical narrative, it's a Prasasti with immense literary value. It not only throws light on the political achievements of Pulakesin II who defeated emperor Harsha, but also of contemporary rulers and dynasties. The entire inscription written several verses is composed in beautiful Sanskrit.

##### 2. THE INSCRIPTION:

This inscription is engraved on a stone slab fixed into the eastern wall of MegutiJaina temple at Aihole, Hungund Taluk, Bagalkot district, Karnataka.

This inscription contains 19 lines of writing, of which nearly the whole of line 18 and the short line 19 apparently are a later addition of little importance. The writing covers a space of about 4' 9 ½" broad by 2' ½" high. It is well engraved, and generally in an excellent state of preservation.

The inscription was first edited with a photo lithography, by Dr. Fleet in Indian Antiquary Vol V P. 67 ff and a revised version of the text and translation with an improved photo lithograph, has been given by the same scholar, *ibid.*, Vol. VIII P. 237 ff and Archaeol Survey of Western India Vol III P 129 ff Subsequently edited by F Kielhorn in Ep. Ind. Vol VI P FF and Plate.

## **2.1 SCRIPT AND LANGUAGE**

The **characters** belong to the Southern class of alphabets and they are of the regular type of the characters of the Western Chalukya records of the period to which the inscription belongs. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit and the text is all in verse. The meters employed in the 37 verses are Sloka, Apachchhandasika, Arya, Aryagiti, Upajati, Indravajra, Rathodhata, Vasantatilaka, Malini, Harini, Mandakranta, Srdulvikridita, Mattebhavikridita and Sragdhara.

## **2.3 Composer:**

The greatest significance of this inscription is, it is as important as a historical document, as much as a great composition from the literary point of view. It may be noted that Ravikirti the composer of the Prasasti compares himself with great poets Kalidasa and Bharavi. The work itself is a great testimony to the fact that the composer can be easily placed as a first rank among court poets and writers of Prasastis. Kielhorn, observes that Ravikirti was thoroughly conversant with rules of the Alamkara Sastra and like a true dakshinatya he is unsurpassed in some of his utprekshas. The composition clearly reveals that the composer of the Prasasti was greatly influenced by the work of KalidasasRaghuvamsa. Thus this inscription occupies a unique place among other inscriptions which are endowed with great literary value.

## **2.4 Date of the Inscription**

The date of the inscription is given in verses 33 and 34. It corresponds for the expired year 3735 of the Kaliyuga, here described as the year 3735, since the Bharata war and which is the same for Saka Samvat 556 expired (634-35 AD).

## **2.5 The object of the Inscription:**

The inscription is a poem by a certain Ravikirti who during the reign of the ChalukyaPulekesinSatyasraya, whom he describes as his patron, constructed the temple of Jinendra. Not only did the construction of the temple but also granted six villages viz., Mulavalli, Vedmaltakavada, Machchanur, Gangavar, Puligere and Gandagrama for the maintenance of the temple. Apart from this, the inscription he furnishes a eulogistic account (Prasasti) of the history of the Chalukya family and especially of the exploits of Pulekesin II.

## **3. GENEALOGY:**

The inscription begins with an obeisance to Jinendra. Describes the Chalukya family as a immeasurable wide ocean, which has given birth to men who are like jewels and ornaments adoring the crown of the earth. The narration of the genealogy of the family begins with the king Jayasimhavallabha, succeeded by Ranaraga, then followed by his son Pulikesi I who made Vatapi (Badami) as his capital His son Kirtivarman, powerful ruler who subjugated the Nalas, Mauryas and Kadambas. Then succeeded by his younger brother Mangalesha and subsequently by his elder brothers' son Pulikesi II the mighty ruler of the western Chalukyas dynasty during whose reign this Prasasti was engraved euologising his political exploits.

## **4. Personality and Political Achievements of Pulikesin II:**

It is stated that SatyasrayaPolekesi II had all the three prerequisites of an imperial sovereign viz., Prabhusakti (possession of a crown of authority), mantra-sakti (God counsel) and Utsahasakti (an inexhaustible spirit of enthusiasm or exertion) and by possessing all the above virtues he proved a perfect monarch of his times. The first half of the seventh century

A.D. marks an important epoch in the history of India. Especially post Gupta period witnessed emergence of great dynasties both in the south as well as, in the north like Maitrakas, Vakatas, Kadambas and the Western Gangas, and great rulers like Harsha in the north, Polekesi II in the Deccan and the Pallavas further south.

There is no need to reiterate the fact that Chalukyas were a great political force to reckon with. The Chalukyas of Vatapi, by their ceaseless exercise in the battle fields, had ensured the survival and steady growth of their imperial might which could stand its ground until and unless challenged and toppled by a more militant rival. Noteworthy are their epithets, which uphold their martial status like Ranaraga, Ranaparakrama, Ranavikranta and Ranavikrama.

Aihole pillar inscriptions help us to a great extent to understand the personality and characters of Pulikesi II of course, other inscriptions too have added much information about his political exploits and achievements. It is gathered from the inscription that the youthful Pulikesi II rose in rebellion, and the imperial authority of the Chalukyas was momentarily shaken to its very foundation. Further, the inscription states that nearer the capital, Pulikesi II was forced to test his strength against two adversaries, Appayika and Govinda, whose identities are uncertain. In all probability they might have been loyal adherents of the Vanquished Mangalesha, and it is possible one of them might have been son of Mangalesha. Pulikesi chased and defeated them north of the river Bhima. Appayika getting utterly routed and Govinda seeking and securing the victors protection. After this event, it paved the way for Pulikesi to occupy the imperial throne.

Once having occupied the imperial throne, he did not look much time in planning and implementing a series of military campaigns, both on the home front and outside mainly to reestablish in full measure the sovereign imperial authority of the Chalukyas. It is again through the inscription only some sort of probable sequence of his military expeditions could be drawn. Ravikirti gives his narration in topographical sequence, through no tangible clue can be found as to the chronological succession of those events. It is stated that Aihole inscription implies that Pulikesi's conquests were carried out at four different levels, two of them in the early years of his reign and the other two nearly fifteen years later, each one of them contributing to a steady and successive improvement in his stature as one of the leading emperors of the subcontinent. The four categories are thus classified as:

- Campaign against feudatory rulers of Karnataka, who were unwilling to accept the suzerainty of the king.
- Campaign to the north west of his empire and his conflict with Harsha
- Campaigns to the north east and east of his empire and
- Campaigns to the south of his empire.

It is known through records that earlier Kirthivarman I had subjugated and brought under his subordination the Gangas of Talakadu, the Kadambas of Banavasi, the Alupas of AluvaKheda and the Mauryas of Konkan. Subsequently, when Pulikesi II occupied the imperial throne marched against these kingdoms and successfully brought them back into the imperial fold.

With a great desire to expand his dominions, turned his attention northwards and subdued the rulers of Lata, Malava and Gurjara, by a mere show of force. Probably, this expansionist attitude might have irked emperor Harsha, and made him measure swords with Pulikesi, which is graphically and beautifully described in the Aihole inscription. They ensued, therefore, predictably enough an in fructuous conflict between Pulikesi II and Harsha, the former being the Lord of the DakshinaPatha and the later The Lord of Uttarapatha". At the

end of the collision between the two, in which Harsha was most certainly the aggressor but Pulekesi definitely had an upper hand.

It may not be out of place if we mention Chinese traveler HieunTsiangs contemporaneous observations who too has highly spoken about both the rulers. Ravikirti devotes two verses to this war, the first of which has a direct bearing on it. The meaning of which is as follows – The powerful Harsha, whose feet were worshipped by an army of extremely prosperous feudatories lost his mirth because of his defeat at this (i.e., Pulekesi II's hands and was disgusted at the sight of rows of his lordly elephants fallen in the battle”.

The second verse – “having returned from that war, while he) i.e, Pulekesi II) was ruling over the earth with (the help of) his huge army, the Vindhyan neighbourhood, which was already lustrous with myriad sand banks of the Reva (i.e, Narmada) became by the addition of his own greatness, even more lustrous, being avoided by the mountainous elephants which, in their size, competed with the (Vindhyan) mountains.

The above verse narrates Harsha's defeat in the war, elephant troops formed the major wing of the army and it conveys that Harsha's elephants never again made bold to trespass the Vindhyan ranges and intrude into Pulekesi II territories.

Pulekesi II made good use of the long interval of peace which ensued his war with Harsha by devoting his time for the administration of the empire, for bestowing benefactions on his subjects and for rebuilding his war worn army. Pulekesi resounding victories and his benign administration made him famous even beyond the confines of India.. According, to Muslim historian Tabari, Khusrull the King of Persia, received an embassy from the Court of Pulekesi in A.D. 625-26 and himself sent a reciprocal embassy to the Chalukya emperor.

Further, the narrative in the Aihole inscription gives raise to the belief that Pulekesi's south ward thrust was in the continuation of his north eastern and eastern campaigns. He invaded the Pallava Empire in force and is credited with having driven the defending Pallava emperor into the safe confines of the Kanchi fort.

He marched his forces further deep and made the Pallavas appear weak and helpless in the eyes of gleeful Chola Pandya, and Kerala contemporaries. Having thus humiliated the Pallavas, Ravikirti tells us Pulekesi II the conqueror of all the quarters, triumphantly reentered Vatapi and was in 634-35 A.D. The date of the Aihole inscription, administering his Vast Empire in peace. It is stated that, one conclusion that may be reasonably drawn from Ravikirthis diction is that the subjugation of the Kosala, Kalinga, Pishtapura and Kunala tracts and has victorious march into Tamil country were only two continuous stages of a single campaign. In beautiful terms Aihole inscription describes Pulekesi's Pallava conquest and his reentry into Vatapi.

Though Pulekesi II was a great devotee of Vishnu, as the Lohaner Plates describe him as Paramabhagavata, he was generous towards other religions and he must have helped in a big measure his confident and court poet Ravikirti. A devout Jain in the construction of the JinendraBhavan, a stone temple, at Aihole It seems Ravikirti felt immensely gratified over two of his achievements, the construction of the Jaina temple and the composition and inscription of his excellent Prasasti in praise of his over Lord. Incidentally the Aihole Prasasti contains the latest known date (A.D. 635-35) for Pulekesi II though we know for certain through circumstantial evidence that he had continued to reign for seven or eight years more.

## **5. CONCLUSION:**

Thus, the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II has its own unique position not only in the history of Karnataka but also of South India, as a great historical narrative and also as a composition with great literary merit. Among all the political achievement of Pulakesin II the mention of defeat of the great emperor Harsha is very important. The mention of Bharata war and the names of great poet Kalidasa and Bharavi in the Prasasti are equally important.

## **6. Appendix:**

### **TRANSLATION:**

1. Victorious is the holy Jinendra he who is exempt from old age, death and birth in the sea of whose knowledge the whole world is comprised like an island.,
2. And next long victorious is the immeasurable, wide ocean of the Chalukya family which is the birth place of jewels of men that are ornaments of the diadem of the earth,
3. And victorious for very long is Satyasraya, who in bestowing gifts and honors on the brave and on the learned, both together on either, observes not the rule of correspondence of number.
4. When many members of that race bent on conquest, applied to whom the title of favourite on the Earth had at last become appropriate, had passed away –
5. There was of the Chalukya lineage the king named JayasimhaVallabha, who in battle where horses, foot soldiers and elephants, bewildered fell down under the strokes of many hundreds of weapons, and where thousands of frightful headless trunks and of flashes of rays of swords were leaping to and fro by his bravery made Fortune his own, even though she is suspected of fickleness.
6. His son was he who was named Ranaraga, of divine dignity, the one master of the world, whose superhuman nature, (even) when he was asleep, people knew from the preeminence of his form.
7. His son was Pulakesin who though endowed with the moon's beauty and though the favourite of Fortune, became the bridegroom of Vatapipuri.
8. Whose path in the pursuit of the three objects of life the kings on earth even now are unable to follow, and bathed by whom with the water of the purificatory rite, when he performed the horse sacrifice, the earth beamed with brightness,
9. His son was Kirtivarman the night of doom to the Nalas, Mauryas and Kadambas, whose mind, although his thoughts kept aloof from others wives, was attracted by the Fortune of his adversary.
10. Who having secured the fortune of victory by his valour in war being a scion of a king, of great strength, at once completely broke down the multitude of the broad kadamba trees the Kadambas.
11. When his desire was bent on the dominion of the lord of gods, his younger brother Mangalesa became king, who by the sheets of dust of his army of horse, encamped on the shores of the eastern and western seas, stretched an awning over the quarters.

12. Who in that house which was the battle field took in marriage the damsel, the Fortune of the Katachchuris having scattered the gathering gloom. The array of elephants of the adversary, with hundreds of bright rayed lamps (vis) the swords (of his followers).
13. And again, when he was desirous of taking the island of Revati his great army with many bright banners, which had ascended the ramparts, as it was reflected in the water of the sea appeared like Varuna's forces quickly come there at once at his word of command.
14. When his elder brother's son, named Pulekesin, of a dignity like Nahusha's was coveted by Fortune, and finding his uncle to be jealous of him thereat, had formed the resolution to wander abroad as an exile.
15. That Mangalesa whose great strength became on all sides reduced by the application of the powers of good counsel and energy gathered by Him, abandoned together with the effort to secure the kingdom for his own son, both that no mean kingdom of his and his life.
16. Then on the subversion of that rule encompassed by the darkness of enemies, the whole world grew light again invaded as it were by the lustrous rays of His irresistible splendor. Or when was it that the sky ceased to be black like a swarm of bees with thundering clouds, in which flashes of lightning were dancing like banners, and the edges of which were crushed in the rushing wind.
17. When, having found the opportunity he who was named Appayika and Govinda approached with their troops of elephants to conquer the country north of the Bhasimarathi, the one in battle through His armies came to know the taste of fear, while the other at once received the reward of the services rendered by him,
18. When He was besieging Vanavilal, which for a girdle has the rows of Hamsa birds that sport on the high waves of the Varada as their play place, and which by its wealth rivalled the city of the gods, that fortress on land, having the surface of the earth all around covered with the great sea of his army, to the looker on seemed at once converted into a fortress in the water.
19. Although in former days they had acquired happiness by renouncing the seven sins, the Ganga and Alupa lords, being subdued by his dignity, were always intoxicated by drinking the nectar of close attendance upon him.
20. In the Konganas the impetuous waves of the forces directed by Him speedily swept away the rising wavelets of pools the Mauryan.
21. When, radiant like the destroyer of Pura, he besieged Puri, the Fortune of the western sea, with hundreds of ships in appearance like arrays of ratting elephants, the sky, dark blue as a young lotus and covered with tiers of massive clouds, resembled the sea, and the sea was like the sky.
22. Subdued by His splendor the Latas, Malavas, and Gurjaras became as it were teachers of how feudatories subdued by force, ought to behave.
23. Harsha whose lotus feet were arrayed with the rays of the jewels of the diadems of hosts of feudatories prosperous with unmeasured might, through Him had his mirth (Harsha) melted away by fear, having become loathsome with his rows of lordly elephants fallen in battle.

24. While He was ruling the earth with his broad armies, the neighborhood of the Vindhya, by no means destitute of the lustre of the many sandbanks of the Reva, shone even more brightly by his great personal splendor, having to be avoided by his elephants because, as it seemed, they by their bulk rivalled the mountains.
25. Almost equal to Indra, He by means of all the three powers, gathered by him according to rule and by his noble birth and other excellent qualities, acquired the sovereignty over the three Maharashtrakas with their nine and ninety thousand villages.
26. Through the excellences of their householders prominent in the pursuit of the three objects of life, and having broken the pride of other rulers of the earth, the Kalingas with the Kosalas by his army were made to evince signs of fear.
27. Hard pressed (pishta) by Him, Pishtapura, became a fortress not difficult of access wonderful the ways of the Kali age to Him were quite inaccessible.
28. Ravaged by Him, the water of Kunjacoaloured with the blood of men killed with many weapons, and the land within it overspread with arrays of accountred elephants was like the cloud covered sky in which the ted evening twilight has risen.
29. With his sixfold forces, the hereditary troops and the rest, who raised spotless chowries, hundreds of flags, umbrellas and darkness, and who churned the enemy elated with the sentiments of heroism and energy. He caused the splendor of the lord of the Pallavas, who had opposed the rise of his power, to be obscured by the dust of his army and to vanish behind the walls of Kanchipura.
30. When straightway He strove to conquer the Cholas, the Kaveri, who has the darting carps for her tremulous eyes, had her current obstructed by the causeway formed by his elephants whose rutting juice was dripping down, and avoided the contact with the ocean.
31. There He caused great prosperity to the Cholas, Karajas and Pandyas he being the hot rayed sun to the hoar frost the army of the Pallavas.
32. While, He Satyasraya, endowed with the powers of energy, mastery and good counsel, having conquered all the quarters, having dismissed the kings full of honours, having done homage to gods and Brahmans, having entered the city of Vatapi is ruling like one city this earth which has the dark blue waters of the surging sea for its moat.
33. Now, when thirty and three thousand and five years besides, joined with seven hundred years, have passed since the Bharata War;
34. And when any and six and five hundred years of the Saka kings also have gone by in the Kali age
35. This stone mansion of Jinendra, a mansion of every kind of greatness, has been caused to the built by the wise Ravikirti, who has obtained the highest favour of that Satyasraya whose rule is bounded by the three founder.
36. May that Ravikirti be victorious, who fall of discernment has used the abode of the Jina, firmly built of stone for a new treatment of his theme, and who thus by his poetic skill has attained to the fame of Kalidasa and of Bharavi.





**AIHOLE INSCRIPTION OF PULIKESIN II COMPOSED BY RAVIKIRTI**

**Saka samvat 556 ( 635 AD)**

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