

4

RAJPUT AGE

Parimal was watching a historical serial on T.V. in which he saw a palace. A thought arose in his mind. Are such palaces still in existence? Who had constructed such palaces? Being curious, he went to his grandfather to get answers to this and other similar questions. His grandfather told him a few things like what is discussed below.



4.1 Picture of a palace

Such palaces were constructed by kings in ancient times. We come across many such palaces - some of which are in ruins, while others are in good condition. There is a difference between the construction of structures in present times and the kind of work done in earlier ages. From these differences we can make out the period during which a particular structure was constructed. Monuments constructed during the Rajput age can be seen even today. To know about that era, let us know about the main Indian dynasties of that time.

Rise of New Dynasties

After the death of Emperor Harshvardhana in the middle of 7th century C.E., many feudal chieftains and landlords declared themselves to be independent and founded new dynasties.

Think

- *List the present names of the regions marked on the map. In which kingdom of the Rajput Age is your city situated?*



4.2 Map of India during Rajput Age

Things to know

Who is a feudal lord or landlord?

- *The vast empire was divided into different provinces (three parts). The person who collected the revenue of a particular province was called landlord or feudal lord (Samanta). The landlord gave some portion of land revenue to the king. He kept the rest with him, out of which he maintained an army. He sent his army whenever the king needed help. In time, these landlords became powerful and 'feudalism' (Samantashahi) came into existence.*

Many dynasties came into existence. The main dynasties ruling North India were the Gurjar, Pratihara, Pal, Chalukya, Parmar and Chauhan dynasties. Among those in South India were the Pallava, Rashtrakuta, Kalyani-Chalukya, Cher, Pandya and Chola dynasties.

The kingdoms of the early medieval period were divided into two parts:

1. North India
2. South India

North India

After the death of Harsha, many kings ascended the throne of Kanauj. Among them, Yashovarma is considered as a powerful ruler. After him, the Pratihara dynasty established its rule in Kanauj. They protected India from Arab invasions. Mihirbhoj, who was also known as Bhoj, was the most powerful ruler of this dynasty. He fought many battles with the Rashtrakutas during his reign. We will learn about the Rashtrakutas later.



4.3 Yashovarma

The Parmar dynasty ruled Malwa. Ujjain and Dhar Nagari were the two main cities of Malwa. Dhar Nagari is known as the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh at present. King Munj and King Bhoj of Parmar dynasty were not only good rulers but also good poets. They gave patronage to the scholars in their courts. Raja Bhoj or King Bhoj made Dhar Nagari the center of studies (Vidyanagari) and established a University (Vidyapith) for the study of Sanskrit literature. Many architectural monuments were built during this time. The Parmars fought many battles with the Chalukyas of the South. After the death of Raja Bhoj, the kingdom of Malwa weakened.



4.4 King Bhoj

Did you know?

- *It is said that Raja Bhoj (1016-1053 C.E.) suffered from brain tumour in his early age. In the early 10th century, he was operated on by two brothers from Ujjaini, who sent him into a controlled coma using a medicine called Sammohini. They , then opened his skull and removed his tumour. Raja Bhoj survived this surgery and lived a healthy life.*

The rulers of the Pala dynasty and Sen dynasty ruled in Bihar and Bengal. The rulers of the Pala dynasty had added 'Pala' to their names and so their dynasty was known as the Pala dynasty. (With the help of your teacher and the library find out more information about the rulers of the Pala dynasty).

Many Rajput rulers of the Chauhan or Chahman dynasty ruled over various parts of Rajasthan during 7th and 8th century C.E. Of them, one branch ruled over Shakambhari, a place near Lake Sambhar which is to the north of Ajmer, in the beginning of the 8th century. Ajayraj ascended the throne of Shankbhari in the 12th century. He established the city of Ajaymeru which later came to be known as Ajmer.

The rulers of the Chauhan dynasty captured Delhi, the capital of the Tomar kings, and established their supremacy. Prithviraj III or Raipithora was a powerful ruler of the Chauhan dynasty. He is unparalleled in the history of India. Many stories and folksongs have been written about his bravery on the battlefield. Chand Bardai, a famous poet, has written about Prithviraj Chauhan's valour in his epic 'Prithviraj Raso'. We shall learn about the battle between Prithviraj Chauhan and Shahbuddin Muhammad Ghori later.

The Gohils or Guhils of Mewar, who were later known as the Sisodiya Rajputs, hold a unique position in medieval history. It is said that Bappa Rawal established this dynasty. During the Rajput era, the Chedi dynasty ruled over Jabalpur which is to the south of river Narmada (Madhya Pradesh). It was known as the Chedi dynasty of Kalachuri with its capital at Tripuri (present day Tewar). In the medieval era in Gujarat, the Rajput dynasties of the Chavdas, followed by the Solankis ruled over Anhilwada Patan. There were many valiant rulers of this dynasty about whom we will study later.

South India

During the Rajput era many big and small states were established in South India. After the demise of Pulkeshi II, his vast empire disintegrated into smaller states. The reign of many rulers of the Chalukya dynasty is noteworthy.

The kingdoms of the Pallava and the Chola dynasties are also included in the states of South India. Narsinh Varma was a strong ruler of the Pallava dynasty. The emperors of this dynasty were lovers of art and literature. The Kailashnath temple of Kanchi is the best example of Pallava architecture.

The Chola dynasty also ruled in the south. Tanjor was their capital. The rulers of Chola dynasty attacked Ceylon and annexed many territories. The Cholas had a powerful navy because of which they could attack countries even across the sea. Rajaraja-I adapted a very systematic way of administration in his state. He started with the measurement of land and local self government.

Apart from them, the Rashtrakuta, Chera and Pandya dynasties also ruled in South India. So it is evident that many dynasties ruled at different places during the Rajput age. There were frequent battles between them to annex each other's areas. Due to the internal conflicts, there was no unity among them. Foreign invaders took advantage of this. We will discuss the administration and culture during the Rajput era in the next unit.

Things to know

Rulers of Rajput dynasty in medieval age

- *Utpala dynasty ruled in Kashmir.*
- *Salambh, Harjarvarma, Vanmalavarma, etc. ruled in Kamrupa (Assam)*
- *Nagabhata-I, Devraja, Mihirbhoj, Mahendrapala, etc. were the great rulers of Pratihara.*
- *Shahiya dynasty ruled in Gandhar.*
- *Chandela ruled in Bundelkhand.*
- *In the beginning, Tomar ruled in Dhillak (Delhi).*

Reference: Chotubhai Nayak: 'Medieval India Part-1', Gujarat University.

Rashtrakutas ruled South India. With the fall of Chalukya dynasty Rashtrakuta came to power. Rashtrakuta means 'head of a state or area.' It is believed that the founder of the dynasty was an officer of that community and hence the dynasty was named after him. Out of many rulers, Govind-III was the most powerful king. In the 8th century, he established a powerful kingdom in the Deccan.

The Pandyas also ruled over South India. The Pandya dynasty is believed to be very ancient. Megasthenes, the Greek traveler, notes that females used to rule in this community. The inscriptions of Emperor Ashok also contain references to the Pandyas. The Pandyas ruled in present day Madurai and Thirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. Cheras ruled over South India. Chera is now known as Kerala. In ancient time, Kerala was part of the Tamil state. Later on, Kerala or Malayalam state separated. 'Keralaputra Rajya' is mentioned in the inscriptions of Ashoka. Athan II was the first strong ruler of this dynasty. Cheran Settingvan was a powerful ruler of this dynasty.

Think

- *Why did many rulers of South India maintain a naval force?*
- *Why are the old architectural monuments preserved?*
- *Why were wells, lakes, step wells, etc. constructed like temples in ancient times?*

Things to know

Dynasties of South India in the Medieval Period

- *Chalukyas ruled Vatapi (Badami).*
- *Rashtrakutas ruled Manyakheta.*
- *Hoysala ruled Dwar Samudra.*
- *Yadavas ruled Devgiri.*
- *Cholas ruled Tanjor.*

(Reference: Chotubhai Nayak: 'Medieval India Part-1', Gujarat University)

Pride of Rajput rulers

Rajputs were very brave. They felt proud to give up their lives for their country. To die but never fear, to protect those who seek refuge, to speak the truth and fight for truth were their special traits. Rajput women (Rajputani) were known for their chastity and fearlessness. They sent their husbands, sons and brothers to the battlefield with a smiling face. They were so brave that if need be, they would fight on the battlefield. They preferred 'Jauhar'(to burn alive) if their husbands were defeated or attained martyrdom in wars. The heroic stories of the Rajput age are engraved in golden letters in the history of India.

EXERCISE

- 1 Who were known as feudal lords (Samantas)?
2. Name a powerful ruler of the Pallav dynasty. Mention any two of his achievements.
3. Which period is known as the early medieval period?
4. Describe the characteristics of the medieval Rajput men and women.

Project

Find out and write about any one king belonging to the early medieval period of India.

Things to know

- *Ranki Vav: Ranki vav is a seven storeyed step well in Patan (Gujarat). Udaymati, the wife of Bhimdev-II, constructed it. It is an unparalleled example of a stone architectural structure.*
- *Vastupal and Tejpal built Jain temples in Delwara in Mount Abu (Rajasthan) in which marble pillars, arches, domes, balconies, etc. were engraved minutely by skilled artists.*
- *Vastupal and Tejpal were the ministers of Rana Virdhaval of Dholka (Gujarat).*
- *Vastupal constructed Jain temples at Girnar, Palitana, Shertha, Dabhoi (Gujarat), etc.*