

**“A NEW NOTE ON THE WESTERN GANGAS AFFINITY WITH
TAMIL KINGDOMS AS A VASSAL OF THE RESTRAKUTAS AND THE CHOLA
CONQUEST OF GANGAVADI (817 A.D TO 1024 A.D)”**

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ABSTRACT

The Western Gangas ruled the province of Gangavadi 96,000 for nearly six and half centuries, i.e. from 4th to the beginning of the 11th century A.D. From the inception the Western Gangas dynasty was closely associated with the Tamil Nadu Politics. They served as an appendage of some imperial powers. The dynastic struggle of the Cholas, the Gangas and the Pallavas and the rise of the great empires of the chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas were in one way or other influenced by the geography of this region. This paper focus the position of the Rashtrakutas and Western Gangas Tamil Nadu and its impact on Tamil Nadu politics.

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In an age when time and distance were realities the maintenance of an empire depended to a great extent on the loyalty of the surrounding rulers. This is true in the case of Indian empires than that of Western empires, more particularly to the rulers of Tamil Nadu.

The western Gangas ruled the province of Gangavadi 96,000 for nearly six and half centuries, that is from fourth to the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. and were one of the illustrious rulers of south Indian History. From the inception the western Gangas dynasty was closely associated with the Tamil Nadu politics. They served as an appendage of some imperial powers. The dynastic struggle of the Cholas, the Gangas and the Pallavas and the rise of great empires of the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas were in one way or other influenced by the geography of this region. So there is no wonder that the Pallavas, the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas often relied on the loyalty of the Western Gangas to strengthen their position.

Beside the western Ganga main line there was a collateral line which came to power in the beginning of the 9th Century A.D. They also actively participated in the affairs of the Tamil Country and contributed much to the consolidation of the imperial cholas.

The present paper is an endeavour to establish western Ganga's affinity with Tamil Kingdoms as a vassal of the Rashtrakutas and the impact of that relationship on the overall politics of this region.

Rajamalla Satyavakya I (817 A.D - 837 A.D.):

Rajamalla Satyavakya I succeeded his uncle Sivamara Seigotta to the throne of Western Ganga in the main line in 817 A.D.¹ He was the son of Sivamara Saigotta's brother

Vijayaditya.² When Rajamalla came to the throne he inherited a Kingdom considerably shrunk in size. The Rashkutas had a good part of the Western Ganga Kingdom under their suzerainty. The condition of the Gangavadi at the time of his accession needed great strength and energy to regain its lost glory. He found confusion and Chaos in the Rashtrakuta Kingdom during the early years of Amoghavarsha I's reign and made over the kingdom in favour of him. He entered into an alliance with his neighbour Nolambas. Rajamalla Satyavakya I gave his daughter Jayabee to the Nolamba prince Polachora and himself married a grand-daughter of Nolamba simhapota.³ In alliance with these Nolamba Kings Rajamalla, Satyavakya I overthrew the Rashtrakuta yoke and rescued his country. This is stated in an inscription as "Vishnu in the form of a boar rescued from the earth from the infernal regions".⁴ The Krerogodi Rangapura Grant⁵ refers about the successful termination of the Rashtrakuta overlordship from Gangavadi as the Kingdom lost in the less skilful hands of Sivamara saigotta being regained by Rajamalla. The Goddess of sovereignty sad owing to the seizure by the Rashtrakuta King was once again made cheerful by auspicious annointment and a adornment of good qualities by Rajamalla."

No other political activities of Rajamalla were referred in the records of the Western Gangas. The reign of Rajamalla Satyovakya I witnessed the successful overcome of the western Gangas from the Rashtrakuta yoke. His place in the western Ganga annals is a conspicuous one as being the usheres of a new era of prosperity. Since, the collateral line of Western Ganga was associated with the political activities of the Tamil Nadu, the main line lost its opportunity to take part in it.

Ereganga - Deva (837 A.D. – 890 A.D.):

Rjamalla I was succeeded by his son Nitimarga I in 837 A.D. He was also known as Ereyanga or Eregang Deva and his other titles were Ranavikramayya⁶ and Permannadi.⁷ The Kudlur grant called him as Nitimarga Konganivaram- dharmamaharajadhiraja paramesvara.⁸

The notable achievement of Nitimarga I was a great victory over the Vallabha army at Rajaramudu, which is to the north of Kolar.⁹ The vallabha army which fought with Nitimarga I was identified with the army of Rashtrakuta King Amoghavarsha I and 868 A.D. was the date of battle.¹⁰ The Keregodi Rengapura plates indicate the allies of the Rashtrakutas, the pallavas, the Kuru, the Magadha, the Malava, the Chola, the Samvalla and the Calukya Kings.¹¹

This battle was described in the Kudlur grant as “ in the rainy season of a terrible battle fought at Rajaravadi accompanied with initial rain drops of arrows shot from the bow, lighting of fierce sword dark clouds of infuriated elephants, high winds of horses and streams of blood, this eminent king defeated with ease his powerful enemies. The vallabha army terrible with towering elephants and horses which was commanded by the Pallavas, the Rashtrakutas, the Kuru, the Megadha, the Malavas, the Cholas, the Samavalla and The Cha-lukya Kings and others, he caused to fall down in battle together with the tears of their wives.¹²

Though the battle of Rajaramudu was an important battle in the annals of the Western Gangas, it has less importance for our study purpose. Because the epigraphical sources did not give us, who were the pallavas and the Chola Kings fought against Nitimarga I in this battle. C. Hayavadana Rao says that “the Vallabha army was commanded by a

combination of Kings of different ruling dynasties, some of which seem to have been added for poetical effect and no more.¹³

Finding it futile to continue the war with Nitimarga I, the Amoghavarsha I concluded a peace treaty with Western Gangas. This treaty was sealed by a marriage between Butuga I the son of Nitimarga I and Abbalabba, the daughter of the Rashtrakuta emperor, Amoghavarsha I.¹⁴ Butuga's wife is called as Chandra-bbalabba in the Gattavadi plates.¹⁵ The another daughter of Amoghavarsha I called Sankha was given in marriage to the Pallava King Nandivarman III.

The hostile relation of Nitimarga I with the Pallavas of Kanchi, in his early period came to light by the battle of Rajaramudu. We are not aware that the victory of Nitimarga in the Rajaramudu battle caused any superior influence over the Pallavas. Butuga I, the son of Nitimarga I and the Pallava King Nandivarman III became co-brothers by marrying two daughters of the Rashtrakuta King Amoghavarsha I. This exhibited the cordial relation between the Pallavas of Kanchi and Western Gangas in the last days of Nitimarga I.

Rajamalla Satyavakya II (870 A.D. – 907 A.D.)

Rajamalla Satyavakya II the eldest son of Nitimarga I was the next successor who ascended the throne in 870 A.D.¹⁶ The Husukuru inscription¹⁷ says that Butuga I or Butarasa was Yuvaraja under his elder brother Rajamalla satyavakya II. Butuga I was governing the Kongaland and Pannad provinces.¹⁸ Butuga I continued to hold this charge till his death in 886 A.D. The glory of Rajamalla's reign was nothing but the achievements of his brother Butuga I.

Butuga I was praised in the Keregodi Rangapura plates as “the harasser of the pallava family by his prowess.”¹⁹ This was the period when the pallavas and the pandyas came

into hostile contact with each other in Tamil country. Till the important battle at sripurambiyam in 880 A.D., it was a continuous struggle between these two leadign powers for gaining supremacy in the south. Srimara I was the contemporary Pandyan ruler of Rajamalla II. Nandivarman III occupied the throne of the Pallavas of Kanchi. The Western Gangas had dynastic ties with the Pallava rulers, Butuga I and Nandivarman III being related as co-brothers in-law. Butuga I and Nandivarman III married Chandrabbalabba and Sankha, the two daughters of Amoghavasha I respectively.²⁰ It was therefore, not surprising to find the Western Gangas figuring in the Kudumukku²¹ battle on the side of the Kanchi ruler Nandivarman III. Nandivarman III²² and Butuga I were defeated in this battle by the Pandya King Srimara I. Srimara I assumed the title Parachakra Kolahala due to commemorate this victory.²³

Later Buguta I had overcome five times in fight with the Kongu ruler, who was the feudatory of the pandyan sovereign sriamara I.²⁴ The reaction of Sriamara I regarding the battle was not found in the records either of the pandyas of the Western Gangas.

The last day of Butuga I witnessed a success over the Pandyas of Madura. Nirpatunga Varman, the son of Nandivarman III Succeeded to the throne of Kanchi. Butuga I and his nephew Nripatungavarman jointly carried a war against Srimara. The defeat of Srimara Pandyan was stated in the Bahur Plates as “The army of the Pallavas which on a former occasion sustained defeat at the hands of the Pandyan King was by the grace of this King Nripatungavarman, able to burn down hosts of the enemies together with the prosperity of their Kingdom on the bank of the river Aricit.”²⁵

After the death of Butuga I in 886 A.D., his son Ere-yappa or Nitimaraga III become Yuvaraja under his uncle Rajamalla Satyavakya II²⁶ Ereyappa was associated with his uncle in the government.

During the reign of Rajamalla Satyavakya II, the Western Gangas had cordial relations with the pallavas of Kanchi at the same time he had hostile relations with other Tamil ruling dynasty the pandyas of Madura. Rajamalla Satyavakya II successfully maintained the integrity of his kingdom with able assistance of the yuvarajas Butuga I and Ereyappa.

Nitimarga II (908 A.D. – 920) A.D.):

Nitimarga II, the nephew of Rajamalla Satyavakya II came to the Western Ganga throne after a long period of apprenticeship as Yuvaraja in 908 A.D.²⁷ The Kudlur grant of Marasimha² called him as Nitimarag Kongamivaram – Maharajadhi – Raja Paramasvara and Komaravedenga³.

The Rashtrakuta – Western Ganga conflict was revived during the reign of Nitrimarga II⁴. A Virakal at Karbail in Nagamangala taluk refers Nitimargas war with the Rashtrakuta King Ballaha Krishna II.³⁰ Nitimarga II was defeated and the Rashtrakuta overlordship was imposed on Gangavadi.

Another threat to Nitimarga II reign was the challenge of Mahendra, the son of Nolambhadhiraja Polakhora and Jayabbe, the Ganga Princess. He was the Viceroy of kirutore Province.³¹ He challenged the overlordship of Western Gangas. Begur Virakal now in the Bangalore Musuem recorded that Nitimarga II slew the Nolamba King Bira-Mahendra in the battle at Tumbepadi.³² Nitimarga II, thus saved his kingdom and assumed the title Mahendrantaka.³³

Parantaka I Chola was the contemporary of Nitimarga II He put an end to Pallava supremacy and established their own suzerainty over the disintegrated Pallava dominions. A part of the Ganga Kingdom probably the portion about the present Kolar District was under the control of Parantaka I Chola.³⁴ The administration of this region was carried out by the Banas. Suddenly Parantaka I uprooted the Banas and conferred the Bana sovereignty on the Ganga Prince Prithivipati II and entitled him as Hastimalla.³⁵ The Cholas did not interfere in the affairs of the main line of the Western Gangas.

Nitimarga II married Jakebbe, the daughter of Chalukyan king, Nijagali.³⁶ Nitimarga II appears to have more than one wife. The Buraganhalli Virakal states that Mahadevi as his elder queen.³⁷ Of the three sons of Nitimarga II, the reign of the eldest son Narasimha was very brief and uneventful. Then he was succeeded by his brother, Rajamalla III.

Rajamalla III (920 A.D. – 937 A.D.):

Rajamalla III came to the western Ganga throne after his elder brother Narasimha-Deva. The Sudi Plates,³⁸ identified him as Nitimarga Konganivarma-dharma-maharajadhiraja Paramesvara. He was also known as Kachcheya-Ganga which means the quarrel some or fighting Ganga.³⁹ The Kudlur grant of Marasimha describes the famous victory of Rajamalla III in the Kottamangal battle as “slaying foot soldiers with his arrows horses with his sword and elephants with his single-scent elephant. King Rajamalla conquered and put to flight the Anniga in the famous Kotamangal battle, and taking pity on the trembling enemy, took him under his protection.”⁴⁰

The Anniga referred in the grant was identified with the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III⁴¹ Rajamalla III succedessfully overcome the Rashtrakuta suzeranity. No records give information about Rajamalla III’s affinity with the Tamil kings. The period of Rajamalla III was a colourless one for our field of interest.

Butuga II (937 A.D. – 960 A.D.):

Butuga II was the brother and successor of Rajamalla III He slew his brother Rajamalla III and obtained the Western Ganga throne.⁴² The other names of Butuga II were Butayya, Nanniya, Gunga and Ganga Gangaya.⁴³ The Sudi plate states that he married, Amoghavarshas III’s daughter Revaka.⁴⁴

The matrimonial alliance renewed the cordial relation between the Western Gangas and the Rashtrakutas. After the death of Amonghavarsha III, his son Krishna III ascended the throne of the Rashtrakuta empire. Butuga II helped Krishna III or Kannara to save the throne for himself from Lalleya, the rival for the Rashtrakuta throne.⁴⁵

When Butuga II was on the throne of the western Gangas, the Rajaditya Chola was in Charge of Tondimandalam. Rajaditya Chola consolidated his father parantaks's conquests in Banavasi and otehr places. This gave displeasure to Krishna III and he decided to attack the Chola kingdom. As a result of krishna III's desire, a war broke out. krishna III along with Butuga II met the Rajaditya chola army at Takkolam near Arkonam in 947 A.D.⁴⁶ Butuga II rendered a great service to the Reshtrakuta King Krishna III in the battle at Takkolam and slew the Chola crown prince Rajaditya in the battle field.⁴⁷ The victorious Rashtrakuta King Krishna III occupied the Tondaimandalam and besieged Tanjavur, Kanchi and Nalkote.⁴⁸ Krishna III was efficiently assisted by Butuga II in these campaigns. So Butuga II received Banavasi 12,000 province as a reward for his praiseworthy service in these campaigns.⁴⁹

The inscription at Nagar Taluk states that Butuga's daughter was married to Amonghavarsha IV, the son of Krishna III and Butuga's sono Muruladeva panuseya Ganga married the daughter of Krishna III⁵⁰ During the period of Butuga II, the Western Gangas had close relation with the Rashtrakutas. This was further cemented by these matrimonial alliances.

The share of Butuga II in the battle of Takkolam had historical importance. The effect of Takkolam battle was ruinous to the extreme and the Cholas took some years to come up from that effect.

Marasimaha (960 A.D. – 973 A.D.):

Marasimaha was the last great ruler of the Western Gangas line. He ascended the Western Gangas throne in 960 A.D. after the death of his father. From the inscriptions, we known that Marasimha bore the titles Calad-Uttaranga. Dharavatara, Jagadekavira,

Jagadekvavira, Gangara Simha, Gangovarjra, Ganga Kandarpa, Nolamba Kulantaka, Ganga Chudamani Vidhyadhara and Muttiy Ganga.⁵¹

During his reign Marasimha led a successful expedition against Gujjare or Gujarat King on behalf of Rashtrakuta King Krishna III. After his victory Marasimha assumed to the title Gujaradhiraja.⁵² Then Marasimha defeated Vajjala, the younger brother of Patalamalla, the ruler of Banavasi and captured all his possessions.⁵³ He also fought against the western Chalukya Prince Rajaditya.⁵⁴ Inscriptions State that Marasimha led a large army against Nolambas and destroyed them.⁵⁵ This expedition of Marasimha gave him a title Nolamba Kulanataka.⁵⁶ The last days of Marasimha had made extensive conquests in the south as far as Tanjavur.⁵⁷ During his reign, the Kingdom of the Western Gangas extended as far as the river Krishna and included the Nolambavadi 32,000 Gangavadi 96,000 the Banavasi 12,000 and other provinces.⁵⁸

Marasimha was the last great ruler of the Western Gangas dynasty. His reign witnessed full of battles and his territory extended further. From inscriptions, we came to know that he extended his territory up to Tanjavur in Tamil Nadu. But we were not given any information about Marasimha's relation with Tamil Kings in the inscription.

Rajamalla Satyavakya IV (947 A.D. – 985 A.D.):

Marasimha was followed by Rajamalla Satyavakya IV in 947 A.D. He was the eldest son of Marasimha. An inscription states that Rajamalla Satyavakya IV assumed the title Jayadekavira.⁵⁹

When Rajamalla Satyavakya IV came to power, the important feudatories of the Western Gangas were setting up independent rule in their dominions. Panchaladeva was the Governor of Puligere and Belvola which comprised thirty villages. In 975 A.D. Panchala–

Deva Called himself as Mahasamantadhipati and set an independent rule.⁶⁰ Rajamalla satyavakya IV directed his Minister Chaundarya to subdue the rebel government. chaundaraya successfully carried out the task and killed Panchala – Deva in the battle field in 975 A.D.

The rebel policy of Panchala-Deva was followed by another feudatory who was known as Mudu Rachayya. This rebel went a step further than panchala-Deva and Assumed the titles chala-deka Ganga and Gangarabanta. He besieged the Ganga capital to capture the throne of the Western Gangas. First Chaundarya's brother Nagavarma was sent to subdue the rebel feudatory. But he was repelled and killed by Madu Rachayya. Then Chaundaraya himself met mudu Rachayya in the battle Bageyur and killed him in the battle Bageyur and killed him.⁶¹ For this service Chaundaraya was honoured with the title Samara Parasurama.⁶² Rajamalla was assisted by his Minister Chaundraya in the administration as well as in the battle field.

Rakkasa Ganga (985 A.D. – 1024 A.D.):

Rajamalla satyavakya IV was succeeded by his younger brother, Rakkasa Ganga in 985 A.D.⁶³ He was the governor of Baddoregere when his brother Rajamalla Satyavakya IV was the ruler of Gangavadi. He ruled the Gangavadi as an independent ruler till the conquest of the cholas in 1004 A.D.

The rising power of the Cholas under the energetic Rajaraja I and his valiant son Rajendra I gave a death blow to the Western Ganga dynasty. In 1004 A.D. Rajendra I the glorious son and general of the King Rajaraja I conquered Gangavadi along with Nolambapadi and Tadigaipadi.⁶⁴ The imperial Cholas of Tanjavur put to an end to the

Western Ganga dynasty which held sway for nearly seven centuries in the Gangavadi 96,000 province.

C. Hayavadana Rao described the last phase of the Western Ganga dynasty as the Western Ganga dynasty however disappeared from history. Driven from their kingdom, they took refuge with the Chalukyas and with the Hoysalas who were destined to succeed to their dominion in Mysore, and attained to positions of the highest honour under both.”⁶⁵

Rakkasa Ganga, younger brother Arumali-Deva had two daughters and a son. Being issueless Rakkasa Ganga adopted the children of his brother.⁶⁶ Later the adopted daughter of Rakkasa Ganga called Cattale was married to Kaduveti, the lord of Kanchi.⁶⁷

The last ruler of the Western Ganga dynasty Rakkasa Ganga had matrimonial alliance with the Pallavas of Kanchi. Thus the ancient glorious dynasty was brought to an end by the Cholas of Tanjavur.

Though the western Gangas had a long affinity with the Tamil Country, from the second half of the 4th century A.D to the beginning of the 11th century A.D. did not influence the Tamil society in any manner.

Reference

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3. E.C., Vol. XI, Si. 38.
4. E.C., Vol. IV, Yd. 60.
5. M.A.R., 1919, Para – 66.
6. E.C., Vol. IV, Yd. Yd. 60, and M.A.R., 1919, Para – 67.
7. M.A.R., 1909-10, Para – 60.
8. M.A.R., 1921, p.20.
9. E.C., Vol. X., Kl. 90.
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13. C.Hayavdana Rao, **Op. Cit.**, p. 655.
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15. M.A.R., 1919, p.30.
16. E.C., Vol.III, Nj. 385.
17. E.I., Vol. VI, p.68.
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19. M.A.R., 1919, Para-68.
20. M.A.R., 1921, p.21.
21. Kudumukku – identify with the modern town Kumbakonam
22. M.A.R., 1907, p.6.
23. M.V.Krishna Rao, **Op. Cit.**, p.85.
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26. E.C., Vol. IV, Hg.103
27. E.I., Vol. VI, p.69
28. M.A.R. 1921, p.21.
29. Komara Vendenga means “a wonder among Princes”.
30. M.A.R., 1914-15, Para – 65.
31. E.C., Vol. III, Md. 14
32. E.C., Vol. IX, p.7 and M.A.R., 1906, Para-21.
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35. S.I.I., Vol, II, p.387.
36. M.A.R., 1921, p.21
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38. E.I., Vol. III, p.183.
39. E.I., Vol, III, p.183,
40. M.A.R., 1921, P.21.
41. E.I., Vol. V. P.191.
42. E.I., Vol.p.70, M.A.R., 191, p.21 and E.C., Vol. III, p.5.
43. E.C., Vol. IX, p.7.

44. **E.I.**, Vol. III, p.183.

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47. **M.A.R.**, 1921, p.22.

48. C.Hayavadana rao, **Op.Cit.**, p.671.

49. **E.I.**, Vol. VI, p.57.

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51. **E.C.**, Vol., II, p. 59.

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56. **E.C.**, Vol. IX, p.7.

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58. B.Lewis Rice., **Op. Cit.**, p.47.

59. **E.C.**, Vol. II, p.201.

60. **E.C.**, Vol. XI, Hr.1 (Hiriyur) and **E.I.**, Vol, V, p.372.

61. M.V.Krishna Rao, **Op.Cit.**, P.110.

62. Ibid.

63. Hayavadana Rao, **Op. Cit.**, p.687.

64. **S.I.I.**, Vol. Ins. No.40, **S.I.I.**, Vol .II, Ins. No.2, 4 and 57 and **M.A.R.**, 1919, Para-76.

65. C.Hayavadana Rao, **Op.Cit.**, p.690.

66. **E.C.**, Vol. VIII, Nr. 35.

67. **E.C.** Vol.VIII, Nr. 35.

