

Unit.1
Chapter-I
THE EMERGENCE OF RAJPUT
The Gurjara-Pratiharas, Art and Architecture

Structure

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1.1.1. Objectives

This chapter deals with the history of India in the post-Harshavardhana era. Here a discussion on the emergence of Rajput and particularly the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty and their contribution to various fields of India will be discussed. After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- *identify the different Rajput clan in India which emerged during post-Harsha era.*
- *examine the various theory regarding origin of Rajput clan in India;*
- *discuss the origin and polity of Gurjara-Pratihara in Indian history;*
- *evaluate the cultural activities of the Gurjara-Pratihara;and*
- *assess the significance of Gurjara-Pratihara in Indian history.*

1.1.2. Introduction

The period between 750 and 1200 C.E is referred to as an early medieval period of Indian History. During this time the whole country was divided into numerous regional states which were busy fighting with each other. Though politically divided, during this period India witnessed a growth of new and rich cultural activities in the fields of art, literature and language. Indian political history in the post Harshavardhan, was marked by the growth of three important political powers in India. These were Gurjara Pratiharas in north India, Palas in eastern India and Rashtrakutas in South India. These powers were constantly fighting with each other with a aim to set up their control on Gangetic region in northern India. This armed conflict among these three powers is known as 'Tripartite struggle'. In this unit in three different chapter we will discuss about the above mentioned three ruling dynasties in separately. This chapter will discuss the emergence of Rajput clan with special reference to the Gurjara-Pratihara in the polity of India and their contribution to the various fields of Indian history.

1.1.3. Emergence of Rajput

The anarchy and confusion which followed Harsha's death is the transitional period of Indian history. This period was marked by the rise of the Rajput clans who began to play a significant part in the history of northern and western India from the 8th century C.E onwards. The term Rajput denotes a tribe or clan, the members of which claimed themselves as Kshatriyas belonging to the 'solar' or lunar' dynasties. There is a keen controversy among scholars regarding the origin of the Rajputs. In spite of painstaking researches on the subject, there is a lot of obscurity around it. In the absence of any definite theory on the origin of the Rajputs, we can merely some of the views put forth by historian on this aspect of Indian history.

1.1.3.1. Descendants of the Kshatriyas:

Various suppositions regarding origin of Rajputs have been put forward. The term Rajputs seems to be the corrupt form of "Rajaputra". A different observation is that Rajputs are the descendants of Brahmin or Kshatriya families. On the basis of ancient inscriptions they have rejected the story of sacrificial- fire pit and also the view of the foreign origin of the Rajputs. They believe that the founder of Chauhans, the Gehlots, the Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Pratiharas and the Parmaras were Brahmins. In the accounts of Bana and Indian Puranas, "Rajaputra" is mentioned as a highborn Kshatriya. According to the contemporary literary sources, the Rajputs were originated from the highborn Kshatriyas. The centuries between the death of Harsha and the Turkish conquest was marked by the ascendancy of the Rajputs. The entire northern India was disintegrated and came under the sway of the different houses of the Rajput. The Rajputs are usually a social group of northern India and Gujarat flourished during the period. The Rajputs were the dominant martial and land-owning community of northern India. The period is conveniently termed as the Rajput period of Indian history.

1.1.3.2. Foreign Origin:

Many historians believe that that they are the brood of distant invader like Sakas, Kushanas, Huns who were Hinduized. The upper rank came to be known as Rajputs. Some scholars have opined that Gurjaras entered India through Afghanistan, settled themselves in different parts of India and were

the ancestors of the Rajputs. However this theory had less acceptability. Other hypotheses, ascribing to them a Scythian origin. Invasions of the Huns had an impact on Indian society socially and culturally which also established many new ruling empires. Later, they mixed themselves in the Indian society and almost lost their individuality. Certain customs like women's status in society, horse worship were similar to clan of Shakas, Huns and Kushanas so their foreign origin is proved.

1.1.3.3. Agnikula Theory:

Chand Bardai, court poet of Prithviraja Chauhan state that Rajput's origin lies in sacrificial fire pit. Sage Parasuram destroyed all the Kshatriyas and then the ancient sages performed a yajna on Mount Abu to guard the Vedic religion. Out of that yajna four heroes were born and their progeny were the Chauhans, Solanki, Parmara, and Pratihara. This is believed to be origin of Agnivanshi Rajputs. Suryavanshi Rajputs trace their ancestry to the Sun. They ruled Mewar, Marwar, and Amber. Chandravanshi Rajputs descended from Moon. Gujarat, Jaisalmer was ruled by Chandravanshi Rajputs.

Whatever the origin is, the Rajputs were believed till date as one of the virulent warrior tribes ever ruled in India. They never originated as a tribe or a single community. They were a collection of clans ruling different regions. The term Rajput as it is used today refers to the set of intermarrying royal clans. "It is their war like occupation coupled with their aristocratic rank that gave them a distinctive common feature and made the Brahmins recognize them as Kshatriyas." In a broad spectrum no single origin-theory can be held to be authoritative.

1.1.4. The Gurjara-Pratihara

Of all the Rajput clans that ruled in India, the Pratiharas had the most dazzling record. The command of the Pratiharas was obeyed from Punjab to Central India and from Kathiwar to North Bengal. For three centuries, they stood as the bulwark of India's defence against the Muslim invaders. They revived the dream of the political unification of India after the fall of Harsha's dynasty.

1.1.5. Origin of the Pratiharas

According to epigraphic evidence, the Pratiharas were descendants of Lakshamana of the solar race of the great epic, the Ramayana. Some scholars opine that they were a branch of the Gurjara race. They are mentioned in the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II, the records of Hieun Tsang and the Hashacharita of Bana. It is known from the Rashtrakuta record that the Pratiharas belonged to the Gurjara stock. It is also held by some scholars that the Gurjaras were central Asiatic nomads who accompanied the Hunas into India. Some others are of the opinion that the Gurjaras were of indigenous origin. Another opinion is that the Pratiharas were a tribe of the land called Gurjaradesa. The expression Gurjara-Pratihara family of the Gurjara country was possessed by the Pratiharas since the time of Vatsaraja. Whatsoever may be the fact that the Gurjaras came into prominence about the second half of the 6th century C.E. they took advantage of the downfall of the Gupta Empire to establish their political authority. Their most important kingdom was that founded in the heart of Rajputna near Jodhpur and gradually advanced towards the South and took hold of Avanti and later on conquered Kannauj. The Avanti branch of the Pratiharas has become famous by their success over the Arab Muslims.

The Gurjara Pratihara dynasty was founded by Nagabhatta I in the region of Malwa in the eighth century C.E. He belonged to a Rajput clan. Later one of his successors, Vatsaraja extended his rule over to a large part of North India and made Kannauj in western Uttara Pradesh his capital. Vatsaraja's policy of expansion brought him in conflict with Dharamapala, the Pala King of Bengal and Bihar. Soon, the Rashtrakuta king Dhruva from south India jumped into the fight. And thus began what is known as 'Tripartite Struggle' i.e struggle among three powers. It continued for about the next hundred and fifty years under various succeeding kings with ups and downs. The Gurjara-Pratiharas, however, could continue to maintain their hold over Kannauj till the last. One of the important kings of this dynasty was Mihira Bhoja (ninth century). He was highly praised by an Arabian scholar Sulaiman for keeping his empire safe from robbers.

1.1.6. Political History of the Dynasty

The Pratihara Kings ruled from 6th century till the end of 11th century C.E. Among Pratihara Kings, their kingdom was laid by Harichandra near modern Jodhpur in the mid sixth century C.E. Harichandra was a Brahmin who had two wives, one was Brahamana and the other one was a Kshatriya. His sons from his Brahamana wife were called Pratihara Brahmins while his sons from his Kshatriya wife established the ruling dynasty of the Pratiharas. His four sons established a separate kingdom for themselves. Their dominion was concentrated in Jodhpur, Nandipura, Broach, Ujjayani and nearby areas.

1.1.6.1. Nagabhata I

The foundation of Pratihara dynasty's magnitude was positioned by Nagabhata I, who ruled between 730-756 C.E. His rule was prominent because of his successful confrontation with the Arabs. He established an empire extending from Gujarat to Gwalior and defied the Arab invasions towards further east of Sindh. He fought against King Dantidurga the Rashtrakuta ruler as well and was defeated. Conversely the success of Dantidurga was short-term and Nagabhata left for his successors a far-reaching empire which included Gujarat, Malwa and parts of Rajputana. Nagabhata I was succeeded by his brother's sons, Kakkuka and Devaraja.

1.1.6.2. Vatsaraja

Devaraja was succeeded by his son Vatsaraja who proved to be an influential ruler. He ruled from C.E 775 to 805. He seems to have consolidated his position and made Ujjain as his capital. He was in the verge of his imperial career in Western India. He in trying to be ruler of Northern India annexed the territories upto Kanauj and central Rajputra by defeating Bhandi, the ruling dynasty probably related to the Vardhanas. His ambition to capture Kannauj led him into conflicts with the Pala ruler Dharmapala of Bengal and the Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva. He succeeded in defeating Dharmapala in the Doab region and vanquished Northern India including the Ganga Yamuna valley. Dhruva defeated him later on and captured Kannauj. Vatsaraja was succeeded by Nagabhata II.

1.1.6.3. Nagabhata II

Nagabhata II who succeeded Vatsaraja revived the lost prestige of the empire by conquering Sindh, Andhra, Vidarbha. After the defeat of Vatsaraja by Dhruva the Pratihara empire was limited only to Rajputana. Nagabhata II revived the policy of conquest and extension of the empire. He defeated the rulers of Andhra, Saindhava, Vidarbha and Kalinga. He subdued Matsayas in the North, Vatsas in the East and Turuskka (Muslims) in the West. Dharmapala had defeated Indrayudh and made Chakrayudh, his brother, the ruler of Kannauj. Nagabhata attacked Kannauj and after defeating Chakrayudha occupied it. He also succeeded in defeating Dharmapala and entered into his territories as far as Munger in Bihar. But he could not enjoy his success for long. Nagabhata II was initially defeated by the Rashtrakuta ruler Govinda III, but later recovered Malwa from the Rashtrakutas. He rebuilt the great Shiva temple at Somnath in Gujarat, which had been demolished in an Arab raid from Sindh. Kannauj became the center of the Gurjar Pratihara state, which covered much of northern India during the peak of their power. Rambhadra, the son and successor of Nagabhata II proved incapable and lost some of his territories, probably, to Pala ruler, Devapal. He was succeeded by his son Mihirbhoj who proved to be an ambitious ruler.

1.1.6.4. Mihirbhoj

Mihirabhoja ascended the throne on 836 C.E. He was a very brave and powerful king. A glorious chapter of the history of the Pratiharas begins with the accession of Mihirabhoja. He reorganized and consolidated the empire inherited from his ancestors and ushered in an era of prosperity of the Pratiharas. He is credited with many conquests; the prominent among them are follows.

Conquest of Bundelkhanda: During the reign of Mihirabhoja's father, Bundelkhanda had become independent. That is why Ramabhadra could not certify and continue the charity given by

Nagabhata in Kalanjaramandal, but Mihirabhoja again started it. This indicates that he had re-conquered Bundelkhanda and king Jayasakti had accepted his suzerainty as well.

Conquest of Rajputana: Varaha, Daulatpur and Kahala inscriptions indicate that he had brought Rajputana and several other provinces under his control. It can also be stated that king Kakkata of Mandisor branch of the Pratiharas who was the samanta of Nagabhata again became the ruler of this region. Kakkata had fought against the Gaudas in Mudoggiri. Bahuka was his son who had killed Nandabala and Mayra and had defeated the kings of nine Mandals. Bahuka had also become independent but Mihirabhoja again brought him under his control. Pratapgarh inscription mentions the following words. It also confirms the control of Mihirabhoja over the southern portion of Rajputana. Chatus inscription of Jaipur also let the reader know that Mihirabhoja had compelled Harsha Gupta, who had defeated the gauda King, to accept his sovereignty. Harsha Guhila had presented many horses to Mihirabhoja.

Conquest of Punjab: 'Rajatarangini' of Kalahana and Pahewa inscription indicate that Karnal region of the eastern Punjab was under the control of Mihirabhoja. However, it is stated that when Mihirabhoja was in the wars of eastern India, king Sankarvarman of Kashmir had brought this region under his control. But even after that some portion of the Karnal region remained under the control of Mihirabhoja.

Conquest of western India: According to one copper plate one samanta Balavarman had defeated Vishad and killed Jajjap and other kings and thus drove away the Hunas.

Conquest of central India: The inscriptions found at Gwalior and Deogarh of central India indicate that Deogarh i.e. Jhansi region and Gwalior region were being governed by the representatives of Mihirabhoja.

War with the Rashtrakutas: During the reign of Mihirabhoja, Amoghavarsa and Krishna II were the Rashtrakuta kings who were ruling over Kannauj. These were weak rulers and hence Mihirabhoja captured Kannauj and extended his empire up to river Narmada. In the course of time, however, Dhruva II, the Gujarat samanta of Amoghavarsa defeated Mihirabhoja in the battle and had driven him away. The war between Rashtrakutas and Bhoja continued for several years and both tried to bring the province of Avanti under their control. Even the last years of the reign of Mihirabhoja passed in these wars.

War with the Palas: King Devapala of the Pala dynasty was a brave and powerful king during the reign of Mihirabhoja. His inscriptions refer that he realized tributes and taxes from the Kings of the territories from Himalaya to Vindychal and from the eastern frontier to the western frontier of northern India. Though these descriptions seem to be an exaggeration, yet the power of Devapala was so strong that it appears that both Bhoja and Palas must have shared victories as well as defeats in their wars with each other. The historian expresses different views with regard to the final victory. But according to Gwalior prasasti, in the end, Bhoja has defeated the son of Devapala.

Other conquests: Mihirabhoja had also conquered many other provinces. He had attacked Karnal, western and southern Saurashtra etc. The Arab travelling Suleman has praised his big army and his efficient administration.

Mihirabhoja was the most powerful ruler of the Pratihara dynasty. His empire extended from the Terai of Himalay to Bundelkhanda and Kausambhi, to the frontier of Pala kingdom in the east, and Saurashtra in the west. A large portion of Rajasthan was also under his control. Some of the coins of Mihirabhoja that are found can be mentioned as alloyed silver which indicates that on account of constant wars his economic condition had become bad. He was the worshipper of Vishnu and Shiva.

From the above account it appears that Mihirabhoja made Kannauj his capital and succeeded in consolidating Pratihara power and influence in Malwa, Rajputana and Madhyadesh. He had to face continuously defeats in the hands of Devapala, King Dhruva and King Kokkalla. These consecutive trounces resulted in weakening his grasp over Rajputana and even the feudatory Pratihara ruler of

Jodhpur became independent. The death of Devapala, ruler of Bengal and, thereafter, weakness of his successors gave Mihirbhoj an opportunity to restore his strength towards the east and south due to the policies undertaken by Rashtrakuta ruler. He conquered part of Western Kingdom by defeating the Pala king Narayanapala. Yet again he took offensive against the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna II and defeated him on the banks of the Narmada. Subsequently he occupied Malwa and Kathiawar. He had an extensive empire which included Kathiawar, territories up to the Punjab in the North-West, Malwa and Madhyadesh. He had consolidated his power in Rajputana and the Kalachuris of Bihar and Chandelas of Bundelkhand had accepted his sovereignty. He made conquests in Punjab, Oudh and other Northern territories. Mihirbhoja was not only a great conqueror but also a great lover of art and literature. He was a great patron of men and letters. Poet Rajasekhara adorned his court. Consequently his reign was regarded as the glorious period of Pratihara ascendancy.

1.1.6.5. Mahendrapala and his successor

Mahendrapala succeeded to the throne of his father, Mihirbhoja. He succeeded in maintaining the empire of his father and also extended it further by annexing Magadha and parts of Northern Bengal. He lost some parts to the Kings of Kashmir. It is believed that his empire extended from the Himalayas to the Vindhya and from the Eastern to the Western ocean. After death of Mahendrapala, a war of succession took place which substantially weakened the power of the dynasty.

Mahendrapala was succeeded by his son Bhoja II but his cousin, Mahipala, shortly dethroned him and became the ruler of Kannauj. During his period, the Rashtrakuta King, Indra III defeated Mahipala of Kannauj. After Indra III retiring to the south, Mahipala again consolidated his position. In the period in-between the Pala rulers captured some eastern parts of his empire and occupied the forts of Kalinjar and Chitrakuta. His period marked the beginning of the decline of the power of Pratiharas.

Mahipala was succeeded by his son Mahendrapala II. He ruled only for a year. Afterwards, we find no less than four successors during a period of fifteen years. Devapala, Vinayakapala II, Mahipala II and Vijayapala ruled in succession over the throne of Kannauj but none of them proved to be a capable ruler. Rather, the quick succession of these rulers proves that family feuds had started among the Pratiharas. This resulted in the disintegration of the Pratihara Empire during the reign of Devapala.

1.1.7. Decline of Pratihara Dynasty

Several feudatories of the empire took advantage of the temporary weakness of the Gurjar Pratiharas during war of succession and they declare their independence, notably the Paramaras of Malwa, the Chandelas of Bundelkhand, and the Kalachuris of Mahakoshal. The Rashtrakuta emperor Indra III briefly captured Kannauj, and although the Pratiharas regained the city, their position continued to weaken in the 10th century, partly as a result of the drain of simultaneously fighting off Turkic attacks from the west and the Pala advances in the east. The Gurjar-Pratiharas lost control of Rajasthan to their feudatories, and the Chandelas captured the strategic fortress of Gwalior in central India, 950 C.E. By the end of the tenth century the Gurjar Pratihara domains had dwindled to a small state centered on Kannauj. Mahmud of Ghazni sacked Kannauj in 1018 C.E, and the Pratihara ruler Rajapala fled. The Chandela ruler Gauda captured and killed Rajapala, placing Rajapala's son Trilochanpala on the throne as a proxy. Jasapala, the last Gurjara ruler of Kanauj, died in 1036 C.E. With this the Gurjara-Pratihara went into the historical horizon of India.

1.1.8. Administration of the Pratihara

In the Gurjara-Pratihara history, king occupied the highest position in the state and had enormous powers, kings adopted big titles such as 'Parmeshwara', 'Maharajadhiraja', 'Parambhatrak'. The appointment of the samantas and singing on giants and charities were also the works of the kings. The samantas used to give military help to their Kings and fought for them the advice of the high officers was taken in matters of administration. However, there is no reference of mantriparishad or ministers in the inscriptions of that period. There are eight types of different officers in the administration of the Pratiharas such as Kottapala; highest officer of the fort, Tantrapala; representative

of the king in samanta states, Dandapashika was highest officer of the police, Dandanayaka look after the military and justice department, Dutaka carry order and grants of the king to specified persons, Bhangika was the officer who wrote order of charities and grants, Vynaharina was probably some legal expert and used to provide legal advice and finally Baladhikrat was the chief of army.

The entire state was divided into many bhuktis. There were many mandals in each bhukti and each mandala had several cities and many villages as well. Thus the Pratiharas had organized their empire into different units for administrative convenience. The samantas were called Maha samantahipati or Maha Pratihara. The villages were locally administered. The elders of the villages were called Mahattar who looked after the administration of the village. Gramapati was an officer of the state who advised in matters of village administration. The administration of the city was looked after by councils which are referred as Goshthi, Panchakula, Sanviyaka and Uttar sobha in the inscriptions of the Pratiharas. Thus the administration of the Pratiharas was quite efficient. It was on account of the efficient administration that the Pratiharas were able to defend India from the attacks of the Arabs.

1.1.9. Social Condition

Caste system was prevalent in Indian during Gurjara-Pratihara period and the reference of all the four caste of the Vedic period is found in the inscription as well. The inscription refers the Brahmans as Vipra and several Prakrit words are used for Kshatriyas. The people of each caste were divided into different classes. Chaturveda and Bhatta groups were prominent among the Brahmans. Among the Vaishyas the Kanchuka and Vakata groups were prominent. The Arab writer Ibdah Khurdadab has referred seven castes in the time of the Pratiharas. According to him, there existed the classes of Savakufria, Brahman, Kataria, Sudaria, Bandalia and Labla. King was selected from the Savakufria class whereas people of Brahman class did not take wine and married their sons with the daughters of the Kataria class. The Kataria classes were regarded as Kshatriyas. The people of Sudaria were regarded as Sudras and usually did farming or cattle rearing. Basuria class was the Vaishya class whose duty was to serve other classes. The people of Sandila class did the work of Chandals. Lahuda class constituted of low and wandering tribe.

The above description of the Arab writer indicates that the Vaishyas did the work of the Sudras and the Sudras did the work of the Vaishyas. It appears that the caste system was slowly and gradually breaking in a nice manner. The Brahmans started marrying Kshatriya girls and the Vaishyas performed the work of the Sudras as well.

The Muslim attacks had begun during this period and many Hindus of the conquered states had been becoming the followers of Islam. It also appears that the Hindu society had allowed the purification of such Hindus. Smriti Ghandrayana Vrat, 'Biladuri' and the writings of Aluberni and other Muslim writers also confirm this fact.

Some references of the inter caste marriage have also been found. The prominent Sanskrit scholar Rajasekhar had married Kshatriya girl named Avanti Sundari. Kings and the rich classes practiced polygamy. However, usually men had only one wife. It can also be known from some reference where on the death of their husbands, women had burnt themselves along with their husbands. Thus sati pratha was there though it was not very much prevalent.

There was no purdah system among the women of the royal families. According to Rajasekhar women learnt music, dancing and paintings. Women were very much fond of ornaments and also used oils and cosmetics. People of the rich families used to wear very thin clothes. The Arab writer Sulaman has written that in this period, silk used to be so thin and delicate that clothes made of it could pass through a ring.

1.1.10. Economy in Pratihara Empire

Economy in Pratihara Empire was largely based on agriculture. The major expenditure of government during the Pratihara Empire was on the royal household and the army. Economy in Pratihara Empire was mainly dependent on agricultural production. Thus, the major source of

government revenue at that time was the tax derived from the bulk of agricultural production. The feudal levies due from subordinates to the Gurjara king were supplemented by standing armies garrisoned on the frontiers. The use of money was strongly implied by such a system. The maintenance of large permanent military forces required the regular disbursement of pay or expenses in the form of ready cash. The forms of money needed to fulfill two conditions: sufficiently high value units to be easily transportable from point of collection to point of disbursement; yet sufficiently low value units to meet the modest salary or expenditure levels of individual soldiers.

Gurjara Pratiharas ruled over an empire which encompassed at one time or another parts of present-day Gujarat, Rajasthan, Malwa and the Ganga basin from Punjab to Bihar. The commercial enterprises of the Gurjara Pratihara kingdom were considered to be both users of money on a regular basis and source of revenue through taxes. Some historiographers have interpreted the period as one in which commerce was moribund, with trade highly localised and dispersed to the village level, where barter relationships replaced monetary exchanges. Historians have further used the term 'feudalism' to describe the political, economic and social process of the Pratihara Empire. The period was characterised by the decentralisation of governmental authority, devolution of economic activity from international to local scale, and de-urbanisation. This interpretation is heavily reliant upon the evidence of land-grants, a biased sample which encourages over-estimation of the strength or prevalence of a trend.

Moreover, regarding the economy and trade in Pratihara Empire, Arab travellers of the ninth and tenth centuries described a number of trade goods originating in various parts of the subcontinent, which moved to market by a variety of pack animals. Indeed, one of the most consistently demanded trade items have been the horse itself. Historians have also confirmed that an active exchange of products internal to Indian kingdoms, as well as between these states, and outside, existed during the time of the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire. The Arab geographers have also mentioned the types of coins used during that period.

Several archaeological factors confirm that there was a regular and well-used medium of exchange in the Gurjara-Pratihara dominions during the ninth and tenth centuries. Inscriptional evidence confirms this surmise. An epigraph from Bharatpur records the distribution of coins called drammas by King Bhoja in C.E 905-6. The Siyadoni inscription from Jhansi District recorded a number of donations by individuals to temple deities from 902 to 967 C.E. Two specific denominations of coins are notable, the Vighrahapala Drama and the Adivardha Drama. There seems to have been no gold coinage in the Gurjara-Pratihara dominions. The smallest purchases were made not with copper and this was the major medium of exchange during that period.

1.1.11. Religion in India during the Pratihara Period

This age was the age of the progress of the Brahminical religion. Vaishnava, Shaiva, Sakta and Surya were the important sects of Brahmanism where the Brahmin enjoyed the first class. This age was the age of the progress of the Brahminical religion. Different sects of Brahmanism further progressed during this period. Vaishnava, Shaiva, Sakta and Surya were the prominent sects of Brahmanism, which were prevalent during this period. The people of these sects considered the construction of temples and statues a sacred duty. The kings and other rich persons gave donations to the temples for their expenses. The followers of Shaiva religion worshipped Siva with different names such as Indra, Sankar, Pashupati, Yoga swami, Shambhu etc. Kings such as Vatsaraja, Mahendrapala and Trilochanapala were the worshippers of Siva. The statues of Vishnu, Surya, Brahma were also established in the Siva temples. Besides this there were other small sects who worshipped different goddesses. The most prominent among these goddesses were Durga, Chamunda, Bhagavati and Kali. Surya and vinayaka were also worshipped at some places. From the religious point of view the Pratihara kings were tolerant and had allowed the people to follow any acts they looked. But as a whole they cannot be said to have followed a

policy of religious toleration. It is because that though within a religion people was free to follow any sect. There are also some references of the persecutions of the followers of other religion.

Besides idol worship, Yajanas and giving of charity at religious places were also prominent. It is always learnt from an inscription that on the day of Sankranti, Trilochanapala had given in charity a village to 6,000 Brahman after worshipping lord siva. Milladitya had made a pilgrimage to hardwar. Buddhism and Jainism: Buddhism was on the decline during this period and the number of its followers was diminishing. So was the case with the followers of Jainism whose followers mostly lived in Rajputana, Gujarat and Deogarh.

Thus it can be seen that while Jainism and Buddhism were declining. Brahmanism was progressing during the period of Pratiharas. Besides, the followers of Islam were also coming to India and were making converts to their religion.

1.1.12. Art & Architecture under the Gurjara Pratihara

The Gurjara-Pratihara rulers were great patrons of arts, architecture and literature. Mihir Bhoj, was the most outstanding ruler of the dynasty. Notable sculptures of this period include Viswaroopa form of Vishnu and Marriage of Siva and Parvati from Kannauj. Beautifully carved panels are also seen on the walls of temples standing at Osian, Abhaneri and Kotah. The female figure named as Sursundari exhibited in Gwalior Museum is one of the most charming sculptures of the Gurjara-Pratihara art. The most important groups of architectural works generally credited to the early Pratiharas are at Osian in the heart of Gurjara, to the east in the great fort at Chittor and at Roda in the south by the border of modern Gujarat - which the Pratiharas had absorbed by the end of the 8th century. They had also reached north-central India, where several temples around Gwalior are comparable to the later works at Osian. The extraordinary Teli-ka-Mandir in Gwalior fort is the oldest surviving large-scale Pratihara work.

The early works at Osian have five-bay mulaprasadas with porch and open hall but no vestibule or ambulatory and several have five-shrine complexes (pancha-yatana) like Hari-Hara I. In addition to ghana-dwaras for the principal manifestations of the deity in the central projections there are usually aedicule with purna-kalasha pilasters and high mesh-like pediments for dikpalas in the outer bays and for subsidiary deities in the intermediate ones, though occasionally the latter have pillar motifs instead or are left unrelieved - as in a subsidiary shrine of Hari-Hara I and the Surya Temple respectively. Open halls are surrounded by vedika with 'seat-back' coping supporting truncated purna-kalasha columns and their internal pillars, square with projections, often have purna-kalasha for both capital and base to provide the extra height needed in the centre of halls, as in the Surya Temple and Hari-Hara I. The shrine portal of Hari-Hara III is typical of non-architectonic compositions with lotus, pearl and mithuna jambs rising from Ganga and Yamuna and dikpalas, but Surya's richly incised pilasters support a prasada. Porches and the balconies of Hari-Hara III-have flat roofs and even the later halls have two or three superimposed slabs without additional superstructure. Early ceilings are flat, later ones corbelled and embellished with carving, Hari-Hara III's nine-square hall is unique in having curved side vaults.

Most of the works at Roda have five-bay mulaprasadas without ambulatory, like the temples at Osian, but they generally have only a porch. Sometimes with platform, they have socles unlike those of early Pratihara works elsewhere. For instance one piece of architecture in Roda, has a slab-like plinth with a semi-kumbha, a recessed zone and a festooned floor slab surmounted by a minor padma, all below a heavy dado which includes khura, kaiasha and kapota. Walls are usually relieved only by ghana-dwaras. Roda III has a beaded valance all round and fluted padma-kumbha pillars in the intermediate recessions, which recall north-west Deccani rather than Gupta forms. *Shikharas* are all of the *Latina* variety, similar in their stunted profile and bold central bands to the predominant type at Osian. Porches sometimes have pitched roofs in superimposed tiers with bold blind dormers, like those of the Maitrakas. Pillars are usually exquisite examples of the square type with purna-kalasha capitals and the sanctuary portals of Roda IV and III well represent respectively the non-architectonic and

architectonic approaches - the deeply carved pilasters of the latter, conforming to the type of the attached pillars outside, bearing a particularly elegant suite of five niches assimilated to the prasada motif.

Dedicated to a Shakti cult, the Teli-ka-Mandir at Gwalior consists of an elevated rectangular mulaprasada and a double oblong *shikhara* and a closed portico. The sides have three bays, though there are small intermediate recessions and the central zone steps out in diminishing planes below the bizarre superimposed horseshoe window motifs of the *shikhara*'s two levels. There are two principal projections to the back with ghana-dwaras bearing tiered kapotas and miniature lunettes, like those of the sides, flanked by aedicule with various *shikhara*-like superstructures. On a simple platform and stepped base the unorthodox dado has a double recession with kaiasha and kapota. The stepped superstructure over the portico is modern but the Kameshvara at Auwa - the Teli-ka-Mandir's contemporary - has one of the earliest surviving examples of a Phamsana roof, for which precedents may most plausibly be found in the Maitraka tradition.

Thus, in these early works the various elements of the mature northern complex had appeared - *Latina* mulaprasadas with varied planes accommodating ambulatories, balconies, open halls with full vedika and closed ones matching the mulaprasada, Phamsana roofs, richly faceted supports with varied purna-kalasha or padma-kumbha capitals. In the next phase of their development the Pratiharas turned their attention to the elaboration of the socle and the superstructure.

The Ghateshwara at Baroli has a Phamsana in two registers over its square, portico with parapets bearing elaborate aedicule and miniature *Latina shikharas* at the corners. In this and several other features the Baroli temple anticipates the sumptuous practice of the Chandellas in particular: the *shikhara* is taller, more elegantly curved than hitherto, and has central bands which penetrate up into the zone of the *amalaka*'s base; there is now a vestibule crowned by a high and elaborate gable composition in which a variety of miniature shrine forms play an important part; apsaras adorn alternative facets of octagonal pillars whose capitals incorporate graded rings, stepped friezes and convoluted brackets; undulating arches are suspended from the columns at the entrance.

The partly excavated Gyrapur Temple is more advanced in plan, with ambulatory as well as vestibule and closed hall with balconies and porch making it cruciform. Its *shikhara*, with nine miniature *Latina* forms clustered about its base, is perhaps the oldest surviving Sekhari example in the central domain of the Pratihara Empire. The roofs of both hall and porch are Phamsana. The dado with kaiasha and kapota is raised on a high podium.

The Ambika Matha at Jagat is an early and exquisite example of the further elaboration and synthesis of the various elements so far encountered: five-bay mulaprasada, with ambulatory, and equilateral projections suggesting a diagonal as well as octagonal grouping of facade elements in response to the clustered composition of its Sekhari *shikhara*; Phamsana-roofed, cruciform closed hall with richly detailed aedicule matching those of the mulaprasada; porch with high vedika, seat-like coping and prominent chadya, elaborately carved purna-kalasha pillars with prominent bracket capitals; five-jamb portal with niches virtually obscured by the vibrant figures spilling from them; gorgeous ceilings; a base differentiated between the two main parts of the temple, including major and minor padmas, karnaka or kumbha, and friezes of elephants and krittimukhas below a dado with superimposed khura, kumbha, kalasha and kapota.

Likewise, the Vishnu and Someshwara Temples at Kiradu may be taken as representative of the still more sumptuous culmination of the Pratihara tradition. The latter is distinguished by the octagonal arrangement of the many-faceted pillars which define the central space of its hall. It also has one of the earliest-known seven-bay mulaprasadas with a socle expanded to include three friezes of human figures, horses and elephants. The slightly earlier, but equally splendid, Vishnu Temple is also notable for the Samvarana roof of its hall - one of the earliest known examples of the type, clearly revealing its evolution from the Phamsana form.

1.1.13. Legacy

Pointing out the importance of the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire in the history of India, Dr. R.C. Majumdar has observed, "The Gurjara Pratihara Empire which continued in full glory for nearly a century, was the last great empire in Northern India before the Muslim conquest. This honour is accorded to the empire of Harsha by many historians of repute, but without any real justification, for the Pratihara Empire was probably larger, certainly not less in extent, rivalled the Gupta Empire and brought political unity and its attendant blessings upon a large part of Northern India. But its chief credit lies in its successful resistance to the foreign invasions from the west, from the days of Junaid. This was frankly recognised by the Arab writers themselves."

Historians of India, since the days of Eliphinstone, have wondered at the slow progress of Muslim invaders in India, as compared with their rapid advance in other parts of the world. Arguments of doubtful validity have often been put forward to explain this unique phenomenon. Currently it is believed that it was the power of the Gurjara Pratihara army that effectively barred the progress of the Muslims beyond the confines of Sindh, their first conquest for nearly three hundred years. In the light of later events this might be regarded as the "Chief contribution of the Gurjara Pratiharas to the history of India".

1.1.14. Conclusion

The Pratiharas sustained the dignity of a great empire in North India for about a century and fulfilled their duty to fight against foreign attackers. The empire of the Pratiharas proved more resilient as compared to the Palas and the Rashtrakutas. After the fall of the empire of King Harsha, Pratiharas played an important role in unification of Northern India. There was no dearth of genius during the reign of Pratiharas. They were considerate towards the welfare of their subjects. The Pratihara Kings were patrons of art and letters. Rajashekhar, the well known Sanskrit writer was renowned in the court of Bhoja I and Mahendrapala, his son. The decline in the power and authority of Pratiharas was due to the assault of Rashtrakutas, revolt of Vassal chiefs, and undoubtedly foray of Muslims. Towards the end of tenth century, the prestige of the Pratiharas came to an end.

1.1.15. Summary

- *The Gurjara Pratihara, often simply called Pratihara Empire, was an imperial Indian dynasty that ruled much of Northern India from the 6th to the 11th centuries.*
- *Kannauj was the capital of imperial Gurjara Pratiharas. The Gurjara Pratihara rulers in the tenth century was entitled as Maharajadhiraja of Aryavarta.*
- *The word "Pratihara" means protector or "who takes over the enemy or opponent" and was used by the Gurjara-Pratihara rulers as self-designation. I*
- *The Pratihara rulers claim descent from the Hindu mythological character Lakshmana, who had performed the duty of a guardian ("pratihara") for his elder brother Rama. They were thus Suryavansh dynasty according to traditional Indology.*
- *Harichandra is said to have laid the foundation of this dynasty in the 6th century C.E. He created a small kingdom at Bhinmal near about 550 C.E. after the fall of Gupta Empire.*
- *Nagabhata I extended his control east and south from Mandor, conquering Malwa as far as Gwalior and the port of Bharuch in Gujarat. He established his capital at Avanti in Malwa, and checked the expansion of the Arabs, who had established themselves in Sind.*
- *Nagabhata I was followed by two weak successors, who were in turn succeeded by Vatsraja (775-805 C.E).*
- *Vatsraja ambitions for capturing Kannauj, brought the Pratiharas into conflict with the Pala dynasty of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas of the northern Deccan, with whom they would contest for primacy in northern India for the next two centuries.*

- *Vatsraja successfully challenged and defeated the Pala ruler Dharmapala and Danti durga the Rashtrakuta king for control of Kannauj. In about 786 C.E the Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva crossed the Narmada River into Malwa, defeated Vatsraja and from there tried to capture Kannauj. Vatsraja was defeated by Dhruva around 800 C.E.*
- *Vatsraja was succeeded by Nagabhata II. Nagabhata II was initially defeated by the Rashtrakuta ruler Govinda III, but later recovered Malwa from the Rashtrakutas, conquered Kannauj and the Indo-Gangetic Plain as far as Bihar from the Palas, and again checked the Muslims in the west.*
- *Bhoja I or Mihir Bhoja expanded the Gurjar dominions west to the border of Sind, east to Bengal, and south to the Narmada. He was the greatest among the Pratihara rulers and was also a great patron of art and letter.*
- *After Bhoja, many rulers such as Mahenderpal-I, Bhoja II, Mahipala-I, Rajapala, Trilochanpala ruled as kings. Jasapala, was the last Gurjar ruler of Kanauj, died in 1036.*
- *Weak rulers provided opportunity to the feudatories of the empire, who declare their independence. Repeated Turkis invasion also resulted in the decline of the Pratihara kingdom.*
- *The Gurjara-Pratihara rulers were great patrons of arts, architecture and literature. Mihir Bhoj, was the most outstanding ruler of the dynasty. Several fine sculptures and temple at Osian in Rajasthan speaks us about the growth of art activities under Pratihara kingdom.*
- *Under the Pratihara rule economic condition of people was prosperous, social life was peaceful and religious life was harmonious.*
- *The Gurjara Pratihara Empire which continued in full glory for nearly a century was the last great empire in Northern India before the Muslim conquest. The Pratihara Empire was probably larger, certainly not less in extent, rivalled the Gupta Empire and brought political unity and its attendant blessings upon a large part of Northern India.*
- *The Pratihara successfully resisted the foreign invasions from the west, from the days of Junaid, which was frankly recognised by the Arab writers themselves.*

1.1.16. Exercise

- Write an essay on the India during post Harsa period.
- Give an account on the theories of origin of the Rajput in early medieval India.
- Discuss the political history of Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty.
- Describe the socio-religiopus and economic condition of Gurjara-Pratihara Empire.
- Write a note on the Art and Architecture flourished under Gurjara-Pratihara Empire.

1.1.17. Further Readings

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Unit.1
Chapter-II
THE RASHTRAKUTAS OF MANYAKHETA
Their Role in History, Contribution to Art and Culture.

Structure

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1.2.0. Objectives

This chapter deals with the history of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Here a discussion on the origin, polity, and contribution of the Rashtrakuta to Indian history will be attempted. After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- *identify the theory of origin of the Rashtrakuta dynasty;*
- *discuss the political history of the Rashtrakuta dynasty;*
- *assess the development of art and architecture under the patronization of Rashtrakutas.*
- *evaluate the cultural contributions of the Rashtrakutas; and*
- *examine the administration and society under the Rashtrakutas.*

1.2.1. Introduction

The Rashtrakuta dynasty ruled over large portions of India from the 8th to 12th century C.E. India at the time was under the threat of invasion from the Arabs, who conquered Sind in 712 C.E and were looking to expand to the west and control trade routes in the region. A royal family called the Calukyas controlled this territory and successfully resisted Arab attacks. This significantly weakened their power. Seeing an opportunity an official in the Calukyas' administration named Dantidurga declared his independence in C.E 753. The dynasty that he and his family formed the core of was called the Rashtrakuta, with their capital based at Manyakheta. Geographically the Rashtrakuta kingdom located nearly in the middle of India along the top of the Deccan Plateau. This position afforded many opportunities for expansion. The Rashtrakutas took advantage of this and frequently interfered with both the northern and southern kingdoms of India. The northern kingdoms were particularly easy to prey on, as there was no one powerful enough to effectively repel the Rashtrakutas. The Rashtrakutas also controlled large portions of the western coast of India. The majority of the trade with West Asia came through these ports and much of the Rashtrakutas wealth along with it. Tea and cotton textiles were exported out of the kingdom and horses were imported to be sold further inland. The Rashtrakutas also maintained good relations with the Arabs in Sind and traded extensively with them. By the end of the 10th century the geographical advantages the Rashtrakutas had enjoyed turned to disadvantages, as new powers in the north and south emerged as threats. In the south the Colas were becoming the dominant kingdom in the area. The Calukya dynasty, whom the Rashtrakutas had originally overthrown, was regaining much of their former power and territory. With this new threat in the south the Rashtrakutas were unable to keep the Colas from regaining their northern territories. Along with the threat of these two kingdoms was the rise of the Shilaharas in the north-western Decca. They took over much of the western coast and port cities of Western India. In the end the Rashtrakuta's dynasty came full circle and was overthrown by the Calukyas, from whom Dantidurga had claimed independence from hundreds of years ago.

1.2.2. Origin of the Rashtrakuta

The origin of the dynasty is still a matter of controversy among historians. Several theories are put forward to explain the origin of the Rashtrakutas. It is said that they were indigenous people of the country claiming decent from the sacred Yadava family of Epic fame, especially considering their predominance in the Gujarat and Deccan region. Of the 75 inscriptions and copper grants of the Rashtrakutas of Deccan and Gujarat that have so far been discovered, only eight mention any connection between the Rashtrakutas and the Yadavas. The earliest one that connects the two dynasties is dated to C.E 860, with all the earlier ones being completely silent on the issue. However, a copper grant dated to 914 C.E states, 'Rashtrakuta Dantidurga was born in the line of Yadava Satyaki'. The book Kavirahasya by Halayudha also mentions the Rashtrakutas as being the descendants of Yadava Satyaki.

Another opinion is that Rashtrakuta was a title given to governors of provinces by the Chalukya kings and meant 'head of the region'. Since it was such governor who established an independent

kingdom, the dynasty itself came to be called the Rashtrakutas. On becoming more powerful, they also assumed the title of Prithvi Vallabha with the 'Vallabha' getting transliterated into 'Balharas' in the Arab chronicles of the time. Irrespective of the vagueness regarding the origins of the dynasty, their rise was rapid and relatively painless by the standards of the day.

The earliest reference to the Rashtrakutas is found in the Edicts of Asoka Maurya as Rashtrika and Rathika, who have been used to refer to a tribe at that time resident in the North-Western regions. It has been opined that Rashtrika refers to the same tribe as the Arattas of Punjab. The Arattas are mentioned in the Mahabharata and also in the account of Alexander's invasion of Gandhara. In the Asokan edict they are mentioned immediately after the Kambojas and Gandharas, giving credence to the belief that they were resident in the Punjab. The prominent historian C.V. Vaidya is of the opinion that the Rashtrakutas were initially settlers of Punjab who migrated south and carved out a kingdom in the Deccan, gradually becoming the Kshatriyas of Maharashtra.

Dr. A.S. Altekar has pointed out that the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta originally lived in the Karnataka country and their mother tongue was Kanarese. They used the Kanarese script. Several inscriptions describe them as "Lord of Lattura". This place is identified with Latur-in Bidar in modern Karnataka. Thus it is assumed that the Rashtrakuta were initially served as the district officer under the Chalukya of Badami. With the passage of time when the early Chalukya lost their power, taking advantage of this situation the Rashtrakuta overpowered them and established their dynasty.

1.2.3. Sources of Information

The study of the history of the early Rashtrakutas and the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta has been made possible by the availability of numerous inscriptions spread all over the Deccan. Most of the inscription written in Sanskrit, Kannanda language and stone records. There are literary sources as well such as ancient literature in Pali, contemporaneous Kannada literature such as Kavirajamarga (850 C.E) and Vikramarjuna Vijaya (941 C.E), Sanskrit writings by Somadeva, Rajashekara, Gunabhadra, Jinasena and others and the notes of Arab travellers of those times such as Suleiman, Ibn Haukal, Al Masudi, Al Istakhri and others.

1.2.4. Political History of Rashtrakutas

The Rashtrakuta lived in various parts of Deccan in the 5th Century C.E. In the 7th Century C.E they became feudatories of the Chalukyas. In subsequent years one of the Rashtrakuta clans established a strong kingdom under Indra. He was married to a Chalukya princess and managed to maintain friendly relations with them. The power of the Rashtrakuta dynasty further increased under the reign of Dantidurga, the son and successor of Indra.

1.2.4.1. Dantidurga.

Indraraja was followed on the throne by his son Dantidurga who is credited with re-establishing the Rashtrakuta rule over most of Deccan, which his descendants thereafter sustained for the next 225 years. He recaptured territory lost to the Chalukyas earlier by defeating the Chalukya king Kirtivarman II sometime between C.E 747 and 753. Inscriptions, copper plate grants and Sanskrit texts independently confirm Dantidurga's victory as a fact. There are two copper grants of later Rashtrakuta kings dated 807 and 812 C.E, that clearly mention Dantidurga II's defeat of the Chalukya king Kirtivarman II and the annexation of almost the entire Chalukya kingdom into the Rashtrakuta fold. He went on to conquer Shri Saila (Kurnool district in Andhra), Kalinga, South Koshala, Malwa and Lata. After the initial victory over the Chalukyas, he assumed the title of Rajadhiraja (King of Kings) and Parameswara (Supreme Lord). At the end of his conquests the Rashtrakuta kingdom controlled Gujarat and Malwa in the north and included Rameswaram in the south, while it stretched across the Peninsula to touch both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. There is also an inscription that mentions that he put down a revolt in Kanchi, confirming the spread of his kingdom. His look is said to have had the effect of a sword on his enemies, obviously a metaphorical expression to indicate his ferocity and

valour. He assumed the title of Khadagavaloka (the one wielding the Khadaga) and towards the end of his reign he was also called Maharajadhiraja (The Greatest King of Kings).

1.2.4.2. Krishnaraja-I.

Around 760 Krishnaraja-I, the uncle of Dantidurga came to power. There is one opinion that he usurped the throne by deposing Dantidurga because the king had become unpopular. Considering his achievements, this theory is difficult to believe. In fact it can be considered patently incorrect since there is an inscription that states very clearly that Krishnaraja-I came to power on the 'demise of the great king Dantidurga'. Three stone inscriptions, one copper grant and 1800 silver coins of Krishnaraja's reign have been found and identified. The first inscription in Hattimattur is not dated; the second at Telegaon is dated to 768; and the third at Alas is dated to 770 C.E with the copper grant being dated 772 C.E. The flag of Rashtrakuta ascendancy was kept flying by Krishna I. He extinguished the lingering power of the Chalukyas in 760 C.E by inflicting the final defeat on Kirtivarman II. He assumed the title of Subhatunga and Akalavarsa. Krishna I became the unrivalled master of Deccan by defeating the Gangas of Mysore and the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. He extended his sway upto Southern Konkona. The Bhandaka plate informs us that Krishna ruled over the whole of central India. Perhaps he captured Lata or Gujrat. So the Rashtrakuta empire under Krishna I comprised whole of modern Maharashtra, a good part of Mysore, the whole of Andhra Pradesh. A part of Vengi and Central India acknowledged his supremacy. Krishna I patronized art and architecture. He constructed the famous rock cut temple of Siva at Ellora, which is known as the Kailashanatha temple. The Kailashanatha temple at Ellora alone is fit to immortalize the name of Krishna I. The front portion of a hill was carved in such a manner that it was converted into a vast complex of Siva temple with exquisite sculptures depicting stories of epics in most lively form. He also built another eighteen Shiva temples, which confirms him as a Shiva worshipper. He was a great patron of learning and founded a 'college' called Kanneshawara where a large number of scholars lived and worked. The famous Jain author Akalanka Bhatta, the author of the tome Rajavartika lived in the college during the time of Krishnaraja. Krishnaraja had two sons-Govindaraja and Dhruvaraja.

1.2.4.3. Govindaraja II.

The elder son, Govindaraja succeeded Krishnaraja to the throne. As a prince, he had conquered Vengi, the eastern coastal district that lie between the Rivers Krishna and Godavari, annexing it to the spreading Rashtrakuta kingdom. Although two copper plates of the time of his reign has been found (one dated 775 and the other 779 C.E), they do not mention the king by name, but only that of his brother Dhruvaraja as well as that of his son Karakaraja. The copper grant found in Wardha reports that Govindaraja was excessively fond of the good life and of women and entrusted the governance of the kingdom to his younger brother Nirupama, one of the titles of Dhruvaraja. Dhruvaraja subsequently deposed him from the throne. Govindaraja unsuccessfully tried to regain the throne with the assistance of the kings of Malwa and Kanchi, during which the combined armies were defeated by Dhruvaraja.

The Jain author Jinasena, of the Digambara sect, confirms towards the end of his monumental work Harivamsha Purana that, 'in Shaka S. 705 (783 C.E.), king Indrayudha reigned in the north; Krishna's son Shrivallabha in the south; Vatsaraja of 'Avanti' in the east; and Varaha in the west'. Here Indryudha is doubtless the Rashtrakuta king of Kanauj and Krishna's son could either be Govindaraja or Dhruvaraja, since the Rashtrakuta kings of the Deccan were also titled 'Vallabha'. Subsequently the son of Vatsaraja, Pratihara Nagabhata II seized the kingdom of Kanauj, defeating Indrayudha's sons and successor, Chakrayudha.

1.2.4.4. Dhruvaraja

The second son of Krishnaraja dethroned his brother, with the actual date of his accession being confirmed as C.E 780, although he had been the virtual ruler for some years before that. There is an opinion, probably correct, that he took over the kingdom only to save it from its covetous neighbours who were planning to take advantage of the weak rule of Govindaraja II. Dhruvaraja was a brave and

wise king and defeated both the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Chera king further south. He also attacked and routed Pratihara Vatsaraja, who had already conquered Gauda, and drove him towards Marwar. This particular event is mentioned in the Harivamsha Purana. He is said to have captured the canopies of the defeated kings, obviously a custom of the day that denoted complete subjugation of the defeated forces. It is possible that his kingdom ranged from Ayodhya in the north to Rameshawaram in the south. Three inscriptions in Canarese found at Pattadakal, Naregal and Lakshmeshvar, made during his reign corroborate the information from other sources. During his lifetime itself he appointed his son Govindaraja III as the ruler of a kingdom that by then extended from Kanthika (Konkan) in the south to Khambat (Cambay). There is some indication that he was fatally wounded while trying to put down a rebellion in Gujarat, although this cannot be conclusively proved. However, it is certain that Dhruvaraja was found of waging aggressive wars, so dear to the heart of typical Indian rajas or kings.

Dhruva assumed a number of high sounding titles like Nirupama (one who has no equal), Kali-Vallabya (fond of war) and dhara varsa (heavy rainer) etc. Dhruva established himself as the lord paramount of Deccan. He made a bid for mastery over northern India. Under him the history of Rashtrakuta became a part of the general history of India.

1.2.4.5. Govindaraja III

Dhruvaraja had wanted to give him the title of king even before his own death, but Govindaraja III protested and continued as Prince Regent, not wanting to be called king while his father was still alive. It is significant that he was not the eldest son but was still anointed as successor. Nine copper grants that date between 794 and 813 C.E provide a great deal of information regarding the rule of this powerful king.

The records show that there was some sort of a succession struggle, which is not surprising considering that Govindaraja was not the eldest son of his father and that primogeniture was the confirmed tradition of the time. His brother named as Stambha in one of the plates, possibly Shauchkhamba who is mentioned in other sources, assembled an army supported by twelve other kings and attacked Govindaraja. However Govindaraja defeated them and established himself as the sovereign ruler. Govinda III showed an extraordinary magnanimity in restoring his elder brother to the previous office and earned his eternal loyalty.

In order to fulfill his dream of imperial supremacy in the north Govinda III had to fought with Pratihara king Nagabhata II and Pala king Dharmapala. Govinda routed Nagabhata in a pitched battle in the Bundelkhand region. Dharmapala and his protégée Chakrayudha of Kanauj submitted to him without resistance and followed his camp. It is said that Govinda III defeated many other king of northern India and reinstated them again as his vassals. He marched up to the Himalayas and became the suzerain of northern India.

The Sanjan plate states that Govinda also humbled the pride of the kings of Kalinga, Dahala, Odraka and Vengi. We have neither details about his campaign against Kaliga or Odraka, nor any corroboration from other sources. But Govinda's campaign against Vengi is authentic. After all Rashtrakuta rivalry with Vengi was an ancient one dating from the time of Dhruva. Govinda's contemporary on the throne of Vengi were Vishnu Vardhana IV and Vijayaditya II. Probably Vijayaditya II the king of Vengi, was reported to have accepted Govindaraja's supremacy and attended his court to pay obeisance.

The Sanjan plate also states that Govinda III marched south ward to the south of Tungabhadra against the Dravida, Kerala, Pandyas and Cheras. It is recorded that Govindaraja defeated king Dantiga of Kanchi. This Dantiga could have been the Pallava king Dantivarman, whose son Nandivarman subsequently married princess Shankha, Govindaraja's granddaughter. Govindaraja was magnanimous enough to liberate the Chera king Ganga who had been imprisoned for life by his father, but was also pragmatic enough to put him back in prison when Ganga rebelled after being free for some time.

Govindaraja subsequently invaded and conquered Malwa. The most important development that took place during the reign of this illustrious king was that he conquered Lata (central and southern Gujarat) and made his younger brother Indraraja the ruler of the region. Indraraja went on to found the second branch of the Rashtrakuta line who became the kings of Gujarat. The kings of Bengal and Magadha also yielded to the power of Govindaraja, probably without going to war. An inscription in Nilgund dated to 866 C.E claims that he also conquered Kerala and Chitrakuta (Chittor). However, lack of any other corroborative evidence makes this claim a bit tenuous and hard to believe.

While the core Rashtrakuta kingdom ruled by Govindaraja directly was the territory between the Narmada and the Tungabhadra Rives, kings of territories ranging from Vindhya and Malwa in the north and Kanchi in the south were under his sway and could be considered autonomous feudatories of the Rashtrakutas. It is also possible that some of the achievements attributed to Govindaraja III could have been that of his father Dhruvaraja who was himself a dynamic and successful king. This confusion arises because of the fact that contemporary writings of the time are at times unclear regarding their dating and therefore open to differing interpretations. In either case, Govindaraja III was one of the more successful Rashtrakuta kings, a dynasty that produced a number of very capable rulers.

1.2.4.6. Amoghavarsha

Govinda III was succeeded by his minor son named Amoghavarsha. This name is only considered a title by several scholars. His real name remains a mystery even today. However, in later years the title lapsed into being considered a name that succeeding kings of the dynasty adopted. The reign of Amoghavarsha was started with rouble. During the period of his minority the feudal chiefs revolted against him. In the wake of disruption the Eastern Chalukya king Vijayaditya of Vengi took a revenge for the past defeat by overthrowing Amoghavarsha from his ancestral throne. The sanjan plate states that Vijayaditya II of Vengi joined with the Ganga ruler to overthrow him. But with the help of his cousin Karkaraja, the regent, Amoghavarsha slowly and steadily recovered his fortune by defeating Vijayaditya in 830 C.E.

He then went on to amass real power. He is reported to have possessed a number of royal emblems that included the three canopies captured earlier by his ancestor Govindaraja II. The copper grants found in Baroda and Kavi in Broach that deal with Amoghavarsha's rule, mention the charitable generosity of the king and indicate that he put down another rebellion in Gujarat by a Rashtrakuta king. Inscriptions, dating from 843 C.E onwards found at Kanheri in Thane district, at Konur, at Shirur, provide a great deal of information regarding Amoghavarsha's reign. It is known that Pulla Shakti of the Shilahara dynasty and the governor of Konkan was his chief feudatory; that Pulla Shakti was a Buddhist and succeeded by Kapardi II to the governorship; and that Amoghavarsha was a benevolent king. In one inscription it is mentioned that the Rashtrakutas were an off-shoot of the Yadavas and that they adopted a new title of Vira Narayana.

Amoghavarsha ruled for a long period of 64 years was full of revolts and attack bu neighbours. He had to wage many wars to crush these rebellions. First he defeated the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, the eternal enemy of the Rashtrakuta revolted again in and about 850 C.E. At this time ruler of Vengi was Gunaga Vijayaditya. Gunaga was determined to assert the independence of Vengi and made an attack on Kurnool district, a part of Rashtrakuta kingdom. Amoghavarsha inflicted acrushing defeat on his Chalukyan adversary in the battle of Vingavalli. The Sanjan plate narrates the incident.

Amoghavarsha had to cross his sword repeatedly with the Ganga king of Gangavadi. The Konnur inscription gives a faithful description of Amoghavarsha's wars against the Gangas. Amogha recruited a meritorious general Bankesha Sellaketana of Vanavasi. Bankesha or Bankeya belonged to the Mukua clan. On the king's orders Bankeya invaded Vatatavi of Gangavadi, and although he did not get any assistance from any of the other feudatories, captured the fort of Kedal on his own. He defeated the Ganga king "Nitimarga-Ranavikrama" and brought him to the path of loyalty. He proceeded further and defeated the ruler of Talavan on the north bank of the River Kaveri. Thereafter he crossed the river

and invaded the province of Saptapada. At this stage there was a rebellion against Amoghavarsha in the Deccan and Bankeya returned to put down the rebellion against his king. For the services he rendered to his King, Amoghavarsha granted 30 villages for the upkeep of the Jain temple that Bankeya was having built at that time.

The inscriptions also show the figure of the Garuda in Amoghavarsha's coat of arms and mention that the kings of Anga, Banga, Magadha and Malwa continued to accept Rashtrakuta superiority over themselves. According to the last inscription, in his 61st regnal year he attempted to overthrow the 'Dravidian' kings ruling Kerala, Chola, Pandya and Kalinga territories. The result of this obviously military effort is not mentioned and it can be presumed that this attempt did not meet the level of success required for it to be recorded for posterity as yet another achievement of a great king. However, it is confirmed that he put down an insurrection of some courtiers who had revolted under the instigation of the Gangavamsi ruler of the time, who was captured and imprisoned for life. The courtiers who sided with him paid a higher prize-they were all executed.

Amoghavarsha also shifted the capital of the Deccan Rashtrakutas from Nasik to Manykhela mentioned as Mankir in the Arab chronicles. Throughout his reign he was at odds with the Western Chalukyas over control of fertile lands, both the kingdoms regularly resorting to conflict. His daughter Abbalabba was married to Gunadattaranga Bhutuga, the king of the Ganga dynasty. This alliance was to stand the Rashtrakutas in good stead in later years.

While there is no doubt that he was a great patron of Jainism, it is also possible that Amoghavarsha was himself a practitioner of the religion. It is likely that he followed the 'Digambara' sect of Jainism, which can be confirmed if circumstantial evidences can be accepted. A Jain writer, Jinasena, mentions in one of his works that the king Amoghavarsha was an ardent follower of the Jain religion. This Jinasena also compiled the Adipurana, the first half of what was to later become the Mahapurana, which mentions the king's religious affiliation. Jaydhavala, the book of Digambara principles, probably dated 837 C.E, was also written during Amoghavarsha's reign. It is claimed that the king himself was an author of repute, but there is no evidence to prove this. The incontrovertible proof of Amoghavarsha being a follower of the Jain religion comes at the end of his life, when after having handed over the governance of the kingdom to his son after 65 years of tumultuous but glorious rule, he opted to spend the rest of his life in religious meditation, while gradually starving himself to death-the epitome of Jain belief. The excessive patronage that the Digambara sect of Jainism enjoyed during his long reign is often mentioned as one of the primary reasons for the decay of Buddhism in the Indian sub-continent.

1.2.4.7. Krishna-II

Krishnaraja II was the son of Amoghavarsha and ascended the throne around 875 while his father was still alive. Information regarding his rule comes from four inscriptions and two copper grants that have so far been discovered. The first three inscriptions, dated between C.E 900 and 903 C.E were found in Bijapur, Ardeshhalli and Mulgund in Dharwar district while the fourth is dated to 912 C.E and found at Aihole near Bijapur. The second copper plate provides the genealogy of the Rashtrakutas from Krishnaraja I to Krishnaraja II. In some places the king has been referred to as 'Krishnavallabha', confirming that the term Vallabha was a title used by Rashtrakuta kings to indicate status and power.

Krishnaraja II was married to Mahadevi, princess of Chedi and the daughter of king Kokkala of the Kalachuri, also called Haihaya, dynasty. She was also the daughter of Krishnaraja's maternal uncle. This system of marrying the maternal uncle's daughter was common in the Rashtrakuta dynasty and is a custom that is still prevalent in some South Indian communities. During Krishnaraja's reign the conflict with the Western Chalukyas continued with sporadic increases in the intensity of the battles and skirmishes taking place. He is also reported as having overthrown the Rashtrakuta king of the off-shoot dynasty in Lata and annexing the area to the primary Deccan kingdom. However, the annexation could have been a temporary measure and the Lata Rashtrakutas continued their independent rule even after

this disruption. Legend has it that his son Jagattunga won many battles on behalf of his father and extended the territorial holding of the kingdom. There is a lack of firm evidence to confirm this, especially since Jagattunga predeceased his father and did not succeed him as king. The kingdom under Krishnaraja II is supposed to have touched the River Ganges in the north and encompassed Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) in the south. This claim may be a bit of an exaggeration, the scribe taking poetic license in writing the copper plates and inscriptions. However, there is no doubt that the Rashtrakuta kingdom held a position of predominant power in the sub-continent during these times. Krishnaraja II died around C.E 911 and was followed on the throne by his grandson Indraraja III.

1.2.4.8. Indraraja III

Indraraja was the son of Jagattunga and Lakshmi the princess of the Kalachuri dynasty. His coronation was held at the village of Kurundaka, located at the confluence of the Rivers Krishna and Panchganga, and not in the kingdom's capital. It has not been possible to ascertain any reason for this break from tradition, which remains an enigma. A copper plate of his reign mentions that the Rashtrakutas were descendants of Satyaki Yadava, a connection that continually comes up in their history, but is impossible to ascertain as being correct. According to a copper plate, Indraraja III laid waste Meru, ruled by Pratihara Mahipala. This could be a reference to Mahodaya which was another name for Kanauj. It was also during his reign that the author Trivikrama Bhatta wrote the books *Damayanti Katha* and *Madalasa Champu*. Indraraja III died in C.E 916 having ruled for only about six years. He had two sons and was succeeded by his elder son Amoghavarsha II who died within a year of accession.

1.2.4.9. Govindaraja IV.

Govindaraja was the younger brother of Amoghavarsha and took over the reins of power on the untimely death of his brother. There is some speculation of foul play in Amoghavarsha's untimely death and Govindaraja's complicity in it although there is no evidence to prove it. Conflict with the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi broke out at this stage, although Govindaraja's attempt at attacking Chalukya territory did not meet with any notable success. He is also mentioned in copper grant as a 'Yaduvanshi' of the lunar lineage. Govindaraja also did not rule for long, died at an early age.

1.2.4.10. Baddiga.

The death of Govindaraja brought on greater confusion in an already turbulent kingdom that was suffering from a deficit of governance. The feudatories of the Rashtrakutas, in order to stabilise the core kingdom, brought Amoghavarsha III commonly called Baddiga, to the throne around C.E 935. He was the son of Jagattunga through another queen and therefore a stepbrother of Indraraja III. He proved to be an effective and wise king and managed to recover the kingdom from any further decline. He was married to Kundakadevi, the daughter of Yuvaraja I of the Kalachuri dynasty and his daughter was married to Satyavakya Bhutuga II of the Ganga dynasty. It is certain that the Rashtrakuta kings traditionally took Kalachuri brides and their daughters were normally married into the Ganga dynasty. Baddiga returned to these traditional alliances to re-establish relationships and to ensure stability. His rule too was short, may be since he himself had come to power at a late age. He had four sons who came to the throne after him sequentially.

1.2.4.11. Krishnaraja III

Krishnaraja was the eldest son of Baddiga and came to power around C.E 939. Even as a Crown Prince he exercised a powerful influence in ruling the kingdom during his father's short reign. On ascending the throne he went on to become an effective ruler. He successfully battled the Chola dynasty in C.E 949-50 at a place called Takkola. An inscription to commemorate the victory mentions that during the battle Krishnaraja killed the Chola king Rajaditya. In actual fact this is wrong. Rajaditya was indeed killed, but through treacherous means by Stayavakya Bhutuga II, the husband of Krishnaraja's elder sister Revakanimmadi.

Information regarding Krishnaraja's rule is available from sixteen inscriptions and two copper grants. There is some confusion regarding the dates of events mentioned since only seven of the inscriptions provide actual Shaka Era dates, the other eight only mentions the king's regnal year. Since the exact date of his ascending the throne is still vague, the calculations can vary by as much as a decade at times. The collated information gives a picture of a successful and conquering king who was renowned for his personal bravery and at the same time was a patron of learning, art and literature.

Krishna II was a military genius. Throughout his reign he led military campaign against all direction. First Krishna III defeated the Gurjara king with the help of some Rashtrakuta feudatories. Secondly he led a campaign towards South India in which king Dantiga of Kanchi and Vappuga was defeated and killed, while his kingdom was conquered and destroyed, the Pandya territory was conquered, and the king of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was subjugated. He also defeated king Antiga of the Pallava dynasty and also protected the Kalachuris from invasion of the Gurjaras. The inscriptions also describe him as the conqueror of Kanchi and Tanjore as well as the incarnation of death to Chola kings. It is written that he assumed the title of Chakravarti around C.E 949 and that he had feudatories from the Himalayas to Ceylon and also touching both the oceans. He was also not reluctant to conquering territories held by allies and relatives. He dethroned Rachmala I of the Ganga dynasty and installed his brother-in-law Bhutuga II on the throne, who subsequently had Rachmala assassinated. Krishnaraja also defeated Shasharjuna the Kalachuri king of Chedi, although whether the kingdom was annexed or not is unclear.

In Deoli he granted lands in memory of his younger brother Jagattunga who had died earlier and in 945 C.E supported the school that was opened by his Minister Narayana where students from all over the kingdom and the feudatories came to be taught by renowned masters. The king was also a worshipper of Shiva, which is confirmed by his adoption of the title Parama Mahesvara. He was renowned patron of literature and supported a number of authors and poets in his court. Somadeva was an author and scholar who wrote *Yashastilaka Champu* in C.E 959, which describes Krishnaraja's conquest of Chera, Chola, Pandya, and Simhala lands. His other work *Nitivakyamrita* is mentioned in the later date Jain Sahitya Samshodhaka. The poet Ponna, a Jain, wrote *Shanti Purana* in Canarese and was bestowed the title '*Ubhayabhasa Chakravarti*' by the king. Of particular importance is the work of the Poet Laureate Pushpadanta since it provides the first confirmed indication of the decline and subsequent fall of this illustrious dynasty. Pushpadanta was resident in the capital Manykheta and started to compile the Jain Mahapurana in Apabramsha language, although it was completed only during Krishnaraja's successor's rule. It is certain that Krishnaraja III ruled at least till C.E 966.

1.2.4.12. Khottiga

Krishnaraja's immediate younger brother Jagattunga having predeceased him, the next brother Khottiga inherited the throne. In C.E 972, the powerful king of Malwa, Siyaka II of the Paramara dynasty, attacked and defeated Khottiga, going on to plunder the capital Manyakheta. In this battle, Khottiga was killed, a fact confirmed in Pushpadanta's book. This was the beginning of the end of the Deccan Rashtrakutas and they never recovered from this defeat. From this point it did not take long for the dynasty to collapse and rapidly go into oblivion. Khottiga died without any male heirs, leaving the succession path clear for the son of his younger brother Nirupama to ascend to the throne. 'An inscription of the time of Paramara king Udayaditya, found at Udaipur (Gwalior), contains the following lines: i.e. Shri Harsha (Siyaka II of the Paramara dynasty of Malwa) had seized the kingdom from Khottigadeva.'

1.2.4.13. Karakaraja II.

Karakaraja came to the throne almost around C.E 972 at the death of his uncle Khottiga at the hands of the invading Malwa king. This is indicative of the fact that the kingdom was not annexed, but only plundered and destroyed to a certain extent. The Malwa invasion weakened the Rashtrakutas considerably and the Chalukya king Tailapa II took the opportunity to mount an assault in 973 C.E,

finishing the destruction that had been started by Siyaka II of Malwa. The Chalukyas regained lost power through this act and became the predominant dynasty of the Deccan with their capital at Kalyani. C.E 973 can be considered the end of the primary Deccan branch of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. An inscription of Vijaya of the Kalachuri dynasty and the primary feudatory of the Rashtrakutas for two centuries confirms that Karakraja II was killed by Tailapa during the Chalukya invasion. The complete defeat of the Rashtrakutas is corroborated by two copper plates dated to C.E 997 and 1008 of Aparajita of the Shilara dynasty, which was a confirmed feudatory, indicating that he was now independent of the Rashtrakutas.

Immediately after this defeat, Peramanadi Marasimha of the Ganga dynasty, allied through matrimony to the Rashtrakutas for several generations, attempted to recoup the Rashtrakuta strength and place Indraraja IV, the grandson of Krishnaraja III and his own cousin, on the throne. The attempt failed and with it the powerful dynasty of the Deccan Rashtrakutas came to an inglorious end. The unpredictable march of Indian history continued, the fall of a once glorious dynasty was but the beginning of another that would scale the same heights of power and again come to an end at the hands, at times, of lesser mortals. The underlying commonality in the theme of history does not change.

1.2.5. Rashtrakuta Administration

In the Rashtrakuta system of governance the king was the sovereign and fountain of power. He used high sounding titles like Paramesvara, Paramabhattacharaka, Maharajadhiraja to add to his dignity. He lived in extraordinary pomp and grandeur. The Rashtrakuta court was marked with impressive ceremonies and etiquettes. In the court, the king was attended by Ministers, officers, vassals, generals, poets etc. Kingship was hereditary. It usually passed from the father to the eldest son. The latter was called Yuvaraja. In special cases younger sons were selected as heir to the throne.

The actual work of the administration was carried by the ministers whose number is not known. Persons of efficiency were appointed as ministers. Some officers were appointed to carry tours of inspection throughout the empire and keep watch upon the vassals. The Emperor established direct rule over part of the empire and the rest was governed by vassals. Powerful vassals enjoyed complete autonomy in their internal administration. They could even make grants of land without seeking the consent of the suzerain. The vassals attended the court when summoned by the Emperor. Sometimes they accompanied the king in military campaigns.

The empire under direct rule of the monarch was divided into administrative units styled Rashtras or Vishayas. The Vishayas were subdivided into Bhuktis. Each Bhukti consisted of a number of villages. Rashtra was headed by Rashtrapati who exercised both civil and military jurisdiction over the Rashtra. He maintained law and order, collected taxes and maintained records of accounts. Village headmen carried out administration at village level. In the village administration, the popular representative council played some important role. Households were represented in the councils.

The revenue of the state was mainly derived from the tributes paid by the vassals. Mines, forests and wasteland also brought the revenue. Land tax was called the Udranga or Bhagakara, the king's share. Normally the tax collected was $\frac{1}{4}$ of the gross produce. The lands that were granted to the Brahmins and temples were also not exempted from taxation, but the tax on such land was low. If the state was visited by natural disaster like drought or famine, the tax was not levied. The Rashtrakuta had a well developed system of coins. There were five kinds of coins- Drama, Suvarna, Godhyanka, Kalanju and Kasu. Some gold coins were also issued by Rashtrakuta emperors.

The Rashtrakuta had a vast army. A greater part of the army was always stationed at the capital for safety. The Rashtrakuta standing army was employed both for defensive and offensive purposes. Added to this the armies of the provincial and feudatories also could be drawn whenever necessary. The Rashtrakuta armies were well organized and known for their efficiency.

1.2.6. Socio-Economic Condition

The Dharmasastras and the accounts of the Arab writers help us to form a picture of the society and economic condition during this period. There were a numbers of social groups. Among the four castes, the Brahmans enjoyed a superior status. In actual practice, the privileges of the Kshatriyas were no less than those of the Brahmana. The status of the Vaishyas had degenerated to a great extent. The period witnessed great improvement in the position of the Sudras. The Bhakti movements led by Nayanrs and Alvars which preached the footing equality of man with man narrowed down the gulf between the high and low castes. The untouchables had come to be excluded from the main stream life. Joint family system was the order of the day. Widows and daughters were recognized as heirs to the property. Sati system was not popular in the Deccan. Child marriage had become common in society.

In the sphere of economy, agriculture continued to receive the attention of the government as before. But the period made much progress in mining and industry. Textile industry, which was the principal industry of the period made considerable progress. Cloth was manufactured in sufficient quantity to meet internal demand and to leave large surplus for export. Muslins, hides, mats, indigo, incense, sandal and teakwood, ivory were main articles of exports. Among the article f imports were gold, wine, copper, tin, lead, topaz etc. Commercial transactions were carried on either barter or by the exchange of gold and silver. But barter system was in vague. Trade and industries were organized into their respective guilds. They used to regulate trade and industry and do the banking business. Foreign trade must have been handled by the Arab merchants who have by now become intermediaries in Indian overseas trade.

1.2.7. Religion and Literature

The Rashtrakuta kings were great patrons of literature and religion. The three main religions flourished during this period are Brahminism, Jainism and Buddhism. The opening verse in the Rashtrakuta copper plates pays homage to both Siva and Vishnu. The Rashtrakuta seals contained either the Eagle or the Garuda. Later king leaned towards Jainism. It appears that Jainism was highly popular. Tolerance was the keynote of the Rashtrakuta rulers. There was complete harmony among the adherents of different religions. Magnificent temples were erected and endowments were granted by the Rashtrakuta rulers.

In the field of literature the contribution of the Rashtrakuta is at once rich and many sided. This period witnessed the beginning of Kannada literature. The earliest Kannada literature can only be traced from the Rashtrakuta period. As mentioned in Kavirajmarga, written by Amoghavarsa, Vimaladoya, Nagarjuna, Jayabandhu, Durvinita and others were notable Kannada prose writers. Among the poets Kavisara, Pandita, Chandra and Lokapala are named as most admired. Asasa, the author of Vardhamanacharita, Guanvarma the author of Neminathpurana and Gunanandi were living in this period. Harisena, the spiritual preceptor of Amoghavarsa composed the Harivansa. Krishna III was aliberal patron of literature. In his court flourished many great Kannada poets-Pampa-Ponna and Chavudraya. Chavudraya has written a prose work Chavudrayapurana. Pampa wrote Adipurana. But the poet laureate of the time was Ponna who wrote Santipurana for which he received the title Ubhaya Kavichakravartin. Sanskrit literature also flourished to a great extent Sakatayana was an eminent scholar in Saskrit and he was the author of Savdanasasana. The Rashtrakutas widely patronized the Sanskrit literature. There were many scholars in the Rashtrakuta court. Trivikrama wrote Nalachampu and the Kavirahasya was composed by Halayudha during the reign of Krishna III. The Jain literature flourished under the patronage of the Rashtrakutas. Amogavarsha I, who was a Jain patronized many Jain scholars. His teacher Jinasena composed Parsvabhudaya, a biography of Parsva in verses. Another scholar Gunabhadra wrote the Adipurana, the life stories of various Jain saints. Sakatayana wrote the grammer work called Amogavritti.

1.2.8. Rashtrakuta Art and Architecture

The Art of Rashtrakuta bears imperishable testimony to the cultural progress of Deccan. Famous rock cut shrines at Ellora and Elephanta belongs to this period. At Ellora, the most remarkable temple is the Kailasa temple. It was excavated during the reign of Krishna I. It is carved out of a massive block of rock 200 feet long, and 100 feet in breadth and height. Kailashnath Temple at Ellora is similar to the Lokeshvara temple at Pattadakal, it is "an entire temple complex completely hewn out of the live rock in imitation of a distinctive structural form." The four main parts of the temple are the main shrine, a gateway for entrance, the pavilion of Nandi, and a courtyard with cloisters surrounding it. The temple stands on a lofty plinth 25 feet high. The central face of the plinth has imposing figures of elephants and lions giving the impression that the entire structure rests on their rashtrakutas art and architecture kailasa temple at elloraback. It has a three-tiered sikhara or tower resembling the sikhara of the Mamallapuram rathas. In the interior of the temple there is a pillared hall which has sixteen square pillars. The Kailasa temple is an architectural marvel with its beautiful sculptures. The sculpture of the Goddess Durga is shown as slaying the Buffalo demon. In another sculpture Ravana was making attempts to lift Mount Kailasa, the abode of Siva. The scenes of Ramayana were also depicted on the walls. The general characteristics of the Kailasa temple are more Dravidian.

Supplementary shrines apparently were excavated at a later date. The sculptured panels depicting Dasavatara, Bhairava, Ravana shaking the mount Kailasa, dancing Siva, and Lakshmi and Vishnu listening to music are exquisitely crafted. Commenting on its architecture, Percy Brown said: "The Kailasa is an illustration of one of those occasions when men's minds, hearts and heads work in unison towards the consummation of a supreme ideal. It was under such conditions of religious and cultural stability that this grand monolith representation of Siva's paradise was produced."

The Dasavatara temple is a marvelous blend of simplicity with amplexity. Saiva and Vaishnava themes are depicted on the surrounding walls by stupendous sculpted figures. The Hiranyakasipu relief is the most outstanding, inspiring awe and reverence. Among the Ellora caves some are dedicated to Jainism and these dates back to the ninth century C.E. Among the five shrines in the group, the Chhota Kailasa, the Indra Sabha and the Jagannatha Sabha are the most significant. The Chhota Kailasa is a small scale imitation of the famous Kailasa temple at Ellora and the Indra and the Jagannatha Sabhas are partly of structural mode and partly of cave extraction. There is a monolithic shrine behind a gateway in the fore-court of each, excavated from the rock. The facade of the cave in two stories is behind it following the general plan of a pillared hall with a chapel at the back and cells on the sides. Although the designs are identical, the Indra Sabha, especially its upper storey is more finely balanced and harmoniously integrated than the Jagannatha Sabha. Apparent in the Jagannatha Sabha are signs of decline, perhaps a sign of the times to come when such designs ceased altogether.

Elephanta is an island near Bombay. It was originally called Sripuri. The Portuguese named it Elephanta. The sculptural art of the Rashtrakutas reached its zenith in this place. There is a close similarity between the sculptures at Ellora and those in Elephanta. They might have been carved by the same craftsmen. The architecture of the caves in Elephanta and Salsette islands near Bombay are of the same design as Ellora but are smaller in scale and irregular in execution. The main halls of the caves in Ellora are usually driven into the rock axis-wise, while in Elephanta the axis is parallel to the rock face. The Jogisvara temple in Salsette is not comparable in great art with the other works, but its importance lies in the fact that it is the last of the kind and is dated circa 800 C.E. The main shrine at Elephanta is considered much more exquisite than the shrines at Ellora. The reliefs of Nataraja and Sadasiva in Elephanta have been sculpted with more finesse than those in Ellora, which appear "less accomplished in technique, though more florid in style". The god is represented in his triple manifestation-the Creator, the Protector and the Destroyer-in the sculptured reliefs of Ardhanarishwar and Trimurti or Maheshmurti shrine at Elephanta. It seems earlier there were paintings on some of the shrines. Fragments of these paintings can even now be seen in the corridor of the Kailasa temple at Ellora and on the ceilings of the Trimurti shrine at Elephanta. On the Rashtrakuta art a scholar opined that "The cave

sculptures of Ellora and Elephanta will convincingly prove that art in India attained its highest achievements under the Rashtrakuta”

1.2.9. Conclusion

The Rashtrakutas created a vast empire and established their glorious rule. In the field of religion, art and architecture the Rashtrakuta contribution is noteworthy. They not only brought the entire south India under their control but also penetrated deep the territories of north. Many of them earned laurel as invincible conquerors and efficient rulers. On the Rashtrakuta A.S. Altekar opined “ The period of Rashtrakuta ascendancy in the Deccan constitute perhaps, the most brilliant chapter in its history. No other ruling dynasties in Deccan played such a dominant part in the history of India till the rise of Marathas as an imperial power in 18th century.... Their campaign against their powerful adversaries were repeatedly crowned with brilliant success”.

1.2.10. Summary

- *The Rashtrakuta dynasty ruled over large portions of India from the C.E 8th to 10th century.*
- *Taking the advantage of weak Chalukya power, an official in the Calukyas’ administration named Dantidurga declared his independence in C.E 753. The dynasty that he and his family formed the core of was called the Rashtrakuta, with their capital based in Ellora.*
- *After Dantidurga came Krsna I, who was responsible for starting construction of Kailasa temple at Ellora in the late 8th century C.E. This rock-temple was entirely out of a hillside to represent Mt. Kailasa, which is a mountain in the Himalayas said to be the home of Vishnu.*
- *Due to strategic location of their Empire in the middle of India along the top of the Deccan Plateau, the Rashtrakutas took advantage of this and frequently interfered with both the northern and southern kingdoms of India.*
- *The Rashtrakutas also controlled large portions of the western coast of India. The majority of the trade with West Asia came through these ports and much of the Rashtrakutas wealth along with it. The Rashtrakutas also maintained good relations with the Arabs in Sind and traded extensively with them.*
- *Amoghavarsha was one of the longest-reigning kings in India and also one of the most powerful. His power was so great he was acknowledged as one of the greatest monarchs in the world along with the Caliph of Baghdad, Emperor of China, and the Emperor of Rome.*
- *He was favorable to the Jain religion, and may have been partially responsible for its rise in popularity, along with the decline in Buddhism.*
- *A major focus of the Rashtrakuta dynasty was the control of Kanauj. The Rashtrakuta, Pratihara, and Pala were all kingdoms focused on controlling this city and fought among each other known in Indian history as tripartite struggle.*
- *The Rashtrakuta Empire was divided into several provinces called rashtras, Visya and Bhukti for proper administration.*
- *The village administration was carried on by the village headmen. However, the village assemblies played a significant role in the village administration.*
- *Under the Rashtrakuta Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism flourished harmoniously. Later Jainism received the patronage of Rashtrakuta kings and officers. Almost one third of the populations of the Deccan were Jains. There were some prosperous Buddhist settlements at places like Kanheri, Sholapur and Dharwar.*
- *The economy was also in a flourishing condition. There was an active commerce between the Deccan and the Arabs. The Rashtrakuta kings promoted the Arab trade by maintaining friendship with them.*
- *The Rashtrakutas widely patronized the Sanskrit and Kanarese literature. There were many scholars in the Rashtrakuta court.*

- *The Jain literature flourished under the patronage of the Rashtrakutas. Amogavarsha I, who was a Jain patronized many Jain scholars.*
- *The Kannada literature saw its beginning during the period of the Rashtrakutas. Amogavarsha's Kavirajamarga was the first poetic work in Kannada language. Pampa was the greatest of the Kannada poets.*
- *The art and architecture of the Rashtrakutas were found at Ellora and Elephanta. At Ellora, the most remarkable temple is the Kailasa temple.*
- *By the end of the 10th century the geographical advantages the Rashtrakutas had enjoyed turned to disadvantages, as new powers in the north and south emerged as threats. The Colas in South, the Calukya dynasty in the west, and the rise of the Shilaharas in the north-western Deccan finally led the downfall of Rashtrakuta's.*

1.2.11. Exercise

- Write an essay on the origin of Rashtrakuta dynasty.
- Describe in brief the political history of the Rashtrakuta.
- Write a note on the Northern campaign of Rashtrakuta Monarchs.
- Give an account of the Socio-Religious and Economic condition of Rashtrakuta Empire.
- Discuss the contribution of Rashtrakuta monarch for the growth of Art and Literature

1.2.12. Further Readings

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Unit.1
Chapter-III
THE PALA OF BENGAL
Polity, Economy and Social Conditions

Structure

- 1.3.0. Objectives**
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1.3.0. Objectives

This chapter deals with the history of the Pala dynasty of Bengal. Here the origin, polity, and contribution of the Palas to Indian history will be discussed. After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- *identify the origin and early history of the Pala dynasty;*
- *discuss the political history of the Pala dynasty;*
- *assess the growth of religion, art and architecture under the Palas of Bengal;*
- *evaluate the cultural contributions of the Palas; and*
- *examine the administration and society under the Palas in Eastern India.*

1.3.1. Introduction

Bengal played a leading role in Indian politics between the eighth and the eleventh centuries. This was the age of the famous Pala dynasty, some of whose rulers were the ablest in ancient India. For nearly a century after Harsha's death in 647 C.E, Bengal had been subject to much interference and disruption by its near and farther neighbours. The respite came in C.E 765 with the election by the people of an able leader, Gopala, who was neither a brahman nor a kshatriya. The dynasty prospered under Gopala's successors, Dharamapala and Devapala. The Palas realised the importance of Madhyadesha in the Indian political sphere, and fought hard to gain power and influence there. Their main rivals, of course, were the Gurjara-Pratihara and the Rashtrakuta, although with the latter there were useful marriage alliances. In the triangular contest over Madhyadesha and Kanauj, all three dynasties ultimately exhausted themselves. However, the fact that the Palas were ever-present, asserting their right to reorder affairs to their advantage, meant that Bengal was no longer on the margins of the Indian polity. Over different periods of time, the dynasty also ruled over Bihar, Odisha and Assam. The Bengal kingdom's reputation reached beyond the boundaries of India, into Nepal and Tibet and, above all, towards Southeast Asia, in Java, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula ruled by the Shailendra dynasty. Commerce and religion linked the fortunes of Bengal, Tibet and Nepal. There was also the desire for territorial power. The Palas during the rule of Dharamapala extended their suzerainty in Assam. Pala suzerainty in Bengal and eastern India lasted until the end of the eleventh century, when they were succeeded by the Senas, who, in turn, lost out to the Turkish Khaljis in the thirteenth century. In this chapter a brief history of the Palas will be discussed to understand their contribution to Indian history and culture.

1.3.2. Origin of the Pala Dynasty

The Palas appeared in the political scenario after the death of Sasanka, when there was great political upheaval in Bengal. There are no clear evidences of the origin and early history of the Palas. Epigraphic sources of the contemporary era and official Pala records are generally silent about the caste, origin and early history of the Palas. Since no clear evidence is available, historians had to depend on indirect evidences, which shed light on the reign of the Palas in Bengal. Hence there are enough controversies among historians about the origin and ancestry of the Palas. From official records of the Palas it is known that Gopala's father was Vapyata and his grandfather was Dayita Vishnu. They are mentioned in a very general tone without referring to any royal or exalted status. In their inscriptions the Palas do not claim descent from any mythical figure or epic hero like contemporary dynasties. The Khalimpur plate of Dharmapala informs us that Gopala I, the founder of the dynasty, was the son of '*khanditarati* (killer of enemies) *Vapyata* and grandson of '*sarva-avadata*' Dayitavisnu. From this it seems that before Gopala I this family was not of much importance. In the commentary on '*Astasahasika-Prajnaparamita*' by Haribhadra, Dharmapala has been described as '*Rajabhatadi-vamsapaita*'. On the basis of facts provided by poet Baribhadra, contemporary to the second Pala king Dharmapala, some scholars have suggested that the Pala kings were connected to king Rajabhata of the Buddhist Khadga of eastern Bengal. Again some scholars have provided other views about the origin of

the Palas. They have opined on the basis of evidences from Khalimpur Copper Plate that the Palas were originally descendants of the Bhadra Dynasty. Moreover controversy lies in the fact that the Palas themselves claimed to be solar descendants. Though the early Palas did not declare themselves any mythical ancestry, yet the later Palas claimed themselves as solar descendants or "Surya Kula". Sandhyakara Nandi in "Rama Charita", Ghanarama in "Dharma Mangala" and other chronicles of the Age referred to Samudra Kula, or the 'origin of the Palas from Ocean'.

Although there are no conclusive evidences about the origin and ancestry of the Palas, yet it has been opined by historians that the Palas were Kshatriya by caste. Evidences supplied by "Ramcharita" and Taranatha corroborates the above theory. This was further supported by their matrimonial relationship with the Rashtrakutas and the Kalachuriyas. Again according to another group of historians the Palas did not belong to any higher caste. In "Arya-manjusri-mula-kalpa", the Palas were described as "Dasajivina" or Sudra by occupation. A medieval Muslim writer, Abul Fazal, depending on this tradition had described the Palas as "kayasthas". But modern scholars have opined that the Palas were staunch Buddhists, depending on official records of the Palas. Their court had become the stronghold of Buddhism. Copper plates of the Pala kings bore a clear mark of their Buddhist affiliation. Though it is not known whether the founder of the Pala dynasty in Bengal was originally of Buddhist origin, yet there is evidence that the Pala kings held an important position in the international Buddhist world.

The original homeland of the Pala kings or the actual extent of the kingdom of Gopala, the founder king, cannot exactly be determined. Taranatha says that Gopala was elected to the vacant throne of Vanga some years after the rule of the Candra dynasty. His evidence is not reliable unless it is corroborated by some other sources. Sandhyakarauandi's 'Ramacarita' and the Kamauli grant refer to Verendra as the 'janakabhu' (fatherland) of the Palas, and from this it would seem that northern Bengal was their original home. The Tibetan historian further records that Gopala extended his power over Magadha. The extension of power from Varendra to Magadha was natural rather than from Vanga to Magadha.

The century that followed the death of Sasanka was marked with political upheavals, extreme chaos and foreign invasion. Peace within the province was horribly disturbed. Moreover after the death of Sasanka, Harshavardhana and the Kamrupa king Bhaskarvarmana had annexed Bengal or Gauda. Later a strong wave of the Tibetan invasion swept away remnants of the political stability of Bengal. The ultimate result was that, the entire province of Bengal was divided into several small provincial units, who unfurled the flag of independence. Each one struggled for the mastery of land. The absence of any central authority or Government made the situation even more anarchic, which vitally affected the situation. Ultimately the state of anarchy in Bengal came to an end when Gopala ascended the throne. It is known from facts of the Khalimpur Copper Plate that Gopala was made emperor by popular support. The people in order to put an end to this lawlessness established him as the central authority and thus Gopala appeared in the political scenario of Bengal. Gopala was an eminent chief and a competent military general. It is presumed that Gopala did not possess royal blood because he was not born in a high and distinguished family. But it was just because of his martial and exceptional leadership qualities that he was chosen the leader of the lawless country. The main achievement of Gopala was that he had established durable peace within Bengal by removing the prevailing state of anarchy. Gopala became the king of Bengal and supremacy of the Pala kings was established in 8th century C.E, which continued uninterrupted till 12th century.

1.3.3. Political History of the Palas

Pala dynasty was founded by Gopala. As the names of all the succeeding kings ended with 'Pala' this dynasty come to be known as the 'Pala' dynasty. The son and grandson of Gopala, viz; Dharmapala and Devapala greatly extended the power and prestige of the Pala dynasty. About eighteen generation of ruler ruled over this dynasty for a period of four hundred years. Following paragraphs will discuss the career and achievements of few rulers of this dynasty.

1.3.3.1. Gopala

The chaos and anarchy that engulfed Bengal for almost a century after Harshvardhana's death made the people elect a chieftain called Gopala to be their king, around C.E 730-40. It is pretty sure that Gopala must have given ample proof of his military ability and political wisdom before his election to the throne at the most critical juncture when the very existence of the kingdom was at stake. This unmistakably shows that he was the only man who was thought competent to cope with the situation. It is quite probable that Gopala might have come into prominence by warding off one of the foreign invasions that preceded his rise. It has been suggested that in the first verse of the Bhagalpur grant of Narayancipala a pun has been used on- the word 'kamakari', and in case of Buddha it refers to Mara, while it may refer to king Harsa of Kamrupa in case of Gopala. Taranatha most probably confused Harsa of Kamrupa with Harsa of Kasmira who, according to him, was a contemporary of Gopala. He must have been a man of unusual abilities which commanded respects from his contemporaries.

The spirit of the inscriptions points out that he proved himself equal to the occasion and the confidence that was reposed in him was amply justified. We do not know who were the enemies against whom he had to fight, but his military preparations and campaigns are alluded to in the Mongyr plate of Devapala, which further records that he extended the boundary of his kingdom upto the sea-coast. If Taranatha is to be believed, Magadha was also annexed. If he cannot be credited with any great political achievement, it seems that peace and order was restored after a period of misrule and anarchy, and a strong consolidated kingdom was left, thus making the task of his successor Dharmapala easier in order to take an active part in north-Indian politics. According to Taranatha, Gopala ruled for 45 years. It seems that he was sufficiently advanced in age before his election. The 'Manjusri Mulakalpa' records that he died at the age of eighty after a reign of 27 years. He was succeeded by his son Dharmapala.

1.3.3.2. Dharmapala

The outstanding political fact of the period from 750 to 950 C.E. was the tripartite struggle among the three great powers, the Pratiharas, the Palas and the Rastrakutas, for imperial suzerainty of northern India and for the possession of Kanauj, the imperial city of the time. Dharmapala inherited a consolidated kingdom, and it seems that his ambition was to make Bengal the suzerain power in northern India. Naturally he turned his attention to the west. It is not known which were the powers with whom he had to fight at first for the westward expansion of his kingdom. The Gwalior *prasasti* informs that Pratihara Vatsaraja wrested the sovereignty of Kanauj from Bhandikula. Dharmapala must have regarded him as a rival, but in the encounter the Pala king was defeated. We know from the Wani and Radhanpur plates that Rastrakuta Dhruva defeated Vatsaraja who had inflicted a defeat on the Gauda king. But though defeated in his first attempt, Dharmapala did not give up his imperial ambition and made further attempts to occupy Kanauj, because not long after this we find him in the possession of the Ganges-Yamuna Doab. The Sanjan plates of Amoghavarsa record that the Gauda king was defeated by Dhruva in the Ganges-Yamuna valley and this is confirmed by the 'Baroda and Surat plates of Karkaraja. Chronologically it stands thus that in the westward expansion of his kingdom Dharmapala received two checks—first from Vatsaraja and next from Dhruva. Dhruva attacked Vatsaraja in C. 789 C.E, and therefore Dharmapala was defeated by Vatsaraja before that. Dhruva died before May, 794 C.E, and he must have defeated the Pala king before that date.

But nothing could arrest the political expansion of Bengal, reinvigorated and regenerated as it was from the political turmoil after the election of Gopala. The Palas were determined to assert themselves in north Indian politics and make Bengal a first class political power. The Pratihara king was driven into the desert by Dhruva and the next Rashtrakuta king Govinda III was engaged in a fratricidal war for succession with his brother Stambha, and thus the time was opportune for Dharmapala. The 7th verse of the Mongyr plate of Devapala states that his (Dharmapala's) army in course of 'digvijaya' visited Kedara (in the Himalayas) and Gokarna which has been sought to be identified with Gokarnatirtham Nepal, Gokarna in the Bombay Presidency and in Odisha. The 12th verse of the Khalimpur plate

enumerates the countries that actuality acknowledged his overlordship. It is told that " with a sign of his gracefully moved eyebrows he installed the illustrious king of Kanya-kubja, who readily was accepted by the kings of Bhoja (Vidarbba), Matsya (Jaipur), Madra (E. Panjab), Kuru (Delhi region), Yadu (Mathura), Yavana (W. Panjab), Avanti (Malwa) Gandhara (Taxila) and Kira (Kangra valley), bowing down respectfully with their diadems trembling and for whom his own golden coronation jar was lifted by the delighted elders of Pancala". Further light in the whole situation is thrown by the 3rd verse of the Bhagalpur plate of Narayanapala. It is known there from that Dharmapala took possession of Kanauj from Indraraja and installed, his own protégé Cakrayudha on its throne by calling an imperial assembly. His overlordship was acknowledged, and the war of '*digvijaya*' he had to undertake for this purpose speaks of the stupendousness of the task. The supreme political achievement was sanctified by holding the imperial assembly at Kanauj.

The undisputed sovereignty of Dharmapala over northern India and his handling of the situation according to his pleasure did not go unchallenged. The invasion of Dhruva did not crush the Pratihara power but only gave a temporary blow to its vigorous rise. Nagabhata II, son and successor of Vatsaraja, once more tried to consolidate the Pratihara power in order to make another trial of strength with the Palas. Before actually taking the field, he came to a close understanding with the kings of Sindhu, Andhra, Vidarbha and Kalinga thus making a strong confederacy of states. Thus strengthening his position, Nagabhata II most probably first directed his attention to his eastern rival and defeated Cakrayudha, Dharmapala's nominee on the throne of Kanauj. This was nothing but a challenge to the suzerainty of Dharmapala and necessarily brought him on the field. This fight between Nagabhata II and Dharmapala for the overlordship of northern India was one of the most fiercely contested battles of the period and in all probability" both the parties were equally matched. The epigraphic records of the vassals of the Pratiharas claim victories over the Gauda emperor, implying that they followed Nagabhata in his campaign. In an inscription of Avantivarman II, great grandson of Vahukadhavala and a feudatory of Mahendrapala, it has been claimed that Vahukadhavala defeated in battle king Dharma who may be identified with Dharamapala. Again, from the Catsu inscription of Baladitya it is known that Sankaragana, the Guhilot prince, conquered Bhata, king of the Gauda country, and made a present of his kingdom to his overlord, It is known from the Jodhpur inscription, of Bauka that his father Kakka won distinction by fighting with the Gaudas at Mudgagiri.

Though no details regarding the preparations of Dharmapala are known, yet from the nature of the vast and elaborate preparations of his rival from every possible quarter and from the description of the array of the mighty hosts of the lord of Vanga in the Gawalior *prasasti*, it can be presumed that the Pala emperor must have equipped himself fully well to meet the formidable enemy. If Kakka's fight with the Gaud as refers to Nagabhata II' s fight with Dharmapala, the Pratiharas advanced as far as Mongyr and the victory of this severe battle was also on their side. But the victory, so strenuously and valiantly won, could not offer to the Pratihara king the desired overlordship. Once more the Rasthrakutas under Govinda III appeared on the scene and the Radhanpur plates record that the Pratihara king "in fear vanished nobody knew wither". Govinda III overran the Pratihara territory and advanced as far as the Himalayas. The Sanjan plates inform us that Dharmapala and Chakrayudha submitted to the Rastrakuta monarch of their own accord. In the Nilgund inscription it is mentioned that Govinda III fettered the people of Gauda. Dharmapala after his defeat by Nagabhata II did not risk another encounter with the Rasthrakutas and thought it wise to submit to Govinda III. From a comparison of the Wani and Radhanpur grants the northern invasion of Govinda III can be assigned to the period between 807 and 808 C.E. It is therefore clear that the reverses of Dharmapala must have taken place before that date.

Dharmapala is one of the greatest kings of the Pala dynasty and takes an honourable place among the great kings known to Indian history- He assumed the highest imperial titles of those days, viz. Paramabhattacharaka, Paramesvara and Maharajadhiraja, while his father was styled only

Maharajadhiaaja. His name and fame was not confined within his kingdom. Poet Soddhala of the eleventh century calls him Uttarapathasvamin. He assumed the title Vikramasila either to signalise his might or to commemorate the foundation of the Vikramasila monastery. The Somapuri-mahavihara also owed its origin to the great Pala king.

The second verse of the Bhagalpur plate of Narayanapala records certain facts which throw light on his administration and the liberality of the man himself, and these seem to be corroborated by other sources too. Though himself a devout Buddhist, he was very particular in following the policy that his subjects should be governed in accordance with their respective sastric rules. This is alluded to in the 5th verse of the Mongyr plate of his son. That this tolerance was not a thing to be boasted of in the *prasastis* is attested by the Mahabodhi inscription or Kesava *prasasti* of the 26th year of Dharmapala's reign, which records the setting up of a Caturmukha-linga of Mahadeva in the great Buddhist holy place. It is further recorded in the Bhagalpur plate that incidence of his taxation was equitable and just. Many kings sought his protecting shelter which he gladly accorded to them. The defeated kings were not uprooted but reinstated on their thrones and a friendly policy was adopted towards them. It is no wonder that a monarch with such brilliant achievements to his credit, whose government was based on so just and benign principles, should win the love and respect of all classes of his subjects. His court-poet records that his praises were sung by the cowherd boys, hermits, village folk, traders and the rich alike.

Dharmapala was the second king of the dynasty and there are claims that he ruled for an astounding 32 years. The Tibetan historian Taranath describes Dharmapala's kingdom to have stretched from the Bay of Bengal to Delhi and Jullunder in the north and to the Vindhya ranges in the south. In addition he also states that Dharmapala also had a large number of vassal states in the periphery of his kingdom in the Punjab, the western hills, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar. The emergence of Dharmapala as the most powerful king of the time is clear indication of the visible change that the political climate was undergoing. The exercise of supreme power in North India was transferred from the Pratiharas to the Palas, at least for a period of time. Dharmapala was also an avid Buddhist and built the monastery of Vikramasila on a hill overlooking the River Ganges. The site of the monastery is considered to be at Patharghata in Bhagalpur district and it is stated that at its height it contained 107 temples and six colleges.

1.3.3.3. Devapala

It is known from the Khalimpur plate that the crown prince Tribhuvanapala was the dutaka of that grant. Most probably he died during the life-time of his father. Dharmapala was succeeded by Devapala, his son by the Rastrakuta princess Rannsdevi. During the reign of Devapala the Pala arms were crowned with success everywhere. It is stated in the Mongyr plate that in course of his 'digvijaya' he advanced as far as the Vindhya and the Kamboj a country. This is confirmed by the 13th verse of the Badal Pillar inscription where Devapala's victories in the Vindhya and Kamboj. It seems that he fought with the Rastrakutas during the interregnum and the period of minority of Amoghavarsa I. It is not precisely known where the Kambojas lived at this time. Thus the statement in the Badal Pillar inscription that by the wise counsel and policy of his minister the whole tract bounded by the Vindhya and the Himalayas and by the eastern and western seas paid tribute to Devapala was not a mere political exaggeration but an actual fact.

These achievements in the said *prasasti* have been attributed to Darbhapani, but it is also stated therein that by the policy and counsel of Kedaramisra, who also served Devapala the Gauda king "eradicated the race of the Utkalas, humbled the pride of the Hunas and shattered the conceit of Dravida and Gurjara kings." It seems that the victories and supremacy won during the first part of his reign were challenged, and Devapala had to undertake another expedition to curb their power and maintain Pala supremacy. That the two rival powers, the Pratiharas and Rastrakutas, tried to assert their power is also hinted at in their own records, though they are scrupulously silent of their own defeats. The Gwalior inscription of Vailabhata indicates that Gwalior was the boundary of the Pratihara kingdom at the time

of Ramabhadra and in the early part of the reign of Bhoja. The 12th verse of the Gwalior *prasasti* of Bhoja seems to imply that Ramabhadra freed his country from the yoke of foreign soldiers. The evidence of Daulatpura plates and Ghatiyala inscription goes to show that some time before 843 C.E. the Pratiharas under Bhoja made an attempt to reassert their power, and though it met with some initial success, his power was again checked some time before 861 C.E. This is in complete agreement with what we know from the Pala records.

Amoghavarsa I was the Rastrakuta contemporary of Devapala. During the period of his minority and anarchy Devapala victoriously advanced as far as the Vindhya in course of his first expedition. It is stated in the Sirur and Nilgund grants that the kings of Anga, Vanga and Magadha paid homage to Amoghavarsa, but there are reasons to hold that the Rastrakutas advanced through Odisha after the conquest of Vengi. Amoghavarsa finally crushed the power of the Vengi ruler Vijayaditya II sometime before 866 C.E, the date of the issuing of the Sirur grants. It seems, therefore, that the Rastrakuta invasion of Bengal should be placed after 860 C.E, and that Devapala defeated the Rastrakutas sometime before that date in course of his second expedition, when Amoghavarsa was perhaps engaged in wars with his Gujarat cousins and in putting down risings of the rebellious chiefs.

It is not known who was the contemporary Utkala king defeated by Devapala. The conquest of the Utkalas is corroborated by the Bhagalpur plate in which it is recorded that Jayapala, cousin and general of Devapala, drove away the Utkala king from the throne. Hunamandala in northern Malwa has been mentioned in an inscription of the Paramara king Vakpati-Munja. The Bhagalpur plate also records that Jayapala defeated the king of Pragytisa (Kamarupa). The Kamarupa king defeated by Jayapala was most probably Harjaravarman whose Tezpur rock inscription is dated in 829 C.E, or his successor Vanamala.

The Nalanda inscription of the 39th year of Devapala reveals the fact that there was constant intercourse between the Pala kingdom and the Indian colonies in the Pacific Ocean, specially Java and Sumatra. The object of the inscription was to grant five villages for the upkeep of the Buddhist monastery built by the Sailendra king Balaputradeva of Suvarnavdipa and Yavadvipa at the instance of his mother Taradevi. He requested Devapala to grant the income of five villages for its maintenance. This request was gladly and readily complied with, thus showing that his wide charities compared with those of Bali, Karna and Vikramaditya were not vague flattery of the court-poet. This religious contact must have been accompanied by brisk commercial activity, as the testimonies of Fa-hien, I-tsing and other Chinese travellers point to such a state of things even before the rise of the Palas.

Thus, Devapala the third king of the dynasty is considered by most historians to have been the most illustrious and powerful of the Pala kings after Dharmapala. While his predecessors had concentrated on growing westwards, Devapala's interests lay to the east. He led his army as far as the banks of the Indus, the first and only time a king of Bengal achieved this feat. It has not been repeated anytime thereafter. A historian remarks "The reigns of Dharmapala and Devapala constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal. Never before, or since, till the advent of the British, did Bengal play such an important role in Indian politics". He was a devoted Buddhist and ruled for 48 years.

1.3.3.4. Successor of Devapala

The *dutaka* of the Mongyr plate was the crown prince Rajyapala, but Devapala was succeeded by Vighrahapala. The Badal inscription places Surapala between Devapala and Narayanapala, and therefore it can be accepted that Surapala was a viruda of Vighrahapala I. The relation of Vighrahapala with Devapala cannot be ascertained, and the opinions of the scholars are divided on this point. The Bhagalpur plate after describing the achievements of Dharmapala introduces his brother Vakpala and states that from him ('tasmāt') was born Jayapala. In the next verse Devapala has been described as 'purvaja' referring to Jayapala. Again, in the sixth verse the achievements of Jayapala on behalf of Devapala have been recorded, and in the next verse it is said that from him was born Vighrahapala. The most important point in the controversy is that there is no mention of Vakpala and Jayapala in the grants

of Dharmapala and Devapala, whereas in the grants of subsequent Pala kings the victories of those two reigns have been ascribed to Vakpala and Jayapala. Although it may be argued that the praises of Vakpala and Jayapala in the public records might have made them popular heroes and that after their death the subsequent Pala kings did not feel jealous to give due credit to the two distinguished generals of their own family, yet the way in which the names of Vakpala and Jayapala have been introduced cannot be overlooked, and it suggests that Vighrahapala and Narayarjapala were probably directly connected with them and not with Dharmapala and Devapala.

The short reign of Vighrahapala I was not without political significance, the king of Anga, Vanga and Magadha who paid homage to Amoghavarsa I was very likely Vighrahapala I, as it has already been pointed out that the Rastrakuta invasion took place after 850 C.E. The acceptance of an ascetic life by him by shirking all responsibilities to his son might have been due to defeats by the foreign invaders and humiliation consequent thereon. It cannot be clearly stated whether Vighrahapala I suffered defeats at the hands of Bhoja, though the probability is strongly so. The Pala records are significantly silent over the Pratihara invasions of the time. But the gradual extension of the Pratihara empire at the cost of the Palas can no longer be doubted. Bhoja, like his grandfather, made extensive preparations in his Bengal campaign. It is known from the Kalha plates of Sodhadeva that the Kalchuri chief Gunambodhideva who ruled in Kalanjara got some territories from Bhoja and took away the fortune of Gauda by a warlike expedition. The evidence of the Benares and Bilhari inscriptions has, been generally construed to imply that Bhoja was most probably assisted by the Kalacuri king Kokkaladeva against the Palas. After the publication of the Amoda plates that view is perhaps to be changed, and it seems that Kokkaladeva I raided Vanga on his own account most probably during the reign of Vighrahapala I or that of his successor.

Though no record has yet come to light to show the subjugation of Magadha and adjacent countries by Bhoja, the discovery of the inscriptions of the early part of the reign of his son Mahendrapala and the absence of Pala records in that region indicate that the expansion of the Pratihara power over Magadha might have taken place in the reign of Bhoja. In the 7th and 9th years of the reign of Narayanapala the Pala sway was acknowledged in Gaya, and his Bhagalpur grant was issued in his 17th regnal year from Mongyr, and it seems that Magadha was included in the Pala empire in c. 880 C.E. Bhoja died in c.890 C.E. The evidence of the Ram-Gaya, Guneria and Itkhauri inscriptions unmistakably show that some portion of Magadha was included in the Pratihara empire in the last decade of the 9th century. The discovery of the Paharpur pillar inscription of the 5th year of the reign of Mahendrapala shows further expansion of the Pratihara power. It is quite likely that the Pratiharas advanced along the northern bank of the Ganges and occupied the very citadel of the Palas. Thus in the long struggle with the Pratiharas, the Palas were ousted for the time being from their 'janakabhu' Varendri. There is nothing to be wondered at how the name of Mahendrapala has been included by the Tibetan historian Taranatha in the list of the kings of Magadha and Gauda.

It is not known how long the Pratihara occupation of Magadha and northern Bengal lasted. In the 54th year of Narayanapala (i.e. , about the second decade of the 10th century) an image was set up at Nalanda which goes to show that south-eastern Magadha was under the Palas. Inscriptions of Rajyapala I and Gopala II have been found at Nalanda, Bodh-Gaya, and in northern Bengal. After the death of Mahendrapala the Pratihara empire began to break up. The Rastrakutas under Indra III dealt a crushing blow to the Pratiharas in c.916 C.E, and it is not unlikely that the Palas might have attempted during this troubled time of the Pratiharas to recover some of their lost possessions. It must be noted that no record of the Palas from the time of Narayanapala to Mahipala I (both exclusive) has yet been found in northern Behar. The Pala kingdom was considerably reduced during the weak rules of Vighrahapala I, Narayanapala, Rajyapala, Gopala II and Vighrahapala II, and during their reigns many foreign invaders took the opportunity of carrying on their depredations in Bengal, It is known from two Kalacuri inscriptions that the Cedi king Yuvaraja I and his son Iyaksmanaraja invaded Gauda and Vangala

respectively. Yuvaraja I was the father-in-law of Amoghavarsa III, the Rastrakuta king, whose reign commenced in c. 935 C.E. Therefore Yuvaraja I and his son seem to have reigned in the first half of the 10th century C.E, whose Pala contemporaries were probably Rajyapala and Gopala II. Yuvaraja I carried on raids on many countries far and near, viz., Gauda, Karnata, Lata, Kasmira and Kalinga. Laksmanaraja defeated the Vangalas, Pandyas, Gurjaras and Kasmira. Nor was the other central Indian power sitting inactive. The Khajuraho inscription of Candella Yasovarman, dated in 954 C.E, informs us that he defeated the king of Gauda. Another Khajuraho inscription, dated in 1001 C.E, records that the wives of the kings of Kanchi, Andhra, Radha and Anga lingered in the prison of his son Dhangadeva.

1.3.3.5. Mahipala

In the second half of the 10th century C.E, the ruling Pala king was ousted by a hill tribe called Kambojas whose raid was, at least initially, definitely oriented towards plunder, but changed during the course of the invasion to conquest and rule. This defeat of the Palas and subsequent Kamboja rule is commemorated in an inscription on a pillar at Dinajpur. The Pala king who was defeated and his position in the dynastic tree is unclear. However, around C.E 978-80, Mahipala who was the ninth Pala king expelled the Kambojas and regained the kingdom. The fact that Mahipala was counted as the ninth of the dynasty means that the Palas were not obliterated after being overthrown by the Kambojas from their primary holdings but continued as a ruling family, perhaps overseeing only a minor principality.

Mahipala ruled for 52 years, an estimate that is considered accurate. Mahipala is also the best remembered Pala king and songs praising his rule are still sung in many parts of Bengal, especially in the rural areas. His rule was marked by two important events-the conscious revival of Buddhism; and the invasions of the Pala kingdom by powerful kings from other parts of the sub-continent.

Religious revival was marked by the mission of a group of holy men sent to Tibet in 1013 C.E, led by the well-known sage Dharmapala. Dharmapala was also the principle personality instrumental in restoring the status and reviving Buddhism, obviously with the ardent support of Mahipala. Buddhist revival was very clearly very close to Mahipala's heart and an inscription at Sarnath near Benares, dated to around C.E 1026 claims that Mahipala built Buddhist temples and monasteries and also repaired many structures that had fallen in disrepair. More importantly, the inscription at this place indicates that his Empire extended all the way to Benares in the west. This assumption is questioned by few historians, but in the absence of any contradictory proof or information, and considering that the Palas had been ruling parts even further west and north, there is a very high probability that Mahipala ruled the entire Gangetic basin from the Bay of Bengal to at least Benares.

Around C.E 1023, Mahipala was attacked by the illustrious Rajendra Chola of the Southern Chola dynasty. The Chola records indicate that Rajendra first defeated the king of Dandabhukti (an area corresponding to Midnapore), named Dharmapala (not from the Pala dynasty); then conquered southern Radha (the Burdwan district area) ruled by king Ranasura; and then defeated the forces of Govindachandra ruling Vangala. Chola records indicate these three kings as being independent rulers, which if correct would mean that the southern parts of Bengal was not under direct Pala rule. It is conceivable that these three kings acknowledged Pala supremacy only in a perfunctory manner and therefore the Pala king was not 'honour-bound' to go to their rescue. Rajendra Chola then battled Mahipala himself and conquered northern Radha. Even though this defeat was a setback for Mahipala, it is certain that this invasion did not leave any deep impression on the Pala kingdom. Rajendra Chola's northern adventure was nothing but a sweeping raid that spanned a vast area, without any aim to conquer and hold territory. The illustrious Chola was following the age-old tradition of kings, the search for wealth and stature through the subjugation of other rulers.

Towards the end of Mahipala's reign he was attacked and defeated by the Kalachuri ruler, Gangeyadeva. The claim from the Kalachuri side is of the defeat of the king of Anga and the dates start to be substantiated by external sources at this stage. The Kalachuri claim is corroborated by the Muslim writer Baihaqui who states that when Ahmed Niyaltigin invaded Benares in C.E 1034, the town was in

the possession of a king called Gang, who was almost certainly Gangeyadeva. Since it has been confirmed that Mahipala controlled Benares in C.E 1026, it can be ascertained that the Kalachuri-Pala encounter took place sometime between C.E 1026 and C.E 1034.

The timeframe of Mahipala's rule coincide with the initial Ghaznavid invasion from the north-west. Later historians have levelled criticism at Mahipala stating that as a Buddhist king he kept away from joining the confederacy that the north-western Hindu kings were putting together to ward off the Islamic invasion. There is a hint of labeling Mahipala as being disloyal to 'India' in this criticism; and that if he had joined this alliance, the Muslim invasion could have been beaten back. Viewed dispassionately it is seen that the criticism is unfounded. At this stage in Indian history, Mahipala was obviously pre-occupied in containing internal dissent, having only reclaimed the ancestral throne few years earlier. Further, his kingdom itself was under the onslaught of two of the most powerful dynasties of the time-the Cholas and the Kalachuris-and therefore he could ill afford to send a military expedition to the far north to stem a Muslim onslaught that would have had no direct repercussions on his empire. It has also to be emphasised here that there was no concept of 'India' during this period. So Mahipala was only doing the right thing for the welfare of his kingdom and people by not dissipating his rather limited spare resources in futile military adventures, however exalted the aim.

Mahipala saved the Pala Empire and to a large extent restored its old glory against great odds, which is a highly credible achievement. He is rightly considered the founder of the second Pala Empire; his half-century rule still celebrated as a memorable period in the history of Bengal.

1.3.3.6. The Successors of Mahipala

The great Mahipala was succeeded to the throne by Nayapala who is mentioned as the king of Magadha in Tibetan records. At this time the Kalachuri king was Karna the son of Gangeyadeva. Karna invaded Pala territory which resulted in a protracted war between the kingdoms. Nayapala finally managed to defeat Karna and peace between the warring dynasties was arbitrated by Atista, a Buddhist monk then residing at the monastery in Vikramasila. Around C.E 1040-42, Nayapala send another Buddhist mission to Tibet led by the same Atista, who was a revered monk and missionary also called Dipankar Sijnana. At this time Tibetan Buddhism was firmly rooted in Bengal.

Nayapalas' son Vighrahapala III who was married to Karna's daughter Yauvansri defeated another Karna, the king of Chedi. Vighrahapala died around C.E 1070 leaving three sons-Mahipala II, Surapala II, and Ramapala. Mahipala II, as the eldest, succeeded to the throne but was unsure about his capacity to rule. Almost immediately on becoming king he imprisoned his brothers to avoid their creating any alternative centres of power and/or vying for the throne. He was an indifferent and cruel ruler-a result of his incompetence and under-confidence-and the kingdom lapsed into misrule very rapidly. At this stage the kingdom was almost continually being invaded by other States, which weakened central control and facilitated the increase in power of feudatories.

Perceiving, rather shrewdly, that the Pala power was in decline, Divyoka the chief of the Chasi-Kaivarta tribe from North Bengal invaded the kingdom around C.E 1074-75 and captured the throne after killing Mahipala II. Divyoka's nephew Bhima became the king of Varendra, heralding the brief Kaivarta interlude in the history of Bengal. Bhima was followed on the throne by his brother Rudok and then by Bhima II. The rule by three successive kings of the Kaivarta family indicate the consolidation of power by the tribe. Contemporary writings indicate that Bhima II's reign was prosperous and that the people were generally without any great trouble. However, this idyllic situation as not to last for long.

1.3.3.7. Ramapala

In the initial confusion of the Kaivarta take-over, Ramapala had escaped from captivity and started to travel around North and Central India requesting support from local kings and collecting an army to recapture the Pala throne. Ramapala was related by marriage to the powerful Rashtrakutas, his mother having been the sister of the Rashtrakuta chief Mathanadeva then ruling Anga, who provided him assistance in terms of financial resources and personnel. When he felt that he had gathered a

sufficiently strong force, Ramapala attacked the old Pala kingdom-in a bitterly fought battle Bhima II was killed and Ramapala regained his father's throne. A contemporary historical poem, found in Nepal, called Ramacharita written by Sandhyakara Nandi provides graphic descriptions of the battle, the killing of Bhima II, and the recapture of the kingdom.

Ramapala was a vigorous king, ambitious and daring, bent on re-establishing the power of the Palas and extending his territorial holdings after the debacle of losing the kingdom to a hill tribe. This may also have been a reason why his elder brother who was inefficient imprisoned Ramapala in the first instance. He conquered Mithila and North Bihar and then moved towards East Bengal. This region was ruled by Yadavas called Varmans. Ramapala send his chief general Timgyadeva to annex Kamarupa, whose king Harivarman surrendered to the Pala general rather than fight and face destruction of the kingdom. In turn, Ramapala rewarded Timgyadeva by installing him as the governor of Kamarupa.

Buddhism, although in its final decline all over India, continued to flourish as the religion of choice in the Pala dominions during Ramapala's reign. Ramapala led a long life, full of suffering in the early stages, and as king, almost continually campaigning to extend the holdings of the dynasty. His strength of character, sound decision-making skills, and resourcefulness is clearly visible in all the actions that he successfully initiated. During the latter part of his life he handed over the running of his kingdom to his eldest son Rajyapala, withdrawing from kingly duties. It is likely that Rajyapala predeceased him since records show that he was succeeded by another son Kumarapala on the throne. He handed over a kingdom in a much better shape than he had found it when he re-established Pala rule. After installing his son on the throne Ramapala committed ritual suicide by drowning in the River Ganges in C.E 1120.

1.3.3.8. Eclipse and Downfall

The Tibetan historian Taranath writes that Ramapala was the last of his dynasty, which is technically incorrect since there is clear evidence of at least another five kings from the Pala dynasty-recorded in the Dinajpur Pillar-who ruled the kingdom. However, there is no doubt that he was the last powerful king of the dynasty, the successors being men of limited vision and stature. When Kumarapala came to the throne, the Pala kingdom encompassed the whole of Bengal, Bihar and Assam, a sizeable territory by any reckoning. However, the signs of decay and disintegration were already becoming visible.

By the time of Ramapala's death, the some of the feudatories were already functioning with increased autonomy and it was not long before they declared independence. The Gahadvalas and the Kalachuris had started to make inroads into Pala territory from the west; and the governor of Kamarupa, Timgyadeva the old Pala general, was in open rebellion. Kumarapala was an inherently weak personality and died in C.E 1125, completely overwhelmed by the troubles facing the kingdom, leaving it tottering at the brink of collapse. The next king Gopala III is supposed to have ruled for 14 years and then died an unnatural death, details of which are unavailable. He was followed on the throne by his uncle, Madanapala the youngest son of Ramapala, who tried to save the kingdom and the dynasty, but failed.

By the time Madanapala came to power and started to exert himself in an effort to regroup the power of the Palas, the empire and the dynasty were both almost on their death bed. There was on-going conflict with the Gahadavalas with Bihar changing hands at least twice; and the Kalinga king Anantavarma Chodaganaga had increased his power and could not be conclusively defeated, becoming a constant irritant and threat to the Pala kingdom. These continuous wars depleted the Pala treasury and also sapped the energy of the kingdom. However, the greatest threat to the dynasty emanated within Bengal itself-from the Senas of Kasipuri in Radha. In a severe battle at the banks of the River Kalindi in Malda district, Madanapala was defeated and had to surrender the territory of Varendri to the Sena king, presumably Vijayasena. Thereafter the Palas ruled only the Anga territory. Madanapala died in C.E

1161 and is the last king of the Palas about whom detailed information is available. He could be called the last 'known' Pala king.

There is indication that a king named Govindapala was ruling the much diminished Pala territory in C.E 1175 and while he could have been related to Madanapala, he is not considered a direct descendant of the great Pala dynasty. This Govindapala, for some inexplicable reason, titled himself the Lord of Gauda. Further, tradition has it that king Indrayumnapala was on the throne in C.E 1197 at the time of the Muhammadan conquest of Magadha. After this defeat, the Palas fade into obscurity and is not heard of again in the context of the political history of the land that they ruled for nearly five centuries.

Several factors are behind the collapse of the Pala dynasty. It is well known that after the end of the triangular struggle among the Palas, Pratiharas and Rastrakutas, the new powers like the Kalacuris, Candellas, Calukyas and Paramaras carried on raids almost on every opportune occasion. Certainly some of these raids were accompanied with loots and plunders. Political and military glory might have been one of the leading motives but the more material and economic motive was not also perhaps absent. Whoever might have been the victor, these incessant raids were a great strain on the treasury of the Palas.

Again, the feudatories also took utmost advantage of the weakness of the central power to assume a defiant, if not almost independent, attitude. We know of two such cases in Magadha. Two records from Gaya¹ of the 15th year of Nayapala introduce us to one Visvaditya son of Sudraka and grandson of Paritosa. The family seems to have been devoted to religion and constructed temples and installed gods at Gaya. Nothing is known of its political status. Another Gaya inscription of the 5th regnal year of Vighrapala III describes Sudraka in vague terms and records that Visvarupa destroyed his enemies. It is clear that he was a contemporary of Nayapala and Vighrapala III.

The Govindapur *prasasti* of the poet Gangadhara of 1137-28 C.E. introduces us to two princes of the Mana family, namely Magadharaja Varnamana and Rudramana, who ruled towards the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century C.E. The attitude of these two princes towards the Palas is not known. We have already noted that Devaraksita of the Cikkore family and ruler of Pithi, who was subdued by Mathanadeva, might have tried to secede from the Pala kingdom. It seems that at the time of the Kaivarta revolt the Pala feudatories of Magadha were assuming a semi-independent attitude. The history of eastern and western Bengal which will be narrated in the next chapter also shows the same state of things. The verses of the Ramacarita indicate that Divvoka was an officer of the Palas, and the Samanta-cakra at first sided with him.

Taking a broader view of the Pala history, it appears that from the tenth century onwards the Pala power was collapsing. The disruptive tendencies and disintegrating forces were kept in check for the time being by the vigour and energy of Mahlpala I and Ramapala, who tried to revive the Pala suzerainty in eastern India and gave it a longer lease of life. It began to crumble after the death of Ramapala and the task devolved on Vijayasena to found a united kingdom all over Bengal by suppressing all the disintegrating forces, and the death-knell of the tottering Pala kingdom was rung by him.

1.3.4. Administration

Pala Dynasty ruled ancient Bengal and Bihar for over a longer period. The supremacy era of this dynasty witnessed a glorious period in the history of these two states. The dynasty ruled for about four hundred years, the Palas spread their empire far and wide and furthermore their ruling policy oriented towards matchless superiority in the field of arts and literature. The Administration of Pala Dynasty was quite organised system. They always thought about the welfare of the people. In addition to that the Pala dynasty extended their power towards Kanauj in the beginning of the ninth century. It is in the period of the Pala dynasty, that Bengal successfully got involved in politics of northern India.

The system of Administration of Pala Dynasty was monarchial. The king or monarch was the centre of all power. The Pala kings were offered the title of Parameshwar, paramvattaraka or Maharajadhiraja. The structure of Pala administration followed the appointment of the Prime Ministers. Furthermore, the Pala Empire was divided into separate Vuktis (Provinces). These Vuktis were segmented into Vishaya (Divisions) and then Mandala (Districts). Other smaller units were Khandala, Bhaga, Avritti, Chaturaka, and Pattaka.

The Pala kings gave land grants to brahmans, priests and temples. These grants were permanent. They also bestowed land grants on Buddhist monasteries. The land grants carried with them various economic and administrative perquisites. The Pala grants are specifically related to maintenance of law and order and of administration of justice. A Pala grant (802 C.E.) mentions an official in North Bengal called Dasagramika who was given one kula of land as inferred from Manu. Land grants were also given to Kaivartas who were peasants. The pala records (land charters) refer to rajas, Rajputras, Ranakas, Rajarajanakas, Mahasamantas, Mahasamantadhipatis, etc. They were probably feudatories who were given lands in lieu of military services. There is no evidence for sub-infeudation under the Palas.

Administration of Pala Dynasty covered a widespread area from. The Pala kings managed the whole society from the proletariat to the royal court. Their achievements were experienced all throughout. The village level to the central government level was introduced to an exceptional planned structure. According to the history of Pala Dynasty, they inherited an administrative structure from the Guptas. Nevertheless, the administrative system of the Palas was far more efficiently practised. The system introduced arrangement for revenue collection. The administration over all took care of every sphere of public life. During their long period of influence, the Pala Dynasty developed the ferry ghats to the river ways, land routes, trade and commerce, towns and ports, as well as skillfully managed the law and order in the country.

The Pala system of government had a long record of state-officials. The copperplates of the Pala dynasty indicate about the efficient administrative system. Moreover, these copperplates announced the laudable achievement of Administration of Pala Dynasty. The Pala dynasty had the assigned position such as the Raja, or the Mahasamanta (Vassal kings), Mahasandhi-vigrahika (Foreign minister), Duta (Head ambassador), Rajasthaniya (Deputy), Sasthadhikrta (Tax collector). Other important positions in the royal court included Mahaksapatalika (Accountant), Jyesthakayastha (Dealing documents), the Ksetrapa (Head of land use division) and Pramatr (Head of land measurements).

The Administration of Pala Dynasty also featured the Mahadandanayaka or Dharmadhikara (Chief justice), the Mahapratihara (Police forces), Khola (Secret service). Agricultural posts were also allocated and the positions in the society included Gavadhakshya (Head of dairy farms), Chhagadhyakshya (Head of goat farms), Meshadyakshya (Head of sheep farms), Mahishadyakshya (Head of Buffalo farms) and Nakadhyakshya (Aviation ministry). This extensive system of administration and management glorified the power and strength of the Pala rule and allowed them to possess supremacy in northern India till 10th and 11th centuries C.E.

1.3.5. Society under the Palas

The long reign of the Palas formed a glorious period in the history of ancient Bengal. The dynasty had ruled for about four hundred years, a rarity in chronicles of dynastic history. Credits of achievements of Bengal during this long period indeed can be attributed to the glories of the Palas. Widespread empire organised administrative system, ruling policy oriented towards welfare of the people, unprecedented excellence in fields of art and cultivation of knowledge and literature were the achievements and resplendencies of the Pala Empire in Bengal.

Social life during the Pala period was marked by the emergence of feudalism in Bengal. With the emergence of feudalism, hero cult and bravery in warfare also was developed. This hero cult reverberated in the "Nalanda inscription" of Bala Varmana, in the legend of bravery of Hari, the general

of Bhima, in the folk songs. Sacrificing one's life in the battlefield was considered a sacred duty and was highly praised during the reign of the Pala kings in Bengal.

In spite of the Buddhist inclination of the Pala kings, social structure represented the essence of Brahmanism in its organisation according to the caste basis. The Varna or caste system though was not rigid like the preceding eras, yet was deeply rooted within the society and Buddhists had to adjust themselves with that. Though caste system prevailed, the orthodox Brahmanical division had undergone a massive change. The supremacy of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas was no more important in the socio-political life. Though Sandhyakara Nandi describes the Pala kings of Kshatriya origin, yet they did not actually belong to the Kshatriya caste, as later evidences record. The Brahmins were first mentioned in the land grants, which they use to receive predominately. Though Brahmins were accorded first place in the social hierarchy, but in practice, neither Brahmins, nor the Kshatriyas had portrayed any significant part in the public life during the Pala period. Their place was taken by the Karana Kayasthas. Even some Brahmins during the Pala period had chosen the profession of the Karanas. Though "Vyasa Smriti" describes the Kayasthas as Sudras, yet they had ascendancy in the social hierarchy during Pala period. The Ambastha Vaidyas also had dominance during this age. The Kaivartas also possessed control during the Pala realm. The Kaivartas for the first time appeared in pages of history right from the time of the Pala supremacy in Bengal. The liberal social policy of the Palas opened the way for superiority of the Kaivartas during the period. Pala records also mention lower castes like Andhras, Chandalas, Madas, Doms, Savaras etc. They pursued their occupation and also served in the Pala army.

As a whole, though the social structure was based on the rules laid by Brahmanical Hinduism, yet the Pala kings were staunch Buddhists. During this period Buddhism had earned enormous patronage of the Palas. They had restored Buddhism from being completely worsened in 7th century C.E. Though the Palas respected the Brahmanas and their status and theoretically had accepted the Varna system, yet in practice they had granted higher status to the middle Varnas and Sudras.

From the inscriptions and epigraphic evidences of the Pala period, it is known that though the caste system was not so rigid, yet people of the lower castes were considered untouchables. Bhaba-Deva Bhatta in his "Law book" has described the Chandalas, Medas, Savaras, Kapalis as untouchables. They were considered outcasts and lived on the outskirts of villages. The "Charya Padas" refer to the lax sexuality of this class of people, which gradually penetrated into the life of the upper castes. The trading and merchant classes, as also the Kshatriyas had lost their importance in society. This happened probably due to the decline of trade in 7th century C.E. The Varna or caste regulation during the Pala age was extremely flexible. The rigidity in the Varna system did not affect the society of Bengal during the Pala Age, probably due to the absence of 'Smritis' or law books in Bengal. In the Sena period, Bhaba-Deva Bhatta and other Smriti writers had introduced rigidity in the Varna system and the concept of untouchability.

The most glorious aspect of Pala rule was their policy of public-welfare. The Pala rulers were Buddhists, but majority of their subjects were Hindus. Dharmapala had adopted the policy of religious toleration as their state policy. He had declared that he is 'conversant with the precepts of Shastras and he made 'the castes conform to their proper tenets'. This policy was followed by his successors. There is no doubt that Hindu gods and goddesses and Brahmins use to receive liberal patronage from the Pala rulers, though they themselves were devout Buddhists. The Brahmins occupied high official posts. Except one or two, all the Pala copperplates record grant of land to temples of Hindu gods and goddesses or to Brahmins. There is no evidence of any religious discord between the Buddhists and Hindus in the society. Religious toleration and mutual coexistence can be identified as the characteristic of social life of the people during the Pala period.

The everyday lifestyle of the Pala period pinpoints to one of the significant aspects of social life. People led a very simple life and staple food comprised rice, lentil, fish, milk and milk products, gur or sugar, meat and wheat etc. People used to chew betel leaves mixed with spices after meals. Populace

during the Pala Age devoted their leisure in different pastimes. The ruling and upper class people were fond of hunting. But lower class people took hunting as their livelihood. The Paharpur and Moynamoti inscriptions depict such various hunting expeditions. While common men were fond of wrestling, horse racing and chariot racing were the favourite pursuits of higher or aristocratic class. Upper class women spent their leisure in gardening, water sports, dancing, singing etc. A class of courtesans and temple dancing girls were called 'Devdasis'. The Devdasi system was widely prevalent during the Pala society. Garments used by individuals of the Pala period depict the simplicity of lifestyle during that era. Men folk generally wore dhoti and chaddar. Seldom had they used stitched garments for the upper part of the body, resembling fashion of the northwestern community. Women used to wear sarees and scarf. Aristocratic women also used cholis. Jimutavahana had recommended special dress for festive occasions. Dancing girls used to wear special decorative garments. Workers and common men used to wear very short dhoti or a very short cloth, just to cover the waist.

The condition of women in the Pala social order was no better than that of the previous periods. According to Vatsayana, women of Gauda loved luxury. They used to apply vermilion dots on their foreheads and fragrant sandal powder and sandal paste on their body, flower on their hair knots. Upper class ladies living in towns lived in enough pomp and lavishness. But the village women lived a simple, unsophisticated life. Poor women also had to participate in domestic duties with their male partners. Polygamy was still widely prevalent during the Palas. Dowry system was the general practice. Even a groom of the upper class did not hesitate to marry a lower caste bride, if he could draw a good amount from her. Widows were highly detested in the Pala society and they were forced to live a life of penance. The idea of womanhood prevalent throughout the Pala society was to be a good and devoted wife, a caring mother and to be able to suffer the sins committed by her husband. Women from lower caste suffered the most. Self-respect and freedom of women were curtailed in a male predominated society.

On a whole, the Pala period in ancient India had witnessed a period of lingering peace and security in their societal life. Caste system became more flexible and people belonging to different caste and creed were given due respect and status. In spite of the deplorable condition of the fair sex and the poor, social life during the Palas left its mark in the history of ancient India as an era of absolute peace and prosperity. This social peace during the Palas contributed to the prosperity of ancient India in all fields over a long period of time.

1.3.6. Art & Architecture Under the Palas

Art and Architecture of Pala Dynasty In India, during the rule of Palas, art and architecture witnessed a phenomenal development in the states of Bengal and Bihar. The matchless tradition of sculptural art had attained a new position under the reign of Palas. The exclusive development of Art and Architecture of Pala Dynasty demonstrated the emergence of 'Pala School of Sculptural Art'. The characteristic of art and architecture of that period included lot of local phenomena of the Bengali society. Consequently, the most distinctive achievements during the age of the Palas were in the field of art and sculptures.

Art and Architecture of Pala Dynasty furnished the accomplishment in the field of terracotta, sculpture and painting. One of the finest instances of architecture of the Pala period is a creation of Dhamapala, the Somapura Mahavihara at Paharpur. In addition to that several enormous structures of Vikramshila Vihar, Odantpuri Vihar, and Jagaddal Vihar proclaim to be the masterpieces of the Palas. The architectural style of the Pala Empire influenced the whole of the country and its neighbouring countries. Their approach was followed throughout south-eastern Asia, China, Japan, and Tibet.

The matchless examples of the Art and Architecture of Pala Dynasty find their significance in the museums in Bangladesh and West Bengal as the remarkable display. The museums play abode to the innumerable beautiful sculptures on Rajmahal black basalt stone. The sculptures beautifully carved in the Pala period demonstrate the mastery of Pala dynasty. The age saw an upsurge of perfect carving

and Bronze sculptures. Furthermore, it has been recognized by the historians that the specimens of bronzes influenced the art in south-east Asian countries.

Art and Architecture of Pala Dynasty also involved the art of painting also excelled in that period. Though, no exact examples of paintings have been found of that period yet various illustrations of beautiful paintings of the Buddhist gods and goddesses, appearing in the Vajrayana and Tantrayana Buddhist manuscripts corroborate the subsistence of paintings in the Pala Empire. Moreover, with advanced stage of architectural expansion several Buddhist Viharas came originated. The plan of central shrine in the Buddhist Vihara evolved in Bengal during the Pala rule. Other instances demonstrating the brilliance of the art in the Pala period include the terracotta plaques. These plaques are used as the surface decoration of the walls and are recognised as unique creation of the Bengal artists.

1.3.7. Economy During Pala Rule

Under the majestic Palas Bengal had witnessed a protracted period of social peace and material prosperity. Available sources state that the Pala period was marked by economic and material prosperity. The main source of economy during the Pala period was agriculture. The Pala kings usually granted land to the farmers. The chief source of income of the common people was derived from agricultural products of the land granted to them. Rice, sugarcane, mango, bamboo, coconut etc. were the important agricultural products produced during the Pala period. During the Palas, paddy production had become the chief source of economy in Bengal. The "Monghyr inscription" of Devapala refers to mango and fish as the products of land granted by him. "Bhagalpur inscription" of Narayanapala also refers to the production of rice and mango, betel nut etc. as the important agricultural products produced in lands allowed by them.

Salt production also shared a significant position in the agricultural economy during the Pala period. The "Irda inscription" of Nayapala refers to the production of salt. South Midnapore was famous for the production of salt in seawater. North Bengal was famous for the production of Pundri Sugarcane, from which good quality sugar was produced. Various fruits, like jackfruit, date palm, betel nut, coconut, mango and useful articles like bamboo were also grown. The "Paharpur terracotta plate" also refers to banana. Betel leaf was cultivated in a wide scale. Cocoa leaf, long pepper, cardamom, clove were grown and exported to west Asia. High quality cotton was also grown in Bengal. The Chinese traveller of 13th century C.E and the Venetian traveller Marco Polo also referred to the production of fine quality cotton in Bengal. The "Charya Padas" refer to cotton production as the important part of Bengal's economy during the Pala period. Silkworm cultivation was also very popular in Bengal. As a whole, agriculture shared a significant part of the economy during the Pala period.

Apart from agriculture, mineral resources also played an important part in the economy during the Pala period. Mineral resources were abundant during the Palas. Iron ores existed in plenty, in Radha's Jangalkhand and in Bankura and Birbhum districts. Though the use of iron ore was not very extensive, yet the process of smelting ore was well known to the people. Bengal, heart of the Pala Empire, was famous for producing the double-edged sword from the ore. These swords were highly in demand during the Pala period. Copper deposits were found in the Suvarnarekha valley. Diamond ores were available in the Pundravardhana and Tippera Valleys. Kautilya had mentioned about this in his accounts. Pearl was also found in the confluence of the Ganges according to Periplus, though not in plenty.

Historians have opined that Bengal was prosperous and economically affluent during the Pala period. Bengal became a flourishing country, abounding in agriculture and mineral resources. Land grants of the Pala kings referred to the various products grown on the granted land and bamboo groves that grew on that soil as well as tanks full of fishes.

Not only agriculture and mineral resources, Bengal during the Pala period also had witnessed thriving prosperity in the field of industry. Since agricultural products were grown in plenty, industries therefore were mainly agro-based. Textile industry was in high requirement during the Pala period.

Cotton was the principal industry in Bengal. Bengal became the harbour of fine quality cotton fabrics, which made brisk trade of cotton goods with distant countries, like Arab and China. Apart from the production of fine cotton, creation of coarse cotton goods for daily use was also manufactured on a daily basis. Many people had adopted weaving as a profession during the Pala era. Literary evidences during the Pala period recorded the profession of weaving that had become a source of economy for the commons. Silk industry was very popular in Bengal, because it not only owned a domestic market, but foreign market as well. Economy during the Pala period had flourished both in inland and foreign countries. Bengal was also famous for the Sugar industry, next only to the textile industry. Gur (molasses) and sugar was produced in plenty from the sugarcane industry. Gur, being one of the important foods in Bengal, had a huge inland market. According to some scholars, the name 'Gauda' is derived from "Gur". Gur produced in Bengal, during the Pala period was exported to foreign countries like Ceylon, Arabia and Persia. The 13th century C.E Portuguese traveller Barbossa had stated that Bengal during the Pala kings was in huge competition with Southern India in the export of sugar to foreign countries.

Apart from these two major industries, other industries like gold smithy also produced silver and gold ornaments and plates. Black smithy, carpentry, and the brass metal industry also had played an important part in the industrial economy of the Pala period.

Though trade had flourished during the Pala phase, yet it could not attain the thriving popularity like Gupta period. The decline of standard of trade is evident from the debased coins of the Pala period. The scarcity of gold and the silver coins led to the dependence on copper coins. Hence foreign trade had received a great blow during the Palas. Moreover the brisk trade from port of Tamralipta had declined from the time when the course of river Saraswati was altered. During 8th century C.E., trade of the Palas had declined considerably, with the descent of the Tamralipta port. As a result the economic system became entirely dependent on agriculture. Since Bengal had an agrarian climate, therefore agriculture flourished on a huge scale. The flowering agrarian economy gave rise to feudalism in society. Agricultural economy and feudalism had developed simultaneously by crushing the peasants ruthlessly. Hence the Pala epoch though had witnessed material and economic prosperity and affluence, yet it was concentrated within a limited group of the upper class or aristocratic society. Common men were cut-off from financial prosperity during the Palas.

1.3.8. Religion in the Pala Domain

During the Pala Age, Brahmanical Hinduism had gained wider acceptance. But Hinduism was transformed throughout the Palas, due to extreme popularity of Vaishnavism and Shakti cult. Puranic themes and legends dominated religious beliefs of the people. Most of the inscriptions, temples and images of deities during that time depict the essence of Puranic Hinduism. Vedic Hinduism and Vedic gods had passed into oblivion during the Pala era. The Puranic kings and heroes, who had inspired the lifestyle of the upper classes, became widely popular in the Pala phase. The concept of Vishnu became more humanised all through the Pala period, which gave way to the cult of Krishna. Due to the influence of Puranic Hinduism, the concept of Siva underwent a massive change. Lord Siva became a generous, powerful god, oblivious to his own material interests, but always kind towards his devotees. The concept of Siddhidata Ganesha came into vogue, which was much popular among the merchant community. The cult of Saraswati developed as the goddess of learning. Puranic themes were added to the faculties of Vishnu. Lakshmi and Saraswati were considered wives to Lord Vishnu.

Buddhism received a massive impetus during the Palas. However Mahayana Buddhism was further transformed during the Pala period. Philosophical aspects of Mahayana Buddhism were discarded and gradually Tantric practices infiltrated through the Mahayana cult and it came to be known as "Vajrayana". It was said that salvation could be attained by performing 'Bodhichitta'. Another school of Buddhism also had flourished during this period, called "Sahajayana". While the Vajrayanists believed in Mantra Tantra, gods and goddesses, the Sahajayanists discarded all these things. They

completely denied the efficacy of worship, rituals, sacrifices, penance and sufferings for the attainment of salvation. According to them, body is a temple, which could alone bring salvation. Thus both the concept of "Vajrayana" and "Sahajayana" had influenced the socio-religious life of the Pala Age.

All Pala kings were zealous Buddhists. They were liberal with their support to numerous monastic communities and for the upkeep of monasteries with patronage of the learned teachers heading them. Dharmapala reformed the religion although over the years his successors moved towards the Tantric form of Buddhist worship. By the middle years of the Pala rule the practice of Buddhism in Bengal was far removed from the one propagated by its originator, the 'Enlightened One'. It had moved to a completely different space, with no connection to the original concept. The original version relied on a rationalisation of the human condition and was based on the observance of a code of ethics, which was considered inviolate. The trappings associated with conventional religion, its rituals and deities, were anathema and completely ignored. This idealistic situation could not endure for long and over a period of time Buddhism succumbed to the practices of the orthodox religion from which it was trying to separate.

By the time the Pala dynasty reached the zenith of its power, the Buddhist icons were indistinguishable from the Hindu idols. Buddhist religious practice had by now acquired all that was shunned by the Buddha himself and was far removed from the 'Middle Way' that he had preached. In Bengal it also came under Tantric influence. The Tantras originate from a collection of esoteric texts of unknown origin that elaborate and describe difficult practices, which provided the practitioner a chance to commune with divinity and to assume supernatural powers. Its rituals and disciplines are complex and secret. The practice of Tantric rites consists mainly of mantras; yantras; and mudras.

The shift towards a Tantric-influenced worship in the Buddhist religion compromised whatever was appealing in the practice of that religion for the lay person. This proved to be counter-productive for the popularity of Buddhism in the long-term. Over a period of time it became difficult for the common man to differentiate between orthodox Hindu practices and that of the evolving Buddhism, directly contributing to the decline and eclipse of the religion in its last bastion in India.

Apart from Vajrayanas and Sahajayanas, there also developed some other sects, which had attained much popularity during the Pala period. These sects comprised the Nathas, Sahajiya cult etc. According to historians, the bauls of Bengal owe their origin to the Sahajiya cult. Since socio-religious codes during the Pala period were widely flexible, various religious sects apart from Brahmanical Hinduism and Buddhism had flourished with thriving prosperity.

It is during the Pala rule, the spread of Mahayana Buddhism occurred in the countries like Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and the Indonesian archipelago. Several Buddhist scholars of the Pala Empire travelled from Bengal to the Far-East and propagated Buddhism. Outstanding Personalities such as Shantarakshit, Padmanava, Dansree, Bimalamitra, Jinamitra, Muktimitra, Sugatasree, Dansheel, Sambhogabajra, Virachan, Manjughosh and Atish Dipankar Srigyan travelled to the neighbouring countries for the extend of Buddhism.

The long Pala period and the selected Religion during Pala Dynasty produced a commixture atmosphere of Hindu-Buddhist culture. This admixture resulted in the evolution of the sahajiya and tantrik cults. The Palas introduced a heritage of religious-social-cultural synthesis and this can be marked as the glorious achievement of the period and this attribute became a vital ingredient of ancient Bengal.

1.3.9. Conclusion

At the height of their power, the Palas controlled a wide realm and enjoyed extensive influence across entire North India. As the predominant dynasty of the time, they were able to assert the right to reorder the affairs of North India to their own advantage. Bengal was no more at the periphery of Indian polity, but the core of politico-economic and military strength. The century between C.E 780-890, which coincides with the combined rule of Dharmapala and Devapala, can be correctly assumed to be

the most prosperous and greatest years of the Pala rule. The century is known for its marked intellectual and artistic activities and achievements.

The Palas remain one of the most remarkable dynasties to have ruled a large Empire in India. Irrespective of the fact that there were two minor interludes when the Kambojas invaded in the 10th century C.E and thereafter when the Kaivarta's usurped power in the 11th century C.E for a limited period, the Palas were at one time the foremost imperial power of medieval India. Like every other dynasty in Indian history, the Palas vanished from the scene not in a blaze of glory, but in a rather timid manner, gradually becoming irrelevant to the broader political developments, holding on to an ever-decreasing geographical territory, becoming targets of rising and ambitious kings in the neighbourhood, and finally becoming a memory amongst the people. The golden days are remembered in folklore and song as are the faults and foibles of the lesser capable kings.

1.3.10. Summary

- *The Pala Dynasty reined the Indian states of Bihar and Bengal from 8th to the 12th centuries C.E.*
- *The founder of the Pala dynasty was Gopala. His successor, Dharmapala made the dynasty a dominant power of northern India. This dynasty is acknowledged as the Palas because all the rulers had their last names as "Pala" which means protector.*
- *The actual Origin and rise to power was not stated in the Pala records. There are no exact evidences on the origin and ancestry of the Pala. However, scholars suggest that the Pala kings were connected to king Rajabhata of the Buddhist Khadga of eastern Bengal.*
- *The Palas ruled for about four hundred years. This ruling decade by the Pala Dynasty was considered to be the glorious age as Bengal witnessed several achievements.*
- *Social Life during the Pala Period was quite prosperous. The society was dominated by religion but the status of the Vedic Brahmanas declined. Furthermore, the social condition in the days of the Palas was peaceful.*
- *The basis of Administration of Pala Dynasty was monarchial. The center of all power was the King or Monarch. The kings were accompanied by a Prime Ministers and the empire was divided into separate Vuktis or Provinces. Further, these Vuktis were divided into Vishaya (Divisions) and then Mandala was divided into (Districts).*
- *Economic Life during the Pala period introduced the society to a feudal economy. Trade declined and the agro economy flourished, in addition to that minerals also played a role in uplifting the economy of the state.*
- *The Pala Dynasty was the followers of Buddhism. They belonged to the Mahayana Buddhism group. Buddhism as well as Hinduism was the Religion during Pala Dynasty that flourished.*
- *The Palas excelled in art and sculpture and thus they provided distinctive form of Buddhist art. The form of Art and Architecture of Pala Dynasty was identified as the "Pala School of Sculptural Art."*
- *This dynasty ruled the state and continued with eighteen generations of kings. Long struggle against the different dynasty of other part of India, declining economic condition, weak rulers and rise of feudal power finally led the decline and disintegration of the Pala Empire.*

1.3.11. Exercise

- What was the cause of conflict between the three powers during C.E 750-1000?
- Examine the changes that occurred in the society and economy during the Pala rule in Bengal.
- Discuss the career and achievements of Dharmapala.
- Write an essay on the religious condition of Bengal under the Pala dynasty.
- Give an account on the origin and early history of Pala dynasty in Bengal.