

9

EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA: THE AGE OF REGIONAL CONFIGURATIONS (c. 600-1200 CE)

The term 'early medieval' denotes the intermediate period between the 'ancient' and the 'medieval'. This period in India is marked by feudalism, political fragmentation, and the formation and proliferation of various states at regional level. In south India, especially, this period is viewed more as a period of segmentary statehood, wherein the king acted more as a ritual head, and did not have a firm revenue infrastructure or a standing army. For simpler understanding, the period from c. 600–1200 CE can be roughly classified into primarily two phases, different for north and south India* respectively:

- a. The period from c. 600–750 CE in north India, dominated by the Pushyabhutis of Thaneswar and the Maukharis of Kannauj, and correspondingly, the period from c. 600–750 CE in South India which included three major states, that of the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai.
- b. The period from c. 750–1200 CE in North India can be further divided into two phases:
 - i. Phase I from c.750–1000 CE, which was marked by the age of three important empires, the Gurjara Pratiharas in north India, the Palas in eastern India, and the Rashtrakutas in Deccan.
 - ii. Phase II from c.1000–1200 CE, which is primarily known as the age of conflict and breakdown of the tripartite powers into many smaller kingdoms all over the country. For example, in northern India, the disintegration of the Pratihara empire brought to the forefront various Rajput states under the control of different Rajput dynasties such as the Chahamanas (Chauhans), Chandellas, Paramaras of Malwa, and so on. These states would eventually go on to fight and resist the Turkish attacks from northwest India led by Mahmud Ghazni and Mohammad Ghorī in the 11th and 12th centuries, but they had to yield ultimately as they

failed to stand united against the invaders. This section is dealt with in the next chapter.

The period from c. 850–1200 CE in south India saw the supremacy of the Cholas.

Even though India was politically divided during these years, this era added new and rich cultural elements in the fields of art, literature, and language. In fact, some of the best specimens of temple architecture and Indian literature belong to this period.

[* Kindly note that in order to ensure simplicity, the period of classification does not adhere to a specific time span but just presents a rough idea for conceptual clarity. For instance, in order to ensure continuity among the various kingdoms, the period from c.600–750 CE may include kingdoms after c.750 CE too.]



PERIOD FROM C.600-750 CE: NORTHERN INDIA



Pushyabhutis of Thanesar

As we have discussed earlier, until the middle of the 6th century CE, the Gupta Empire had provided stability to the northern India — especially modern day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar — for about 160 years. The decline of the Gupta Empire had, however, resulted in the splitting of northern India into several kingdoms. Since the 5th century CE onwards Kashmir, Punjab, and north west India had come under the sovereignty of the white Hunas, whereas from the middle of the 6th century CE, north and western India was ruled by different feudatories of the Guptas. An important ruling family to gain prominence after the fall of the Gupta was that of the Pushyabhutis, who had their capital at Thanesar (near Kurukshetra, Haryana). Two major historical sources which provide information regarding the Pushyabhuti dynasty are the *Harshacharita*, a biography of Harsha written by Harsha's court poet

Banabhatta, and travelogues of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang/Xuanzang. Not much is known about the first three kings of the dynasty and most likely the dynasty came into prominence with the accession of Prabhakar Vardhana, who was able to defeat the Hunas and strengthen his position in the regions of Punjab and Haryana.

Pushyabhutis (Originally feudatories of the Guptas)

Prabhakar Vardhana (around mid-6th century CE)

- Fourth king of the dynasty, who actually laid the foundations of the Pushyabhuti dynasty.
- He was a great general with many military victories.
- He established important marital alliances with the Maukharis of Kanyakubja/Kannauj (their neighbours to the east) by marrying his daughter Rajyashri to the Maukhari ruler Grahavarman.
- After his death, his elder son Rajya Vardhana came to the throne, but he was treacherously killed by Shashanka, the king of Gauda, that is, Bengal and Bihar.

Harsha Vardhana (c. 606–647 CE)

- He is known as the last great Hindu king of India, who was originally a Shaiva but also supported Buddhism to a great extent and made generous endowments to Buddhists. He is popularly known as Harsha and was also described as the lord of the north (*sakalauttarapathanatha*).

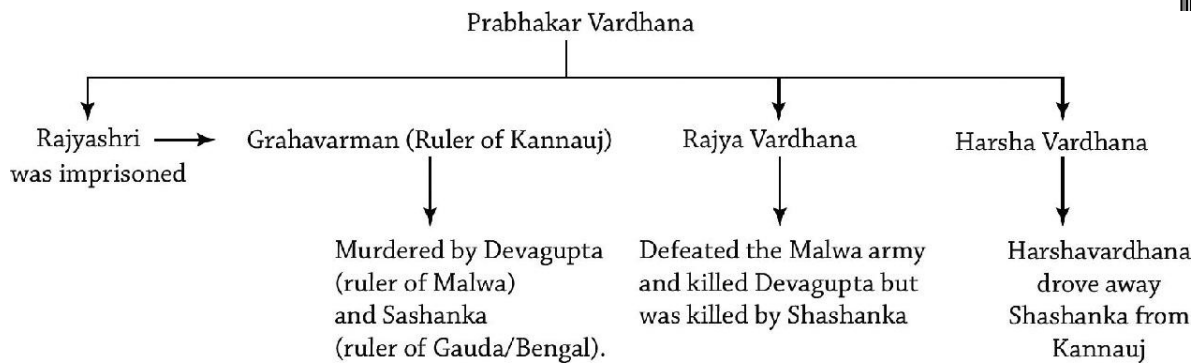


Harshvardhana Empire

- **Rajya Vardhana** had succeeded Prabhakar Vardhana initially. However, Harsha succeeded his brother, when Rajya Vardhana left the reigns of governance in the hands of Harsha Vardhana as he had to undertake a **campaign** against the ruler of Malwa, **Devagupta** and **Shashanka**, the ruler of Gauda, who had imprisoned their sister **Rajyashri** and killed her husband **Grahavarman**. He defeated the Malwa army and killed **Devagupta**, but was unfortunately killed by **Shashanka**, who also cut the Bodhi tree and

occupied Kannauj. It was under these circumstances that Harsha then ascended the throne. He was only sixteen years of age at that time, but he still proved himself to be a great warrior and an able administrator. He immediately marched towards Kannauj and rescued his sister Rajyashri, who was believed to be on the verge of committing Sati. Kannauj subsequently came under the sovereignty of Pushyabhutis.

- Later, he also defeated Shashanka and extended his control over parts of Kongoda in Orissa.



- Harsha’s reign was marked by many military victories and he brought most of north India under his control as he brought the five ‘Indies (regions)’ — Punjab, Kannauj, Bengal, Orissa, Mithila and assumed the title of ‘Siladitya’ (as mentioned in travel records of Chinese traveler Xuanzang (Hsuan Tsang). He was victorious against the ruler of Sindh in the north west and also defeated the Vallabhi king, Dhruvasena II, as mentioned in the Nausasi copper plate inscription. However, he was defeated by Pulkesin II (western Chalukyan King of Badami) on the banks of Narmada. Pulkesin II bestowed the title of “Sakalauttarapathanatha”, meaning “Lord of the entire north”, upon him.
- Harsha’s empire probably included Thaneswar, Kannauj, Ahichchhatra, Shravasti, and Prayag, and he extended his empire into Magadha and Orissa. The capital of Harsha was originally Thaneswar, but he shifted it to Kannauj. The Narmada formed the southern boundary of his empire. In

the east, the king of Kamrupa, Bhaskaravarman and Dhruvabhata accepted his overlordship, while in the west, the king of Vallabhi also did the same. The forest tribes of the Vindhya too regularly paid tribute to Harsha and also helped him with military support.

- Some of the subordinate rulers who had titles such as *samanta* and *raja* used the **Harsha era** of **606 CE**, which was the year of accession of Harsha Vardhana.
- The Chinese pilgrim **Hsuan Tsang**, who is also **known as the Prince of Travelers** and **author of Si-Yu-Ki**, visited India during 629–644 CE. He earned Harsha's friendship and left a vivid account of the beauty, grandeur, and prosperity of Kannauj. He gives a detailed account of a **grand assembly** held at **Kannauj** in **643 CE**, which was attended by the **representatives** of **Hinduism**, **Jainism**, and **Buddhism**, in which Xuanzang along with others gave discourses on **Mahayana** doctrines. This grand conclave was also attended by various subordinate kings including those of Vallabhi and Assam. A huge tower with a golden statue of the Buddha was constructed for the occasion, which was later worshipped by Harsha himself.
- He also used to **celebrate** a **solemn festival** at **Prayag (Allahabad)** at the end of every five years and also held the *Mahamoksha Parishad* at **Allahabad**. The images of the Buddha, the Sun and Shiva were worshipped and gifts of valuable articles and clothing were distributed in charity.
- Harsha was a great patron of the arts and learning. He was very talented himself as it is believed that he **wrote three dramas** *Priyadarshika*, *Ratnavali* (both romantic comedies), and *Nagananda* (based on *Bodhisattva Jimutavahana*). He also has to his credit a **work on grammar** and two Sutra works. It is presumed that he **himself composed the text** of the **two inscriptions** **Madhuban** and **Banskhera** (they contain his signature and exhibit his calligraphic skills). According to Banabhatta, he

was also an accomplished flute player.

- He established a large monastery at Nalanda. Banabhatta (author of *Harshacharita* and *Parvatiparinay*), Mayura (author of *Mayurashataka*), renowned grammarian Bhartrihari (author of *Vakapadiya*), and Matanga Divakara were the accomplished writers at his court.
- He had diplomatic relations with the Chinese as his contemporary T'ang Emperor sent three embassies to his court. The last of these, under Wang-hiuen –tse, came to India in 647 CE when Harsha was no longer alive.

The death of Harsha was followed by a period of political confusion that continued up to the 8th century, when the Gurjara Pratiharas and the Rajput rulers emerged as a big force in northern India.



Administration under Harsha

Harsha governed his empire on almost the same lines as the Guptas, except that his administration was more feudal and decentralised. The leading feudatories of Harsha were Bhaskaravarmana of Kamarupa, Dhruvabhatta of Vallabhi, Purnavarman of Magadha, and Udit of Jalandhara. He had the support of a large army, which was also supplemented by contributory forces from feudatories in the times of need. The army consisted of infantry, cavalry, chariots, and elephants. The power shifted to military camps known as *skandhavaras*. Land grants to priests in lieu of their special services continued and it is generally presumed that land grants to officers by charters in lieu of their salary probably began with Harsha (as evident in the lesser number of coins issued by Harsha). These grants contained the same privileges as enjoyed by Brahmadeya lands. Hsuan Tsang states that people were taxed lightly and the revenues were divided into four parts :

- One part earmarked for the king
- Second part reserved for scholars
- Third part for the endowments of officials and public servants
- Fourth part for religious purposes

Harsha personally supervised the administration and according to the

records of Hsuan Tsang, he divided his day into *three parts: attending to administrative duties during the first and devoting himself to religious work during the other two*. He used to have frequent *tours of inspection* around his kingdom. However, *law and order* suffered from some *lacunae* as *inferred* from the *travel statements* of Hsuan Tsang, wherein he states that *he was robbed as well*. The laws of the *land were severe* and generally robbery was considered as second only to treason, for which the right hand of robber was amputated. But, *later* it appears under the influence of Buddhism, the *severity* of punishment was *mitigated* and criminals were punished for life.

The Brahmanas and Kshatriyas were reported to lead a simple life, but the nobles and priests led a luxurious life. The *Shudras* were generally *agriculturists* and *their status improved* as compared to past. Earlier, they were meant to serve the other three varnas only, but they could *now pursue agriculture independently*. However, the state of *untouchables* such as the *Chandalas* continued to be *pathetic* and they suffered from *all forms of disabilities*. The *forest guards* were known as the *Vanapalas* and the *chief of all the villages* was an officer called *sarva-palli-patti*.

Hsuan Tsang pointed to the disintegration of the Buddhist sect into eighteen sects. However, *Nalanda* emerged as a great *centre* of *Buddhist studies* and had a huge monastic establishment. Another *Chinese traveller Yijing/I-Tsing* also *visited India* in *670 CE* and *lived for ten years* at the *Nalanda monastery*. He describes that Nalanda was supported by the revenues of 200 villages.



The Maitrakas

The Maitrakas were *tributary chiefs* of the Guptas, who established an *independent* kingdom in western India ruling over *Saurashtra* in Gujarat. *Dhruvasena II* was the most important ruler of the Maitrakas, who was a *contemporary of Harsha Vardhana* and was *married to his daughter*. Hsuan Tsang tells us that Dhruvasena II attended Harsha's assembly at Prayaga (Allahabad). The Maitrakas developed *Vallabhi* as their *capital*, which was also an important centre of learning. Being on

the Arabian Sea, it was also a **port town** having flourishing trade and commerce. The Maitrakas continued to rule until the middle of the 8th century when Arab attacks weakened their power.



The Maukharis

The Maukharis were also **subordinate rulers of the Guptas** and used the **title of samanta**. They ruled over **Kannauj**, a city in western Uttar Pradesh, which gradually replaced Pataliputra as the political centre of northern India. **Harsha Vardhana's sister Rajyashri** was **married to Grahavarmana**. As we have discussed earlier, **Shashanka**, the ruler of Bengal (Gauda), and **Devagupta**, the ruler of Malwa, jointly attacked Grahavarmana and killed him. After the successful expedition of Harsha Vardhana, the kingdom of **Kannauj**, was then **merged** with that of the **Pushyabhutis** and Harsha **shifted his capital** from **Thanesar** (Kurukshetra) to **Kannauj**. The **Maukharis** are also **mentioned** in **Patanjali's** work.

Hari Varhmana Maukhari (mid-6th century CE)

- Had assumed the title '**Maharaja**'; however, the extent of his kingdom is unknown.

Advaita Varmana

- He had succeeded his father, and is said to have assumed the title of Maharaja.

Ishanavarmana (c. 554 CE)

- The **real founder** of **Maukhari supremacy** and assumed the title '**Maharajadhiraja**' according to **Asirgarh copper plate inscription**.
- The Maukhari kingdom had stretched to Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Gauda, under his reign. The **Andhra king defeated by** Ishanavarman may have been a member of the Visnukundin family. Ishanavarman had to **face opposition** from the **later Guptas** and there started a prolonged struggle with the later Guptas. He had to **suffer** crushing **defeat** at the hands of **Kumaragupta**.

- He is remembered in history for the resistance offered to the Hunas, resulting in the defeat of the Hunas. The Maukharis possibly fought with the Hunas as feudatories of Baladitya of the Imperial Gupta family. The Harsha inscription claims that Ishanavarmana had also defeated the Sulikas.
- The seals and coins of this ruler indicate that he was a learned person, a just ruler, a brave warrior, and a patron of education.

Sarvavarmana (c. 560–585 CE)

- Probably the son of Ishanavarmana, who succeeded the throne after his father's death. Sarvavarmana did maintain his hold on Magadha and kept the later Guptas under subordination. The Asirgadh Inscription in Nimar district of Madhya Pradesh narrates his victory over Damodargupta, and describes Nimar as a 'Maukhari outpost in the Deccan.'
- In the time of Sarvavarmana, the later Guptas created no trouble.

Avanti Varmana (c. 585–600 CE)

- The Nalanda seal shows that Sarvavarmana was succeeded by his son Avantivarmana who also took the title of Maharajadhiraja and extended the boundary of the kingdom by transferring the capital to the historical city of Kannauj.
- It was under him that the Maukhari empire reached at its peak.

Grahavarmana (around c. 600 CE)

- He succeeded Avantivarmana and was married to Rajyashri, the daughter of Prabhakar Vardhana of the Pushyabhuti family of Thanesara.
- Grahavarmana was killed by Deva Gupta of the later Gupta lineage.

Gradually the Maukhari family disappeared into obscurity.



PERION FROM C.600-750 : SOUTHERN INDIA

As we have seen earlier, the period from c. 300–750 CE marks the **second historical phase** in the region south of the **Vindhyas**. It continued some processes from the first historical phase but it also differed from the first historical phase (c.200 BCE–300 CE) in many respects such as

First Historical Phase (c. 200 BCE –300 CE)	Second Historical Phase (c. 300–750 CE)
The major kingdoms were of the Satavahanas , the Cholas , the Cheras , and the Pandyas .	The three major kingdoms of this era were of the the Pallavas of Kanchi , the Chalukyas of Badami , the Pandyas of Madurai .
This period was marked by the appearance of numerous crafts , internal and external trade , widespread use of coins and a good number of towns.	Trade, towns and coinage declined in this phase, however, there was more expansion of agrarian economy .
This period offered patronage to Buddhism as is evident in extensive Buddhist monuments in both Andhra and Maharashtra. Cave inscriptions also point to the existence of Jainism and Buddhism in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu.	There was more emphasis on Brahmanism and more instances of Vedic sacrifices by kings. Jainism was restricted to Karnataka. The culture of Megaliths paved way for temple construction.
The epigraphs were mostly written in Prakrit .	Sanskrit became the official language of the peninsula and most charters were prepared in it.



Deccan

The Western Chalukyas of Badami

As we have discussed earlier, in northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha (Berar), the **Satavahanas** were **succeeded** by the **Vakatakas**. The **Vakatakas** were **followed** by the **Chalukyas of Badami**, who played a prominent role in the history of Deccan and south India for about two hundred years from the beginning of the 6th century CE. The **Chalukyas** were a **maritime power** and they set up their **kingdom** in **western Deccan** with **capital** at **Vatapi** (modern **Badami** in **Karnataka**). Along with the Chalukyas of Badami (who are primarily called the Western Chalukyas), there were **two other branches** of the **lineage** who **ruled independently** — the **Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi** and the **Chalukyas of Lata**.

The Western Chalukyas, in order to acquire legitimacy and respectability, **claimed Brahmanical origin** as **Haritiputras** of the **Manavya gotra**. The founder king of this dynasty was **Pulakeshin I**, who established the independent power of this dynasty.

Pulakeshin I (c. 535–566 CE)

- Founded the **kingdom** with **capital** at **Vatapi** (Badami, Karnataka).
- Performed a number of *shruta* sacrifices such as *ashvamedha*.

Kirtivarman I (c. 566–598 CE)

- Pulakeshin I's son, who further **enlarged** the **kingdom** and **defeated** the **Kadambas of Banavasi** (near **Mysore**), the **Mauryas of the Konkan**, and the **Nalas of the Bastar** area.

Mangalesha (c. 598–609 CE)

- After Kirtivarman I's death, a war of succession broke out between his **brother Mangalesha** and **nephew Pulakeshin II**, in which Pulakeshin II emerged triumphant.

Pulakeshin II (c. 610–642 CE)

- The **most powerful** and **famous king** of this dynasty, who

achieved many military successes. His eulogy was written by his court poet Ravikirti in the Aihole Inscription, which describes his victories against the Kadambas of Banavasi, Alupas and Gangas of Mysore. He also led expeditions against eastern Deccan kingdoms, south Kosala and Kalinga.

- Contemporary of Harsha Vardhana and defeated him on the banks of river Narmada. He thus acquired the title of *dakshinapatheshvara* (lord of the south).
- Sent an embassy to Persian king Khusro II (the reception of this embassy is depicted in the Ajanta Caves).
- Hsuan Tsang visited his kingdom and he describes that even though Pulkeshin II was Hindu, he was tolerant towards Buddhism and Jainism.
- He had conflicts with the Pallavas of Kanchi and annexed the region between Krishna and Godavari (popularly known as Vengi) from the Pallavas and placed it under his brother Vishnuvardhana (Chalukyas of Vengi/Eastern Chalukyas). Thus the first expedition against the Pallavas, who were at the time ruled by Mahendravarman I, was a complete success. However, the second expedition against the Pallavas proved to be a complete failure as King Narsimhavarman of the Pallava dynasty killed Pulkeshin II and adopted the epithet of *Vatapikonda*.
- The Badami Chalukya dynasty went into a brief decline following the death of Pulakeshin II due to internal feuds. Badami was occupied by the Pallavas for a period of 13 years. It marked the beginning of a long-drawn political struggle between the Pallavas and Chalukyas, that continued with ups and down for more than a hundred years.

Vikramaditya I (c. 655–680 CE)

- Succeeded in pushing the Pallavas out of Badami and re-established authority over whole kingdom. He not only defeated successive Pallava rulers but also captured their

capital Kanchi.

- Vikramaditya I took the title ‘*Rajamalla*’ (meaning ‘the Sovereign of the Mallas’ or Pallavas).
- Also defeated the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas.

Vinayaditya I (c.680–696 CE)

Vijayaditya (c.696–733 CE)

- His 37 year rule was a prosperous one and is widely known for his prolific temple building activity.

Vikramaditya II (c. 733–743 CE)

- The Vatapi dynasty was at its peak again during the rule of the illustrious Vikramaditya II, who is known for his repeated invasions of the territory of *Tondaimandalam* and his subsequent victories over Pallava King Nandivarman II. He thus avenged the earlier humiliation of the Chalukyas by the Pallavas and engraved a Kannada inscription on the victory pillar of the Kailasanath Temple.
- He is also known for benevolence towards the people and the monuments of Kanchipuram, the Pallava capital.
- During his reign, Arab intruders of the Umayyad Caliphate invaded southern Gujarat, which was under Chalukya rule, but the Arabs were defeated and driven out by Pulakesi, a Chalukya governor of Navsari.
- He later also overran the other traditional kingdoms of Tamil country, the Pandyas, the Cholas and the Cheras, in addition to subduing a Kalabhra ruler.

Kirtivarman II (c.743–757 CE)

- Last ruler of this dynasty who was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king Dantidurga. Thus, Chalukyan rule came to an end in about 757 CE and one of the feudatories, the Rashtrakutas came into prominence.

Culturally, Chalukyan period is noted for the growth of art and architecture in Deccan. Their style of architecture is called ‘Chalukyan architecture’. They developed Deccan or Vesara style of temple-building, which reached its culmination under the Rashtrakutas and the

Hoyasalas (13th century). Nearly a hundred monuments built by them, rock-cut (cave) and structural, are found in the Malaprabha river basin in modern Bagalkot district of northern Karnataka. They mostly **used** locally found **reddish-golden sandstone** in their monuments. Most of the Chalukyan temple-building activity were concentrated in a relatively small area of **Aihole**, **Badami**, **Pattadakal** and **Mahakuta** in modern **Karnataka** state. Their temple building activity can be categorised primarily into **three phases**:

- a. The **early phase** (which began in the **last quarter of the 6th century**): In this phase, **prominently cave temples** were **built**, such as the **three elementary cave temples** at **Aihole** (one Vedic, one Jaina, and one Buddhist which is incomplete), followed by four developed cave temples at Badami out of which three caves temples are Vedic and one belongs to Jaina tradition. The **noteworthy feature** of these **cave temples** at **Badami** is that **each has a plain exterior** but an **exceptionally well-finished interior**, consisting of a **pillared verandah**, a **columned hall** (mandapa) and a **cella** (**shrine**, cut deep into rock) which **contains the deity of worship**. The Vedic temples contain large well-sculpted images of *Harihara*, *Mahishasuramardhini*, *Varaha*, *Narasimha*, *Trivikrama*, *Vishnu seated on Anantha* (the snake) and *Nataraja* (dancing Shiva).



Badami Cave Temple

- b. The **second phase**: This phase of temple building was at **Aihole** where some 70 structures exist and has been called '*one of the cradles of Indian temple architecture*' and **Badami**. These are the **Lad Khan Temple** with its interesting **perforated stone windows** and **sculptures of river goddesses**, the **Meguti Jain Temple** which shows progress in structural design, and the Durga Temple with its northern Indian style tower. Other Dravida style temples from this period are the Naganatha Temple at Nagaral, the Banantigudi Temple, and the Mahakutesvara Temple.
- c. The **mature phase**: The mature phase of Badami Chalukyan architecture includes the **structural temples** at **Pattadakal**, which were built in the **8th century** and are **now** a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. There are ten temples at Pattadakal, six in southern Dravida style and four in the northern Nagara style. Well known among these are the **Sangamesvara Temple**, the

famous Virupaksha Temple of Karnataka which contains a lot of representations from the Mahabharata, and the Mallikarjuna Temple built in the southern style. Inscriptional evidence suggests that *the Virupaksha and the Mallikarjuna Temples were commissioned by the two queens of King Vikramaditya II after his military success over the Pallavas of Kanchipuram.* The Bhutanatha group of temples at Badami are also from this period.

Much of the paintings and sculpture of the Ajanta and Ellora caves were completed during the Chalukyan reign.

The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi

In the second half of the 8th century, the Eastern Chalukyas established themselves in Vengi in Andhra Pradesh. As we have discussed earlier, Pulakesin II (c. 610–642 CE) conquered the Vengi region in eastern Deccan and in 624 CE appointed his brother Vishnuvardhana as the governor of this newly acquired territory. Probably after the death of Pulkeshin II, Vishnuvardhana declared independence and thus the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi came into prominence. Initially, the capital of the Eastern Chalukyas was Vengi (near modern Eluru) but later it was moved to Rajamahendravaram (modern Rajamundry). Throughout their history, the Eastern Chalukyas were the cause of many wars between the more powerful Cholas and Western Chalukyas since they controlled the strategic Vengi country. The five centuries of the Eastern Chalukya rule of Vengi saw not only the consolidation of this region into a unified whole, but also saw the efflorescence of Telugu culture, literature, poetry, and art during the later half of their rule. They continued ruling the region as feudatories of the Cholas until 1189 CE. Their kingdom ultimately succumbed to the Hoysalas and the Yadavas.

Vishnuvardhana (around c. 624 CE)

Vijayaditya II (c. 808–847 CE)

- One of the most important ruler of this dynasty, who led successful military expeditions against the Rashtrakutas,

the Gangas, and also led campaigns into Gujarat. Even the Rashtrakuta inscriptions acknowledge their defeat at the hands of Vijayaditya and they admit *that the glory of their kingdom was 'drowned in the ocean of the Chalukyas'*.

Vijayaditya III (c. 848–892 CE)

- Another important ruler of this dynasty, who claimed to have won over not only the Pallavas, the Pandyas, the Gangas, the Rashtrakutas, the Kalachuris, and South Kosala, but also gave shelter to a Chola king.

Bhima I (c. 892–922 CE)

- He was captured by the Rashtrakuta king but was later released.

Vijayaditya IV (around c.922 CE, for a period of six months)

- From his reign, many succession disputes erupted in which the Rashtrakutas openly interfered and backed one or the other contenders. The later rulers thus had very short reigns, from six months to a mere fortnight too.
- Some political stability was restored during the reigns of Bhima II and Amma II, but it did not last for a long time and subsequently in 999 CE, the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi were conquered by the Chola king Rajaraja.

The Chalukyas of Lata

Initially in their early years, they started as feudatories of the Western Chalukyas but gradually during the 10th and 11th centuries, with the diminishing power of the western Chalukyas, they declared themselves independent and started ruling in the Lata region of present day Gujarat and were ultimately defeated by the Chalukyas of Gujarat (Solankis).

Nimbarka (Not much is known about him)

Barappa (c. 970–990 CE)

- The dynasty's first prominent ruler, who earlier worked as a general of the Western Chalukya king Tailapa II and was subsequently made the governor of the Lata region by

Tailapa.

- It is believed that a joint army of Barappa and the Shakambhari king defeated the Solanki ruler Mularaja.
- According to Hemachandra's Devyashraya Kavya, Mularaja's son Chamunda-raja invaded Lata and killed Barappa.

Gogi-raja (c. 990–1010 CE)

- Barappa's son Gogi-raja probably revived the family's fortune in the Lata region.

Kirti-raja (c. 1010–1030 CE)

- A 940 Shaka (1018 CE) **copper plate inscription of Kirti-raja** was discovered in Surat, which lists the names of his ancestors as Gogi, Barappa and Nimbarka.

Vatsa-raja (c. 1030–1050 CE)

- Vatsa is believed to have **built a golden umbrella** for the **god Somanatha**, and also established a **free food canteen (sattra)**.

Trilochana-pala (c.1050–1070 CE)

- Two **copper plate inscriptions** dated 972 Shaka (1050 CE Ekallahara and 1051 CE Surat) related to Trilochana-pala have been discovered. He is titled **Maha-Mandaleshvara** in these inscriptions.
- These inscriptions given an account of the **mythical origin** of the Chalukyas. According to these inscriptions, *the family's progenitor originated from the chuluka (a vessel or a folded palm to hold water) of the creator deity Virinchi. On the deity's advice, he married the Rashtrakuta princess of Kanyakubja.*
- The 1050 CE inscription records his donation of the Ekallahara village to a Brahmin named Taraditya.

However, by 1074 CE, the dynasty appears to have been **vanquished** by the **Solankis**.



Far South

The political history of the far south during this period was dominated by two prominent kingdoms, the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai.

The Pallavas of Kanchi

On the ruins of the Satavahanas, in the eastern part of the peninsula (specially in the Krishna–Guntur region), arose the Ikshvakus. They were probably a local tribe who adopted the exalted name of the Ikshvakus to demonstrate the antiquity of their lineage. Many monuments and copper plate inscriptions at Nagarjunakonda and Dharanikota belonged to them. The Ikshvakus were supplanted by the Pallavas. The term Pallava means ‘creeper’, which is a Sanskrit version of the word *tondi* and in Tamil they are synonymous to robber. So, the Pallavas were probably a pastoral local tribe who established their authority in the land of creepers called Tondaimandalam (the land between the north Penner and north Vellar rivers), mostly comprising of southern Andhra Pradesh and northern Tamil Nadu with their capital at Kanchi. Kanchi (modern Kanchipuram) under them became an important temple town and a centre of trade and commerce.

Some inscriptions refer to early kings of this dynasty such as Shivaskandavarman, who probably ruled in the early 4th century CE. But in the last quarter of the 6th century, the ruler who played a crucial role in the Pallavas’ rise to power was Simhavishnu.

Simhavishnu

- He supposedly defeated the Ikshvakus and laid a firm foundation for the Pallava empire.
- Putting an end to the political disturbances caused by the Kalabhras, he conquered the land up to the Kaveri and set up capital at Kanchi (south of Chennai).
- Bore the title of “*Avanisimha*” (Lion of the Earth).

Mahendravarman I (c. 590–630 CE)

- During his reign, conflict between the Chalukyas of

Badami and the Pallavas heightened and he was defeated by Pulekshin II at Pullalur (near Kanchi) who annexed the northern part of the Pallava kingdom.

- Was a great patron of arts, was himself a poet and musician. He wrote the *Mattavilasa Prahasanna* and initiated the construction of the famous cave temple at Mahabalipuram.



Mamallapuram Rock Carvings

- Was earlier a Jaina but later took up Shaivism under the influence of Appar.

Narasimhavarman I/Mahamalla (c.630–668 CE)

- Avenged his father's defeat and not only defeated Pulkeshin II but also invaded the Western Chalukyan kingdom and captured Badami with the help of the Sri Lankan prince, Manavarma.
- Claimed to have won over not only the Chalukyas but also the Cholas, Cheras and the Kalabhras.
- Dispatched two naval expeditions to help his friend Manavarma, but subsequently Manavarma was defeated

and he had to seek political refuge at his court.

- Enthusiastic patron of architecture and along with constructing the port of Mamallapuram, he also ordered the construction of the *rathas* at Mahabalipuram. It is in honour of Narasimhavarman I that Mahabalipuram is also known as Mamallapuram.



Ratha Temple at Mahabalipuram

Mahendravarman II (c. 668–670 CE)

- The Pallava–Chalukya conflict continued for subsequent decades and Mahendravarman II died fighting the Chalukyas.

Parameshvaraman I (c. 670–695 CE)

- Defeated the Chalukya king Vikramaditya and also the Gangas.
- Built temple at Kanchi.

Narsimhavarman II/ Rajasimha (c.700–728 CE)

- Constructed **Rajasimheshvara/Kailashnatha Temple**.
- Shore temple at Mahabalipuram
- Sent an ambassador to China.

Paramesdhvaraman II (c.728–731 CE) **Nandivarman II** (c.731–795 CE)

Dantivarman (c.795–846 CE)

- During his reign, **Rashtrakuta** king **Govind III** invaded **Kanchi**.

Nandivarman III (c.846–869 CE)

- Managed to defeat the Pandyas.

Aparajita (c.880–893 CE)

- Last known Pallava king who, with the help of Western Gangas and Cholas, defeated the Pandyas at a battle at Shripurambiyam.

In c.893 CE, the **Pallavas** were ultimately **overthrown** by the **Chola king Aditya I** and the area of **Tondaimandalam** passed under the suzerainty of the Cholas. Culturally, the reign of Pallavas is important for the growth of Tamil bhakti literature and the **Dravidian style** of art and architecture in south India. It was under them that **Mahabalipuram** emerged as an **important centre of temple architecture**.

The Pandyas of Madurai

There is not enough information about the Pandyas of the early medieval times. The Pandyas were involved in internecine wars with the other contemporary powers such as the Pallavas. They were in control of Madurai and Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

Kadungon (c. 560–590 CE)

Maravarman Avanishulamani (c. 590–620 CE)

- Son of Kadungon and **credited** with **ending** the **Kalabhras' rule** in the area and revived the Pandyas. It is noteworthy to understand that during that time, the rise of the Kalabhras was not seen in a positive light as they posed a serious challenge to the Pallavas and other rulers in the Tamil land.

They put an end to the brahmadeya rights granted to the Brahmanas in numerous villages and mostly patronised Buddhist monasteries. It is presumed that the Kalabhras' revolt was so widespread that it could be put down only through the joint efforts of the Pandyas, the Pallavas and the Chalukyas of Badami.

Rajasimha (c.735-765 CE)

- Defeated the Pallavas and had the epithet of *Pallava-bhanjana* (breaker of the Pallavas). Expanded the Pandya empire.

Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan (c.756–815 CE)

- Expanded the Pandyan empire.

Shrimara Shrivallabha (c.815–862 CE)

The Pandyas were completely overpowered by the Cholas in the 10th century.

The Kadambas of Banavasi

Since the 4th century CE, the Kadambas had ruled over northern Karnataka and Konkan. They had their capital at Vijayanti or Banavasi in north Kanara district in Karnataka. They were contemporaries of the Pallavas and claimed to be Brahmanas. They also generously gifted a lot to the Brahmanas. The Kadamba dynasty was founded by Mayurasharman, who defeated the Pallavas with the help of forest tribes. Recognising his authority, the Pallavas formally presented Mayurasharman with royal insignia.

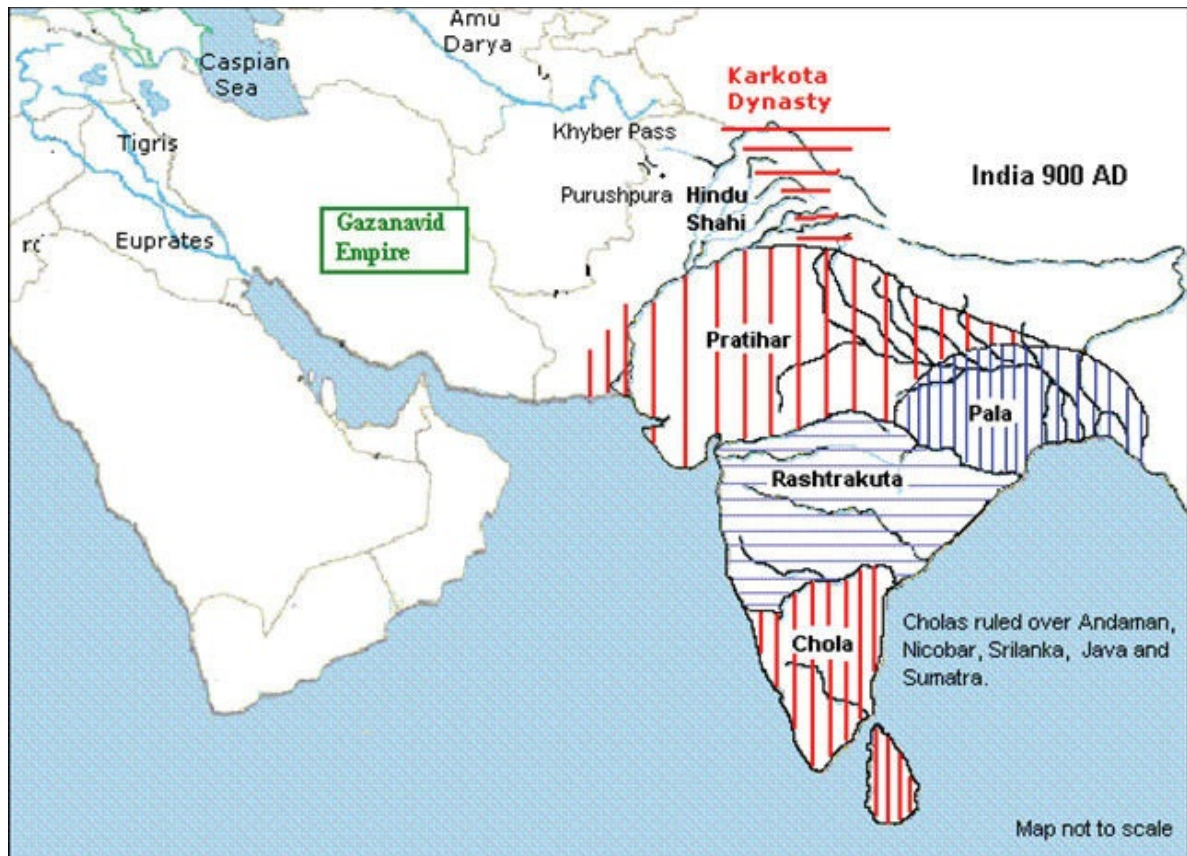
The Western Gangas of Mysore

They were another important contemporary of Pallavas, who were earlier feudatories of the Pallavas who gradually set up rule in southern Karnataka. Their kingdom lay between the Pallavas in the east and Kadambas in the west. Their earliest capital was located near Kolar, which supplied a lot of gold to the kingdom. They made most of the land grants to the Jains.



THE PERIOD FROM C.750–1000 CE: NORTHERN INDIA

The period from c.750–1000 CE was marked by the growth of three important political powers, namely, the Gurjara–Pratiharas (who dominated the western India and the upper Gangetic valley till the middle of the 10th century), the Palas (who ruled over eastern India till the middle of the 9th century), and the Rashtrakutas (who dominated the Deccan and also controlled territories in north and south India). These three kingdoms were constantly fighting with each other with an aim to set up their control on the Gangetic region in northern India. This conflict among these three powers is often described as the ‘tripartite struggle’. Out of these three, the Rashtrakutas emerged as the most powerful and their empire lasted for the most time. The Rashtrakutas also acted as the bridge between north and south India in economic and cultural arenas. Each of these empires even though they fought amongst themselves, provided stable conditions of life over large areas, extended agriculture, built ponds and canals, and gave patronage to art and architecture, specially temple architecture.



India 900 CE



The Pratihara dynasty

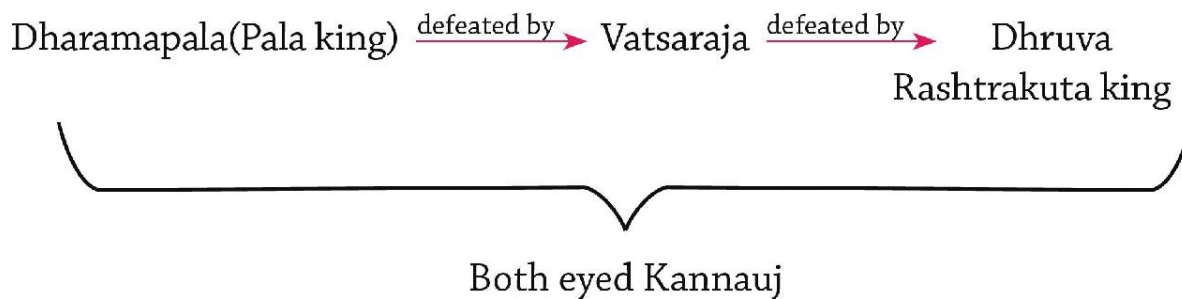
The Pratiharas were also known as the **Gurjara-Pratiharas**, as they originated from the **Gurjaras** who were primarily pastoralists and fighters. Since the early kings of this dynasty considered the epic hero **Lakshmana** as their hero, who he served as the door-keeper to his brother **Rama**, the Pratiharas took on their title which literally means 'door-keeper'. The Gurjara-Pratiharas are known for their sculpture, their carved panels and the open pavilion style temples. The greatest development of the Gurjara-Pratihara style of temple building took place at **Khajuraho** (a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**). The dynasty was founded by a **Brahmana** named **Harichandra** in and around Jodhpur, south western Rajasthan. The Gurjara-Pratiharas were instrumental in containing Arab armies moving east of the Indus. They came to prominence in the second quarter of the 8th century, during the reign of Nagabhatta I.

Nagabhata I (c. 730–760 CE)

- One of the most famous and prominent Pratihara kings, who is known for checking the invasion of the Arabs and offered most successful resistance to the Arabs. He defeated the Arab army under Junaid and Tamin during the Caliphate campaigns in India.
- He exercised control over the areas of Malwa, Rajputana, and Gujarat.
- Defeated by the Rashtrakuta king, Dhruva.

Vatsaraja (c. 780–800 CE)

- One of the successors of Nagabhata I, who extended his rule over to a large part of North India and made Kannauj in western U.P his capital.
- Vatsaraja's policy of expansion brought him into conflict with Dharamapala, the Pala King of Bengal and Bihar and also the Rashtrakuta king Dhruva, thus began what is known as the 'tripartite struggle'. It continued for about another 350 years under various succeeding kings with ups and downs. The Pratiharas, however, could maintain their hold over Kannauj till the last.
- Tripartite struggle between Rashtrakuta, Pratiharas and Palas during his reign can be depicted as:



Nagabhata II (c. 800–833 CE)

- The tripartite struggle continued as:

Dharamapala (Palas) $\xrightarrow{\text{again defeated by}}$ Nagabhata II $\xrightarrow{\text{defeated by}}$ Govind III (Rashtrakuta).

- Nagabhata II was succeeded by his son Ramabhadra, who

ruled briefly, and was succeeded by his son Mihira Bhoja.

Bhoja I / Mihir Bhoja (c.836–885 CE)

- Grandson of Nagabhatta II, who had a long reign of over 46 years and proved to be the **most successful** and **popular ruler** of Pratiharas.
- In the early years of his reign he was defeated by the Palas, Rashtrakutas and the Kalachuris, but he subsequently made a comeback. With the aid of feudatories such as the Chedis and the Guhilas, he **won victories** over the **Palas** and the **Rashtrakutas**.
- He had his **capital** at **Kannauj**, which was also called **Mahodaya**. In one of his earliest inscriptions, the **Barah copper plate inscription**, *there is mention of a military camp i.e., skandhavara at Mahodaya*.
- He is also identified with the **king Juzr** of the **travel accounts** of the **9th century Arab merchant, Sulaiman**, who describes his great military power and riches. He was appreciated by the Arab writer for keeping his empire safe from robbers. He was called **King Baura** by another **Arab traveller, Al-Masudi**. According to Arab travellers, the Pratihara rulers had the **best cavalry in India**.
- Expansion checked by Sankarvarman of Kashmir and Rashtrakuta Krishna II and Devapala
- Devotee of Vishnu and **adopted** the **title** of '**Adivaraha**.'
- The Kalachuris, the Chandalas and the Arabs of Sindh acknowledged his supremacy.

Mahendrapala (c. 885–910 CE)

- Under Bhoja and his successor Mahendrapala I, the Pratihara empire reached its peak of prosperity and power. The extent of its territory was almost similar that of the Guptas and by the time of Mahendrapala, the empire reached west to the border of Sindh, east to Bengal, north to the Himalayas, and south past the Narmada.
- **Fought a battle** with the **king of Kashmir** but had to yield to

- him some of the territories in the Punjab won by Bhoja.
- Took the title *Maharajadhiraja* of *Aryavarta* (Great King of Kings of Northern India). His court was adorned by **Rajashekhar**, who was an **eminent Sanskrit poet, dramatist** and **critic** who wrote:
 - ***Karpuramanjari***: A famous **play** written in **Sauraseni Prakrit** to please his wife, Avantisundari, a woman of taste and accomplishment. He is perhaps the **only ancient Indian poet to acknowledge a woman** for her contributions to his literary career.
 - ***Kavya Mimansa*** (around c.880–920 CE): A **practical guide for poets** that explains the elements and composition of a good poem.
 - *Vidhasalabhanjika*
 - *Bhrinjika*
 - *Balaramayana*
 - *Prapanch Pandav*
 - *Balabharata*
 - Bhusan Kosh **Mahipala I** (c. 913–944 CE)
 - Defeated by the **Rashtrakuta King Indra III**, who completely devastated the city of Kannauj.
 - **Gujarat** passed into the **hands of the Rashtrakutas** in this period, in all likelihood, as **Al Masudi** in his accounts mentions that *the Pratihara empire had no access to the sea*.

Rajyapala (c. 960–1018 CE)

- The **Rashtrakuta** king **Krishna III** invaded north India in about 963 CE and defeated the Pratihara ruler.
- **Raid of Mahmud Ghazni** on Kannauj; Rajyapala fled from battlefield.
- Murdered by **Vindhyadhar Chandella**.

Yashpala (c.1024–1036 CE)

- **Last ruler** of this dynasty
- By 1090 CE, the Gadhavalas conquered Kannauj.

Under a succession of rather obscure rulers, the Pratiharas never

regained their former influence and gradually, their feudatories started asserting their independence and the empire disintegrated and was reduced to the area around Kannauj. Finally in 11th century CE, they were wiped off from the political map by the **Ghaznavids** and their rule was **succeeded** by **Chahamanas** or **Chauhans** in Rajputana, **Chalukyas** or **Solankis** in Gujarat and the **Paramaras** or **Pawars** in Malwa.



The Palas of Bengal

In eastern India, **after the death of king Shashanka** in c. 637 CE, a situation of **political confusion** prevailed in Bengal and adjoining areas. The region witnessed **invasions** by **Yashovarmana** of Kannauj, **Lalitaditya** of Kashmir, and even of a **Chinese army**. **Bhaskaravarman**, the ruler of Assam, conquered most of Bengal and the western territories of Bihar and Orissa came under the influence of Harsha. Subsequently, around **8th century CE**, **Gopala** laid the **foundation of Pala dynasty**. As the names of all the succeeding kings ended with 'Pala' which meant "**protector**" in the ancient language of **Prakrit**, this dynasty came to be known as the '**Pala**' dynasty. The Pala kingdom included **Bengal** and **Bihar**, which included the major cities of Pataliputra, Vikramapura, Ramvati (Varendra), Monghyr (Munger), Tamralipti and Jaggadala. The **tripartite struggle** continued between the Palas, Rashtrakutas and Pratiharas and the area of Bihar and modern east U.P remained a bone of contention between them, though Bihar, in addition to Bengal, remained mostly under the control of the Palas for most of the time.

The Pala kings were the **followers of Buddhism**, especially **Mahayana** and **Tantric schools of Buddhism**. They greatly promoted this religion by making monasteries (viharas) and temples in eastern India. The Pala legacy is still reflected in Tibetan Buddhism.

Gopala (around c.750 CE)

- According to the **Khalimpur copper plate Inscription** of Dharmapala, *Gopala, in order to rescue the people from matsya-nyaya (a period of anarchy), founded the Pala dynasty when he was elected the king by notable men of the*

realm. He displaced the later Guptas of Magadha and Khadga dynasty of eastern Bengal.

- Gopala was an **ardent Buddhist** and according to Buddhist scholar Taranatha, Gopala **built** the famous **monastery** at **Odantapuri**.

Dharmapala (c.770–810 CE)

- Though he initially suffered defeats at the hands of the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas (he was **defeated by** the **Rashtrakuta king, Dhruva**, who had earlier defeated the Pratihara ruler too), but **later** he **conquered** large parts of **northern India** and raised the Pala empire to great heights.
- Believed to have **held a durbar at Kannauj**, which was attended by many vassal chiefs, wherein he showcased his own power by installing his puppet ruler, Chakrayudha, on the throne. Thus, **Kannauj functioned** as a **dependency** and Dharmapala had Bengal and Bihar under his direct rule. His sovereignty was also accepted by the rulers of both west and south India such as those of Punjab, western hill states, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar.
- Dharmapala was **again defeated** by the **Pratihara king, Nagabhatta II**, near Monghyr.
- **Founded** the **Vikramshila monastery** near **Bhagalpur** in Bihar, and like Nalanda university, it also attracted students from all parts of India and from Tibet. Many Sanskrit texts were translated into tibetan language at this monastery. The most celebrated name associated with the Vikramshila University was that of the **Buddhist scholar Dipankara** (called **Atisa**), who was greatly respected in Tibet.
- He also **founded** the **Somapuri monastery** (near Paharpur, Bihar) and is also credited with the **grant of 200 villages to Nalanda University**.
- The renowned 8th century **Buddhist scholar, Santarakshita**, who is also considered as an abbot of Nalanda, belonged to his reign. Santarakshita **founded** the **philosophical school** known as **Yogacara- Svatantrika-Madhyamika**, which

united the Madhyamaka tradition of Nagarjuna, the Yogacara tradition of Asanga and the logical and epistemological thought of Dharmakirti. He was also instrumental in the introduction of Buddhism and the Sarvastivadin monastic ordination lineage to Tibet.

Devapala (c. 810–850 CE)

- Extended the empire to include *Pragyoytishpur/Kamarupa* (Assam), parts of Orissa(*Utkala*) and modern Nepal. He claimed to have extracted tribute from the whole of northern India, from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas, and from the eastern to the western oceans.
- His inscriptions proclaim his victory over the Hunas, the lords of Gurjaras (probably Mihir Bhoja) and the Dravidas.
- Preferred Monghyr to Pataliputra.
- Was also a great patron of Buddhism. According to Buddhist tradition, the Sailendra dynasty king, Balaputradeva (ruler of Suvarnavipa which corresponds to the Indonesian Archipelago, including Malaya, Java, Sumatra and other neighbouring islands), requested him to grant five villages to the monastery at Nalanda. He granted the request and appointed Viradeva as the head of Nalanda Monastery.
- His court poet was a Buddhist scholar, Vajradatta, who is the author of the *Lokesvarasataka*.
- The Pala empire was called “*Ruhimi* or *Ruhma Dharma*” by the Arab merchant Sulaiman, who visited India in the middle of the 9th century. He claims that the Pala emperor was at war with the Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas and had more troops than his adversaries.
- The power of the Palas declined in the late 9th century and Pala control of North India was too ephemeral, as they struggled with the Gurjara–Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas for the control of Kannauj and were defeated. The subordinate rulers of Assam and Orissa assumed Independence.

Mahipala I (c. 977–1027 CE)

- After a short lived decline, the **fortunes of the Palas** were **restored** under **Mahipala I** in the late 10th century.
- He defended Pala bastions in Bengal and Bihar against Chola invasions, but was **defeated** by **Rajendra Chola**.

Ramapala (c. 1072–1126 CE)

- The **last strong Pala** ruler, who gained control of Kamarupa and Kalinga and again revived Pala fortunes in the 11th century.
- He was mentioned in **Sandhyakar Nandi's Ramcharita**, which describes **Kaivarta peasant rebellion**.

The empire was considerably weakened by the 11th century, with many areas engulfed in rebellion. The **Palas power** was **destroyed** by the **Sena dynasty**. The resurgent Hindu Sena dynasty, under **Vijaysena**, dethroned the Pala Empire in the 12th century, ending the reign of the last major Buddhist imperial power in the subcontinent.

The **Pala** period is considered one of the **golden eras** in the **history of Bengal**. The Palas brought stability and prosperity to Bengal after centuries of civil war between warring divisions. They advanced the achievements of previous Bengali civilisations and created outstanding works of art and architecture. They **built grand temples and monasteries**, including the **Somapura Mahavihara**, and **patronised** the great **universities of Nalanda and Vikramashila**. The proto-Bengali language developed under Pala rule as they laid the basis for the Bengali language, including its first literary work, the **Charyapada**, which is a **collection of mystic Buddhist poems** from the **tantric tradition**. The writers of Charyapada are called **Mahasiddhas** and they were from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam.

The Palas were astute diplomats and military conquerors. Their army was noted for its **vast war elephant cavalry**. Their navy performed both mercantile and defensive roles in the Bay of Bengal. The empire enjoyed **relations** with the **Srivijaya Empire**, the **Tibetan Empire** and the **Arab Abbasid Caliphate**. Abbasid coinage found in Pala archaeological sites, as well as records of Arab historians, point to flourishing mercantile and intellectual contacts. **Islam first appeared in Bengal**

during **Pala rule**, as a result of increased trade between Bengal and the Middle East.



The Rashtrakutas

The political history of the Deccan between c.753 and 975 CE was marked by the rise of the Rashtrakutas, who for a long time provided stability to the region. 'Rashtrakuta' means the **chief of a rashtra** (a division or kingdom, depending on the context). Around c.625 CE, they appeared to have **migrated from the Latur area to Ellichpur** (near the source of the Tapi, in modern MP) since one of the title used by kings of the main and subordinate lines was **lattalura-puraveshvara** (lord of the great city of Lattalura/Latur of Maharashtra). They are presumed to be a **feudatory of the Chalukyas** and their **capital** was **Manyakheta** or **Malkhed** near Sholapur. They achieved spectacular military successes in the north and south and in the **tripartite struggle** they **mostly defeated** the **Palas** and the **Pratiharas**. It is significant to note that although their raids did not result in the extension of the Rashtrakuta empire to the Gangetic valley, they brought rich plunder, and added to the fame of the Rashtrakutas. They also constantly fought against the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi (Andhra Pradesh), the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai. The Arab accounts testify to the **liberal attitude** of the Rashtrakuta kings as the Arab traders were allowed to build mosques and follow their religion without any hindrance.

Dantidurga (c. 733–756 CE)

- **Feudatory of the Chalukya king, Kirtivarman II**, who later founded the Rashtrakuta kingdom by taking control of the northern regions of the Chalukya empire and thus ascended to the throne in c.733 CE. However, the Rashtrakutas as a kingdom rose in power from c.753 CE.
- His name '**Dantidurga**' (meaning **he whose elephant is his fortress**) also signifies his military feats and accomplishments. He also **helped his father-in-law**, the **Pallava King Nandivarmana**, to **regain Kanchi from the Chalukyas** and also defeated the Gurjaras of Malwa, and

the rulers of Kalinga, Kosala and Srisailam.

Krishna I (c.756–774 CE)

- Extended the Rashtrakuta empire and brought major portions of present day Karnataka and Konkan under his control. Also gave a **final blow to Pallavas**.
- The magnificent **rock-cut Kailashnatha Temple** at **Ellora** (near Aurangabad, Maharashtra) was built during his reign. The temple **dedicated** to **Lord Shiva** and is **monolithic** i.e. made of one single piece of rock.

Dhruva (c. 780–793 CE)

- During his reign, the kingdom expanded into an empire that encompassed all of the territory between the Kaveri River and Central India. He led successful expeditions to Kannauj, the seat of northern Indian power where he **defeated** the **Gurjara-Pratiharas** (**Nagabhata II**) and the **Palas of Bengal** (**Dharmapala**).
- He also brought the Eastern Chalukyas and Gangas of Talakad under his control. The Rashtrakutas became a pan-Indian power during his rule.

Govind III (c.793–814 CE)

- Son of Dhruva, who took the Rashtrakutas to greater heights. He emerged victorious at the tripartite struggle. He made incursions to north India and **defeated Pala** king **Dharmapala** and also **wrestled Malwa** from **Pratihara** king **Nagabhata II**. As mentioned in the **Sanjan inscription** of his reign, “*the horses of Govinda III drank from the icy waters of the Himalayan streams and his war elephants tasted the sacred waters of the Ganges.*”
- It is believed that the Rashtrakuta empire under his reign gradually spread over the areas from Cape Comorin to Kannauj and from Banaras to Bharuch. His **military exploits** have been **compared** to those of **Alexander the Great** and **Arjuna of Mahabharata**. Having conquered Kannauj, Gujarat and Kosala, he travelled south and not only humbled the Pallavas of Kanchi but also installed a

ruler of his choice in Vengi and received two statues as an act of submission from the king of Ceylon (one statue of the king and another of his minister). The Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras all paid him tribute.

Amoghavarsha I (c.814–878 CE)

- One of the most famous of the Rashtrakutas, who built a new capital city, that of Manyakheta (modern Malkhed).
- He defeated the invading Eastern Chalukyas at Vingavalli and assumed the title *Viranarayana*. Also made peace with the Western Gangas by giving them two of his daughters in marriage. It is interesting to note that unlike his father, he preferred to maintain friendly relations with his neighbours, the Gangas, the Eastern Chalukyas and the Pallavas with whom he also cultivated marital ties.
- He was a patron of literature and was an accomplished scholar in Kannada and Sanskrit himself. He wrote the *Kavirajamarga* – the earliest Kannada work on poetics and the *Prashnottara Ratnamalika* in Sanskrit, which is considered as a writing of high merit and was later translated into the Tibetan language.
- Because of his religious temperament, his interest in the arts and literature and his peace-loving nature, he is often compared to emperor Ashoka and called “Ashoka of the South”, and is also compared to Gupta king Vikramaditya in giving patronage to men of letters.

Indra III (c. 914–929 CE)

- Grandson of Amoghavarsha who crushed the different rebellions and reestablished the empire.
- He defeated Pratihara Mahipala I and sacked Kannauj in 915 CE, and emerged as the most powerful ruler of his times.

Krishna III (c.939–967 CE)

- The last great Rashtrakuta ruler, who consolidated the empire so that it stretched from the Narmada River to

Kaveri River and included the northern Tamil country (*Tondaimandalam*) while levying tribute on the king of Ceylon.

- He was engaged in a struggle against the Paramaras of Malwa and the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. In about 949 CE, he also defeated the Chola king Parantaka I and annexed the northern part of the Chola empire. He then marched towards Rameshwaram and set up a pillar of victory there and also built a temple.

After his death, all his opponents united against his successor and in 972 CE sacked the Rashtrakuta capital Malkhed and burnt it to ashes. This marks the end of the Rashtrakutas.

Rashtrakuta rule lasted in the Deccan for almost 200 years till the end of the 10th century. They were tolerant in their religious views and patronised not only Shaivism and Vaishnavism but Jainism as well. The Rashtrakutas not only allowed Muslim traders to settle but also permitted Islam to be preached in their dominions. They are credited with the construction of the famous rock cut temple of Shiva at Ellora.

They were also great patrons of art and letters. Their courts were adorned by not only Sanskrit scholars but also poets and authors who wrote in Prakrit and in the apabhramsha language. The great apabhramsha poet Swayambhu and his son probably lived at the Rashtrakuta court.



General Overview of Life during these three kingdoms

The administration was run on similar pattern as that of the Guptas, the Pushyabhutis and the Chalukyas in the Deccan. The king was the epitome of all affairs and was not only the head of administration but also commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The court was not only a centre of cultural affairs and of justice, but of cultural life as well. The ladies of the king's durbar also attended the durbar on festive occasions and according to Arab writers, they did not veil their faces.

The king's position was hereditary, and normally, the eldest son succeeded the father, but the succession rules were not so rigid. The **princes** were mostly **appointed as provincial governors** and in some **rare** cases, **princesses** were also **appointed to government posts**. For instance, *a Rashtrakuta princess, Chandrobalabbe, daughter of Amoghavarsha I, administered the Raichur doab for some time.* The kings were generally **advised** by **ministers**, who were **chosen** from the **leading families** and their **position** was more or less **hereditary**. *As in the case of the Pala kings, a Brahmana family supplied four successive chief ministers to Dharmapala and his successors.* From epigraphic and literary records it appears that almost every kingdom had a **minister of foreign affairs, revenue, treasurer, senapati, chief justice and purohita**. **All the ministers except the purohita** were expected to lead military campaigns when called upon to do so.

All the three kingdoms had large and well-organised infantry and cavalry and large number of war elephants. The **Palas** had the **largest number of elephants**, the **Pratiharas** had the **finest cavalry** while the **Rashtrakutas** had a **large number of forts**, which were garrisoned by special troops and had their own independent commanders. The infantry consisted of both **regular** and **irregular troops** and of **levies supplied** by the **vassal chiefs**. The **Wars** were **frequent between kings and their vassals** also known as **samantas**. For instance, *the Rashtrakutas had to constantly fight against the vassal chiefs of Vengi and Karnataka. Similarly, the Pratiharas had to constantly fight against the Paramaras of Malwa and the Chandellas of Bundelkhand.* The vassals ruled autonomously over the areas and were bound by the general obligation of loyalty, paying a fixed tribute, supplying a quota of troops and were required to fight along with the king in times of need or foreign attack. Sometime, a son of the vassal chief was required to stay in the attendance of the overlord to guard against any rebellion or at times they had to marry one of their daughters to the overlord or to one of his sons. The Palas and the Rashtrakutas had their own navies but more details are not known.

The directly administered territories were divided into:

- a. **Rashtra** under the supervision of **Rashtrapati or governor**.

- b. *Bhukti* (provinces) under the supervision of *Uparika* who was expected to collect land revenue and maintain law and order
- c. *Mandalas or Visaya* (districts) whose head was called *Visyapati* and was expected to perform the functions of collection of revenue and maintaining law and order at district level.
- d. *Pattala* (more smaller unit of cluster of villages) which were headed by *Bhojapati*.
- e. *Village* headed by the *village headman* and village accountant whose posts were generally hereditary. He was often assisted by village elder called *grama-mahajana* or *grama-mahattara*. In certain villages there were village committees for managing local schools, tanks, temples, roads and also settling simple disputes. These *subcommittees* worked in close *cooperation* with the *village headman* and *received a percentage* of the *revenue collection*. Similar committees were also present in towns which had the participation of the heads of trade guilds too. The law and order in towns was the responsibility of the *kosha-pala* or *kotwal*.

It is noteworthy to add that, almost all the *officials* were *paid* by giving them *grants of rent-free land* and it also led to the *rise of hereditary revenue officers* called *nad-gavundas* or *desa-gramakutas*. Later, they were addressed as *deshmukhas* and *deshpandes* in *Maharashtra*. The *revenue assignments* called *bhoga* or *fief* granted by the ruler to his officers were temporary in theory and were liable to be resumed whenever the ruler wanted but this was rarely practised except in case of outright rebellion or disloyalty. Subsequently, with the rise of power of these hereditary officials, the village communities became weaker and subsequently the control and authority of the kings over these officials also diminished. Thus, the *government became feudalised*. The growth of *feudal society* had far-reaching effects as it not only *weakened the position of the ruler* making him more dependent on the feudal chiefs but also resulted in *decline of trade* and encouraged an economy in which *small principalities* emerged having *largely self-*

sufficient villages. However, in the age of disorder and violence, these feudal states could also provide safety of life and property to the common folk.

In terms of religion, most of the kings were tolerant in their views and behaviour and generously patronised the Hinduism (some were devout followers of Shiva or Vishnu), Buddhism or Jainism. Muslims were welcomed and allowed to propagate their faith by the Rashtrakuta kings. The kings like the earlier times were considered upholders of social hierarchy and generally the Chaturvarna system continued. However, the state was essentially secular as the politics and religion were in essence kept apart and kings were not dominated by the religious discourses.



Trade and Commerce

In northern India, the period from c.750–1000 CE was considered to be period of stagnation and even of decline in terms of trade and commerce. This was primarily due to the collapse of the Roman Empire with which earlier India had flourishing trade relations. Also, the decline of the Sassanid Empire (Iranian) due to the rise of Islam, affected India's overland foreign trade. Since the wealth in gold and silver of India was more due to India's favourable foreign trade, hence, with decline in foreign trade there arose the paucity of gold coins in northern India between the 8th and 10th centuries. Interestingly, the trade between the south India and the countries of South-east Asia increased during this period. Interestingly, the decline in trade and commerce was also reflected in some of the Dharmashastras written during this period wherein a ban was imposed on travel beyond the areas *where the munja grass does not grow or where the black gazelle does not roam (outside India)*. Travel across the salt seas was also considering polluting. Presumably, the ban was meant to discourage Indians from going to areas dominated by the Islam in the west and Buddhism in the east so that the Brahmanas' stronghold was maintained. However, this ban was not taken that seriously by Indians as there are a lots of accounts of Indian merchants, philosophers,

medical men and craftsmen visiting Baghdad and other Muslim towns in west Asia during this period.

Gradually, from 10th century onwards, foreign trade and commerce was revived with the emergence of the extensive Arab empire in West Asia and North Africa. The demand for Indian fabrics, incenses and spices among the wealthy Arab rulers rejuvenated the trade again and Malwa and Gujarat emerged as major trade centres.



The Salama Dynasty of Assam (c. 800–1000 CE)

Assam, also known as Kamrupa or Pragjyotisha, remained under the authority of the Palas especially Devapala. However, in 800 CE, a local ruler of Kamarupa named Harjaravarman declared independence from the Palas and established the Salamba dynasty having capital at Haruppushvara on the banks of river Brahmaputra (*Lauhitya*).



The Eastern Gangas of the Orissa

In late 6th century CE, the Shailodbhavas, who were earlier subordinates of Shashanka gradually asserted their authority over Kongoda (which covers modern Puri and Ganjam districts). However, in the 8th century the Shailodbhavas were replaced by the Gangas of Shvetaka who were originally migrants from Karnataka and established themselves in the north Ganjam area. Similarly, the Gangas of the Kalinganagara were also migrants from Karnataka who moved into Orissa towards the end of 5th century and established themselves in South Orissa specially the Vamsadhara and Nagavali valleys.

From the 10th century onwards, the Ganga kingdom rapidly expanded and the north and south Orissa was also unified. Probably their alliance with the Cholas also aided in their military expansion and in the early 12th century, the Ganga king Anantavarman Chodaganga displaced the Somavamshi ruler from lower Orissa. Interestingly, the mother and one of queens of Anantavarman were Chola princesses. However, military

conflict also used to happen between the Gangas and the Cholas as evident from the fact that Chola king Kulothunga I twice sent military expedition against Kalinga.



PERIOD FROM C. 850-1200 CE: SOUTHERN INDIA



The Cholas

The Cholas, famous in Indian history for their local self-government, founded a mighty empire in southern India during c. 850–1200 CE. The relationship between these Cholas, called the ‘Imperial Cholas of Tanjore’, with the earlier Cholas mentioned in Sangam literature is not very clear. The Cholas came to power after over throwing the authority of the Pallavas in South India. This empire brought under its control a large part of the peninsula. They developed a strong navy, which further aided them to develop sea trade in the Indian Ocean and to conquer Sri Lanka and the Maldives Islands. They also defeated the kings of Malaya, Java, and Sumatra. The founder of the Chola dynasty was Vijayalaya (9th century CE).



South India map 1100 CE

Vijayalaya (around c. 850 CE)

- **Founder** of the Chola empire, **earlier a feudatory of the Pallavas**.
- He established his power in the area around Eraiyur, captured Tanjore and extended his kingdom along the lower Kaveri.

Aditya I (c.871–907 CE)

- Successor of Vijayalaya who achieved significant military successes and expanded the Chola kingdom.
- At the **battle of Shripurambiyam**, he **allied with the Pallavas** and **defeated Pandyas** and as a recompense received some territories in the Tanjore area. Later in c.893 CE, he **defeated** and **killed** his **Pallava overlord Aparajita** thus bringing *Tondaimandalam* (southern Tamil country) under his control.
- He also **allied with the Cheras** and conquered Kongudesha (probably Coimbatore and Salem districts) from Pandyas.

- He presumably also conquered Talked, which was the capital of the Western Gangas.
- He entered into a **matrimonial alliance with the Pallavas** by marrying a Pallava princess.

Parantaka I (c. 907–953 CE)

- Won several victories with the help of his allies such as the Western Gangas, the Kodumbalur chiefs and the ruler of Kerala.
- He **captured Madurai** and took the title of **Madurantaka** (**destroyer of Madurai**) and **Maduraikonda** (**capturer of Madurai**).
- At the famous battle of Vellur, he defeated the combined armies of the Pandyas and the king of Sri Lanka and thus Pandya territories became a part of the Chola empire.
- However, in c.949 CE, he was **defeated** by the **Rashtrakuta** ruler **Krishna III** at the **battle of Takkolam**. Krishna III assumed the title of '**Conqueror of Kanchi and Tanjai**' and the Rashtrakuta army overran the Tondaimandalam.

Parantaka II/Sundara Chola(c. 957–73 CE)

- He **recovered** most of the **lost territories** from the **Rashtrakutas** such as some parts of *Tondaimandalam* and also not only defeated a combined Pandya–Sri Lankan army but also **invaded Sri Lanka**.

Uttama Chola(c. 973–985 CE)

- When he ascended the throne, most of the *Tondaimandalam* had been retrieved from the Rashtrakutas.

Arumolivarman/Rajaraja I (c.985–1014 CE)

- **Greatest Chola ruler**, who helped raise the Chola Empire to become the largest dominion in South India till the 13th century.
- Through a series of successful military campaigns, he broke the confederation between the Pandyas and the rulers of Kerala and Sri Lanka. He not only **destroyed the chera navy** at Trivandrum, attacked Quilon, and captured

Madurai but also annexed the northern Sri Lanka and named it Mummadichola mandalam. He also conquered the Maldives islands.

- He led a naval expedition against the Sailendra Empire (Malaya peninsula) and expanded Chola trade with China.
- He also achieved victories against the Western Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas, later Chalukyas who had their capital at Kalyani and annexed the north-western parts of the Ganga region in north west Karnataka and also overran Vengi. However, he restored Vengi to its rulers after marrying the daughter of the king of the Vengi. It is pertinent to note that the Cholas and the later Chalukyas clashed for the overlordship of Vengi, the Tungabhadra doab and the Ganga country in the north-west Karnataka. Neither side was able to gain a decisive victory in this contest and ultimately it exhausted both the empires.
- In c.1010 CE he constructed the Rajarajeshwara or Brihadesvara temple, dedicated to Shiva at Thanjavur (Tanjore). This temple is also called the Rajaraja temple as the Cholas were in the habit of installing the images of kings and queens in the temples in addition to the deity.



Brihaderswara Temple

- During his reign he **developed** and **re-organised** an **excellent revenue system** wherein land was surveyed and then revenue was assessed. Interestingly, he was referred to as **Ulakalanada Perumal** i.e the great one who measured the earth, which, apart from being compared to God Vishnu can also point to his efforts of ordering a land survey.

Rajendra I (c.1014–1044 CE)

- **Son of Rajaraja I**, who carried forward his father's **expansionist policy** and continued the Chola territorial expansion.
- He **completed the victory over Ceylon** by **defeating the Sri Lanka king Mahinda V**. The royal insignia of the king and the queen of Sri Lanka were captured and Sri Lanka was not able to free herself from the Chola control for another 50 years.
- He **completely overran the Pandyas and Cheras** and included them in his empire.

- In 1022 CE, he led an expedition to the north, crossed the Ganga following the same route which was taken by the great conqueror Samudragupta and defeated the Pala ruler, Mahipal I and the Western Chalukyas. To commemorate this occasion, he assumed the title of *Gangaikondachola* (meaning ‘*the Chola conqueror of Ganga*’) and established a new capital named *Gangaikondacholapuram* (meaning ‘*the city of the Chola conqueror of the Ganga*’) near the mouth of the river Kaveri. He built a Shiva temple here and excavated a tank called Chodagarg.
- In 1025 CE, a successful naval expedition was dispatched against the revived Sri Vijaya empire (which extended over the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Java and the neighbouring islands and controlled the overseas trade route to China). The expedition led to the conquest of the *kadaram* or *kedah* and a number of other places in the Malay peninsula and Sumatra.
- The rulers of the Sailendra dynasty were Buddhists and earlier had cordial relations with the Cholas. Infact, the Sailendra ruler had built a Buddhist monastery at Nagapatam and at his instance, Rajendra I had endowed a village for its upkeep. The cause of breach between the two now was the Chola eagerness to remove obstacles to Indian traders and to expand Chola trade with China. It is noteworthy to add that the Chola navy was strongest in the area for some time and the Bay of Bengal was converted into a ‘Chola lake’.
- He was a great patron of learning and was known as *Pandita-chola*.

Rajadhiraja (c.1044–1052 CE)

- He was a great warrior who always led from the front standing shoulder to shoulder with his men on front lines and earned the title of *Jayamkonda Chola* (the *victorious Chola King*). He ably defeated the Pandyas, Cheras, and the ruler of Sri Lanka.

- He also sacked and plundered Chalukyan cities such as Kalyani and planted a Jaystambha at Yadgir. It is noteworthy to add that the Cholas had a blot on their history as they adopted a very harsh attitude towards both the king and general population of the places they sacked, since they mostly plundered and massacred the people including Brahmanas and children. For instance, the Cholas destroyed Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, and treated their king and queen very harshly; they did the same in Pandya country where they settled a military colony to overawe the population. However, once they had conquered the country, they tried to set up a sound system of administration in it.
- Was also known as Vijaya Rajendra Chola (i.e. ‘the victorious Rajendra Chola king’).
- He died in the battlefield while fighting in the battle of Koppam against Someshwar, a western Chalukyan king and from the manner of his death, Rajadhiraja came to be known as Yanai-mel-thunjina Devar (the king who died on the back of an elephant).

Rajendra II (c.1054–1063 CE)

- Crowned in the battlefield.
- Defeated Someshwar, planted a Jaystambha at Kolhapur.

Virarajendra (c.1063–1067 CE)

- Defeated Someshwar II and established a Vedic college of learning.

Athirajendra (c.1067–1070 CE)

- Had to face many rebellions and died while suppressing one of them.

Kollutung I (c.1070–1122 CE)

- The last important Chola king who adopted the title of Shungamtavirtta (abolisher of tolls). Under him the Chola empire started disintegrating and shrunk to a much smaller area.

- In c.1077 CE, a Chola embassy of 70 merchants were dispatched to China and they took tribute (articles taken for trade) such as glassware, camphor, brocades, rhinoceros horns and ivory. The kingdom also had flourishing trade with the kingdom of Shri Vijaya.
- He is credited with uniting the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi with the Cholas. It is presumed that he discarded wars and worked for peace as his reign was comparatively peaceful and it was only during the second half of his reign the kingdom faced hostility from the Chalukyas and Hoysalas.
- The classic writer Kamban (who wrote Ramayana in Tamil) was at his court.

The later rulers such as Kulottunga II, Rajaraja II and Kulothunga III tried to maintain the Chola empire but the Chola power gradually declined and the dynasty came to an end in the 13th century. The place of the Cholas were taken by the Pandyas and the Hoysalas in the south, and of the later Chalukyas by the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas. These states too extended patronage to arts and architecture. But unfortunately, they weakened themselves by continually fighting against each other, sacking towns and not even sparing the temples. Finally, in the beginning of 14th century, they were destroyed by the Sultans of Delhi.



Administration of the Cholas

The Chola inscriptions generally refer to the king as *ko*, *perumal*, *perumal adigal* (the great one), *raja-rajadhiraja* and *ko-konmai kondan* (king of kings). The king had all the authority rested in him and had a council of ministers to advise him. The different Chola inscriptions describe *the king as endowed with an attractive physical appearance, a great warrior and conqueror, a great patron of the arts and a generous giver of gifts (specially to Brahmanas), a protector of varnasharma dharma, a destroyer of the evils of the Kali age*. The kings were often compared with the gods either directly or with the use of double entendre. For instance the Chola king Rajaraja was referred to as *Ulakalanada Perumal*, that is, *the great one who measured the earth*

like the God Vishnu who according to a famous myth encompassed the universe with his three strides. The kings often undertook tours in order to keep in better touch with the administration. They were **protected by bodyguards** who were sworn to defend the kings even **at the cost of their own lives**. There was a hereditary element in their selection and they were given assignments of land revenue. The **Venetian traveller Marco Polo**, who **visited Kerala** in the **13th century** writes that **on the death of the monarch, all his body guards burnt themselves in the funeral pyre**. The kings maintained large households and large palaces with banquet halls, spacious gardens and terraces.

The large number of terms for offices and officials in the Chola inscriptions as compared to those of the Pallavas, Pandyas and Cheras suggest an **expansion of the administrative structure** especially from the reign of Rajaraja I (early 11th century) and a decline after the reign of Kulothunga I, at which point the centralised bureaucracy declined and there was a gradual increase in the power of local chieftains. The Cholas **maintained a large army** consisting of **three limbs** of **elephants, cavalry** and **infantry** (which was armed with spears).

The empire known as **Rajyam** or **Rastrayam** was divided into eight **mandalams (provinces)** each **governed** by a **governor/Viceroy**, who were generally princes of the royal blood or of noble families. Officials were generally paid by giving them **assignments of revenue-bearing lands**. Some of the provinces were formed of principalities which had been annexed by the Cholas and some were the territories of the vassal princes, who paid tribute and rendered service to the king in emergent situations. The **provinces** were further **divided** into **Kottams** or **Valanadus** which were again **divided** into **Nadus (districts)**, each of which again consisted of a number of **autonomous villages** that played a key role in the Chola administration system. The administration was also greatly facilitated by the **shrenis** or **pugas (guilds)**, which were like some autonomous corporate organisations having persons belonging to the same craft.

- **Mandalam/Province**: Headed by **Viceroy/Governor**.
- **Kottam/Valandu**
- **Nadus** (district): also known as agricultural land

- **Nattar**: Assembly of the leading men of a Nadu or district.
- **Nagarattar/Nagaram**: assembly of the Mercantile groups/Merchants.

The **nagaram** was specific to different trades and specialised groups. For instance, the **Saliya nagaram** and **Satsuma parishatta nagaram** was associated with the textile trade, the **Shankarappadi nagaram** represented oil and ghee suppliers, the **Paraga nagaram** was the corporate organisation of seafaring merchants and the **Vaniya nagaram** catered to the oil merchants. These corporate organisations were also referred to as **samaya**, that is, created through an agreement or contract and interestingly the members of **samaya** were governed by a code of conduct called **bananju-dharma**. One of the powerful guilds which was also among the largest supra-regional merchants association was the **Ayyavole** (The Five Hundred) which was established in the Aihole, Karnataka. Similarly, **Manigramam** was another prominent guild of the 13th century located in the Tamil country and was subordinated to the Ayyavole. Trading caravans used to move with armed protection and these guilds jointly fixed cesses and tolls. In due course of time, the merchant guilds became more and more powerful and independent. As the Cholas declined, the guilds too subsequently became less dependent on royal support.



Chola Village Administration

The Cholas were famous for their local self-government model, which can be considered as one of the earliest examples of the Panchayati Raj System. The village administration was very systematic and well developed. Regarding the assemblies of the villages, the Chola inscriptions mention:

- Ur: The general assembly of the local residents of non-brahmadeya villages (or vellanvagai villages) to discuss matters without any formal rule or procedure. Nothing much is known about the composition of the Ur but, generally the members were less than ten. It dealt with various matters

related to land maintenance such as land sale, gift, and tax exemptions.

- b. Sabha or Mahasabha: Exclusive assembly of Brahmins/gatherings of the adult male members in the *agraharas*, that is, rent free *brahmadeya* villages which enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. The membership was governed by different criteria such as property ownership, family antecedents, learning and good conduct. The Mahasabha possessed the propriety rights over communal lands and controlled the private lands within its jurisdiction. It could raise loans for the village and levy taxes with the right to realise the revenue in cases of default by selling the lands in question by public auction.

There were close links between some of the *Brahmana Sabhas* and the Chola court. Two inscriptions from *Uttaramerur* testify this fact and specify that *the resolution of the Sabha was made in the presence of an official specially deputed by the king*. In another inscription from *Tanjavur*, it appears that *Rajaraja I issued orders to the Sabhas of the Chola mandalam to perform various types of services in the Brihadeshvara temple*. The affairs of the village were managed by an executive committee to which educated persons owning property were elected either by drawing lots or by rotation. These members had to retire every three years. There were different committees which looked after different activities like law and order, justice, tank committee known as *erivariya* (which looked after the distribution of water to the fields).

The Chola village assembly was the absolute proprietor of the village lands and also of the newly acquired lands. The main source of income of Chola Empire was the land revenue, which was normally 1/6th of the produce. The royal dues were collected by the village assemblies and were paid either in cash or the kind or in both. The Chola government carried out land surveys (which were generally very accurate) periodically and record of holdings was maintained. The different Chola inscriptions point out to several instances of land transfers via sale or gift, involving the transfer of *kani* rights, that is, the right of possession

over land associated with certain other rights and obligations. These rights were further sub divided into:

- a. **Karanmai** (right to cultivate): Further divided into two types—
 - i. **Kudi Nikki**: Situation in which people previously settled in the village were either removed or deprived of their rights.
 - ii. **Kudi Ninga**: Situation in which such people were not to be disturbed.
- b. **Mitachi** (superior possessive right)

In certain inscriptions of Karnataka, there are interesting references to villages headed by women. For instance, in a 902 CE inscription, we learn that *the village Bharangiyur was headed by the wife of a man named Bittayya*, in another inscription of 1055 CE, there is a reference to a woman named *Chandiyabbe as agavundi*, that is, village chieftain and another woman named *Jakkiyabbe as her mantraki* (counsellor).



Chola society and economy

The society was divided on caste lines and the status of the **Paraiyar** (untouchables) continued to be pathetic. The **Vellallas** (farming groups) were identified with the Shudra varna but since they were land holders and were an economically powerful group they did not suffer from much discrimination or lower social status.

A crucial and unique development was the emergence of a supra caste dichotomy known as

- a. **Idangai** (left hand caste groupings): Consisted mainly artisanal and trading groups.
- b. **Valangai** (right hand caste groupings): Consisted mainly of agricultural groups.

Initially, these were not antagonistic to each other but gradually an element of conflict emerged between the two caste groupings.

An interesting aspect related to the religious sphere was a significant shift of royal patronage from gifts to Brahmanas to gifts to temples. Apart from the king, members of the royal family, rich merchants too contributed generously to the temples. Revenue from many surrounding

and far-flung villages was assigned for the temples maintenance and in order to ensure transparency, the management of the financial resources was in the hands of Brahmana Sabhas of several villages.

There was an **expansion in the agrarian economy** and various factors attributed to it such as extension of the margin of agriculture through land reclamation, the spread of irrigation techniques, and an expansion in the range of crops. The use of **agrahatta** (Persian wheel) also facilitated the already established **smooth irrigation networks** of **tanks, canals, wells** and **sluices**.



Agrahatta (Persian wheel for irrigation)

The early medieval period also marked an significant improvement in the craft techniques and various **centres of craft production** emerged. For instance, **Kanchipuram** emerged as important **weaving industry** centre. **Kudamukku** was a prominent **centre of betel nut** and **areca nut cultivation** as well as an important centre of crafts such as metal works, coin minting and textiles. **Palaiyarai** was another important **administrative centre** and **residential capital** of the **Cholas**. Another noteworthy aspect of the Chola period was the **emergence of trading**

castes known as the *Garvares* who were the northern merchants who had migrated southwards in the 10th–11th centuries, *Gaudas/Gavundas* who were originally cultivators, *Heggades* who were initially revenue officials, *Kayasthas* (scribes, they specialised in drafting and writing land grant documents), and *Karanas* who also represented the occupational group of professional scribes.

The Chola kings maintained close commercial contact with south-east Asia and China.

Key Term/Concept	Meaning
<i>Puravu-vari-tinaikkalam/ Shri-karanam</i>	Revenue department.
<i>Eccoru</i>	Obligation of villagers to provide food for state officials.
<i>Muttaiyal/Vetti/Kudimai</i>	Obligation of villagers to provide labour services to state officials.
<i>Kadamai</i>	Land revenue collected in kind.
<i>Antarayam</i>	Rural tax realised in cash.
<i>Dharmasana</i>	Royal court of justice.
<i>Ur-nattam or ur-irukkai</i>	Residential quarter of the landowning farmers.
<i>Kammanacheri</i>	Residential quarter of the artisans.
<i>Paraicheri</i>	Residential quarter of the agricultural labourers.
<i>Paraiyar</i>	Socially and spatially segregated group of people who were considered ritually impure.
<i>Vellalar</i>	Cultivating groups.
<i>Kaniyudaiyar</i>	Land owning farmers.
<i>Ulukudi</i>	Tenant farmers.
<i>Perudan</i>	Highest officials.
<i>Sirutaram</i>	Lower officials.

<i>Kasu</i>	Gold coins.
<i>Gaudas</i>	Cultivators.
<i>Nettal</i>	Compulsory labour.
<i>Nagarams</i>	Market and commercial centres.
<i>Erivirappattanas</i>	Protected mercantile towns.
<i>Samanta</i>	Refers to a king who has been defeated but his kingdom has been restored to him, with the condition that he will continue to accept the over lordship of the conquering king and also pay regular tribute to him in cash or kind. He may also be asked to help with military assistance in times of need.



Chola Art and Literature

The temple architecture in the south reached its climax under the Cholas. The Dravida style of Temple architecture came into vogue which laid emphasis on the building of storey upon storey above the chief deity room (*garbhagriha*). The temple had a pillared hall called *mandapa* with elaborately carved pillars and flat roof which was mostly used as an audience hall and a place for other activities such as ceremonial dances by devadasis. The temple, apart from serving as place of worship, also functioned as the hub of social and cultural life. The temple had lofty and elaborate gates called *gopurams*. A fine example of Dravida style architecture is the 8th century temple of Kailashnatha at Kanchipuram. Similarly, the Brihadeswara temple at Tanjore is another fine specimen of Dravida style. It is pertinent to note that after the fall of Cholas, temple building activity continued under the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Hoysalas. The district of Dharwar and the Hoysala capital had large number of temples such as the magnificent temple of Hoysaleswara which is a fine example of Chalukyan style.



Kailashnatha Temple, Kanchi



Hoysaleswara Temple

In case of the Chalukyan style, that is, the Vesara style (which

represents a **mixed style of Nagara and Dravida**), apart from the images of Gods and their attendants *Yaksh* and *Yaskhini*, the temples contained finely sculptured panels depicting panorama of life such as scenes of dance, music, love, and war. These were mostly built under the patronage of the Chalukyas and are found at **Pattadakal** near **Badami** (Karnataka). The art of sculpture attained high standard during this period as evident in the **giant statue of Gomateswar** at **Sravan Belgola**. The Chola period is noted for the aesthetic and technical finesse of its metal sculpture. The **dancing figure of Shiva** called the **Nataraja** belongs to this period and is considered to be a bronze masterpiece.



Virupaksha temple, Pattadakal



Shravanabelagola Gommateshvara

There was also growth in literature of general parlance languages along with Sanskrit during this period. A number of *Alvars* (devotees of Vishnu) and *Nayannars* (devotees of Shiva) flourished in the *Tamilakham* between the 6th and 9th centuries who composed a lot in Tamil and other regional languages. The writings of these saints have been collected into 11 volumes under the name *Tirumurais* in the early 12th century and were considered to be so sacred that they were deemed the *Fifth Veda*. *Kamban's Ramayana* is another classic gem of this period. Along with Tamil, a vast body of literature was also composed

in Kannada with the aid of the patronage of the Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas and the Hoysalas. The famous Rashtrakuta king **Amoghavarsha** wrote a book on **poetics in Kannada**. The famous **trinity** of **Pampa** (who composed **Vikramarjuna-vijaya**, known popularly as **Pampa Bharat**), **Ponna**, and **Ranna** were the three most prized jewels of Kannada poetry. **Nanniah**, who lived at the court of a Chalukyan king, **started the Telugu version of the Mahabharata**, which was completed in the 13th century by **Tikkanna**.



Chola bronze Nataraja Idol

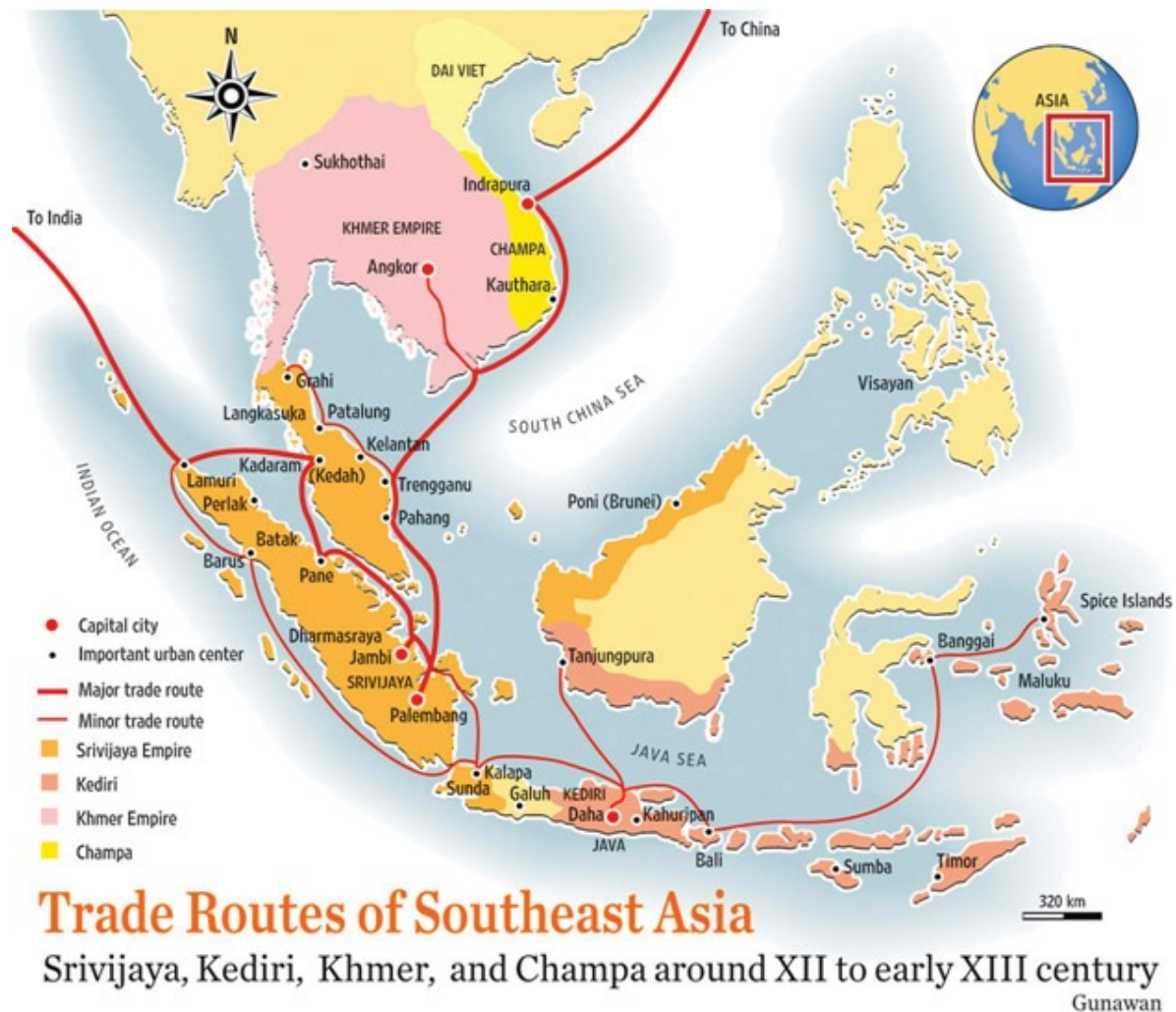
However, Sanskrit still retained a position of importance among the elites as a language of learning. Important works composed in Sanskrit around this period were the **Kathasaritasagara**, which was a collection of stories, the **Rajtarangini**, a vivid account of the **kings of Kashmir**

composed by **Kalhana**, and the *Gita Govinda*, a piece of **devotional literature** composed on the **theme of love between Radha and Krishna**, by **Jayadeva** in Bengal under the **Pala** kings.



Contact with South-East Asia and China.

Indian contact with south-east Asia has been dated from the 5th century BCE, as there are references to Indians visiting *Suvarnavipa* (Island of Gold, identified with **Java**) in the *Jatakas* (**Buddhist fables**). Such early contacts with south-east Asia are confirmed by recent archeological finds, that of pearls and ornaments of agate and carnelian, semi-precious stones of Indian origin, from coastal sites in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and so on. These finds now push the contact back to the 1st century BCE. According to Chinese traditions, the **first kingdom** in **south-east Asia** was **founded** at *Funan* (**Cambodia**) in the fourth century CE by a **Brahmana** known as **Kaundinya**, who had come from India and had married the local princess. However, Indian contact with south-east Asia increased from the 5th century CE onwards, when **inscriptions** in the **Sanskrit language** start appearing in many areas. It reached its peak during c.800–1300 CE, when many kings and dynasties with Indian names emerge over all south-east Asia.



Trade Routes of Southeast Asia

As we have discussed earlier, that while India's trade with the western areas declined, trade with south-east Asia and China grew steadily till the 12th century. India's contact with south-east Asia was largely on account of trade and commerce and the leadership in this trade was taken by the kingdoms in south India and Bengal (the chief port being Tamralipti). The growth of India's foreign trade in the area was based on a strong naval tradition, including ship-building, and a strong navy and the skill and enterprise of its traders. South-east Asia was rich in cardamom, sandal-wood, camphor, cloves, and so on, which formed important items of trade between India and the West. With the decline of the Roman empire, China had become a main focus of trade in the Indian Ocean. The main seaport for foreign trade in China during this period was Canton or Kanfu as the Arab travellers called it. The

Chinese accounts mention that *Canton river was full of ships from India, Persia and Arabia*. In Canton itself there were three Brahmana temples in which Indian Brahmanas resided. The presence of Indians in the Chinese sea is testified by the Japanese records which give the credit of introducing cotton into Japan to two Indians, who were carried over to the country by the black currents. Many Indian rulers, particularly the Palas and the Sena rulers of Bengal, and the Pallava and the Chola rulers of the south India, encouraged the trade relations by sending a series of embassies to the Chinese emperors. The Chola king Rajendra I even sent a naval expedition against Malaya and neighbouring countries to overcome their interference in the trade with China. Buddhist scholars also went from India to China by the sea route. Initially, Indian traders settled along the coast, but gradually they shifted their network to the interior parts of the countryside too. In order to meet the ritual requirements of the Indian settlers, the priests followed the traders and in this way, both Buddhist and Hindu religion were introduced in the region. It also resulted in the interaction of Indian social and cultural elements with that of south-east Asia. It is however, noteworthy to understand that the uniqueness about this interaction was the fact that the local cultures of these countries was equally respected and maintained and there emerged a fine intermingling of both local and Indian cultural aspects, each learning from one another. For instance, while Sanskrit was accepted as a language of court and religion in South-east Asia, the regional languages continued to be used alongside, and many inscriptions in mixed Sanskrit and local language are found. The material prosperity of the south-east Asian countries was also based on the introduction of the Indian technique of irrigated rice cultivation.

The most important empire which come to be founded in south-east Asia in the 8th Century CE was the Sailendra empire which comprised of Java, Sumatra, Malay Peninsula and other parts of the south-east Asian region. They were a leading naval power and on account of their geographical position controlled the trade between China and India as well as other countries in the west. The Sailendra kings were followers of Buddhism and had close contact with the Indian rulers. One of the kings of this empire built a monastery at Nalanda in the ninth century,

and at his request, the Pala king, Devapala of Bengal, granted five villages for its upkeep. Similarly in the eleventh century, another king was permitted by the Chola king Rajaraja I to build a Buddhist monastery at Nagapattam on the Tamil Coast. The Sailendras also built a beautiful temple dedicated to Buddha at Barabodur in Java. It is situated on the top of a hillock and consists of nine gradually receding terraces.



Stupa Borobudur, Java



Angkor Wat, Cambodia



Rock Wall Carving, Mahabharata Battle Scene, Angkor Vat Temple

Besides Buddhism, the **worship of Hindu gods** such as Vishnu and Shiva was also quite popular in south-east Asia. The temples dedicated to them have been found at various places. They show distinct traces of Indian influence and inspiration. One of the most famous temples dedicated to Vishnu is the **Angkorvat temple** built in the **12th century** by **Surya Varman II**, the **king** of **Kambuja (Cambodia)**. It is surrounded by a moat, filled with water. It has a huge gopuram (gateway) and number of galleries, the **walls** of which are **decorated** with sculptures based on **themes** drawn **from** the **Mahabharat** and the **Ramayana**.



Questions from Last Year's Prelims

2016

1. With reference to the economic history of India, the term 'Araghatta' refers to:
- (a) Bonded labour
 - (b) Land grants made to military officers
 - (c) Waterwheel used in the irrigation of land
 - (d) Wasteland converted to cultivated land

2015

2. With reference to Indian history, which of the following is/are the essential elementary elements of the feudal system?
- i. A very strong centralised political authority and a very weak provincial or local political authority
 - ii. Emergence of administrative structure based on control and possession of land
 - iii. Creation of lord-vassal relationship between the feudal lord and his overlord
- Select the correct answer using the code given below.
- (a) i and ii only
 - (b) ii and iii only
 - (c) iii only
 - (d) i, ii and iii

2013

3. The Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) who visited India recorded the general conditions and culture of India at that time. In this context, which of the following statements is/are correct?
- i. The roads and river-routes were completely immune from robbery.
 - ii. As regards punishment for offences, ordeals by fire, water and

poison were the instruments for determining the innocence or guilt of a person.

iii. The tradesmen had to pay duties at ferries and barrier stations.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- (a) i only
- (b) ii and iii only
- (c) i and iii only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

2012

4. With reference to the guilds (shreni) of ancient India that played a very important role in the country's economy, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- i. Every guild was registered with the central authority of the state and the king was the chief admen authority on them
- ii. The wages, rules of work, standards and prices were fixed by the guild
- iii. The guild had judicial powers over its own members. Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) i and ii only
- (b) iii only
- (c) ii and iii only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

2012

5. The Nagara, the Dravida and the Vesara are the

- (a) Three main racial groups of the Indian subcontinent.
- (b) Three main linguistic divisions in to which the languages of India can be classified
- (c) Three main styles of Indian temple architecture
- (d) Three main musical gharanas prevalent in India

2009

6. Where is the famous Virupaksha temple located?
- (a) Bhadrachalam
 - (b) Chidambaram
 - (c) Hampi
 - (d) Srikalahasti

2006

7. Consider the following statements:
- (i) The Ikshvaku rulers of Southern India were antagonistic towards Buddhism.
 - (ii) The Pala rulers of Eastern India were patrons of Buddhism.
- Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) i only
 - (b) ii only
 - (c) Both i and ii
 - (d) Neither i nor ii

2006

8. Who among the following laid the foundations of the Rashtrakuta Empire?
- (a) Amoghvarsha I
 - (b) Dantidurga
 - (c) Dhruva
 - (d) Krishna I

2006

9. The initial design and construction of which massive temple took place during the reign of Suryavarman II?
- (a) Sri Mariammam Temple

- (b) Angkor Vat
- (c) Batu Caves Temple
- (d) Kamakhya Temple

2003

10. Consider the following statements:

- (i) The Cholas defeated the Pandya and Chera rulers and established their domination over peninsular India in the early medieval times.
- (ii) The Cholas sent an expedition against Sailendra empire of South East Asia and conquered some of the areas.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only i
- (b) Only ii
- (c) Both i and ii
- (d) Neither i nor ii

2003

11. Emperor Harsha's southward march was stopped on the Narmada river by

- (a) Pulkeshin I
- (b) Pulkeshin II
- (c) Vikramaditya I
- (d) Vikramaditya II

1997

12. Match the following:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| (A) Gupta | (i) Badami |
| (B) Chandella | (ii) Panamalai |
| (B) Chalukya | (iii) Khajuraho |
| (D) Pallava | (iv) Deogarh |

- (a) A-iv, B-iii, C-i, D- ii
- (b) A-iv, B-ii, C-iii, D- i
- (c) A-ii, B-iii, C-iv, D- i
- (d) A-iii, B-iv, C-i, D- ii



Answers

- 1. (c)
- 2. (b)
- 3. (b)
- 4. (d)
- 5. (c)
- 6. (c)
- 7. (b)
- 8. (b)
- 9. (b)
- 10. (c)
- 11. (b)
- 12. (a)



Questions from Last Year's Mains

- 1. The Kailasha temple built at Ellora marks the culmination of rock-cut architecture in India. Elucidate. (2015, History optional)
- 2. How could the local self-government under the Cholas adjust with their centralised administrative structure? (2015, History optional)
- 3. Critically analyse the agricultural economy from 750–1200 CE. (2014, History optional)
- 4. Analyse the vibrant cultural activities in peninsular India during

550–750 CE. Compare and contrast it with the situation in contemporary North India. (2013, History optional)



Practice Questions(Prelims)

1. What is the correct chronological order of the coming of following Chinese pilgrims.
(i) Hsuan Tsang
(ii) I-Tsing
(iii) Fa-Hien
Code
(a) i,ii,iii
(b) ii,i,iii
(c) iii,i,ii
(d) iii,ii,i
2. Consider the following statements:
(i) Mihir Bhoja was the greatest ruler of the Pratihara dynasty.
(ii) The Rashtrakuta king Amoghavarsha wrote Kavirajamarga, the earliest Kannada work on poetics.
(a) Only i
(b) Only ii
(c) i and ii
(d) None
3. Consider the following statements:
(i) Devapala founded Buddhist monastery at Vikramashila.
(ii) The university which became famous in the post Gupta era was Nalanda.
(a) Only i
(b) Only ii
(c) i and ii

- (d) None
4. Consider the following statements:
- (i) Banabhatta was the court poet of Harshavardhana.
 - (ii) The Rathas of Mahabalipuram were built by Palas.
- (a) Only i
(b) Only ii
(c) i and ii
(d) None
5. Consider the following statements:
- (i) Harshavardhana organised religious assembly at Prayag.
 - (ii) The famous Brihadeshwara Temple was built by Cholas.
 - (iii) The Pattakadal temples were mainly built by Chalukyas.
- (a) Only i and ii
(b) Only ii and iii
(c) All
(d) i and iii
6. Match the following:
- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| (A)Rajaraja | (i) Pushyabhuti |
| (B)Dantidurga | (ii) Rashtrakuta |
| (C)Nagabhatta | (iii) Pratiharas |
| (D)Harshavardhana | (iv) Chola |
- (a) A-iv, B-iii, C-i, D- ii
(b) A-iv, B-ii, C-iii, D- i
(c) A-ii, B-iii, C-iv, D- i
(d) A-iii, B-iv, C-i, D- ii
7. Match the following:
- | | |
|--------------|---|
| (A)Kudimai | (i) Brahmadeya village exclusive assembly |
| (B)Ur | (ii) Tank committee |
| (C)Mahasabha | (iii) Labour services |
| (D)Erivariya | (iv) Non-brahmadeya village assembly |
- (a) A-iv, B-iii, C-i, D- ii

- (b) A-iv, B-ii, C-iii, D- i
 - (c) A-ii, B-iii, C-iv, D- i
 - (d) A-iii, B-iv, C-i, D- ii
8. Consider the following statements:
- (i) The famous Aihole Inscription belongs to Pulkeshin.
 - (ii) The tripartite struggle was between the Palas, Rashtrakutas and the Cholas.
 - (iii) Mihir Bhoja adopted the title of Adivaraha.
- (a) Only i and ii
 - (b) Only ii and iii
 - (c) All
 - (d) i and iii
9. What is the correct chronological order in case of
- (i) Simhavishnu
 - (ii) Mahendravarman I
 - (iii) Narsimhavarman I
 - (iv) Parameshvaraman I
- (a) i,ii,iii,iv
 - (b) ii,i,ii,iv
 - (c) ii,i,iii,iv
 - (d) i,ii,iv,iii



Answers

- 1. (c)
- 2. (c)
- 3. (b)
- 4. (a)
- 5. (c)
- 6. (b)
- 7. (d)
- 8. (d)

9. (a)



Practice Questions (Mains)

1. Describe the highlights of the tripartite struggle, giving references to the major powers involved and important battles.
2. Describe the temple architecture of Pallavas and the Cholas.
3. The administration under Harshavardhana was more or less similar to that of Guptas. Elucidate.
4. Shed some light on the cultural contact of India with south-east Asia. Did trade and commerce have something to do with it? Explain, citing examples.

