

মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

— রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

ভারতের একটা mission আছে, একটা গৌরবময় ভবিষ্যৎ আছে, সেই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের উত্তরাধিকারী আমরাই। নূতন ভারতের মুক্তির ইতিহাস আমরাই রচনা করছি এবং করব। এই বিশ্বাস আছে বলেই আমরা সব দুঃখ কষ্ট সহ্য করতে পারি, অন্ধকারময় বর্তমানকে অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারি, বাস্তবের নিষ্ঠুর সত্যগুলি আদর্শের কঠিন আঘাতে ধূলিসাৎ করতে পারি।

— সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

Any system of education which ignores Indian conditions, requirements, history and sociology is too unscientific to commend itself to any rational support.

— Subhas Chandra Bose

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## **PREFACE**

In a bid to standardise higher education in the country, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) based on five types of courses: core, generic discipline specific elective, and ability/ skill enhancement for graduate students of all programmes at Elective/ Honours level. This brings in the semester pattern, which finds efficacy in tandem with credit system, credit transfer, comprehensive and continuous assessments and a graded pattern of evaluation. The objective is to offer learners ample flexibility to choose from a wide gamut of courses, as also to provide them lateral mobility between various educational institutions in the country where they can carry acquired credits. I am happy to note that the University has been recently accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India (NAAC) with grade “A”.

UGC (Open and Distance Learning programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020 have mandated compliance with CBCS for all the HEIs in this mode. Welcoming this paradigm shift in higher education, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has resolved to adopt CBCS from the academic session 2021-22 at the Under Graduate Degree Programme level. The present syllabus, framed in the spirit of syllabi recommended by UGC, lays due stress on all aspects envisaged in the curricular framework of the apex body on higher education. It will be imparted to learners over the six semesters of the Programme.

Self Learning Materials (SLMs) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. From a logistic point of view, NSOU has embarked upon CBCS presently with SLMs in English. Eventually, these will be translated into Bengali too, for the benefit of learners. As always, we have requisitioned the services of the best academics in each domain for the preparation of new SLMs, and I am sure they will be of commendable academic support. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stake-holders who will participate in the teaching-learning of these study materials. It has been a very challenging task well executed, and I congratulate all concerned in the preparation of these SLMs.

I wish the venture a grand success.

**Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar**

Vice-Chancellor

**Netaji Subhas Open University**

**Under Graduate Degree Programme**

**Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)**

**Subject : Honours in History (HHI)**

**History of India-III (c. 750-1206)**

**Course Code : CC-HI-05**

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**UG: History  
(HHI)**

**History of India-III (c. 750-1206)  
Course Code : CC-HI-05**

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**PAPER-V**  
**HISTORY OF INDIA**

**Module-1**

**Studying Early Medieval India**





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# **Unit - 1 □ Historical Geography–Sources : Texts Epigraphic and Numismatic Data**

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## **Structure**

- 1.0 Objectives**
- 1.1 Introduction**
- 1.2 Texts**
- 1.3 Epigraphic Data**
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- 1.5 Conclusion**
- 1.6 Summary**
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## **1.0 Objectives**

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In this unit, we will come to know about :

- The importance of the study of historical geography
- The sources : epigraphic data and numismatic data

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## **1.1 Introduction**

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Historians depend on a variety of sources to learn about the past. However, it is pertinent to know that while most of the sources of information remain what they were in an earlier period and which included inscriptions, buildings, coins, religious and non-religious literature, there is a marked difference, between the period under discussion and the earlier periods of time. This could be evident from the fact that it was in the medieval period alone that the practice of the writing and recording of history as a distinct discipline took place. In this light we should try to weigh the various sources of medieval Indian History.

The term 'Early Medieval' denotes an intermediate phase between the ancient and the medieval. The time bracket allotted to the early medieval period in India is between 600-1200 EC.

A large number of reliable sources are available for the reconstruction of early medieval period in Indian History. They provide a good deal of insight and knowledge about the condition of those times covering all the aspects of the society, polity, economy and culture.

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## 1.2 Texts

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The decline of the Gupta Empire paved the way for the emergence of the regional powers in North India as well as in South India.

The growth of regional politics was accompanied by the composition of royal biographies by court poets, Banabhatta's Harshacharita is one of the well-known works of this genre. Sandhyakaranandi's Ramacharita is written in shlesha (with double meaning) and simultaneously tells the story of the epic hero Rama and the Pala king Ramapala. The few works of poetry woven around quasi-historical themes or characters included Padmagupta's Navasahasankacharita, which tells the tale of King Sindhuraja Navasahasanka of Malwa, and his winning of the hand of a princess named Shashiprabha. Bilhana wrote the Vikramankadevacharita, a ulogistic work about Vikramaditya VI, the Chalukya king of Kalyani. Hemachandra's Kumarapalacharita (in Sanskrit and Prakrit) tells the story of Kumarapala, king of Anahilavade, while illustrating the rules of grammar. There is uncertainty about the authorship of the incomplete Prithvirajavijaya, which gives an account of the victory of Prithviraja Chauhan over Muhammad of Ghor. Chand Bardais Prithvirajaraso is an epic woven around the exploits of the same Chauhan king. Kalhana's Rajatarangini is a historical chronicle of the rulers of Kashmir from the earliest times upto the 12th century CE.

The early medieval Puranas reflect the increasing popularity of theistic elements within the Hindu cults. They include the Bhagavata Purana (c-10th century), the Brahmavaivarta Purana (composed sometime between the 10th and 16th centuries) and the Kalika Purana (10th / 11th century). Sections on tirthas (pilgrimage), vratas (vows), penance, gifts and the dharma of women were added to the older Puranas during the period. The Upapuranas, many of which were composed in eastern India, are even more valuable for the information they provide on popular beliefs, customs,

and festivals. They can be used to trace the dialogue between Brahmanical and Non-Brahmanical ideas, values, and practices, which resulted in the emergence of distinct regional cultural configurations.

A.D.Mathur (2007) has recently argued that in the early medieval period, Hindu law (vyavahara) emerged from the shadow of dharma and established its independent identity. This was accompanied by an increasing formalization of law and legal procedures, and there was a tendency to empower the state to regulate and arbitrate in the social life of subjects, including with regard to marriage issues. A large number of important and influential Dharmasastra compilations, digests, and commentaries were written during this period. The compilations include the Chaturvimshatimata, which put together the teachings of 24 law-givers. Jimutavahana wrote a work on procedural law called the Vyavaharamatnka and a digest of laws on inheritance called the Dayabhaga, which became extremely influential in Bengal. Major commentaries include those of Medatithi (9th century) Govindaraja (11th / 12th century) and Kulluka (12th century) on the Manu Smriti. Vijnaneshvara (11-12th centuries) and Apararka (12th century) wrote commentaries on the Yajnavalkya Smriti Vijnaneshvara's commentary, titled the Mitakshara, became an authority on various aspects of Hindu law. Other important Dharmashastra works include Lakshmidhara's Kritya Kalpataru (12th century) and Devanabhatta's Smritichandrika (11th-12th century).

Most of the Prakrit works of this period are Jaina texts in the Maharashtra dialect. Their language is marked by artificiality and ornamentation. The few available Pali texts show a strong Sanskrit influence. Apabhramsha represents the last stage of the Prakrit languages, out of which the various modern North Indian languages emerged. Apabhramsha works of this time include several texts on Jaina doctrines and saints, epic poems, short stories and dohas (couplets).

The devotional songs of the Alvars and Nayanars and the hagiographies of the saints were among the important Tamil texts. Vaishnava poetry took off with the compositions of Peyalvar, Puttalvar, and Poikailvar. In the 10th century, Nathamuni collected the Alvar hymns into the canon known as the Nalayira Divya Prabandham. The Alvaravaipavam is a sacred biography of the Vaishnava Saints. Shaiva devotional literature began with the compositions of Tirumular the Nayanmar saints were compiled in the 10th century by Nambi Andar Nambi and this composition formed the core of the Shaiva canon, the Tirumurai. Nambi also wrote a work called the Tiruttondar Tiruvantati about the Saints. In the 12th century, the accounts of the Shaiva saints were collected in a text called the Periyapuram. All these texts provide valuable insights into the religious and social history of early medieval South India.

New genres of Tamil poetry emerged in early medieval times, many in praise of kings and Gods. The Kalambakams were poetic compositions in which the last line, word, foot, or syllable of the preceding poem formed the beginning of the succeeding one. Kovai were poems in which the verses are arranged in a thematic sequence. Compositions in this genre included the Pantikhovali, a 6th/7th century work written in honour of the Pandya King Netumaran. Manikkavachakar's Tirukkovaigar (9th century) in praise of the God Shiva, and Poyyamolip Pulavar's Tanchaivanan Kovai (13th century) about Tanchaivanan, a minister and general of a Pandya king. Ula literature comprised songs in praise of gods, sung when the image of the deity was taken out in procession. Tutu poetry consisted of poems in which a message is delivered to a god, lover and someone else. The moral aphorisms and sayings of Avvaiyar (9th/10th century), the second of three poetesses by this name, are still popular among Tamil speaking people today.

Of the many Tamil renderings of the Rama legend, the most famous is Kamban's Iramavataram. Tamil versions of the Mahabharata story were also written, of which some fragments survive. Several Tamil lexicons and grammatical works belong to the early medieval period.

The earliest Kannada inscriptions date from the 5th/6th century onwards, but the oldest surviving piece of literature in this language is the Kavirajamarga (The Royal Road of the Poets), a 9th century work on poetics. A well developed tradition of prose and poetry must have existed for some time as this work mentions many earlier writers and their works which have not survived.

Karnataka was a stronghold of Jainism and a significant part of early medieval Kannada literature had Jain themes. The best known poets of the 10th century were Pampa, Ponna and Ranna, all of whom wrote Jain Puranas. Pampa, author of the Adi Purana (an account of the life of the first tirthankar Rishabha or Adinatha), also wrote the Vikramarjunavijaya, based on the Mahabharata story. Ponna wrote both in Sanskrit and Kannada and was given the title of Ubhaya-kavi-Chakravarati (imperial poet in both languages). Chavunda Raya, a general and minister under the Ganga Kings, wrote the Trishashtila Kshana Mahapurana, an account of the 24 Jain saints, in continuous prose. In the 12th century, Nagachandra or Abhinava Pampa wrote the Ramachandra Charita purana, one of many Jain versions of the Rama story. The interesting Kannada works of the 12th century include Neminatha's Lilavati, in mixed verse and prose, which tells the love story of a Kadamba Prince and a beautiful Princess.

Although there may have been older works, the earliest surviving work of Telegu literature is Nannaya's 11th century rendering of the first two-and-a-half books of the Mahabharata in mixed verse and prose. This work was written at the request of the eastern Chalukya King Rajarajanarendra. Nannaya laid the foundations of Telegu poetic style, and Telegu tradition gave him the epithet Vaganushasanundu (maker of speech). His style is marked by the use of a variety of Sanskrit and regional metres, and a combination of lengthy Sanskrit compounds with Telegu words.

Tikkana, a minster associated with the court of Manumasiddhi, a ruler based in the Nellore area, added 15 Parvas to Nannaya's Mahabharata and set new trends in narrative style. He also composed a work called the Uttararamayanamu. Another writer who seems to have lived in about this period was Nanne Choda—author of the Kumara-sambhavamu—who describes himself as a ruler of a small principality called Orayuru.

Literary sources offer both direct as well as indirect information about their time. An example of a text that gives direct, useful historical information is the anonymous Lekhapaddahati, a work in Sanskrit and Prakrit composed in Gujarat in about the 13th century which contains models of various types of legal documents. Another example is the Krishi-Parashara, an early medieval text of Bengal, dealing with agriculture. Historical information can also be prised out of texts that appear on the surface to be of little historical value. For instance, Jain folk tales (dharma kathas) of Western India often have merchants as Protagonists, and are a useful source of information on trade and traders. Mathematical texts such as the 9th century Ganitasarasangraha of Mahaviracharya and the 12th century Lilavati of Bhaskaracharya offer incidental information about prices, weights and measures, wages and coins. The early medieval literature of Bengal includes the Darkar Bachan and the Khanar Bachan in old Bengali. These contain aphorisms and wise sayings, mostly concerning agriculture, but also other issues such as family life, illness and astrology.

Apart from indigenous texts, Chinese and Arab accounts are useful sources of information for early medieval India. Foremost among the former are the accounts of the monks Xuanzang (c-600-664 CE) and Yijing (635-713 CE), both of whom visited India. One of Yijing's works gives an account of Buddhist doctrines and practices in India, while the other provides brief biographical sketches of 56 Chinese monks who visited India in the 7th century.

The important Arab works include the 9th-10th century writings of travellers and

geographers as Sulaiman, Al-Masudi, Abu Zaid, Al-Biduri, and Ibn Haukal. Later Arab writers include Al-Biruni, Al-Idrisi, Muhammad Ufi and Ibn Batuta.

Al-Beruni (c-972-1048), the first prominent muslim Indologist was one of the greatest intellectuals of the eleventh century. He accompanied the invading hordes of Mahmud to the Indo-Gangetic valley as a freelance observer. He travelled extensively in various parts of the country, studied the language, religion and philosophy of the Hindus and wrote the classic account of the country and its people in Arabic entitled *Tarikh-ul-Hind*. It is an authentic primary source of information about the socio-religious condition of India of Mahmud of Ghazni's times. It gives a scholarly analysis of the social and religious institutions of the Hindus and throws light on their rich cultural heritage including science and literature. It also gives a dispassionate account of the weaknesses of the Indian character and the shortcomings of their socio-political order which led to their defeat and humiliation at the hands of the invaders.

Utbi, the celebrated author of *Tarikh-i-Yamin-i* or *Kitab-ul-Yamini*, was attached to the personal staff of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. His book is a fine piece of Arabic literature and it gives the story of the rise of the Ghaznavid power under Sabuktigin and describes the character and military exploits of Mahmud upto 1020. A.D. But Utbi was ignorant of Indian languages and his knowledge of Indian topography was also very poor; as a result his description of Mahmud's expeditions is full of mistakes. He was neither a court chronicler nor a professional historian; therefore, his book is deficient in dates and lacks chronological sequence.

Abul Fazl Baihaqi (C.996-1077) was an official Sultan Masud, the successor of Mahmud of Ghazni; he was closely associated with the Ghaznavid court and its nobility. He wrote a ten-volume comprehensive History of the Ghaznavid rulers upto 1059 A.D., entitled *Tarikh-i-Bahaqi* or *Mujallad-i-Baihaqi* (volumes of Baihaqi). He gives an original and refreshing history of reign of his patron, Sultan Masud. The book, though comprehensive, seems to have scribbled in a hurry in colloquial Persian which contains broken sentences, grammatical mistakes and obscure words; the subject matter is not well arranged nor does the author adhere to the chronological narration of events.

Persian was the language of royal courts and high culture in West Asia in early medieval times, and a number of Persian texts refer to India. The anonymous *Chachnama* describes how a Brahmana named Chach usurped the throne of Sind in the mid 7th century and narrates the Arab conquest of that region by Muhammad bin Qasim. The *Shahnama* of Firdausi, a classic of Persian poetry, and the *Gulistan* by the famous poet Saadi, refer incidentally to aspects of Indian trade.

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### 1.3 Epigraphic / Inscriptions

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Epigraphic / Inscriptions are writings engraved on solid surfaces such as rocks, stones, temple walls and metals. The King's royal decrees, dedications and donations, monuments raised in commemoration of victories in wars, those built in memory of deceased warriors, contain rich information about the concerned era. Copper plate grants, which were treated as legal documents, have significant source value. The Islamic-Persian practices and the relatively high cost of copper plates made palm leaf and paper cheaper alternatives from 13th century onwards.

Cynthia Talbot explains as how historical processes can be tracked more objectively through the medium of inscriptions in a manner in which it could not possibly be done with medieval literary sources. Inscriptions offer a view of history which has far more diverse group of actors engaged in a larger range of activities and a broad spectrum of society. Inscriptions make available specific contexts of time and place that are lacking of many literary text from the medieval period. It is largely unconcerned with the historical present or even with the notion of historical change. Further, the literary texts might differ in opinion because they were composed at a different point in time and by different people. In contrast, inscriptions capture and preserve discrete moments in time as a record of specific events. They are almost customarily dated and are generally situated where they were originally placed. We find most of them usually on the walls or structural columns of a temple building or on a stone slab or pillar within the temple complex.

Cynthia Talbot has relied heavily upon a particular kind of historical source materials and medieval stone inscriptions, for writing the history of the medieval Andhra region. Since stone inscription from medieval South India, typically record religious donations, a history constructed from it, therefore gets great importance to the documented activities of real individuals. Epigraphic texts describe the kind of property given away and also provide other useful details like the date on which a gift was made, the donor's name his/ her family background and personal accomplishments, and praise of the monarch.

Talbot believes that groups represented in inscriptions are considerably more diverse than elite literary compositions' would provide. So, along with the Kings and Brahmins, the inscription of the period also mention merchants, landed peasants, herders, and warrior chiefs, along with their wives, daughters, mothers and sisters. Thus inscriptions enable us to trace individual actors in history. It gives us a diversified



picture of society and are, therefore, a more reliable primary source of information about the people in this period of time.

Kesavan Veluthat also makes use of the inscriptions in this period for his study of the political structure of medieval South India. He has divided these inscriptions into two broad categories: a) the copper plate grants with a Sanskrit Prasasti in the beginning followed by a statement in Tamil, which in most cases is a record of the grant of a piece of land to Brahmins, temples or other religious institutions and b) the stone inscriptions, mostly in Tamil (or in Malayalam in the case of the Cera kingdom) generally record land or property transactions made by temple committees and other local groups. The Tamil inscriptions record the details of the gift in question, with much attention paid to matters like land boundaries, terms and conditions and witnesses. These records are the title deeds of property and are hence preserved in the lockers of the owners and are not meant for public viewing.

On the other hand, the stone inscriptions record property transactions. This includes the assignment of land endowed to temples, the managenat of cattle wendowed for the maintenance of 'perpetual' temple lamps and other similar matters. Obviously, these records deal with the more important sections of society such as land owners—both Brahmin and non-Brahmin—merchants and other notables. Thus, they keep out certain other major aspects of social life, not covered by the scope of these records.

Veluthat argues that it was always possible for the historian to be misled by statements which could well have been an exaggerated account of actuality and the veracity of which was highly suspected. The speculation and generalization on the basis of inscriptional statement can well be replaced by systematic treatment of available data. For example, in the case of the Chola region, the fabulously rich data, contained in numerous inscriptions, has been to the delight of the many historians engaged in a study of this period, subjected to computational analysis.

Naboru Karashima says that the main sources, for the study of the Chola villages, are the contemporary inscriptions which usually record the various donations made to temples. These inscriptions are, however, mostly concerned only with the brahmadeya villages and very little information on non-brahmadeya villages can be gathered from them. In his study Karashima has used one brahmadeya (Isanamangalam) and one non-brahmadeya (Allur) village of the early Chola times in the 9th and 10th centuries. The purpose of his study is to contribute to a more general understanding of the two kinds of Chola village community. He focuses on two major points in his

thesis—land tenure and the social stratification of the community. The source materials of his study are thirty stone inscriptions, which record land donations made to temples or tax remission of the land. Twenty-one inscriptions, which concern Isanamangalam of the early Chola times, are from the Chandrasekhara temple of Tiruchchendurai in Tiruchirappalli Taluk, Tiruchirappalli District, and nine inscriptions, which concern Allur, are from the Pasupatisvara temple of Allur of the same taluk. These two villages were in the same locality on the southern side of the Kaveri river.

It is interesting to note that until the 1960's, inscriptions were mainly read in order to build a chronological framework for regional dynasties, and so it was only the tenure of kings and the important political events mentioned in them, that interested scholars. Over the recent few years, information relating to the functioning of temple institutions, the role of religious patronage and the nature of political structures has also been extracted from epigraphic records and has been put to statistical analysis. The primary criterion, in a statistical analysis of this kind, is the number of endowments received by a temple, the identity of the donar, the location of the temple, and the nature of the gift object. Furthermore, in organising information drawn from inscriptions, historians are trying to apply categories that are inherently more meaningful and relate better to the people under study.

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## 1.4 Numismatic Data

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Edward Thomas was the first, among the modern historiographers of medieval India, to make extensive use of numismatic (the study of coins). Coins are not only a valuable source for reconstructing the dates of historical events, but they also give us an insight into the economic conditions of the period under study.

Medieval states, with their many ruling dynasties and kings, issued their own coins. These coins, in their own time, normally carried the same value as that of the metal used in manufacturing the coins. Since these coins were controlled and monitored by the state, they provide us with an almost unparalleled series of historical documents. They make available before us the life and times of those who had issued them. They weave the texture of history into their being and are therefore interesting in the context of the changing times. There is hardly any scope of manipulating the information based on coins and so they furnish us with authentic, true information.

In India, we do not possess much literature of the early medieval period and so coins become a very significant source of historical evidence in the modern sense of

the word. Coins can shed light upon diverse facts about rulers, their names, dynasties, their thoughts and actions. These facts are well enough illustrated on our coins. So the study of coins is an integral part of history. Likewise, coins add to and supplement the information that can be obtained from other sources. This could well be said of the Chola period.

Historians like R.S. Sharma argue that the numismatic picture, in the period ranging from the reign of the Guptas to the advent of the Muslims in India in the 12th century A.D. is extremely dismal. Gold coins are rare silver coins are few in number and copper coins are even rarer. R.S. Sharma looks at these developments to indicate the collapse of the coinage system. But we cannot be sure of this. There is a possibility that most of the gold and silver coins might have disappeared as booty during the invasions of Mahmud Ghazni. What we have been able to get, through archaeological excavations, are the base metal coins of lower denominations alone.

P.L. Gupta provides a very interesting fact gleaned from Turkish coins. Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori, the early Muslim invaders of India, have been portrayed by historians as inconclasts, who were virulently anti-Hinduism. However, their coins tell an altogether different story. Mahmud Ghazni had placed the true translation of the Kalima in Sanskrit and in Nagara characters—the language and script of the infidels and the kafirs, that is, the Hindus. Mohammad Ghori had stamped the figure of Lakshmi on his gold coins and had his name inscribed in Nagara characters. The coins tell us that this early Turkish invader was, in all likelihood little liberal in religious outlook than most other Muslim rulers who came to the throne of Delhi after him. Likewise, coins are also a very important source of information on economic history.

Apart from history, coins have also an aesthetic and artistic value. The dies, from which coins were struck, were the work of the artists of the day. So they reflect the workmanship of the artists and also the aesthetic tastes of the people of those times. The portraits of the kings and other important political figures on the Chola coins reflect the art of inscribing and minting at its best. They present before us a very accurate portrayal of the monarchy. The Cholas issued some gold coins, but these vary considerably in terms of the quality and weight of the gold used, and are at times merely gold-washed. However, a large number of silver coins were issued in the South.

With the advent of the Muslims in India, Indian coinage assumed an entirely new pattern. The coins of earlier times had pictorial or heraldic devices at least on one

side. During the Turkish rule, the Sultanate coins carried inscriptions on both sides either in Arabic or in the Persian script. In Islam, the inscribing of the ruler's name on the coins was invested with special importance. This license, with the reading of his name in the Khutba (public prayer) implied the definite assumption of legal power by him. It became the practice and prerogative of the Muslim rulers to issue coins on each occasion of victory over a country or kingdom or even a fort or a town, and to record on them their names with all their titles and the date in the Hijri era and the place of issue of the coins. The crusading zeal of the early Khalifas of Syria in the eighth century A.D. had introduced the Kalima or profession of faith—Lailah-il-illah- Muhammad-Ur-Rasool Allah (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah) Later this formed part of the Muslim coins, In India too, the Kalima was used on the coins.

Mohammad Ghori, after defeating Prithviraj Chauhan and his allies in the second battle of Thaneshvara or Tarain in 1192, struck gold coins in imitation of the coins that were current in the country. Each coin had the name Sri Mohammad bin Sam—inscribed in Nagari upon it and on the obverse, was placed an image of the seated Lakshmi. Qutub-uddin Aibak was the first Sultan to set up his capital in Delhi, but no coin, bearing his name, has so far been found.

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## 1.5 Conclusion

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The various literary and archaeological sources for early medieval India have their own specific potential as well as limitations, which have to be taken into account by the historian. Interpretation is integral to analysing the evidence from ancient texts archaeological sites inscriptions, and coins wherever several sources are available. Their evidence has to be corrected. The correlation of evidence from texts and archaeology is especially important for a more comprehensive and inclusive history of early medieval India. However, given the inherent differences in the nature of literary and archaeological data it is not always easy to integrate them into a smooth and seamless narrative.

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## 1.6 Summary

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The Sanskrit literature of the early medieval period has usually been described as characterized by pedantry, ornateness and artificiality. The literature includes philosophical commentaries and religious texts, bhāṣas (monologue plays), stotras

(hymn compositions), story literature and anthologies of poetry. Historical and epic-Puranic themes were popular in Kavya. The technical literature includes works on metre, grammar, lexicography, poetics, music, architecture, medicine and mathematics.

The growth of regional politics was accompanied by the composition of royal biographies by court poets.

The early medieval Puranas reflect the increasing popularity of theistic elements within the Hindu cults.

Most of the Prakrit works of this period are Jaina texts in the Maharashtri dialect.

The devotional songs of the Alvars and Nayanmars and the hagiographies of the saints were among the important Tamil texts.

Apart from indigenous texts, Chinese and Arab accounts are useful sources of information for early medieval India.

Inscriptions continue to form a major source of historical information for c. 600-1200 CE. The interpretation of the epigraphic data is in fact central to the major debates concerning the major debates concerning this period. The assessment of the early medieval numismatic evidence is an issue of debate.

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## 1.7 Model Questions

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1. What are the different kinds of sources for studying early medieval Indian History. Give a brief description of each.
2. Discuss the significance of studying the coinage system of early medieval India.
3. What, in your opinion, is the authenticity of indigenous literature?

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## 1.8 Suggested Readings

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Singh, Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India* (Pearson)

Singh, Vipul, *Interpreting Medieval India Vol-I* (Macmillan).

Asher, Catherine B. & Talbot, Cynthia, *India before Europe*, CUP.

Eaton, Richard M., *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765*, Allen Lane.

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## **Unit - 2 □ Debates on Indian Feudalism**

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### **Structure**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **2.2 Feudalism Debate**

#### **2.3 Conclusion**

#### **2.4 Summary**

#### **2.5 Model Questions**

#### **2.6 Suggested Readings**

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### **2.0 Objectives**

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In this unit, we will study the following points on the debate on Indian feudalism:

- Debates on the Indian feudalism
- Recent historiography of Indian feudalism

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### **2.1 Introduction**

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There is a great deal of confusion and innumerable controversies regarding the agrarian structure during the post-Gupta period. The whole confusion hinge around the practice of land grants which were made during this period, both for secular and religious purposes. But the main controversy on the subject centres around the nature and extent of the feudal system which is said to have come into existence on account of the practice of land grants.

The existing historiography of the early medieval period has been classified broadly into two sets of propositions termed as 'Changeless' and 'Change'. The first proposition tries to explain that traditional polity is essentially changeless. Historians, relying on this hypothesis have described polity in early medieval India as 'traditional' or as 'Oriental despotic'. Karl Marx characterised the Indian state in terms of Asiatic Mode of production having absolute power of oriental despotic rulers. Through his explanation of Asiatic Mode of production, Marx has excluded the pre-modern Asia, including India from the orthodox mode of production of slaves and feudal societies.

He thus postulated special mode of production in the context of India. Marx's concept was however, challenged by Indian Marxist historians like R.S. Sharma and Irfan Habib. Hermann Kulke also says that Marx's model of 'oriental despotism' was an outcome of 'occidental prejudice against an alleged oriental despotism.

Recent research shows that the period witnessed many dynamics of change. Most of the works on the 'change' hypothesis came up in the post independence period. These writings envisage the possibility of change as against an earlier version which staunchly believed in the essential changelessness of Indian polity. One of the first models to have ever come up with the assumption of change is the 'centralised state model'. Change, according to historians supporting this model was conceived and understood only in terms of territorial and dynastic changes in the empire. In other words, change is viewed as indicating instability as opposed to the idea of a centralised state. This approach does not give a holistic picture of the early Indian society, and is therefore not very helpful in gaining an insight into the processes involved in state formation during the period under study. Another model, and of late the most dominant premise, is based upon the assumption of dynamism or change. It is also referred to as the 'Indian Feudalism model'. One of the richest historical debates i.e. the feudalism debate revolve around this period. It is dubbed by B.D. Chattopadhyay as a period which long remained a much maligned period of Indian history. This period is seen in Marxist historiography as a breakdown of the civilizational matrix of early historic India. Breakdown is envisaged in terms of social crisis.

Another issue that saw much disagreement among historians relates to the nature of the polity in the period. Different genres of historians agree that there was a shift in the nature of polity of the post 600CE phase from that of the pre 600CE days but the causative factors responsible for this changing scenario are not unanimously identified.

Marxist scholar like R.S. Sharma, B.N.S. Yadav and the likes view early medieval polity as one of decentralization and disintegration in sharp contrast to early historical polity which encouraged forces of centripetality. According to this historiography, decentralization and disintegration is to be posited against the background of the emergence and crystallization of Indian feudalism. B.D. Chattopadhyay does not, however, see the making of early medieval India in terms of the crisis of a pre-existent, pan Indian social order. He is not in favour of perceiving early medieval phase only in terms of feudal formation. On the other hand he identifies three major

processes which were operative throughout Indian History viz. a) the expansion of state society through the process of local state formation, b) peasantization of tribe and caste formation and c) cult appropriation and integration.

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## 2.2 Feudalism Debate

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It will be in order to briefly discuss the contours of the feudalism debate that has shaped up in Indian History. The concept of feudalism is a borrowing from European historiography. Combined with the notion of social formation it is the seminal empirical writings of Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch which have perhaps served as models for those who began seriously working out empirical validation of feudalism as a social formation in Indian History.

The first assimilation of feudalism in the Indian context occurred at the hands of Col. James Todd, the celebrated compiler of the annals of Rajasthan's history in the early part of the 19th century. For Todd as for most European historians of his time in Europe, lord-vassal relationship constituted the core of feudalism. The lord in medieval Europe looked after the security and subsistence of his vassals and they in turn rendered military and other services to the lord. A sense of loyalty also tied the vassal to the lord in perpetuity. For him the pattern was replicated in Rajasthan.

D.D. Kosambi gave feudalism a significant place in the context of socio-economic history. He conceptualised the growth of feudalism in Indian history as a two-way process : from above and from below in his landmark book, *An introduction to the study of Indian History*, (first published in 1956).

Feudalism from above according to him, means a state wherein a king levied tribute from subordinates who still ruled in their own right as long as they paid to the king. They did what they liked in their own territory. By 'feudalism from below' Kosambi meant a stage where a class of landowners developed between the state and the peasantry within the village to wield armed power over the local population. The second kind, according to him, began after the emergence of Delhi Sultanate. Kosambi explains that, whereas in 'Feudalism from above' the taxes were collected directly by the royal officials, in 'feudalism from below' taxes were collected by small intermediaries who passed on a fraction to the feudal hierarchy.

Later, the most important theoretical construct, that contributed towards a better understanding of the early medieval period was developed by R.S. Sharma. He argued that the period between 750-1200 was a period when a number of changes took place



in Indian society. R.S. Sharma was of the view that an ever increasing number of land grants have been made to Brahmins, religious institutions and much later on to government officials in the post-Gupta period. He indicated the fact that grantees were being endowed with more and more concessions and were now increasingly encroaching on communal village land which led to the exploitation of the peasantry. The hereditary land holders gradually assumed many of the functions of the government. They not only got the power to collect revenue, but also had administrative powers like rights of awarding punishments and exacting fines. They also assumed the right to sublet their lands.

According to R.S. Sharma, this situation was further aggravated by a decline in urbanism and trade particularly in foreign trade. Another factor was the paucity of coins. Thus economically, this period, according to R.S. Sharma, was one of decay and decline. He described the period, in political terms, as one which stood witness to continuous process of fragmentation and decentralisation caused by the widespread practice of granting land holdings to feudatories and officials who established their control over these territories and emerged as independent potentates.

The crux of Sharma's argument, therefore, is that feudal polity emerged from the gradual breakdown of a centralised bureaucratic state system, the best example of which was the Mauryan state. The system of assigning land gradually became widespread in the early mediaval period and was tied up with the transfer of the rights of administration of the centralized state as well as its right over sources of revenue. This process gradually eroded the authority of the state and resulted in a weakened sense of sovereignty.

B.N.S. Yadav, another proponent of the Indian Feudalism model, found new evidence of an increasing practice of land-grants made to military officers during the post Gupta period and which imposed added restrictions on the mobility of peasants. B.N.S. Yadav, who seems to be influenced by the writers of Marc Bloch and Max Weber, shifted emphasis towards the political aspects of feudalism. For him, the most important feature of Indian feudalism was the samanta or the independent neighbouring chief, who rose to prominence in about 600 or so. In the new conception of empire, the territorial aspect was no longer important. In its place, the extension of the tributary system became important. According to Yadav, such empires were at best tributary superstructures and therefore lacked solidarity, stability and political unity. R.S. Sharma calls this type of agrarian set up as essentially feudal in nature, based as it was on the pan-Indian character.

The salient features of Indian feudalism were as follows :

R.S. Sharma says that the disintegration of polity was one of the first characteristics of the period. This process was antithetical to the centralised polity of the Mauryan period. It got consolidated in the post-Gupta period. The essential characteristics of the state included : vertical gradation, division of sovereignty and the emergence of a separate category of semi- independent rulers also referred to as the samantas or the mahasamantas. The period saw the emergence of landed intermediaries, who soon rose to ascendancy in the social hierarchy. Vassals, officers of the state and other secular assignees, also called samantas, had diverse military obligations. Sub-infeudation, by the recipients of land grants to get their land cultivated by others, led to the growth of a different strata of intermediaries. It was a hierarchy of landed aristocrats, tenants, share croppers and cultivators. This hierarchy was also reflected in the administrative structure, where a sort of lord-vassal relationship emerged. There was also a prevalence of land grants, bestowed mainly upon Brahmins or religious institutions, in the initial period dating from the early centuries of the Christian era to later times. In the post-Gupta phase, land grants were made to individuals for other somewhat more secular purposes.

R.S. Sharma also talks about the prevalence of forced labour. The right of extracting forced labour (*vishti*) is believed to have been exercised by the Brahmanas and other powerful land grantees. Forced labour was originally a prerogative of the king or the state. It was later transferred to the grantees, petty officials, village authorities and various others. As a result, a kind of serfdom emerged, in which agricultural labourers were reduced to the position of semi-serfs. However, according to Harbans Mukhia, such a situation of *begar* or *vishti* was exceptional rather than a rule.

Sharma also argues that, on account of the growing claims of the greater rights of rulers and intermediaries over unfortunate peasants, resulted in the colossal suffering of the latter. Peasants not only experienced the severe curtailment of their land rights, but were also reduced to the position of tenants faced with the ever-growing threat of eviction. A number of peasants were only share-croppers (*ardhikas*). Factors like the ever-on-the-rise taxes, coercion and rapidly escalating debts made the lot of the peasants even more unfortunate.

An important constituent of Indian Feudalism was a decline in the market economy, trade and urbanism. Services were paid for through land assignments. With the growth of an agrarian economy, social relations in the rural areas underwent an even greater sense of transformation due to the movement of groups into rural areas and the consolidation of the *jajmani* (patron-client) system. The peasants were subjected to

high taxation, compulsory labour and were deprived of the right to mobility. They could no longer freely move from one place to another.

Sharma says that one unique characteristic of the post-Gupta period was the emergence of social stratification. This was brought about on account of the prevalence of a concept called varnasankara, which could be, roughly speaking, understood as the intermixture of the castes, a phenomenon which had originated in the pre-Gupta period. This process of intermingling, which resulted in the emergence and rapid proliferation of new caste groups, gained greater strength and added momentum in the post-Gupta period. Due to this phenomenon many new categories like those of the Kayasthas and the untouchables, came into existence. According to R.S. Sharma, the basis of the ideology and culture of this period was Bhakti a concept which was analogous to the feudal construct since both relied upon attributes like fealty and faithfulness the deterioration in the sphere of religious practices—such as the development of Tantrism, the development of a court culture, and the emergence of the landed intermediaries to the crystallisation of the feudal ideology.

The construct of Indian Feudalism by R.S. Sharma drew criticism from scholars like D.C. Sircar who was of the view that, compared to the proven, beyond scope of doubt, belief that a large number of grants were made to Brahmins and other religious institutions, there was scant evidence of the existence of land grants of a secular kind with service tenures.

Several historians criticized the notion of the decline of trade and urban centres D.N.Jha had criticized R.S. Sharma for relying too heavily on the absence of long distance external trade as the cause of the rise of feudalism in India.

B.D. Chattopadhyay had questioned the theory of urban decay and the decline of trade in the post-Gupta period, a very essential premise of the feudalism argument. He has shown that there are enough evidence to show urban development and not decay in early medieval India, to have happened at least a century earlier. Ranabir Chakravarty has brought forward ample evidence of flourishing trade, different categories of merchants and market centres in the concerned period. The monetary anaemia thesis fundamental to the formulation of Indian feudalism, has also been put under severe strain by recent researches of B.D. Chattopadhyay and B.N. Mukherjee and Joyns Deyell who seriously undermined the assumption of the scarcity of money. Premise of the feudalism argument. An even harsher point of view has come from Harbans Mukhia. Mukhia is of the opinion that Indian feudalism could well have been a non-existent, make belief construct for which there was no supporting evidence. He pointed out that, in the European context, feudalism emerged due to changes in

society, whereas in India, the establishment of feudalism has been attributed to the state practice of making landgrants. He is of the view that feudalism which is a very complex socio-political structure could not have possibly been a state imposition, which granted more ground and later became more firmly entrenched on Indian soil through administrative and legal procedures. Harbans Mukhia also expressed virulent disbelief in the existence of serfdom. He argued that the Indian peasantry has always been predominantly free.

Harbans Mukhia goes on to compare the medieval Indian scenario with that of the scenario in medieval Europe at the empirical level. Can feudalism be at all conceived as a universal system, is Mukhia's question poser. It was the force of consumption rather than the profit motive that was the driving force behind pre-capitalist economic systems and it was this that limited their capacity for expansion beyond the local or the regional level.

Mukhia says that, even within the same region, the variations are so numerous that some of the most established historians of medieval Europe such as George Duby and Jacques Le Goff, tend to avoid the use of the term feudalism altogether. Mukhia came up with a comparative appraisal of the history of medieval Western Europe with that of what was happening in medieval India. He chose to focus his study on three major concerns—the ecological conditions, the technology available and the social organisation of forms of labour used in the agriculture of the two regions concerned. Mukhia explains that, as opposed to Europe, Indian ecology was marked by almost ten months of sunshine, a fact that was conducive to agricultural processes. Because of the intense heat, followed by rainfall, the upper crust of the soil was made more fertile, and therefore, did not require deep or intensive labour. The hump on the Indian bull allowed peasants to use the bull's drought power maximally for it, allowed the plough to be placed on the bull's shoulder; however the plain back of the Indian bull's European counterpart could not support the plough which would inevitably slide downwards on being pulled. It took centuries of technological improvement to facilitate the full use of the bull's drawing power on medieval European fields. Land productivity was also much higher in medieval India. Besides, most Indian lands yielded two crops a year, something unheard of in Europe until the 19th century.

Mukhia says that the fundamental difference in condition in India, compared to those in Europe, also made it imperative that the forms of labour use in agriculture should follow a different pattern. Begar or tied labour, paid or unpaid, was seldom part of the process of production here. It was used more for non-productive purposes

where peasants would carry the Zamindar's load or possession on his head, or be required to supply oil or milk to the Zamindar's or the Jagirdar's homes on his specific occasions. We do not, therefore, witness the same levels of technological breakthrough and transformation of production process in medieval India as we see in medieval Europe, although it must be emphasized that neither technology, nor the process of agricultural production was static or unchanged in India.

Harbans Mukhia is of the view that the medieval Indian system was marked by a 'free peasant economy'. A free peasant was understood to be entirely different from the medieval European serf. Whereas the serfs labour for the purpose of agricultural production was set under the control of the lord, the labour of his Indian counterpart was under his own control. What was subject to the state's control was the amount of produce of the land in the form of revenue. A crucial difference here was that the resolution of tension over the control of labour resulted in transformation of the production system from feudal to capitalist in European agriculture from the 12th century onwards, in India tension over revenue did not affect the production system as such and its transformation began to seep in only in the 12th century under a different set of circumstances.

B.D. Chattopadhyay agrees that the existence of land grants cannot be denied, nor can the presence of the contractual element in these land grants be negated completely. He also accepts that the system of assignments did bring in important changes in agrarian relations. However, he points out that all this does not help to explain the origin of feudal polity. Instead, he considers land grants as an important but not the sole criteria for understanding the structure of polity. While subjecting the single line argument for the formation of polity to skeptical inquiry, Chattopadhyay is of the view that no system can be totally centralised, indicating thereby that the problem should be addressed from another stand point altogether. This leads us to studies on the complex inter relationship between the socio-economic and political aspects that have shaped the formation of early medieval politics.

Chattopadhyay tries to give a fresh look at the formation of polity in early medieval India and it is this that has led historians to reinterpret developments from a macro to a micro-level. This new group of historians, led by him, has perceived political changes through the integration of and interrelationship between socio-economic and political processes. The process of change, according to these historians, has been a result of the emergence and gradual development of a 'state society' (formation of ruling lineages). Thus 'pre-state polities' gradually evolved into state polities and it was this that resulted in the assimilation of local polities into

larger state structures. B.D. Chattopadhyay explains that the establishment of larger polities took place in nuclear areas.

According to Herman Kulke this process of the expansion of state society through the transformation of pre-state polities into state polities, was based on and progressed along with certain other crucial phenomena. One of these was the emergence and spatial expansion of ruling lineages, This was achieved through what he calls a process of Kshatriyaisation or Rajputisation.

B.D. Chattopadhyay also highlights the formation of ruling lineages from the perspective of the process of social mobility in early medieval India. He explains that through Kshatriyaisation, any lineage or segment of a large ethnic group could make an attempt to assume political power and establish a large state structure by an effective mobilisation of force. Ruling lineages owed their origin to the expansion of agricultural settlements. This development was heightened by improvement of agricultural techniques and the transformation of tribal groups into peasant groups, which helped in the colonisation of new areas and the emergence of a state structure. Although this period was marked by the emergence of many ruling lineages which could not find permanent rootedness in a geographical region for any significant duration of time, who faded into oblivion in due course of time. Several other lineages emerged as offshoots of the same clan. New political powers emerged through expansion into new regions.

The model developed by Chattopadhyay is called Integrative Polity which linked the process of the formation of state polities with economic and social processes. He has successfully been able to link the expansion of agrarian society through the peasantisation of tribal groups. The integrative polity, like the feudal polity, also sees political processes in the context of contemporary economic social and religious developments such as the horizontal spread of rural agrarian settlements, the horizontal spread of the dominant ideology of the social order based on the varna division, integration of local cults, rituals and sacred centres/places into a large structure. But, at the same time in the 'feudalism' and 'segmentary state models that Burton Stein is talking about land grants to Brahmins and temples are attributed a 'divisive' and hence negative role leading to a process of the fragmentation of political authority and the resultant strengthening of a segmentary structure of state. However, as B.D. Chattopadhyay points out in his model of Integrative polity, administrative measures like brahmadeyas and devedanas helped in providing legitimacy to the temporal power in the area occupied by them. During the process of the spread of a lineage society, several cults and practices of lineage groups were brought into a uniform framework and the precepts of Bhakti provided the basis for this integration. The

temple served as the focal point of the Bhakti ideology. The religious cults and traditions, which were institutionalised and integrated through the temple and the principles of Bhakti, became an instrument for legitimising state power.

B.D. Chattopadhyay expresses his scepticism about the decentralised polity standpoint and while conceding the fact that in the samanta scheme of things the relationship between the overlord and his subordinate was an admittedly hierarchical and unequal one—also felt that this inequitable world did not necessarily result in centrifugal and disruptive tendencies. In fact contrary to expectation, it actually served as cohesive force and an instrument of integration. The expansion of ruling lineages horizontally was brought about due to many factors like a growth in agricultural settlements and the transformation of tribes into peasant groups (which B.D. Chattopadhyay prefers to call the peasantisation of tribes). This type of polity could sustain itself only through the hierarchical feudatory (Samanta) system in which administrative powers and resources had to be parcelled out. A local and regional ruling lineage could emerge as a supra local power only with the aid—military and otherwise of other lineages and this necessitated a hierarchical system based on gradation. Thus, according to Chattopadhyay, rather than decentralised in character.

A major trait of the individuality of the early medieval South Indian polity can be seen in the vital local self bodies of the Pallava and the Chola regime. The local self bodies made their presence strongly felt in the political life within a monarchical set up. The general tendency in a monarchical set up is to undermine the vitality of local self-bodies and to wipe out their existence. N.K. Shastri opined that the Chola monarchy was an intelligent juxtaposition of an extremely powerful monarchy at the apex level and the overwhelming presence of local self bodies at the villages.

This proposition has been negated by an alternative explanation of the phenomenal presence of local self bodies in South Indian polity. The theoretical model known as the segmentary state theory, also questions the inadequacy of the feudal model as a tool to explain the prevailing polity in South India. Inspired by the Studies of East African Alur Society by A. Southall Burton Stein located the segmentary polity from Pallava times. The segmentary theory views the king as having enjoyed only limited territorial sovereignty. The element of centrality existed only in the core area even where the presence of quasi autonomous foci of administration was tolerated by the Cholas. The real foci of power are suggested to have been the locality level centers or nodus. Stein distinguishes sharply between actual political control on one side and ritual sovereignty on the other. All the centres of the segmentary state do exercise actual political control over their own part or segment, but only one center the

primary center of the ruling dynasty has the primary of extending ritual sovereignty beyond its own border. The absence of an organised bureaucracy forced the Chola monarch to fall back instead on ritual sovereignty in which the position of the ruler required to be legitimized and validated by the Brahmana Priest. Stein confines ritual sovereignty mainly to the state cult exemplified in the royal Siva cult of Rajaraja's Rajrajasvara temple at Tanjore. R.S. Sharma after major criticisms from different quarters defended his thesis of Indian feudalism in a paper called, 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?'. Since Sharma had faced much criticism for looking at the rise of feudalism in India entirely as a consequence of state action in transferring land to intermediaries, he modified his earlier stance and construction of massive temples is interpreted not as a mark of the stupendous power of the Chola rule, but as a symptom of political uncertainties, the king being the principal rituals. Moreover the inscriptions are also looked at by Stein as a clear evidence of ritual sovereignty.

Hermann Kulke has questioned Stein's concept of ritual sovereignty. According to him in a traditional society particularly in India, ritual sovereignty seems to be an integral part and sometimes even a pace maker of political power. These inscriptions were documents of a systematic ritual policy which was as much a part of the general 'power policy' as, for instance, economic or military policies.

A key element of the segmentary state theory was also the so-called Brahmana peasant alliance at the nadu. This does not have any parallel in history. On the contrary, the peasant is always known to have been exploited by the Brahmana and Kshatriya combination. The creation of val nadu (larger than the nadu but smaller than a mandalam by Rajaraja and Kulottunga I) is an indicator of the administrative intervention by Chola central authority.

The feudal polity and the segmentary state theory highlight the traits of disintegration and fragmentation as opposed to a centralized state structure.

According to B.D. Chattopadhyay, the segmentary state model or the concept of ritual sovereignty cannot in fact resolve the problem of the political basis of integration since a rigid use of the segmentary state concept relegates the different foci of power to the periphery and does not really see them as components of state structure. The phenomenon of different foci of power was not peculiarly South India but cut across all major political structures of the early medieval period.

Expanded its scope to understand feudalism as an economic formation which evolved from an economic and social crises in society, thereby heralding the beginning of Kaliyuga. Sharma does not hold the view that feudalism is nothing but a consequence of state action anymore.



B.N.S. Yadav also supports R.S.Sharma with a detailed study of the notion of Kalijuga in early Medieval Indian literature and suggested that this notion had all the characteristics of a crisis provided the ideal context for the transition of a society from one state to another. All this considerably enriched the argument on behalf of Indian feudalism. R.S. Sharma was also able to trace several other instances of peasant resistance. He also tried to draw attention to the ideological and cultural aspects of feudal society in his latest book, which is infact a collection of essays. He had revised several of the old arguments and included new theme like 'The Feudal Mind' where he explores the impacet of a hierarnchically structured feudal system an art and architecture. He also comes up with the interesting view point that seems to suggest that the much desred emotions of gratitude and loyalty were actually nothing but a feudal construd and an ideological subtfeuge aimed to preserve and bolster an extremely unequent feudal statusque. These forays into the cultural sphere have benn undertaken by several other historican as well. In a collection of sixteen essays, the editor D.N. Jha had included papers exploring the cultural and ideological dimerisions of what the calls the feudal order.

One of the major dimensions so explored is that of religion especially popular religion or the Bhakti Cutt, both in North and South India and the growth of India's regionalcultures and languages. Most scholars would view the rise of the Bhakti Cults as a popular protest against the domination of Brahminical orthedexy, the proponeals of feudalism, however would view the Bhakti ideology of total, selfless surrender and subjection and loyalty to a deity—as a tool to buttress Brahminical domination. This deity—who demands blind unquestioning faith, loyalty and self-surrender-could well be nothing but a powerful feudal lord. Historians have held diverse opinions on the Kaliyuga crisis. They have found an inconsistency between the locale of the evidence of the notion of Kaliyuga and the site of the 'crisis' which the Kaliyuga hints.

B.P. Sahu has also questioned the validity of the evidence of Kaliyuga as indicative of a crisis. He has perceived it more as a redefinition of kingship and therefore a reassertion of Brahminical ideology rather than a crisis within it. Sahu also believes that, although epigraphic evidence for forced labour (visit which R.S. Sharma has at length talked about) comes from western, central and South India in the second half of the first millennium, the practice seems to have waned and fallen into disuse after about 1000 A. D. To Sahu land tenures and villages were by no means unifrom and they varied from region to region. Thus, he also rasises doubts about the uniform existence of a self sufficient village system.

These Models have been challenged by a group of scholars clubbed together as “non-aligned historians” by Hermann Kulke. This non-aligned group is reluctant to accept any models one the other hand their focus is on structural developments and changes within a given state system. According to them, the multiplicity of local and regional power is the result of the extension of monarchical state society into areas and communities tribal, non-monarchical polity. In their opinion early medieval polity is perceived as an ‘integrative polity’. The integration of the tribes in the jati system was further given a momentum by the simultaneous absorption of tribal/folk cults into the sectarian Brahmanical Bhakti cults. Bhakti from the stand point of the state could be an instrument of integration, much more effective than Dharma shastra oriented norms. Thus modes of integration formed an important aspect of state formation in early medieval India.

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## **2.3 Conclusion**

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The stereotypical construct of Indian feudalism has been subjected to a radical reappraisal. The integrative polity model has gained much popularity in recent years because it tries to accommodate the long-term dynamics of change in Indian history.

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## **2.4 Summary**

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After the decline and disintegration of the Gupta empire into a number of small states, several charters and deeds of landgrants were issued by the royal and private donars of these states. Landgrants were made during this period both for secular and religious purposes. In the former category, the biggest beneficiaries were the high officials who were paid their salaries or remunerated through the grants of land, and in the latter category the grants were made to the Brahmins and temples for charitable and religious purposes. Some scholars are of the view that the practice of landgrants changed the land ownership pattern and reduced the status of free peasants to serfs, which finally led to the rise of feudalism. In this situation, the free peasants also lost their former status due to the imposition of several new taxes. Another factor which reduced the peasants to the state of serfdom was the extension of the practice of forced labour (vishti). But the main controversy on the subject centres around the nature and extent of the feudal system which is said to have come into existence on account of the practice of landgrants.

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## 2.5 Model Questions

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1. To what extent is European model of feudalism relevant in the Indian context?
2. Analyse the recent development in feudalism debate

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## 2.6 Suggested Readings

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## **Unit - 3 □ Rise of the Rajputs and The Nature of the State**

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### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Objectives**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

#### **3.2 Meaning of the term Rajput**

#### **3.3 Rise of the Rajputs**

#### **3.4 Debate on the origin of the Rajputs**

#### **3.5 Nature of the Rajput state**

#### **3.6 Conclusion**

#### **3.7 Summary**

#### **3.8 Model Questions**

#### **3.9 Suggested Readings**

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### **3.0 Objectives**

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In this unit, we will come to know about the following points :

- Rise of the Rajput power in India
- Debate on the origin of the Rajput
- The Rajput state : nature

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### **3.1 Introduction**

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Several theories have been propounded by scholars regarding the origin of the Rajputs. However, recent writings have tried to study the history of the emergence of various ruling lineages in early medieval India. Thus, the focus in the study of early medieval polity has moved away from the dynastic history of 'Rajput' Kingdoms to the analysis of the factors which led to the emergence of state structures comprising

local ruling clans. The formation of these ruling lineages has been described as a 'process' of sorts, which emerged and was strengthened by the fact that a lot of these ruling clans took on a Kshatriya status.

The colossal monarchy of King Harshavardhana collapsed suddenly with his death in 647 CE, causing his dominions to gradually split into a number of petty principalities. There then followed a period of nearly two centuries of confusion and uncertainty until the appearance of the Rajputs on the political landscape, who established several small kingdoms. For nearly four centuries thereafter (800-1200 CE.) most of these Kingdoms remained under the control of Rajput families lending the age its name the Rajput Age.

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### **3.2 Meaning of The Term 'Rajput'**

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The term rajput is derived from Sanskrit root rajputra (Son of the king), Prakrit forms of the term Rajputra are variously known as rawat, rauta, raul and rawal. A transformation in connotation of the term is noticeable from 7th century CE onwards as it began to be used in literary texts in the sense of a landowner rather than "son of the king". In the Harshacharita of Banbhata (7th century CE) the term has been used in the sense of a noble or landowning chief. In Kadambari also it is used for persons of noble descent who were appointed by the king as local rulers. In the capacity of local rulers they might have naturally governed a large portion of land under them and, thus, played an active role in political and administrative system of the state. In Rajatarangini, the term rajputra is used in the sense of a mere landowner, acclaiming birth from 36 clans of the Rajputs. The reference of 36 clans clearly denotes their existence by 12th century CE.

The term began to be more commonly used from 12th century onwards. The 12th century Aparajitprachha of Bhatta Bhuvanadeva refers to rajputras as constituting a fairly large section of petty chiefs holding estates, each one of them constituting one or more villages. Among the ruling elites, rajputra covered a wide range from actual son of a king to the lowest ranking landholders.

The appearance of rajputra as mercenary soldiers is proved as early as 7th century CE. from the reference in Bakshali manuscript found in the North-West Frontier Province and subsequently from chachnama in Sind in 8th century CE. In all bardic traditions of this period the Rajputs are depicted as horsemen. It may not be ignored that the Pratiharas, one of the clans men of the Rajputs of early medieval period felt pride to bear the title of hayapati "the lord of horses." The military character of the

rajputras is also reflected from Lekhpaddhati (a collection of the models of documents from Gujrat and Western Marwar region) which refers to assignment of land grants to them in return for the performance of military services to the state or the overlord. Regarding the military obligation, one of the charters in the above mentioned text provides us the details that a rajputra applies to a ranaka (feudal chief representing the state) for a fief and when he is granted a village he is required not only to maintain law and order within it and collect revenues according to the old just practices but also to furnish 100 foot soldiers and 20 cavalymen for the service of his ranaka overlord at his headquarter. The fact that he was not allowed to make gift of uncultivated land to temples and Brahmanas indicates his limited rights over the land granted to him, which he could sub-infeudate to others. Sometimes, the rajputras were also provided cash endowment for the supply of military soldiers in the service of the overlord. In addition to the military service rendered to his immediate overlord ranaka, the rajputras were also asked to pay the revenue in both cash and kind on the land assigned to him for cultivation. The amount of the revenue was strictly to be paid within the specified time limit. If the rajputra failed to do so, it was not to be paid without a fixed amount of interest imposed as late payment.

The position of the rajputras was distinct under the Gahadawalas and the Chahamanas, as the title was usually applied to the actual sons of the reigning kings. They exercised special powers in administration, acting as governors of estates assigned to them by the reigning kings. Under Gahadawalas, they were provided a special privilege of using their own seals with the separate insignia, differentiating them from the Gahadawala royal seal. On account of their keen interest in the affairs of administration some of the rajputras under the Chahamanas were endowed with the royal prerogatives and were given the charge of all the royal and administrative activities. They could also grant lands and villages with the consent of the reigning king. Under Chahamanas, the instances are there of the rajaputras and maharajputras serving as governors, The Chahamanas princes were also given fiefs (seja) for their personal enjoyment. However, these fiefs were not regarded as their personal property, as sometimes the Central Government exercised its power of assigning revenues out of these fiefs. The right of alienating land out of their fiefs was not usually extended to these Chahamanas rajputras. But, often, they appear to have the right of assigning small portion of the land or its income as a gift for charitable purpose without the king's permission.

However, under the Chahamanas, the rajputras who were not the actual sons of the king but bore the mere title, also worked as feudatory chiefs or officials to govern

the functions of the landed estates under the strict control and supervision of the king and the Viceroy.

Almost all the contemporary texts provided the number of the Rajput clans to be 36.

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### **3.3 Rise of the Rajputs**

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The origin of the Rajputs who dominated the history of Northern India from the 8th to the 12th century CE. has always been debated. One group of historians (Todd, Kennedy and Bhandarkar) believe them to have descended from the foreign tribes of the Sakas, Pahlavas, Kushans and Huns who had miscegenated with the native population to the extent of even following the native faith. This miscege nation gave rise to a new social clan with the warlike qualities of the sturdy Central Asian tribes, but one who adhered to Hindu religious and cultural practices.

Another group of historians led by C.V. Vaidya considers the Rajputs to be Chivalrous representatives of ancient Kshatriya families who drew their lineages from either Suryavamshi, Chandravamshi (royal bloodlines of the itihasa purana tradition) or Agnikula (fire) fore bearers. This theory is based on the strong belief that the waves of foreign conquerors who had invaded India at a time when the Indo-Aryans had long been established as an organised community should have been naturally absorbed into the prevalent social milieu.

Yet another group of historians—V.A., Smith being principal among them—have, however, combined both views. Smith explain that while many of the distinguished Rajput clans—such as the Pratiharas, Paramaras, Chauhans and Chalukyas—descended mostly from foreign tribes, other —like the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan, the Rathors of Rajputana and the Chandelas of Bundelkhand—were descendents of ancient Hindu families.

Whatever their disputed origin, the term ‘Rajput merely denotes tribes or clans with war-like habits who followed Hindu traditions and claimed aristocratic rank. Over time, the disparate Rajput clans became a homogeneous group through constant inter marriages and adoption of common customs.

Despite the frequent quarrel between various Rajput chiefs, there was a high level of prosperity in India between the 8th and the 12th centuries CE. when trade prospered, and the arts and the pursuit of knowledge were greatly encouraged. This was the age of Bhavabhuta, Rajashekara, Raja Bhoja and the great Kalhana. This

was also the era when Malwa, Nalanda and Vikramasila became important seats of learning and magnificent works of public utility were constructed in cities adorned with splendid temples, buildings and tanks, Hinduism became still more popular, its progress being helped by the construction of temples and the organization of festivals and pilgrimages. The Puranas were re-edited and frequent recitations of the great epics were organized, All this resulted in even aboriginal tribes being quietly absorbed into the Hindu fold, which multiplied with castes and sub-sects.

Despite all their achievements the Rajputs lacked the genius for political organization. The frequent squabbles amongst themselves only weakened them further, leading to the formation of several more Rajput states of varied sizes.

### **The Pratiharas of Kanauj :**

Kanauj, king Harshavardhana's capital was considered to be the most important city of northern India during this period under discussion. Soon after the death of Harsha, however, Kanauj fell into the hands of the Rajput clan of the Gurjara Pratiharas, who were probably descendants of the Gurjaras who had settled in India in the sixth century CE. They remained independent rulers of a small Rajputana kingdom during Harsha's reign, increasing their power after his death capturing Kanauj in the beginning of the eighth century CE.

The first great ruler of this dynasty was Nagabhata (725-40CE), during whose reign the Arab Muslims—who had occupied Sind—invaded Central India but were defeated and driven back.

Nagabhata's successors Devaraja, Vatsaraja and Nagabhata II, increased the extent of the Pratihara Kingdom, which included modern Agra, Awadh, Rajasthan, Gwalior and east Punjab.

The most powerful ruler of this dynasty, Mihir Bhoj (840-90 CE.) led successful campaigns against neighbouring kingdoms, soon causing the Pratiharas and Kanauj to reach the zenith of glory in northern India. Mihir Bhoj was not only a great warrior but also a great patron of the arts and learning,

Mihir Bhoj was succeeded by his worthy son, Mahendrapala (890-910 CE), who like his father maintained the dignity of his kingdom, while patronizing the arts.

The Pratihara kingdom, however began to decline after the death of Mahendrapala. His successors were weak and unable to protect their vast kingdom. The last blow came from Mahmud of Ghazni when he attacked and conquered Kanauj in 1018 CE. Though the Pratiharas re-occupied Kanauj after Mahmud's retreat, they had lost all



their power and prestige by then, reducing Kanauj to a small principality. Later, yet another Rajput dynasty—the Rathors’—would come to occupy Kanauj during 1090 CE.

### **Tomaras :**

The Tomaras are reckoned as one of the 36 Rajput clans. According to the bardic tradition, Anangpal Tomara founded Delhi in A.D. 736 and established the Tomara dynasty. The Tomaras ruled the Haryana country from their capital city Dhellika or Delhi. But it appears from other sources that the Delhi region was then under the sway of the Chahamanas of Ajmer from whom it was wrested by Muhammad Ghori. So the tradition relating that Delhi was founded by the Tomaras in A.D. 736 deserves little credence.

### **The Guhilas of Mewar :**

The Guhilas assumed sovereignty after the decline of the Gurjara Pratiharas in the 11th Century. During the 11th-13th Centuries, they were involved in military conflicts with several of their neighbours, including the Paramaras, the Chahamanas, the Delhi Sultanate, The Chalukyas and the Vaghelas.

In the mid 12th Century, the dynasty divided into two branches. The senior branch (whose rulers are called Rawal in the later medieval literature) ruled from Chitrakuta (modern Chittorgarn) and ended with Ratnasimha's defeat against the Delhi Sultanate at the 1303 siege of Chittorgarn. The junior branch ruled from Sesoda with the title Rana and gave rise to the Sisodia Rajput dynasty.

### **Vaghelas :**

The Vaghela dynasty was a short lived dynasty that ruled Gujrat from its capital of Dholka in the 13th century CE. The Vaghelas were the last Hindu monarchs to rule large parts of Gujrat, before the Muslim conquest of the region.

The early members of the Vaghela family served the Chalukyas in the 12th century CE, and claimed to be a branch of that dynasty in the 13<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of the weak Chalukya King Bhima II, the Vaghela general Lavanaprasada and his son V, Radha Vala became very powerful, although they continued to nominally acknowledge the Chalukya suzerainty. In the mid 1240s Viradhavalas son Visaladeva usurped the throne. His successors ruled Gujrat until Karna was defeated by Alauddin Khalji of Delhi Sultanate in 1304 CE.

### **The Kalachuris :**

The Kalachuris also known as the Haihayas have been referred to in the Epics and the Puranas. When they became associated with Chedi country, they were also

known as the Chedis. Their earliest seat of power was possibly at Manssmali, on the Narmada.

In the second half of the sixth century A.D. the Kalachuris emerged as a political power and their kingdom comprised Gujarat Northern Maharashtra and even parts of Malwa. Three Kalachuri kings— Krishnaraja, his son Samkaragana and the latter's son Buddhara—are known to have ruled from 550 to 620 A.D. Buddhara suffered a disastrous defeat in 601 A.D. at the hands of the Chalukyas of Badami and overthrown but the Kalachuris continued to exist as families of some importance in eastern Malwa and the neighbouring regions.

In the eighth century A.D. several branches of the Kalachuris were settled in different parts of northern India. One of them founded a principality in Sarayupara in the modern Gorakhpur district and the other, the most powerful, ruled in Chedi in Bundelkhand.

The Kalachuris of Chedi also known as kings of Dahala mandala, had their capital at Tripuri, modern village of Tewar, 9.5 km from Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. In the early years of the 9th century A.D. the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III conquered the Dahala country.

From the 8th century A.D. a collateral branch of the Kalachuri family ruled in Sarayupara the bank of the Sarayu river. modern Gogra in U.P.

Early in the 11th century A.D. a scion of the royal Kalachuri family founded a kingdom in South Kosala, with its capital first at Tummana modern Tumana in the Bilaspur district and later at Ratanpur, 25 km north of Bilaspur. The family remained subordinate to the Kalachuris of Dahala till the early 12th century A.D.

Another branch of the Kalachuris ruled in the neighbourhood of Kasia in the Garakh district, and another conquered the Deccan by defeating the Chalukya and ruled for a brief period.

### **Kachchapaghatas :**

Kachchapaghatas are generally taken to be the progenitors of the Rajput clan. Kachwaha. In the 10th and 11th centuries at least three families of Kachchapaghatas ruled in and around eastern Rajputana and the region round Gwalior. They ruled in Gwalior Dubkund and Narwar. They were at first feudatories of the imperial Gurjara Pratiharas. But a member of one of these families made himself master of the fort of Gwalior by defeating the Pratihara ruler who may be identified with one of the successors of Mohipala I.

The Rathors or the Ganadvala of Kanauj. The Rathors ruled over the great city of Kanauj and its neighbouring territories for about a hundred years. The first Rathor ruler was Chandradeva whose kingdom spread across Banaras, Ayodhya and Kanauj. His grandson, Govindachandra would grow up to be the most powerful of the Rathor clan, ruling for about forty years and restoring the former glory and greatness of Kanauj to some extent. The last great ruler of this dynasty was Jayachandra, the principal enemy of Prithviraj Chauhan, the king of Delhi and Ajmer. Their legendary enmity provided ample opportunity to Mohammad Ghor to conquer Northern India.

### **The Chauhans of Ajmer and Delhi :**

The Chauhans established an independent kingdom in Ajmer after the downfall of the great Pratihara kingdom. The founder Visalaya-deva (1158-64 CE) is said to have conquered Delhi from a Tomara Chief, Anandapala, before shifting his capital to Delhi. Prithviraj, the nephew of Visalaya-deva was, however, the most famous of the Chauhan rulers. He was a warrior king whose military feats remain immortalised in the epic Prithviraj Raso, composed by his court poet, Chand Bardoi. He defeated Muhammad of Ghur in the First Battle of Tarain (1191 CE), but in the very following year, Muhammad of Ghur invaded Delhi again this time defeating and killing Prithviraj in the second Battle of Tarain.

### **The Paramaras of Malwa :**

Following the decline of their great kingdom, the Pratihara clan went on to establish yet another independent kingdom in Malwa. The most powerful ruler of the Paramara dynasty, Raja Munja (c. 974-97 CE) was a great warrior who carried on successful wars against his neighbours.

Another great ruler of this dynasty was Raja Bhoja (1018-60 CE), who besides being a great warrior was also an accomplished scholar. Raja Bhoja was a patron of the arts and letters too. Besides being credited for having authored several works on astronomy, astrology and grammar, he is also said to have constructed 104 temples and the beautiful Bhojpur Lake. The Paramara line of kings, however, came to an end soon after the death of Raja Bhoja, since his successors were weak.

### **The Chandelas of Bundelkhand:**

The Chandelas were essentially feudatories of the Pratiharas, establishing an independent kingdom in Bundelkhand. The greatest of the Chandela rulers was Yasovarman. With his military abilities, he conquered the hill fort of Kalinjar, extending his Kingdom up to the river Yamuna in the north and to the river Narmada in the south. His son and successor, Dhanga was also a great ruler. Dhanga was succeeded by his Grandson Vidyadhara (1017-29 CE) who expanded the Chandela kingdom, to

its greatest extent from the river Chambal in the north-west to the river Narmada in the South. It is believed that Mahmud of Ghazni attacked the Chandela dominions during Vidyadhara's reign but did not retain any territory.

The Chandelas ruled Budelkh and till the end of the 12th century CE, when their last ruler, Parmal, was defeated by the Muslim general Qutbuddin Aibak. Following that defeat, Bundelkhand was to pass into the hands of the Delhi Sultans.

The Chandelas are credited with having built the famous temple city of Khajuraho between the mid tenth and mid-eleventh centuries CE. During this period, a flourishing Jain community lived in Bundelkhand and numerous Jain temples were also constructed then.

### **The Solankis of Gujarat :**

The Solankis were also feudatories of the Pratiharas like the Chandelas and the Paramaras. Mularaja, who claimed descent from the Chalukya Rajput clan, founded an independent kingdom in Gujarat towards the middle of the tenth century, making Anhilwara his capital. But it is believed that his bloodline was different from the Southern Chalukyas, and was better known as the Solankis. Mularaja was constantly threatened by his powerful neighbour, the Paramaras of Malwa, but he defended his newly established kingdom successfully.

Another important ruler of this dynasty was Bhima I, during whose time Gujarat was invaded by Mahmud of Ghazi.

The most important ruler of this dynasty however, was Kumarapala (1143-74 CE) who was a great patron of the arts and learning, patronizing many scholars in his court.

After Kumarapala's death, the power of the Solank's declined. When Muhammed of Ghor invaded India, the last Solanki ruler was Karnadeva II. Later Gujarat was to be added by the Khiljis into their dominions.

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## **3.4 Debate On The Origin of The Rajputs**

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The origin of Rajputs is shrouded under mystery. Scholars are hardly in unison over their origin and a number of views are in currency pertaining to their origin.

### **i) Agnikula Origin of the Rajputs A Myth**

Chand Bardai in his Prithvirajaso refers that the Chalukyas, Pratiharas, Paramaras and Chahamanas have their origin from the fire pit of Vashistha.

According to Raso, Vishvmitra, Agastya, Vashistha and other sages began a great sacrifice at Mount Abu. Daityas (demons) interrupted it and then Vashistha created from the sacrificial pit three warriors in succession: the Padihara (Pratihara), the Solanki and the Paramara. The bardic text also mentions. That none of the created warriors, however, succeeded in completely removing the demons.

The modern scholars who believe in the Agnikula origin of the Rajputs are : Wastson, Forbes, Camphet. D.R.Bhandarkar etc. they believe that all the so-called Agnikula Rajputs are of Gurjara stock. The Gurjara origin of the Rajputs is being criticised by Pratipal Bhatia. She argues that the Gurjara is not only the name of a people but also a country and of all the people who inhabited it, to whichever caste or clan they might have belonged.

We only knew about the Solar and Lunar Kshatriyas is the ancient texts. The solar and lunar origin of the Rajputs is mentioned in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. The earliest tradition of the Chandella family found mentioned in their inscriptions traces the origin of the Chandellas from Moon, identifying them as the Lunar race of the Kshatriyas. It appears that the concept of the Solar and Lunar Kshatriyas of the Sanskrit literary texts was replaced in the bardic account of Raso and inscriptions during the early medieval period by that of Agnikula.

ii) Other Views :

B.N.S. Yadav has traced the emergence of the early Rajput clans in Rajasthan and Gujarat during the period of political and social confusion and chaos which may be characterised by a declining economy following the invasions and settlements of the foreigners and collapse of the Gupta empire. The rising feudal tendencies, according to him, created favourable circumstances for the emergence of ruling landed aristocracy connected intimately with land. Attached to this background, he traced out the rise of the military clans of the Gurjaras, Guhilots, Chahamaas, Chapas etc. in northern India during 650-750 CE. However, their rise as independent ruling clans may be traced back to the 8th century. When Gurjara Pratiharas as the first Rajput ruling clan established their hold over Kanauj and other regions in Northern India.

D.C. Sircar puts forth that in Kalhana's Rajatarangini, the term Rajputra is used in the sense of a mere landowner. They claimed birth from 36 clans of the Rajputs. It indicates that by the beginning of the 12th century CE, these

clans had already come into existence. During this period, Rajputras had become a class by themselves.

iii) Recent View : Processual Theory

B.D. Chattopadhyay examines the emergence of the Rajputs as a process, which in different periods and different regions was not almost alike but differed in context of time and place. According to him, their emergence should not be looked in terms of ancestry. The term rajputra in early medieval literary texts and inscriptions, in reality, represented a mixed caste consisting a fairly large section of petty landholding chiefs. The status of the clan was generally counted a lot during the early medieval period, which was known for hereditary office and a stereotype system of administration. The contemporary status of the clan was, thus, the criterion for the inclusion in the Rajput clans mentioned in Rajatarangini, Kumarapalcharita and Varnaratnakara. It is to be noted that the list of 36 clans mentioned in all the literary texts is dissimilar. Political dominance may altogether be the prominent criterion which might have added to the status of a clan. Thus, it was perhaps owing to the political dominance of the Pratiharas and Chahamanas that their name was retained regularly in the kists. He suggests that the process of the emergence of Rajputs in early medieval records is found linked with political, economic and social developments. Chattopadhyay, on the basis of the study of the source, has traced the following developments which were directly linked to the process of the emergence of Rajputs.

The colonization of new areas resulted in the expansion of a number of settlements and also of agrarian economy. The comparison of the list of early historic sites with those of early medieval period and appearance of new place names in the contemporary inscriptions clearly suggest an increase in the number of settlements. The inscriptions of the Western and Central India also refer to the territorial expansion of the Rajput power by suppressing the tribal settlements of the Bhils, Pulindas and Sabaras. The Guhila kingdom was founded in the 7th century on the Bhil settlements, according to tradition. Similar movement of expansion are found in case of the Chahamanas of Nadol Shakambari—the capital of the main line of the Chahamanas—also came out of the colonization, which was earlier a forest land (Jangaladesha). The present region of Rajasthan, according to B.D. Chattopadhyay, in the period when Rajput polity was beginning to emerge was in its various areas undergoing a process of change from tribalism.

All the Rajput clans did not emerge out of the process of colonization. The Meds reached to the Rajput status from a tribal background and the other group, namely Hunas were assimilated in Indian society and acquired the status of Kshatriyas. Thus, a criterion for the inclusion of the Meds and Hunas was mobility to Kshatriya status which was more commonly practised. For the majority of other newly emerging royal lines Brahmakshatra was a transitional status. Chattopadhyay opines that Brahmakshtra might have been an open status during the early medieval period.

The Gurjara Pratiharas emerged out of different stocks of the Gurjaras acquiring political eminence in Western India. However, in their inscription they have variously claimed their origin either from Brahman, Sun, Indra etc. in order to maintain the ancestral respectability. The sovereign or ruling families of a clan had a general tendency to frame the genealogies with respectable ancestry. It seems that a definite co-relation did exist between the political eminence and a movement towards corresponding social status.

Some of the Rajput clans emerged out from the feudatory to the independent status, as is clear from the genealogical claims. The case of Gurjaras of Gujarat, Guhilas of Kiskindha and Dhavagarta, Guhilas of Mewar, Chahamanas of Gujarat and Rajasthan was a case of transition from feudatory to independent status. This transition and upward mobility was a result of the growth of the military strength. The emergence of the Rajputs, thus, in the existing hierarchical political structure was not sudden but a gradual process.

The process of emergence of early Rajputs is associated at the level of economy, with certain new features of land distribution and territorial system. One feature of land distribution was the distribution of land among royal Kinsmen. This practice was common among the Pratihara Chahamanas and Guhila clans. Such land assignments were also hereditary in nature. The specific thing was that while the other assignees were not authoritative to grant land independently out of their holdings and depended on the approval of the King, the Kinsmen needed no such sanction and could make grant independently without king's approval.

The Rajput clans strengthened themselves by maintaining military power, one of the chief features of which was the construction and maintenance of forts. Besides serving the defence purpose, the forts played linkage with big land holdings and existing composition of population.

At the level of social relations, the consolidation of the Rajput clans and the acceleration of the process of “Rajputization” were through the marriage network among the clans (interclan relationships). The inter clan relations maintained through marriage network provided social legitimacy. These marriages may have led to collaboration in wider areas of social and political activity. The new clans and the recognized sub-division of earlier clans were brought into the Rajput network by a few cases of marriage of which records are available. The consolidation of Rajput ascendancy was also due to the circulation of clan members in different kingdoms and courts and their participations at various levels of polity.

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### **3.5 Nature of the Rajput State**

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Inter-state rivalries are represented by the struggle for supremacy. The king was the supreme head of the state and the conductor of the overall executive, judicial and military administration. To some extent, he was assisted in administrative matters by the queens, a number of whom figure in the records of different dynasties of our period. However, none of them is possibly found entrusted with any administrative post. Their involvement in administration is borne out indirectly in some of the land grants. They are sometimes found granting land grants with the formal permission of the king.

The ministerial council acted as a consultative body on all the important matters of polity. The office of the ministers were generally hereditary. The officials often adopted the feudal titles like rajaputra, ranaka, thakkura, samanta, mahasamanta, raut etc. in addition to the administrative posts like mahasandhivigrahika, dutaka, maharakshapatalika and others. The combining hereditary position and feudal ranks made these officials more powerful. The territorial administration consisted of the vishayas, bhuktis and other sub-divisions was usually fully governed by a class of power feudatories entitled usually as mandaleshvaras, mandalikas, samantas, thakkuras, ranakas, rajaputras etc. The administrative head in villages apart from the village headman were the panchkulas (a body of five members in a village like panchayat), mahajanas and mahattaras (village elders). The official posts and designations of administrative officials at various levels were different under various Rajput clans.

The feudalization of political structure of the Rajputs had resulted in their military organization. The military functions were mainly played almost under all the Rajput clans by the feudatory chiefs of various ranks. The chief obligation on the part of



such chiefs was to serve the king or the respective overlord at the time of war by fighting valiantly from his side. The literary sources like Lekhapaddhati, Prithviraj avijaya Mahakavya and the contemporary inscriptions throw sufficient light on such obligations and duties of the feudatories towards the state and the overlords. The personal grievances of the feudal lords like rajaputras, ranakas, rautas, samantas etc. created consternation in the whole administrative set up. The powerful feudatories did not hesitate to declare themselves as independent in the hour of the weak position of the king.

The political system of the Rajputs is to be defined as bureaucratic-cum-feudal in character. There was an absence of uniformity in adoption of strategy and the organization of troops in general. Different dynastic clans probably had the tendency to organize the various components of their army in war, in accordance with their own convenience. The chief weakness of the Rajput military was their backwardness in the field of military technology unlike the Turks who were fully conversant with the mounted archery and its strategic use in warfare. However, they prominently used mechanical devices known as munjanis and arradas (Persian names of siege machines) in siege operations to hurl heavy stones and projectile weapons on enemy's ranks and fortifications like the Arabs and Turks. That they used these machines in order to bombard enemy's troops from the ramparts of the forts by the Rajput rulers is known from a variety of sources. The Hindus were known to have learnt the use of these machines from the Arabs and Turks who in turn, imitated the Greeks and Romans in using these devices. The Greek and Roman siege machines which were the variants of machines used by the Hindus and their Muslim adversaries including the Arabs and the Turks, were named as mangonel and catapults.

Forts attained an inevitable importance under the Rajput rulers. The magnanimity and impregnability of these forts attracted the Muslims to besiege them. These forts served as great means of the defence of the Rajputs, as they fought with their Muslim adversaries from the walls of these forts. Realising the strategic and military importance of forts, the Rajput rulers paid special attention to possess them and erect several new ones in order to strengthen their military power. Among the Rajputs, the Chandellas were the great builders of a number of strong forts and fortresses. The Chauhans and Paramaras, both were outstanding builders of forts in Rajasthan. Besides serving the defence purpose, the forts played wider functions, such as maintaining linkage with big land holdings and existing composition of population. Forts represented a process of consolidation of ruling clans.

At the level of social relations the consolidation of The Rajput clans and the acceleration of the process of Rajputization were through the marriage network among the clans (inter clan relationships). The inter-clan relations maintained through marriage network provided social legitimacy. These marriages may have led to collaboration in wider areas of social and political activity. The new clans and the recognised subdivisions of earlier clans were brought into the Rajput network by a few cases of marriage of which records are available. The consolidation of Rajput ascendancy was also due to the circulation of clan members in different kingdoms and courts and their participations at various levels of polity.

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### **3.6 Conclusion**

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The origin of the Rajputs, who dominated the history of northern India from the eight to the twelfth century CE, has always been debated whatever their disputed origin, the term 'Rajput' merely denotes tribes or clans with war like habits who followed Hindu traditions and claimed aristocratic rank, overtime, the disparate Rajput clans became a homogeneous group through constant inter-marriages and adaption of common customs. Despite the frequent quarrels between various Rajput chiefs, there was a high level of prosperity in India between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, when trade prospered and the arts and the pursuit of knowledge were greatly encouraged.

But the Rajputs lacked the genius for political organization. The frequent squabbles amongst themselves only weakened them further; leading to the formation of several more Rajput states of varied sizes.

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### **3.7 Summary**

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The 7th-12 century Rajput polity presents a picture of disunited India after the death of Harsha. The first Rajput clan of Gurjara-Pratinaras, who were earlier the feudatory chiefs of Harsha in Ujjain, emerged as an independent political and military power to rule over Kanauj and the neighbouring regions of Northern India. The political and military strength, which led to the independence or dominance of politically and military superior clans over the less powerful ones. The allotment or distribution of land among royal kinsmen and to different grades of the feudatories and officials was necessarily a step in the creation of the different grades of feudatories many of whom later on emerged as clans or sub-clans.

The consolidation of the Rajput clans in different parts of Central and Western provinces of India has also been reflected by the presence of innumerable impregnable forts, which obviously represented the military strength of the clans. The social relations maintained by the marriage alliances among the members of the different clans provided a legitimate position.

The emergence of the Rajputs has, thus to be understood in reality not in terms of the mythological, traditions of the Agnikula and Solar and Lunar dynastic origins. It should be regarded as a process in terms of the political, social and economic development in the history of early medieval northern India. B.D. Chattopadhyay's contention of the origin of the Rajput seems juxtaposed in the light of the evidence of the contemporary epigraphs. The origin of the 'Rajputs' has to be traced from different strata of indigenous population including the Kshatriyas, Brahmanas and some tribes including the aboriginal ones.

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### 3.8 Model Questions

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1. Write a short note on the origin of the Rajputs in medieval India.
2. Discuss the connotation of the term 'Rajputra' during the early medieval period in India.
3. Discuss the significant features of the political and military system of the Rajputs.
4. Discuss various views regarding the emergence of the Rajputs.

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### 3.9 Suggested Readings

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Chattopadhyay, B.D. 'Origin of the Rajputs : The Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan in *The Making of Early Medieval India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994'

Tod, James, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, edited by William Gooke, Vol-1, London : OUP (1920).

**Module - II**  
**Political Structures**



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## **Unit - 4 □ Evolution of Political structures : Rashtrakutas, Palas, Pratiharas, Rajputs and Cholas**

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### **Structure**

- 4.0 Objective**
- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 Major Kingdoms**
  - 4.2.1 The Rashtrakutas**
  - 4.2.2 The Palas**
  - 4.2.3 The Pratiharas**
  - 4.2.4 The Rajputs**
  - 4.2.5 The Cholas**
- 4.3 Conflict for Riches : Tripartite Struggle**
- 4.4 Conclusion**
- 4.5 Summary**
- 4.6 Model Questions**
- 4.7 Suggested Readings**

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### **4.0 Objective**

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After going through this unit, we will come to know about :

- The evolution of political structures of the Rashtrakutas, the Palas, the Pratiharas, the Rajputas and the Cholas
- The struggle revolving round Kanauj among the three powers—the Rashtrakutas, the Gurjara Pratiharas and the Palas.

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### **4.1 Introduction**

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The early medieval period has been perceived as a phase of political decentralisation by some historians. R.S. Sharma provides us with a detailed analysis

of feudal polity in various kingdoms. During the early medieval period a number of powerful regional kingdoms arose in North India, the Deccan and in South India. All these kingdoms essentially had one aim in mind—territorial expansion and the desire to build an empire. As a result, these kingdoms were perpetually at loggerheads with each other for greater control over neighbouring territories. The Palas came into dominance in eastern India, whereas the Gurjara-Pratiharas gained ascendancy in Western India and in the upper gangetic valley. The third major kingdom was that of the Rashtrakutas, who controlled the Deccan and also the territories in North and South India. The pratiharas, the Palas and the Rashtrakutas were referred to by the Arabs somewhat differently. To the Arabs the Pratiharas were known as Al-Jurz the Palas were known as Rhumi and the Rastrakutas were referred to as Ballahara. A number of Rajput kingdoms, such as those of the Chahamanas or Chauhans, also emerged during this period. The Cholas on account of their sound administrative structure and policies of agrarian expansion emerged as the most powerful kingdom in the South.

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## 4.2 Major Kingdoms

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Historians have tried to see the emergence of such regional kingdoms in the context of Indian Feudalism the defining feature of which was the rise of landgrants. R.S. Sharma has pointed out that, from the seventh century onwards, there was a marked increase in the number of landgrants made and the trend became wide spread throughout the country. Land grants were given not only to the petty lords but also to Brahmins and religious establishments on a large scale by kings, chiefs, members of the royal family and their feudatories. These landgrants came to be known as the brahmadeyas and the agraharas. Villages, which were donated to and inhabited by the Brahmin alone, were known as brahmadeyas. Agrahara villages, though occupied predominantly by the Brahmins, had non-Brahmin residents as well. In South India such villages were also known as the mangalamas.

As a consequence of these profusely made landgrants, the period saw the emergence of big landlords, who came to be referred to by extremely high-sounding titles like : samanta, mahasamanta, rana, rauta etc. In western and Central India they were known by titles like mandalika, maharajadhiraja, mahamandalesvara, mahamandalikas, mahasamantas and samantas etc.

The proponents of the Indian feudalism model feel that the polity, in the early medieval period, had been structured in an essentially flawed manner that was replete

with contradictions. The feudatory chiefs were always looking for an opportunity to free themselves from their rulers. An example of this is the emergence of the Rashtrakutas, who were, to begin with, under the rule of the Chalukyas of Karnataka, in the Deccan. Dantidurga, the Rashtrakuta leader, overthrew the reigning Chalukyan king, Kirtivarman, and took over large portion of the Deccan. He performed the *hiranya-garbha* ritual to seek legitimacy from the Brahmanas for the creation of a separate *kshatriya* status. The ritual sought to give a separate caste identity to Dantidurga as a *kshatriya*, even though he was not a *kshatriya* by birth. Similarly, the Gurjara-Pratiharas also known as the Pratiharas used their military skills and power to carve out a kingdom in Western India.

To say that it was the breakdown of a centralised state structure that led to the emergence of a feudal polity, is a perspective that has not found favour with scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyay. He feels that the emergence of regional states was entirely predicated upon the proliferation of local ruling clans and their later transformation into local state and regional structures.

During the early medieval period agriculture expanded and more forest land was brought under cultivation. This resulted in the assimilation of many tribal communities into the social fold which in turn, led to the peasantisation of these tribes. In the process many changes took place which contrary to popular belief, did not affect the tribal communities alone, but, also had a deep and indelible impact upon everyone concerned. Mainstream culture has been deeply influenced by tribal customs and modes of life, which have found rapid assimilation in the social set-up. Local state formation resulted about the convergence of local and regional customs and traditions in the Dharmashastric social and Puranic Hindu religious tradition. It contributed to the emergence of regional patterns in polity and culture.

#### **4.2.1. The Rashtrakutas**

The term Rashtrakuta denotes officers in charge of territorial divisions called *rashtras*. They originally belonged to Lattalura, better known as Latur in Andhra Pradesh. The ancestors of the Rashtrakutas were mere district officers under the Chalukyas of Badami. But in A.D. 640 Nannaraja won feudatory status for his family from Pulakesin II and carved out a small principality in Berar, of which Achalapura, modern Ellichpur, was the capital.

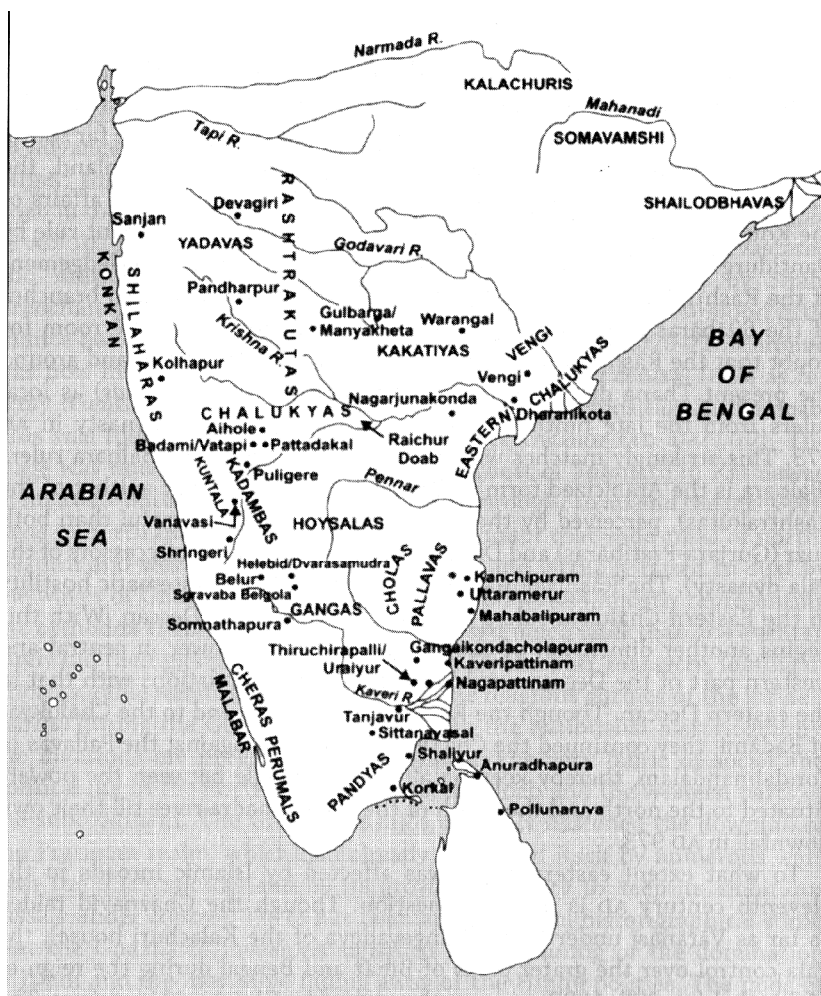
Nannaraja whose rule extended from c. A.D. 630 to 650 was the founder of the family. He was succeeded by Dantivarman who ruled from A.D. 650 to 665. Dantivarman's successors were his son Indra and grandson Govindaraja who ruled



from A.D. 665 to 700. Govindaraja was succeeded by his son Karkkaraja (C.A.D. 700 to 715) who was a Vaishnava. Among the four sons of karkka, Indra was the most ambitious who succeeded his father (A.D. 715-735), Though Indra continued to be a feudatory of the contemporary Chalukya emperor Vijayaditya (A.D. 697-733), he extended his principality northwards which included the majority of the Maratha speaking districts of Madhya Pradesh. He forcibly married a Chalukya princess named Bhavanaga at Kaira in northern Gujarat which must have enhanced his prestige and reputation.



Map 7.1: Political Powers: Northern India c. AD 700-1300



Map 7.2: Political Powers: Peninsular India c.1000–1300

Dantidurga (c.A.D. 733-756), son of Indra I, began his career as a feudatory of the Chalukyas. He was a strong and able ruler who laid the foundation of a lasting empire. He was a clever diplomat and his plan of expansion was directed towards the east and west without disturbing Karnatak, the stronghold of Chalukya power. In A.D. 736 or 737, at the order of his feudal lord Vikramaditya II, he cooperated with Pulakesin, the Gujarat feudatory of the Chalukya in repulsing an Arab invasion. The grateful Chalukya Suzerain Vikramaditya II, honoured him with titles in recognition of his martial exploits. Dantidurga also shared the laurels of victory over the Pallavas by accompanying the Chalukya Crown Prince Kirttivarman in his expedition against Kanchi in A.D. 743.

The varied military experience which Dantidurga had gained in his campaigns in the north and south and the death of Chalukya emperor Vikramaditya II in A.D. 747, emboldened the former to embark upon a career of conquest. He invaded the Gurjara kingdom of Nandipuri (Nandod) and the Chalukya principality of Naosari, defeated their kings and annexed their territories. He then invaded Malwa which was under the rule of the Gurjara Pratiharas, and brought it within his sphere of influence. He signalled his victory over Malwa by performing the Hiranyagar bhadana ceremony at Ujjain. After a short while, he marched to Mahakosala or Chattisgarh district of Madhya Pradesh. Thus by A.D. 750, he had become the master of the whole of Madhya Pradesh and the central and southern Gujarat.

About A.D. 750 Dantidurga reached Kanchi, the capital of the Chalukyas. After a display of show of force he struck up an alliance with Nandivarman Pallavamalla to whom he gave his daughter Reva in marriage. He then attacked and overthrew his suzerain, Kirtivarman-II, the Chalukya emperor and proclaimed himself the paramount ruler of the Deccan (A.D. 753). He did not live long after this victory and died sometime in A.D. 756 at the age of 37 or 38. He was the real founder of the Rastrakuta empire and his successor Krishna-I only completed his work.

Dantidurga died childless and was succeeded by his uncle Krishna-I. Soon after his succession Krishna-I had to crush the imperial pretensions of his grand nephew Karkka-II, ruling in southern Gujarat. He defeated him easily and posted his own officers to govern Gujarat. Soon after this he had to deal with the Chalukya emperor, Kirtivarman-II who after reorganising his forces advanced on the bank of the Bhima in September A.D. 757. But the defeat which Krishna-I inflicted on Kirtivarman-II was so crushing that the Chalukya power was extinguished once for all. As a result, the whole of northern Karnataka dominating passed under the rule of the Rashtrakutas and their sovereignty was recognized in the Deccan from A.D. 760. He then rounded off his conquests by annexing southern Konkan, which was placed in charge of Sarnaphulla, the founder of the feudatory Silhara family.

After securing his position in Maharashtra and Karnataka Krishna I advanced southwards and invaded Gangawadi (roughly equal to modern Mysore) which was then under the sway of its Ganga ruler Sripurusha. The Gangas fought desperately but were eventually overwhelmed by Krishna, who occupied their capital Manyapura i.e. Manne in the Bangalore district. He returned home in A.D. 769 after permitting Sripurusha to rule as a feudatory over a smaller kingdom.

In the east, Krishna I came to grip with the Chalukya Vengi, a branch of the

Chalukyas of Badami, who were anxious to avenge the overthrow of the Chalukyas of Badami. He sent the crown prince Govinda to Vegi and its ruler Vijayaditya I (A.D. 755-72) made his submission without a fight (A.D. 769-70). As a result of this victory Krishna-I became the master of the whole of modern Hyderabad state. Later on, Silabhatarika, daughter of Vishnuvardhana was married to Prince Dhruva, a younger brother of Govinda.

Krishna-I died in A.D. 773. He was an able ruler and a skillful general and more than doubled the kingdom he had inherited by annexing the major parts of the modern states of Mysore and Hyderabad. By inflicting signal defeats on the Gangas and the Chalukyas, he secured for his house a dominating position over the whole of the Deccan a position which no power to the south of the Vindhyas could think of challenging. He, thus, paved the way for successors to participate in the politics of northern India also, and thus to secure a position of dominance for his house over the whole of the Indian subcontinent.

Great as a conqueror, Krishna was equally great as a builder. He constructed the magnificent rockcut monolithic temple at Ellora, now known as Kailasa. This huge rock-cut temple is universally recognised as the high water mark of all the excellence of the style of architecture and sculpture.

Krishna-I was succeeded by his eldest son Govinda-II. He was a pleasure loving King and practically left the whole administration to the care of his younger brother, Dhruva, who had served him faithfully as the Governor of Nasik and Khandesh. But Dhruva was ambitious and planned to seize the throne for himself. As a precautionary measure Govinda removed his brother from the administration and took the reins of government into his own hands. He tried to strengthen his position by entering into alliance with the rulers of Gangavadi, Kanchi, Vengi and Malwa. But his alliance with the sworn enemies of his house alienated his ministers who went over to Dhruva and supplicated the latter to save the Rashtrakuta house from extinction. Dhruva decisively defeated his brother before the arrival of his allies and seized the throne in A.D. 780.

Shortly after accession Dhruva proceeded to punish the kings who had supported his brother. He defeated the Ganga king Sripurusha Muttarasa, took his son Sivamara prisoner and annexed the whole of Gangavadi, thus extending the southern boundary of his kingdom to Kaveri. The victorious army then proceeded against the Pallava ruler Dantivarman who, however, tendered his submission by offering an indemnity in the form of elephants. The ruler of Vengi, Vishnuvardhana IV. made his peace with

Dhruva by offering him the hand of his daughter Silamahadevi who became the chief queen of Dhruva.

These victories made Dhruva the undisputed ruler of the Deccan who now made a bold bid to control north Indian politics, a feat which no Deccan power had succeeded since the days of the Satavahanas. At that time northern India was convulsed by the struggle for supremacy between Vatsaraja Pratihara and Dharmapala the Pala ruler of Bengal in a bid to control Kanauj, the citadel of north Indian imperialism. While Vatsaraja was engaged in hostilities with Dharmapala in the Doab, Dhruva crossed the Narmada and occupied Malwa without much opposition. He then proceeded towards Kanauj and encountered the main forces of Vatsaraji. Somewhere near Jhansi. The Deccan invaders inflicted such a crushing defeat on Vatsaraji deserts of Rajasthan. Flushed with this sensational victory, Dhruva proceeded further north into the Ganga-Yamuna Doab where he met Dhamapala in A.D. 787. Dharmapala fled from the battlefield and to commemorate this great victory the symbols of these two rivers were included in the Rashtrakuta imperial banner. Without marching further into the imperial city of Kanauj, Dhruva returned home in A.D. 790, laden with rich booty.

In the evening of his life Dhruva's main concern was to settle the problem of succession. He had four sons, Karkka, Stambha, Govinda and Indra of whom karkka had predeceased his father. Of the remaining three sons, the old emperor chose the ablest Govinda as his successor and in order to avoid a war of succession after his death installed him as crown Prince sometime in A.D. 791 or 792. Stamba was given the viceroyalty of Gangawadi with a practically independent status. The youngest son Indra was vested with the governorship of Gujarat and Malwa. After making this arrangement, Dhruva died in the latter half of A.D. 793.

The accession of Govinda III took place peacefully. But very soon he had to face the hostility of his eldest brother, Stambha, who had been chafing owing to his supersession. Stambha organised a confederacy of twelve neighbouring kings and feudatories of whom Dantiga of Kanchi was the most prominent. As a counterpoise Govinda enlisted the support of the ministers and released from prison the Ganga King Sivamara evidently to create a rival for his brother in Gangawadi. But contrary to Govinda's expectations, Sivamara went over to Stambha.

Govind-III, however, rose equal to the occasion. Leaving the government in charge of his younger brother, Indra, he swiftly marched against Stambha and defeated him before the arrival of the forces of his allies. He was taken captive. But Govinda won him over by releasing him and reappointing him as viceroy of Gangawadi, a

reconciliation which stood the test of time. Sivamara, however, was put into prison. The King of Nolambavadi (corresponding to the Chitaldrug and Anantpur districts) made an unconditional surrender and was reinstated in his patrimony. The Pallava King Dantiga also suffered defeat. Vishnuvardhana IV of Vengi who was the maternal grandfather of Govinda III acknowledged the supremacy of the Rashtrakutas.

With his position strongly entrenched in the Deccan. Govinda III turned his attention to the ever tempting politics of Northern India. But considerable changes had taken place in the political chessboard of North India subsequent to the withdrawal of his father Dhruva in A.D. 790. Dharmapala had occupied Kanauj and put his own nominee Chakrayudha on its throne. Vatsaraja's successor, Nagabhata II, however inflicted a crushing defeat on Dharmapala and reoccupied Kanauj. It was at this juncture when Nagabhata II was at the height of his glory that Govinda III decided to crush him before he became too powerful.

Govinda's northern campaign seems to have lasted from A.D. 798 to 800. This skillful preparation for his ambitious task was reflected when he entrusted his loyal brother Indra with the task of keeping watch over the Vindhyan passes in order to prevent Nagabhata from invading the Deccan while a number of detachments were maintained in Central India to protect the lines of communication. After making his position secured Govinda marched into Northern India probably via Bhopal and Jhansi and met Nagabhata somewhere between Jhansi and Gwalior. Once more Govinda III emerged victorious and Nagabhata fled into Rajputana leaving, the Doab at the mercy of the invader, Chakrayudha, the puppet emperor of Kanauj his offered unconditional surrender and so did Dharmapala. Besides the powerful Gurjara Pratihara and Pala kings, other ruler of Northern India were also defeated by Govinda III. Mention may be made of the fact that Govinda's expedition in Northern India was the assertion of his suzerainty without any formal annexation of territory.

Meanwhile taking advantage of the absence of Govinda in Northern India, the Kings of South India-Pallava, Pandya, Kerala and Ganga had united in a common cause and invaded the Rashtrakuta dominions. With a lightning speed, Govinda marched to the Tungabhadra and signally defeated the forces of the coalition in A.D. 802 or 803. The fate of these states frightened the king of Ceylon who hurried to offer submission. To complete his victorious career, Govinda turned against Vengi, deposed its ruler Vijayaditya II and raised his protégé Bhima to the throne.

Govinda III was undoubtedly one of the greatest of the Rashtrakuta monarchs. His achievements have been summed up in a verse recorded in the inscriptions of Amoghavarsha I and Krishna II:

Having fettered the people of Kerala, Malava and Gauda together with Gurjaras dwelling in the hill fort of Chitrakuta and then the lords of Kanchi, he became Kirtinarayan.

Govind III was succeeded by his son Sarva, better known as Amoghavarsha. As he was a young boy of 13 or 14 at the time of his accession, the administration was carried on under the regency of his cousin Karka, the nephew of Govinda III and Viceroy of Gujarat and Malava. But in A.D. 817 a very serious rebellion broke out against the minor king in which feudatories, officials and relatives joined, supported by the eastern Chalukya Vijayaditya II and the Ganga Rajamalla I. The situation assumed such a serious proportion that Amoghavarsha (fled from the country in A.D. 818 and the Rashtrakuta power suffered temporary eclipse. But his trusted regent Karka of Lata managed to crush the rebellion completely by A.D. 82)

But Amoghavarsha was not destined to enjoy peace during his long reign of 64 years. He had to encounter frequent rebellions of his feudatories against his powerful hostile neighbours. With the eastern Chalukyas war broke out again in A.D. 850 when Gunaga Vijayaditya III made a strenuous effort to free the Vengi kingdom from the Rashtrakutas. But Amoghavarsha won a decisive victory over the Eastern Chalukyas in a battle at Vingavalli, near Kambhar in the Kurnool district.

Amoghavarsha next turned his attention to the Gangas. The Ganga ruler Yerraya, also known as Nitimarga and Ranavikrama (A.D. 817 to 870), son of Rajamalla, was joined by other feudatories. Amoghavarsha's general Bankesa dealt with them successfully. But hardly had he completed the task, when he was recalled by Amoghavarsha to deal with the internal dissension in which the crown prince Krishna II and the ruler of Lata (Gujarat) Dhruva I (son of Karka) were involved. Thus it appears that the friendly relations that existed between Amoghavarsha and his Gujarat feudatory under Karka underwent a change and marred the relations between the two houses for about 25 years. Bankesa killed Dhruva I in the battle and continued the war with his son Akalavarsha and his grandson Dhruva II. Ultimately a peace was concluded between the two royal families in A.D. 860 as both of them were threatened by the imperial ambition of king Bhoja of Kanauj. But Bhoja's invasion was not a serious one and Dhruva II seems to have repelled it probably with the assistance of Amoghavarsha, sometime before A.D. 867.

Amoghavarsha seems to have clashed with the Palas either in Kosala or in Orissa in which both sides claimed victory. After the recall of Bankesa, the war against the Ganga was entrusted to the Vengi ruler, Ganga Vijayaditya who had become a vassal

of Amoghavarsha. Meanwhile, the Ganga ruler Nitimarga had been strengthened by the adhesion of the Nolamba ruler called Mangi. A fierce battle took place between the eastern Chalukya troops and those of the Nolamba ruler Mangi in which the latter was slain. The road to Gangavadi now lay open. The Ganga army was now beaten and Nitimarga was obliged to make peace with Amoghavarsha which was cemented by the marriage alliance between the latter's daughter and Butuga, Nitimarga's son.

Amoghavarsha was succeeded by his son Krishna II. He married the daughter of the Chedi ruler Kokkala and a sister of prince Sankaragaha. Krishna married his heir apparent Jagattunga to princess Lakshmi, a daughter of his brother-in-law Sankaragana. Later on, Jagattunga married his eldest son Indraborn of his queen Lakshmi, to the Chedi Princess Vijamba. These numerous matrimonial alliances between the two royal houses made them staunch allies. This alliance remained unimpaired even in times of stress and difficulty.

With the aid of his Gujarat feudatory Krishnaraja, Krishna II successfully resisted an invasion by the Gurjara ruler Bhoja I. Soon after the vicereignty of Gujarat Rastrakuta branch came to an end and it came to be governed directly from the imperial capital.

Krishna II's wars with the Chalukyas of Vengi were marked by many vicissitudes. The advent of a new king on the Rastrakuta throne emboldened Vijayaditya III. (A.D. 844-88), the Vengi ruler to take the offensive. For the time being, he carried everything before him. In the South, he defeated the Nolambas and the Gangas, who were feudatories of the Rashtrakutas. In the North he occupied the state of Bastar and penetrated right up Elichpur in Berar-Vijayaditya's victory was complete and Krishna II, unable to withstand further attack, sued for peace. The Vengi ruler satisfied himself by accepting the submission of the Rashtrakuta emperor But Krishna II found this situation untenable and mobilised his resources against Vengi. The death of Vijayaditya III and the accession of Bima I gave the Rastrakuta King an opportunity to invade Vengi. The Vengi ruler Bhima was decisively defeated and taken prisoner. Eventually Bhima was released and allowed to rule as a feudatory. In course of time, however, Bhima I challenged the overlordship of the Rashtrakutas and regained his freedom. Krishna made futile attempts to subjugate Vengi.

Krishna came into conflict with the rising power of the Cholas. One of his daughters was married to the Chola king Aditya I and they had a son Kannhara by name. On the death of Aditya, his other son Parantaka ascended the throne by setting aside Kannhara. Espousing the cause of his grandson, Krishna II invaded the Chola country with the assistance of the Banas and Vaidumbas. But Parantaka assisted by



his Ganga ally, Prithvipati II, inflicted a severe defeat on Krishna and his allies in a battle fought at Vallala, modern Tiruvallam in the north Arcot district.

Krishna II was succeeded by his grandson Indra III, whose father Jagattunga had already died. As a crown prince Indra had distinguished himself by checking an invader from the north by the Paramara ruler, Upendra of Malwa, the latter being prompted to take advantage of Krishna II's pre-occupations with the Chola Parantaka. Indra not only defeated Upendra but also compelled to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Rashtrakuta power.

Soon-after his accession Indra emulated his great ancestors by declaring war against the Gurjara Pratihara emperor, Mahipala. Following the usual Bhopal–Jhansi Kalpi route the invading army started in the autumn of A.D. 916, crossed the Jumna and marched upon Kanauj and occupied it.

Mahipala lost his kingdom for a time and regained it later with the aid of the chandella ruler, Karshadeva.

Towards Vengi, Indra followed the policy of fomenting troubles to the ruling king Amma I, who however, held his own and ruled the kingdom till 925. But his death was followed by a period of confused succession disputes which enabled him to put his own nominee (Yudhamalla II) on the Vengi throne.

Indra III was succeeded by his son Amoghavarsha II (c.A.D. 928-29), but the latter fell a victim to some foul play perpetrated by his younger brother, the ambitious Govinda IV. Thus within a year of his accession. Amoghavarsha II died and his younger brother Govinda IV ascended the throne.

Govinda IV (A.D.930-36) was a wicked king whose tyrannical conduct and vicious life provoked universal resentment. Unable to correct Govinda IV's way of life, his uncle Amoghavarsha III withdrew to the court of his father-in-law in the Chedi kingdom.

Rashtrakuta influence in Vengi ended when Chalukyan Bhima II succeeded in ousting Yudhamalla and gaining the throne for himself in A.D.934. Govinda picked up a quarrel with his Chalukya feudatory Arikesari II, who was ruling at Vamulwad in the Southern Karnataka. This chieftain took a leading part in the revolution which brought about the end of the inglorious reign of Govinda IV and the transfer of the crown to Amoghavarsha III, who was invited to return from the Chedi court to accept the Rashtrakuta Crown.

Amoghavarsa III (c.A.D. 936-39) was a gentle and peaceful monarch who devoted himself to religious rather than to administrative affairs. The government was carried on by crown Prince, Krishna with the able assistance of his younger brother Jagattunga. The ambitious Krishna sent an expedition into Gangavadi, dethroned its king Rajamalla and placed his brother-in-law Butuga on the Ganga throne in 937 A.D. The entente cordiale that existed between the Rashtrakutas and the Chedis came to a rupture when Krishna marched against them. This impolitic act antagonised the Chedis who transferred their loyalty to the Chalukya feudatory Tailapa, destined to supplant the Rashtrakutas. After defeating the Chedi forces, Krishna marched into Bundelkhand and occupied the forts of Kalinjar and Chitrakut which belonged to the Pratihara. Thus Krishna proved his worth while he was a crown prince and Amoghavarsha felt no misgivings about his son's capacity when he died in 939.

After his accession Krishna III (939-967 A.D.) spent a few years in strengthening the administration. In about A.D. 949 Krishna III aided by his brother-in-law, Butuga II, ruler of Gangavadi, led a lightning expedition to the Chola Kingdom and captured Kanchi and Tanjore. It took the Cholas a few years to recover from the blow and in 949 a sanguinary battle was fought at Takkolam in the North Arcot district in which Butuga killed the Chola Crown Prince Rajaditya. This meant the collapse of the Chola resistance. Krishna marched farther south and after defeating both the Kerala and Pandya kings even succeeded in occupying Ramesvaram for a time. Throughout his long reign Krishna III remained in effective possession of Tondai-mandala consisting of the Arcot, Chingleput and Vellore districts. In recognition of Butuga's service, Krishna III gave him practically the whole of former Bombay Karnataka.

Like most of his predecessors Krishna III interfered in the affairs of Vengi by setting up against Amma II, his elder half-brother Danarava and two sons of Yuddhamalla II, Budapa and Taila II. But the Rashtrakuta power in Vengi proved to be short-lived, Amma wrested the Kingdom from Danarava and ruled it until 970 when he was killed in a battle by Danarava.

Towards the close of his reign about 963 A.D., Krishna assisted by Ganga Sarasimha (son of Butuga II) led an expedition into Malwa against the Paramara ruler Harsha Siyaka and occupied Ujjain. Krishna's reign marked the disintegration of the Rashtrakuta empire as the undue clemency shown by him to Butuga in granting large fiefs in the home territory must have weakened the empire. He was oblivious of the feudal developments likely to endanger the stability of the empire by granting the Province of Tardavadi near the heart of the empire as a military fief to Ahavamalla Tailapa of the Satyasraya family sometime before 965. Within a few years of Krishna's

death, Tailapa felt strong enough to overthrow the Rashtrakutas and to lay the foundations of the western Chalukya empire of Kalyani.

Krishna III was succeeded by his half-brother Khottinga (967-972 A.D.). During his reign, the Rashtrakuta empire received a rude blow which completely shattered its prestige. The defeat which the Paramara king Siyaka had sustained at the hands of Krishna III in A.D. 964 was rankling in his mind and he made necessary preparation to avenge it. His first attempt met with no success as he was fiercely opposed by the Rashtrakuta forces while trying to cross the Narmada at the fort of Khalighata. But afterwards in 972 reinforced with large contingents Siyaka crossed the river and reached Malkhed, the Rashtrakuta capital. The imperial treasury was completely sacked. Once more the Ganga king Marasimha II assisted his overlord in regaining the capital after the Paramara forces withdrew. Khottinga did not long survive the disgrace and was followed by his nephew Karkka II, son of Nirupama,

The prestige of Rashtrakuta empire had suffered irreparably when Karkka II (972-973) ascended the throne in September 972. Matters were worsened by the maladministration of the new emperor and the conduct of his two wicked advisers. The feudatories naturally felt emboldened to challenge the imperial authority and one of them eventually deprived Karkka of his sovereignty over the Deccan within about eighteen months of his accession. This feudatory was Taila II of the Chalukya family, who had been nursing imperial ambition ever since he got the fief of Tradavadi from Krishna III.

After making effective preparations Taila marched against Karkka and fought a sanguinary battle somewhere in northern Karnataka. Karkka escaped from the battlefield and his two wicked advisers were killed in battle. Karkka, however, managed to carve out a small principality for himself in the Sorab taluk of the Mysore state, where he continued to rule up to A.D. 991. The Ganga chief Marasimha II made a futile bid in A.D. 975 to revive Rashtrakuta power by setting up Indra IV, a grandson of Krishna III. Both of them were signally defeated, eventually they became Jain and died by the vow of starvation.

Marasimha's successor, Panchaladeva, challenged the authority of Taila in which the former was killed and Taila remained the undisputed master of the Rashtrakuta dominions.

The dramatic suddenness with which the Rashtrakuta empire collapsed like a pack of cards forms an interesting phenomenon of South Indian history. Like most of the empires in ancient India, the Rashtrakuta empire was based on feudal federal

organisation. The stability of the empire depended as much on the goodwill and co-operation of the feudatories as upon its own strength and resources, the aggressive policy of Krishna had exhausted his resources which was further depleted by the cession of imperial territories in the Northern Karnatak to the Ganga king. The Chedis who remained loyal to the Rashtrakutas owing to their matrimonial connections were alienated by the senseless policy of Krishna and began to support the cause of Taila II, who was descended from a Chedi princess. It was, therefore, not difficult for Taila II to strike the final blow to the Rashtrakuta empire which had already exhibited signs of disintegration.

Nevertheless the Rashtrakuta empire which lasted for about 225 years occupied a distinct place in the history of India. No other ruling dynasty in the Deccan played such a dominant role in the history of India till the rise of the Marathas in the eighteenth century. A succession of able rulers like Krishna I, Dhruva, Govinda III, Indra III and Krishna III raised the prestige of the Rashtrakutas to an amazing height, which found few parallels in the history of India. Three times the armies of the Rashtrakutas crossed the Vindhyas and defeated their northern opponents.

#### **4.2.2 The Palas**

The death of Sasanka was followed by anarchy and confusion resulting in political disintegration which marked the course of the history of Bengal from A.D. 650 to 750. The result was, as Taranath graphically puts in, that there was no powerful ruler in either Gauda or Vanga, but every Kshatriya, Brahmana or merchant was a self-styled king in his own house. The political condition of Bengal in the middle of the eighth century A.D. was described as *matsyanyaya*, which denotes a state of anarchy in which might alone is right.

The anarchy and confusion which prevailed in Bengal led to a natural reaction. The people realised the evils of a weak central government and the leading men of Bengal agreed to elect Gopala as the ruler of the whole kingdom. It was a significant political event as without any struggle the independent political chiefs recognised the authority of Gopala.

Gopala founded a dynasty in Bengal which ruled for nearly four centuries. The dynasty is known as the Pala dynasty because the names of all the rulers beginning from Gopala end in 'Pala'.

The original limits of Gopala's kingdom are difficult to determine, but it seems that he consolidated his authority over almost the whole of Bengal. His period of reign probably extended from A.D. 750 to 770.

Gopala was succeeded by his son Dharmapala (C-A.D. 770-810) who raised the Pala kingdom to the high-water mark of greatness. Soon after his accession Dharmapala was involved in a struggle with the two powers—the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. The Pratihara ruler Vatsaraja defeated Dharmapala in a battle which probably took place somewhere in the Gangetic Doab. But before Vatsaraja could reap the fruits of victory, he was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king Dhruva. Thereafter Dhruva defeated Dharmapala and a little later left for the Deccan.

Despite these reverse, Dharmapala gained more than what he had anticipated. With the defeat of the Pratihara power and the retreat of the Rashtrakutas, Dharmapala could dream of buliding up a mighty emoire in northern India. Dharmapala defeated Indrayudha and installed Chakrayudha on the throne of Kanauj. The formal ceremony of investiture of Chakrayudha was attended by the rulers of Bhoja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru Yadu, Yavana, Avanti, Gandhara and Kira. These states were not annexed by Dharamapala, but their rulers acknowledged his suzerainty. It was the visible symbol of the most significant change in the political situation of the time, viz, the transfer of supreme power in northern India from the Pratiharas to the Palas and the formal assumption of imperial authority by the latter.

The Pala empire under Dharmapala was fairly extensive. It comprised Bengal and Bihar, directly ruled by him. Beyond this the kingdom of Kanauj representing modern Uttar Pradesh, was a dependency, ruled by Dharmapala's own nominee, Beyond Kanauj there were a large number of vassal states in the Punjab, Western Hill States, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar whose rulers acknowledged Dharmapala as their overlord. According to a tradition, Nepal was also a vassal state of Dharmapala. The Monghy Copper Plate grant of Devapala credits Dharmapala with conquest up to Kedarnath in the North.

Dharmapala's triumphant career was soon challenged by his Pratihara adversary, Nagabhata II, the son and successor of Vatsaraja. After making himself master of Sindhu, Andhra, Vidharbha and Kalinga Nagabhata II conquered Kanauj and drove away Dharmapala's protege Chakrayudha. A struggle for supremacy between the two rivals became inevitable. The Pratihara ruler advanced up to Manghyi and defeated Dharmapala in a pitchd battle. But Dharmapala was again rescued from the perilous position by the timely intervention of the Rashtrakuta King Govinda III to whom he might have appealed for aid. The Rashtrakuta records tell us that both Dharmapala and Chakrayudha voluntarily submitted to Govinda III. This submission meant nothing as Govinda III soon returned to the Deccan leaving Dharmapala once more master of northe India. After a reign of 32 years Dharmapala died leaving his extensive dominions unimpaired to his son Devapala.

Dharmapala was succeeded by his son Devapala (c.A.D. 810-859) who is rightly regarded as the most powerful Pala potentate. Epigraphic records credit him in hyperbolic language with extensive conquests from the Himalayas to the Vindyas and from the eastern to the Western Ocean. He is said to have defeated the Dravidas, Gurjaras and the Hunas, and conquered Utkala and Kamarupa. The astute diplomacy and wise counsels of his ministers Darbhapani and his grandson Kedaramisra and the military skill of his cousin Jayapala, considerably helped Devapala in his victories.

The Huna and Kamboja princes who submitted to Devapala cannot be identified properly. The Gurjara adversary may be identified with Mihira Bhoja, who tried to expand his kingdom eastwards. But he was defeated by Devapala and during the latter's long reign that eternal enemy of the Palas were kept in check. The Dravida king, usually identified with the Rashtrakutas, was Amoghavarsha. But according to some scholars, as the Dravida usually denotes the country to the south of the Krishna river, the Dravida ruler defeated by Devapala was probably his contemporary Pandya king Shri-mara Shri Vallabha. Devapala seems to have been helped in his southern expedition by his ally, the Chandella king Vijaya.

Devapala's victory in the south could only have temporary significance. His main activity lay in the north and the temporary eclipse of the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas left him in undisputed possession of north India. He carried his arms as far as the Sindhu, 'a feat to which no other ruler of Bengal could lay claim during the next thousand years.'

The glory of the Pala empire suffered irretrievably with death of Devapala. The rule of his successors was marked by a steady process of disintegration which led to the eclipse of the Pala power in north India.

Devapala was succeeded by Vigrahapala (A.D. 850-854 A.D.). He was probably Devapala's nephew, but some scholars maintain that he was Devapala's son. After a short reign of three or four years, Vigrahapala abdicated the throne and took the life of a recluse.

Vigrahapala's son and successor, Narayanapala (A.D. 854-908) had a long reign. The Badal Pillar Inscription records no glorious military achievement to his credit. During the reigns of these two weak kings the Pala empire disintegrated. Sometime after A.D. 860 the Rashtrakuta king Amoghavarsha defeated the Pala ruler. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Palas, the Pratiharas under Bhoja and Mahendrapala gradually extended their power in the east. Narayanapala not only lost Magadha (south Bihar), but also north Bengal, the heartland of the Palas. The decline of the

Palas encouraged king Harjara of Assam to assume imperial titles and the Sailodbhavas to establish their power firmly in Orissa. However, towards the close of his reign. Narayanapala recovered north Bengal and south Bihar from the Pratiharas, the latter being weakened by the invasion of the Rastrakutas.

Narayanapala was succeeded by his son Rajyapala who ruled for at last 32 years (908-940 A.D.) works of public utility and construction of lofty temples. He was succeeded by his son Gopala II, who ruled for 17 years. (940 A.D.-957 A.D.) Gopala II is known to have ruled initially in east Bengal and north Bengal but later on last practically the whole of Bengal and ruled only in Bihar/ Gopala II was followed by Vigrahapala II. (960-988) The rule of these two rulers proved disastrous for Pala power. A series of invasions led by the Chandellas and the Kalachuris dismembered the Pala empire and led to the rise of independent kingdoms like Gauda, Radha, Anga and Vanga which once formed the constituent parts of the Pala dominion.

Of these new states in Bengal, Gauda (West and North Bengal) was ruled by a Kamboja family. Three kings of the family are known to us –Rajyapala and his two sons, Narayanapala and Nayapala. These names were also borne by Pala emperors, but it cannot be said that they were identical. The origin of the Kamboja family is not known to us. The most plausible view is that some high official of the Palas belonging to the Kamboja family took advantage of the weakness of the Pala rulers and set up an independent kingdom.

Another king, Kantideva of Harikela assumed the title of Maharajadhiraja. Harikela primarily denotes eastern Bengal but it also covers South Bengal. Kantideva's capital was Vardhamanapura identified by some with the modern city of Burdwan. It is probable that Kantideva flourished either in the second half of the ninth or the first half of the tenth century A.D.

It seems that Kantideva was supplanted by a new line of rulers known as the Chandras. Two rulers of this dynasty, Trailokyachandra and his son Shrichandra ruled over Harikela with Chandradvipa (Bakargar district) as their capital Another king Govindachandra, ruled over southern and eastern Bengal at the beginning of the eleventh century A.D.

The fortune of the palas which reached its lowest ebb was recovered to some extent by Mahipala I, the son and successor of Vigrahapala II, who ascended the throne in A.D. 988. Within three years of his accession, he recovered northern and eastern Bengal.

The most important event of Mahipala's reign was the invasion of Bengal by

Rajendra Chola sometime between A.D. 1021 and 1023. His Tirumalai, inscription records the progress of his conquering career through Orissa and Kosala while his generals defeated some local kings like Dharmapala of Dandabhukti, Ranasura of Southern Radha and Govindachandra of Vanga. The invader then defeated Mahipala, conquered northern Radha and advanced as far as the Ganga. The Chola invasion 'could hardly have been more than a hurried raid across a vast stretch of territory.' It did not lead to the establishment of Chola suzerainty over Bengal and hardly did it affect the political condition of Bengal, Apart from north and east Bengal, Mahipala was able to recover the northern part of the Burdwan division which lies to the north of the Ajay river.

Mahipala's success was more pronounced in north and south Bihar. His dominion might have included Benaras as by his orders construction and repair of many sacred structures at Sarnath were taken by his two brothers Sthirapala and Vasantapala. But he could not retain the sacred city for long as the Kalachuri king Gangeyadeva annexed Varanasi after defeating the ruler of Anga, who could be only Mahipala.

Thus by his ability and military genius Mahipala rescued the Pala Kingdom from impending ruin and succeeded in reestablishing his authority over a great part of Bengal. He has been regarded as 'the greatest Pala emperor after Devapala' and his remarkable achievement made such profound impression that he is remembered in popular ballads still current in Bengal.

Mahipala was succeeded by his son Nayapala (1038-55). The chief event of the reign was his long drawn struggle with the Kalachuri king Karna, son of Gangeyadeva. Karna had some initial success but was ultimately defeated by Nayapala. The famous Buddhist scholar Dipankara Srijana, also known as Atisa, was then residing at Magadha and at his meditation, a treaty was concluded between Karna and Nayapala.

Nayapala was succeeded by his son Vighrahapala III in A.D. 1055. Once more the Kalachuri king Karna invaded Bengal but was again defeated by the Pala king. A peace was concluded which was cemented by the marriage of Karna's daughter Yauvanasri with Vighrahapala III. But soon afterwards the Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI invaded Bengal and defeated Vighrahapala. Another invasion of Bengal led by the Somavamsi king of Orissa also took place in his reign.

The series of foreign invasions from the west and the south must have considerably reduced the power of the Palas. They not only lost eastern Bengal, West Bengal and Southern Bengal, but their hold over Magadha also become precarious. A new power, the Varmans, occupied eastern Bengal and even Kamarupa assumed independence.



Thus towards the middle of the eleventh century A.D. the pala empire was hastening towards dissolution.

Vigrahapala III had three sons—Mahipala, Surapala and Ramapala. Mahipala II (1072-1075 A.D.) succeeded his father. An almost contemporary poetical work, the Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandi, gives us a detailed account of the history of this period, Mahipala II was led to believe that his brother Ramapala was conspiring to seize the throne. Without proper investigation, he threw both Ramapala and Surapala into prison. But soon afterwards he had to face a well organised rebellion of his vassal chiefs. Disregarding the advice of his minister, Mahipala II proceeded with his small army against the rebels. He was defeated and killed by Divya a high official, but Kaivarta by caste. Varendra or Northern Bengal thus passed into the hands of Divya who for sometime established a new dynasty. This revolt was perhaps due to the effete nature of the central authority rather than to the weakness of Mahipala II.

In the midst of these turmoils, Surapala and Ramapala escaped to Magadha. Surapala died after a short reign and was succeeded by his brother Ramapala.

After his accession to the throne, Divya entered into hostilities against Jatavarman, king of eastern Bengal. Very little is known of the activities of Divya after he became king, either from Ramacharita or from any other source. But the fact remains that he consolidated his position in Varendra (North Bengal) and frustrated Ramapala's efforts to recover it. He was a powerful ruler as he invaded Ramapala's dominion. He left a peaceful kingdom to his younger brother Rudoka, but nothing is known of him. Rudoka was succeeded by his son, Bhima. The author of Ramacharita gives us a very flattering description of the manifold qualities of Bhima and the prosperity of his kingdom. It is reasonable to conclude that Bhima restored peace and prosperity after the period of turmoil that followed the expulsion of the Palas. His promising career was, however, cut short by Ramapala who destroyed the fortune of the kaivarta family.

For many years Ramapala could do nothing to recover his ancestral dominions. This was a very difficult task which he accomplished after he had gathered support from various quarters and mobilised his resources. Ramapala's chief support was his maternal uncle, the Rastrakuta Mathana better known as Mahana and his two sons, though many other feudatory chiefs of South Bihar and south-west Bengal joined Ramapala. With his powerful army, Ramapala crossed the Ganges and defeated Bhima in a pitched battle. Ramapala wreaked a terrible vengeance upon Bhima by killing the member of his family before his eyes. Bhima was then put to death in a cruel manner.

After occupying Varendri Ramapala restored peace and order in the Kingdom. He left the administration to his sons who acted wisely under him. Ramapala fixed his capital at Ramavati, which continued to be the capital of the Palas till the end.

Ramapala tried to revive the lost glory of the empire and met with limited success. He forced the Varman king of east Bengal to recognise his authority and brought Kamarupa under his control. He extended his conquests up to Kalinga and interfered in the politics of Orissa. At this time Orissa was in the midst of internal turmoil, being invaded by eastern Ganga king of Kalinga. Ramapala's interference in Orissa failed to produce any permanent results. It was a duel between the Pala and the Ganga Kings in which the latter emerged victorious. But it was only after the death of Ramapala that the Ganga King succeeded in conquering Orissa and annexing it to his dominions.

It is probable that Ramapala maintained friendly relations with the Chola King kutottunga in order to secure support against the common enemies—the Gangas and the Chalukyas. Ramapala kept the Senas in check but was not able to retain Mithila which ultimately passed to a Karnataka chief named Nanyadeva. He held back the aggressive design of the Gahadavala ruler, Govindachandra by a policy of matrimonial alliance.

Ramapala was the last great Pala ruler who succeeded not only in re-establishing his authority over the whole of Bengal but also in extending his sway over Assam and Orissa. He successfully defended his kingdom against the aggressive designs of the Gangas, the Chalukyas and the Gahadavalas and inaugurated a new era of peace and prosperity. But it was the last flicker of the greatness of the Palas for immediately after his death in 1120 A.D. the kingdom was overwhelmed by internal dissension.

Ramapala was succeeded by his son kumarapala (1120-1125 A.D.) who proved to be a weak ruler. Trouble began early in the reign of Kumarapala. When a rebellion broke out in Assam, his favourite minister vaidyadeva put down rebellion and became the ruler of the country. But Kamarupa was not restored to the Palas for after the death of Kumarapala, Vaidyadeva practically assumed independence.

Kumarapala's son and successor Gopala III ruled from 1125 to 1144 A.D. It has been suggested in the Ramacharita that Gopala III was murdered by his uncle Madanapala which still remains to be vouchsafed by any evidence.

Madanapala ruled from 1144 to 1161 A.D. His dominion included Magadha and North Bengal. But the Pala Kingdom was hastening towards dissolution. The Varmans in east Bengal declared independence and the eastern Gangas renewed the conflict

in Orissa. He recovered Monghyr from the Gahadavala but he had to reckon with the Karnataka rula of Mithila. Meanwhile vijayasena who had made himself master of southern and eastern Bengal defeated Madanapala. Thus, when Madanapala died, the Palas ceased to exercise any sovereignty in western southern and eastern Bengal, and in western and northern Bihar. The Pala kingdom was confined to limited areas of central and eastern Bihar and a portion of north Bengal. Madanapala, the last king of the Pala dynasty died in A.D. 1161. Another king Govindapala, is known to have ruled over the Gaya district till A.D. 1162, but his relationship with the Palas is not definitely known. Thus after four centuries of existence, the Palas passed into obscurity.

### 4.2.3 The Pratiharas

The Pratiharas were a branch of the famous Gurjaras—one of those nomadic Central Asian tribes that poured into India along with the Hunas following the disintegration of the Gupta empire. The Pratiharas claimed descent from Lakshmana, the brother of Rama, the former performing the duty of the door-keeper (Pratihara). This claim is strengthened by Rajasekhara, the dramatist, who calls his patron Mahendrapala. 'Raghukulatilaka' (ornament of Raghu's family) or Raghugramani (leader of Raghu's family). But the fact remains that the name was derived from one of the Kings of the line holding the office of Pratihara a high dignity, in the Rashtrakuta court.

The earliest known settlement of the Pratiharas was at Mandor (5 miles to the north of Jodhpur) where ruled the family of Harichandra from the middle of the sixth century A.D. then a branch of the Pratiharas advanced southwards.

The southern branch ruled in Lata with its capital at Nandipuri, identified with Nandol. The Jaina Harivamsha testifies that Vatsaraj, a member of the line was a ruler of Avanti.

The Pratiharas came into prominence in the middle of the 8th century A.D. when their ruler Nagabhata I defended western India from the invasion of the Arabs and carried his arms upto Broach. He was able to leave to his successors a powerful principality comprising Malwa and parts of Rajputana and Gujarat. Nagabhata, I was succeeded by his brother's sons, Kakustha and Devaraja, both of whom were non-entities.

Vatsaraja (775-800 A.D.) the grand nephew of Nagabhata I was a resourceful ruler who established an empire in northern India. He defeated the famous Bhandi clan, who wielded imperial power probably with its seat of authority in Kanauj.

Aided by his feudatory chief, the Chahamanas Vatsaraja defeated Dharmapala, the king of Bengal and laid the foundation of a mighty empire. But he was unfortunate to sustain a grievous defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakuta king Dhruva. Dharmapala did not escape the fury of the Rashtrakuta king and was defeated somewhere between the Ganga and the Jamuna. A tripartite struggle soon began for supremacy of northern India which was destined to have a profound impact on Indian politics for more than a century.

Vatsaraja was succeeded by his son Nagabhata II (c-805-33 A.D.) who tried to retrieve the fallen fortunes of his family. But he was as unfortunate as his predecessor in suffering defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III. Nagabhata II tried his luck in other direction. Fortunately the terror of Rashtrakuta arm had departed with the death of Govinda III (814 A.D.) and the country was plunged into anarchy and confusion. The Pratihara King did not miss this favourable opportunity. He overran Kanauj, deposed Chakrayudha, Dharmapala's protege and made it the capital of the Pratihara kingdom. The vassal's deposition was too galling for Dharmapala and the latter made preparations for the inevitable struggle. Joined by the three feudal chiefs kakka of the Jodhpur Pratihara family, Vahukadhavala, the Chalukya chief of southern Kathiawar and the Guhilot Sankaragana the Pratihara monarch advanced as far as Manghyi and won a resounding victory over Dharmapala. This signal achievement increased his prestige so much that the kings of Andhra, Sindhu, Vidarbha and Kalinga hastened to seek his alliance against their respective enemies—the Muslims in the west, Rashtrakutas in the south and the Palas in the east. The Gwalior inscription of his grandson tells us of Nagabhata II's victories over Anartta (Northern Kathiawar) Malava or Central India, the Matsyas or eastern Rajputana, the Kiratas (of the Himalaya regions), Turushkas (Arab settlers of Western India) and the Vatsas in the territory of Kausambi (Kosam). Making due allowance for some exaggeration, the limits of the Pratihara empire under Nagabhata II may be roughly defined as comprising parts of Rajputana, a large portion of modern U.P. and central India, perhaps northern Kathiawar and adjacent territories for its south eastern limit. Both vatsaraja and Nagabhata II occupy a prominent place in the contemporary history of India. They raised a provincial principality into a first rate military and political power, and although their dreams of founding a stable empire were not actually realised, they laid its foundations so well, that before long Bhoja succeeded in the great task even in the face of very strenuous opposition from his hereditary foes, the Palas and the Rashtrakutas.

Nagabhata II was succeeded by his son Ramabhadra (833-836 A.D.) during whose

brief reign of three years, the Prathara power suffered eclipse owing to the aggressive policy of the Pala emperor, Devapala. We have no definite evidence of the precise extent of his kingdom but it certainly extended upto Gwalior.

With the accession of Ramabhadra's son Bhoja (836-85 A.D.) the Pratihara power reached an acme of greatness. He re-established the supremacy of his family in Bundelkhand and subjugated the Jodhpur Pratiharas. The Daulatpura copperplate of Bhoja shows that by A.D.643 the Pratihara king had succeeded in reasserting his authority over central and eastern Rajputana. It is possible that he might have received assistance from some of his feudatories, one of whom, the Guhilot prince Harsharaja specially ingratiated Bhoja's favour. In the north, his suzerainty was acknowledged upto the foot of the Himalayas as is proved by the grant of a piece of land in the Gorakhpur district to the Kalachuri king Gunambodhideva.

Bhoja's imperial ambition was not, however, uniformly successful. He was defeated by the Pala king, Devapala, the latter being aided by the sagacious advice of his minister Darbhapani. But instead of being dispirited by this reverse in the east, he turned southward and overran southern Rajputana and the tracts round Ujjain upto the Narmada river. This brought him face to face with the Rashtrakutas of the Gujarat branch whose ruler Dhruva II was able to arrest his triumphant progress. Bhoja was also defeated by the kalachuri king Kokkalla (A.D. 845-888).

While Bhoja's ambition suffered disappointment at the hands of the Palas, the Rashtrakutas and the Kalachuris, he had not given himself up to despair. The political spectrum underwent a change with the death of the powerful Pala ruler, Devapala followed by the Rashtrakuta invasion of Bengal. Having secured the assistance of Gunambodhideva, the Chedi ruler of Gorakhpur and the Guhilot chief, Guhila II, Bhoja defeated the unwarlike Pala king Narayana Pala and secured a considerable part of his western dominions. Flushed with this success he measured sword with Krishna II (878-914A.D.) the Rashtrakuta ruler of the main line. He defeated him on the bank of the Narmada, occupied Malwa and took into possession Khetaka (Kaira District) after advancing towards Gujrat. Subsequently a sanguinary contest took place between the two opposing houses at Ujjain which was long remembered by posterity. The result was inconclusive, Malwa remaining in the hands of the Pratiharas although the latter might have lost Khetaka or Kaira District. There are good grounds to believe that Bhoja extended his supremacy upto Pehowa in the Karnal district of the Punjab as well as upto Saurashtra in the South West. Thus the extensive dominions of Bhoja extended upto Sutlej in the north-west, the foot of the Himalayas in the north, Bengal in the east, Bundelkhand and Vatsa territories in the south and south-

east, the Narmada and Saurashtra on the south-west including the major portion of Rajputana on the west.

Bhoja was succeeded by his son Mahendrapala I (c. 885-910 A.D.) His most notable achievement was the conquest of Magadha and Northern Bengal a task which he accomplished with the help of his feudatory Guhilot chieftain, Guhila. He was able to retain his hold over the Peninsula of Saurashtra, which gave him access to the sea. Mahendrapala's preoccupation in the eastern region must have emboldened the Kashmiri monarch Sankaravarma (883-902 A.D) to recover some territories seized by Bhoja. But despite this reverse, the Pratihara authority remained unshaken in Karnal and continued to be acknowledged up to the foot of the Himalayas.

Mahendrapala's death in 910 A.D. was followed by a scramble for the possession of the throne. At first his son Bhoja II seized the throne with the help of Kokalla Chedi. But his half-brother Mahipala (912-944 A.D.) soon usurped the throne with the help of the Chandella king Harshadeva. Mahipala I was also known by three other names—Kshitipala, Vinaykapala and Herambapala. Once more the mortal enemies, the Rastrakutas sapped the strength of the Pratihara empire when its ruler Indra III, in alliance with his feudatory, Narasimha Chalukya, completely devastated the city of Kanauj after crossing the Jamuna. The Palas were not slow to take advantage and recovered some of their ancestral possessions up to the eastern banks of the river Son.

But the withdrawal of Indra III to the Deccan in 916 A.D. enabled Mahipala to recover from the fatal blow with the help of his feudatories. In a magniloquent verse to Bala-Bharata, Rajasekhara alluded that Mahipala defeated the Muralas (inhabitants of the Narmada region), Mekhalas (of the Amarkantak hills), Kalingas (Orissa), Kerala (kingdom between the Western Ghats and the sea-coast), Kulutas (Kangra district of the Punjab on the Beas), Kuntalas (western part of the Deccan) and the Ramathas (dwelling beyond Prithudaka or Pehowa in the north). Towards the close of his reign the Pratihara empire was again disturbed by the Rashtrakuta attacks on northern India when the two forts Kalanjar and Chitrakuta were occupied by them. The Arab traveller Al Masudi who visited India in the year A.D. 915-16 refers to the power and resources of the king of Kanauj whose kingdom extended up to Sind in the west and touched the Rashtrakuta kingdom in the south. The Arab chronicler testifies to the sea-saw struggle between the Rashtrakutas and the Pratiharas as well as the formidable force at the disposal of the latter.

Mahendrapala II, son and successor of Mahipala, was able to maintain the strength of his empire intact, But it received its shattering blow during the reign of Devapala

(940-960) when Chandella became virtually independent. He was obliged to surrender coveted image of Vishnu to the Chandel king, Yasovarman, who subsequently enshrined it in one of the finest temples at Khajuraho.

The process of decline of the Pratihara empire which had begun with Devapala accelerated with the reign of Vijayapala (960-991) when Gwalior was lost to the Kachchauraha (Kacchapaghata) chief Vojradamas. The Pratiharas also lost a part of their empire in the West when Gujarat came under the Solankis or Chalukya dynasty of Anhilwada. The Gwalior chieftain became a feudatory of the Chandellas who basked in sunshine under Dhanga (c-950-1000 A.D.). The Chahamanas of Sakambhari, originally feudatories of the Pratiharas made themselves independent in central Rajputana. So did the Guhilas and some other vassals who lost no time in asserting their independence.

The Pratihara empire was already a spent force when Rajyapala, the successor of Vijayapala came to the throne of Kanauj in the last decade of the tenth century A.D. At that time the Muslims of north-western India menaced the Indian subcontinent and even the joint resistance of Hindu Shahi King Jaipal and the Kings of Delhi, Ajmer, Ujjain, Kalanjar and Kanauj could not stem the tide of this onslaught. In December 1018, Sultan Mahmud pillaged Mathura and appeared before Kanauj-Rajyapala being panic-stricken abandoned Kanauj and fled to Bari on the other side of the Ganges. This abrupt surrender incensed his Hindu allies among whom Chandela King Ganda took the leading part in killing Rajyapala in the spring of summer 1019 and placing his son Trilochanpala on the throne. Unlike his father, Trilochanpala tried to check Mahmud's advance near the Jumna at the end of 1019. But it availed him nothing and he escaped. A certain Yashapala, referred to in an inscription of the year 1036, was perhaps the last ruler of the line. Thus disappeared the Pratihara dynasty though Kanauj continued to be ruled by the Hindu princes in subordination to Muhammadas rulers.

The Pratihara empire which continued for a century in undiminished glory was the last great compact empire which brought a semblance of political unity and successfully stood as a bulwark against Arab Muslims. Though they ultimately succumbed to the invaders in the sunset of their glory, the Arabs might have hesitated to advance beyond Sind in the heyday of the Pratiharas. A long succession of able rulers—Vatsaraja, Nagabhata II, Bhoja, Mahendrapala—enabled the Pratiharas to rule for a century and a half with a sprawling empire that included the various parts of this subcontinent. The ever-present Rashtrakutas, no doubt enfeebled the Pratihara power occasionally but it also showed unexpected signs of recuperation owing largely

to the prowess of its rulers and partly to the internal crisis that weakened its mortal enemy.

#### 4.2.4. The Rajputs

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 conspicuous part in the history of Northern and Western India from the eighth century A.D. onwards. They became so prominent that the centuries from the death of Harsha to the Muslim conquest of Northern India from the middle of the 7th to the close of the 12th century, might be called with propriety the Rajput period. Nearly all the kindoms were governed by families or clans which for ages past have been called collectively Rajputs.

The term Rajput has no concern with race. It merely denotes a tribe, clan, the members of which claimed themselves as Kshatriyas belonging to the Solar or Lunar dynasties. According to some scholars the origin of the Rajputs is connected with that of the Gurjaras. In the early years of the 6th century A.D., a tribe known as the Khazars along with the Huns poured into India and settled there. These Khazars were known as Gurjaras. The Pratiharas and the Chalukyas were racially connected with the Gurjara tribe. According to the bradictales the Pratiharas, Chalukyas (Solanki), the Parmaras and the Chahamanas are fire-born (Agnikula) originating from a sacrificial fire pit at Mount Abu in Southern Rajputana. This refers to purificatory rites for removing the impurity of their being foreigners and absorbing them within the Hindu caste system.

In the southern group, the principal clans are the Chandels, Kalachuris or Haihayas, Gaharwars and the Rashtrakutas. They are apparently descended from the so-called aboriginal tribes, Gonds, Bhars, Kols and the like. The evidence of a close connection between the Chandels and the Gonds is particularly strong. The Chandel Rajputs were originally Hinduised Bhars or Gonds or both, who became Kshatriyas on attaining political power. The Gaharwars similarly are associated with the Bhars; the Bundelas and the northern Rathors are offshoots of the Garhawars. The Dharmasastras recognise the possibility of lower castes being elevated to higher castes. As a general rule, the Rajputs formed by the social promotion of aborigines were inimical to the Rajputs descended from foreigners.

According to Vincent Smith : the main points to remember are that the Kshatriya or Rajput group of castes is essentially an occupational group, composed of all clans following the Hindu ritual who actually undertook the work of government, that consequently, people of most diverse races were and are lumped together as Rajputs



and that most of the great clans now in existence are descended either from foreign immigrants of the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era, or from indigenous races such as the Gonds and Bhars.

### **Chandellas :**

After the break-up of the Pratihara empire the Chandellas rose and established their rule over Bundelkhand. The earliest capital of the Chandella kings seems to have been at Khajuraho (Chhatarpur district), the splendour of which reached its zenith in the 10th century A.D. Nannuka founded the dynasty in the first quarter of the ninth century A.D. around Khajuraho in old Chhatarpur State Bundelkhand. The early rulers of the Chandella dynasty were the feudatories of the Pratiharas of Kanauj. Nannuka's son and successor, Vakpati, who flourished in the second quarter with contemporary rulers like Pala Devapala, the Pratihara Bhoja and the Kalachuri Kokkala I in the Vindhya region.

Vakpati had two sons Jayasakti and Vijayasakti. Jayasakti was also known as Jejjaka and Jeja, who succeeded his father, was a king of renown as the country over which the Chandellas ruled was known as Jejjakabhukti after him. Jayasakti was succeeded by his younger brother Vijayasakti who subdued the rulers of neighbouring states and even reached the southernmost parts of India. Vijayasakti's successor was his son Rahila. Rahila was succeeded by his son Harsha, who probably ruled from A.D. 900 to 925. During this period, the power of the Chandellas rose to great height. According to the Khajuraho inscription Harsha helped Kshitipaladeva, identical with the Pratihara king Mahipala I, to, recover his throne of Kanauj from Rashtrakuta Indra III.

Harsha was to be succeeded by his son Yasovarman also known as Lakshavarman. The decline of the Pratihara power left Yasovarman free to defy the former and to launch the Chandellas to aggressive militarism. The Khajuraho inscription describes with obvious exaggeration the extensive conquests made by Yasovarman. He defied the authority of the Pratiharas, Conquered Kalanjara and pushed the northern boundary of his kingdom up to the banks of the Ganga and the Yamuna. From the banks of the Ganga and the Yamuna, Yasovarman marched against the Pala ruler of Bengal and Bihar and conquered Gauda and Mithila. He is further said to have conquered Kashmir after subduing the Khasas, the Kashmiri warriors, he defeated the Kurus and pushed the army to the Himalayas along the bank of the Ganga.

Yasovarman fought successfully with the neighbouring kingdoms of Malava and Chedi, then ruled respectively by the Paramara Siyaka II and the Kalachuri Yuvaraja

I. In course of his Southern campaign he invaded and plundered Kosala, then under the sway of the Somavamsi kings. Though he acknowledged the nominal sway of the Pratiharas of Kanauj, he was to all intents and purpose an independent king.

Yasovarman was succeeded by his son Dhanga (A.D. 954-1002), the most famous ruler the Chandella dynasty. He inherited a large territory from his father which included Gwalior, Kalanjara, the northern border of the Jabbalpore region and Bhilsa. Dhanga acknowledged the supremacy of the Pratihara Vinayakapala in the initial stage but later threw it to the winds. He, however, could not retain Gwalior for a long time as sometime before A.D. 977 Vajradaman of the kachchhapaghata family defeated Dhanga and his Pratihara overlord Vijayapala and wrested the place. The defeat of the Pratihara king emboldened Dhanga to rise in arms against him. He invaded his kingdom and wrested all the territories from Banaras to Allahabad. From Banaras he proceeded to Bihar and Bengal and conquered Anga or Bhagalpur from the Palas and Radha or West Bengal.

Dhanga was not slow to take advantage of the political vicissitudes that engulfed the Deccan after the fall of the Rashtrakutas. In his Southern expedition he came into conflict with the kings of Andhra and Kuntala. The claim that he won victories over the kings of Kanchi and Simhala seems to be a vain hyperbole.

According to Firishta, Dhanga joined the confederacy of the chiefs of northern India organised by the Shahi king Jaipal against the incursions of Amir Sabuktigin. The Indian chiefs suffered a heavy defeat in the battle that took place at Lamghan in 989. Dhanga's encounter with the Muslims is corroborated by a Chandella inscription from Mahoba.

Dhanga assumed the title Maharajadhira and raised the Chandella power to its pristine glory. By the strength of his arms, he succeeded in pushing the northern boundary of the Chandella kingdom up to the bank of the Ganga.

Dhanga was succeeded by his son Ganda sometime after 1002. He probably helped the Shahi ruler Anandapala against Sultan Mahmud. His reign came to an end before A.D. 1018. Ganda was succeeded by his son Vidyadhara whose military strength was even felt by Sultan Mahmud. Vidyadhara fought against the Pratihara King Rajyapala and his feudatory Arjuna of the kachchhapaghata family, killed Rajyapala for his pusillanimous conduct towards Sultan Mahmud. This brought upon the Chandellas the fury of the Sultan who twice invaded his kingdom in 1019 and 1022 A.D. Instead of meeting the enemy in the open field Vidyadhara seems to have adopted the scorched earth policy and shut himself up in Kalanjara fort.

The fort was besieged and the Chandellas offered stubborn resistance. The siege dragged on for a considerable time till Vidyadhara sued for peace which was readily accepted by Mahmud.

The death of Vidyadhara in 1035 A.D. witnessed the temporary eclipse of the Chandella power which was accelerated by the repeated Muslim invasions and the emergence of powerful ambitious rulers like Gangeyadeva Kalachuri and Bhoja Paramara. In these circumstances the Kachchapaghata family threw off its allegiance to the Chandellas. Vidyadhara's successor was his son Vijayapala (c.A.D. 1035-50) about whom nothing of importance is known to us. Vijayapala had two sons Devavarman who succeeded him to the throne and Kirttivarman who inherited the kingdom after the death of his brother. Devavarman ruled for a brief period (c 1050-60) and had nothing particular to his credit. On the contrary, he might have suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Chedi ruler, Laksmikarna.

In the early part of Kirttivarman's reign, the Kalachuri king Karna defeated him and occupied the country for some time. But eventually Gopala, one of the feudatories liberated the country from the Kalachuri yoke. Sometime before A.D. 1090 Kirihivarman fought successfully against Mahamud, governor of the Punjab who invaded Kalanjara. His minister Vatsaraja constructed a fort Kirttigiri which is identified with Deogarh in the Jhansi district.

Kirttivarman was succeeded by his son Sallakshanavarman, who raided the territory of his neighbours namely the Kalachuris and the Paramara. He also subdued the refractory elements in the Antarvedi (the land between the Ganga and the Yamuna) then in possession of the Gahadavalas. In A.D. 1117 he was succeeded by his son Jayavarman, who, after a brief reign, abdicated the throne in favour of his uncle Prithvivarman.

The next successor was Madanavarman, Prithvivarman's son, who enjoyed a long reign of 44 years (A.D. 1123-1163). He conquered Bhilsa from his south-western neighbours the Paramaras, but had to surrender it to the Chalukya Jayasimha Siddharaja of Gujarat who advanced as far as Mahoba, the capital city. He fought against Gahadavala Govindachandra and recovered part of Baghelkhand after defeating the Kalachuri king Gaykarna.

Madanavarman was succeeded by his grandson Paramardi whose eventful reign covered the period from A.D. 1165-1202, this early career was successful as he recovered Bhilsa from the Chalukyas some time after A.D. 1173. But in or before A.D. 1182 he had to suffer a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Chahamanas.

Prithviraja III who overran his whole kingdom. But the victory of Prithviraja III proved to be ephemeral as he had to succumb to the onslaught of the Muslim invader Shihabuddin Muhammad's in 1192. Ten years later (1202) Muhammad's general Qutb-ud-din invested the fort of Kalinjara, the strong citadel of the chandellas. After offering some resistance, paramardi concluded a treaty with Qutb-ud-din on condition of payment of tribute. But Ajayadeva, the proud minister of Paramardi, repudiated the treaty, killed his master and renewed the fight. He held out the fort for some time but could not retain it due to acute shortage of water. Qutb-ud-din plundered Kalanjara and conquered Mahoba and appointed his own governor to administer the conquered territories.

But the valiant efforts of Ajayadeva were not wasted. A new kind of patriotic fervour seized Paramardi's son, Trailokyavarman (also known as Trailokyamalla A.D. 1205-51) who recovered all the territories including Kalanjara after inflicting a severe defeat on the Muslims at Kakadwa, South east of Bedwara, some time before A.D. 1205. He ruled over fairly extensive kingdom including Rewa, which he conquered from the Kalachuri Vijayasimha, the last known king of that dynasty. He assumed the title of Kanyakubjadhpati, from which it appears that he defeated the Gahadavala Harishchandra. Malik Nusrat-ud-din, a general of Iltutmish, plundered Kalanjara and disappeared without conquering the territory.

Trailokyavarman was succeeded by his son, Viravarman who ascended the throne sometime before 1254 and succeeded in maintaining intact the kingdom which he had inherited from his father. His redoubtable officer Mallaya vanquished Hariraja of Gwalior, Gopala of Narwar and the king of Mathura.

Viravarman was succeeded by his son Bhojavarman sometime between 1285 and 1288. Very little is known about him. He was succeeded by his younger brother Hammiravarman whose known dates range from 1289 to 1311. In 1309 Alauddin Khalji conquered the greater part of his kingdom including the Damoh district. The last known king of Bundelkhand is Viravarman II who ruled upto 1315.

### **Kalachuris :**

The Kalachuris also known as the Haihayas have been referred to in the Epics and the Puranas. When they became associated with Chedi country, they were also known as the Chedists. Their earliest seat of power was possibly at Mahishmati on the Narmada. An era starting from A.D. 249 or 250 was later used by the Kalachuris and came to be known as the Kalachuri era. But the Kalachuris were not a factor to be reckoned with in the third century A.D. and their association with the era seems to be far fetched.

In the second half of the sixth century A.D. the Kalachuris emerged as a political power and their kingdom comprised Gujarat, northern Maharashtra and even parts of Malwa. Three kalachuri kings Krishnaraja, his son Samkaragana and the latter's son Buddharaja—are known to have ruled from A.D. 550 to 620. They had to contend with the two powerful neighbours—the Maitrakas of Valabhi and the Chalukyas of Badami, Buddharaja suffered a disastrous defeat (c.A.D. 601) at the hands of Mangalesa, the Chalukya king of Badami. Though Buddharaja succeeded in recovering his position, ultimately he was overthrown by the mighty Chalukya Pulakesin II. But the kalachuris were not exterminated. They continued to exist as families of some importance in eastern Malwa and the neighbouring regions and established matrimonial relations with the eastern and western Chalukya princes.

In the eighth century A.D. several branches of the Kalachuris were settled in different parts of northern India. One of them founded a principality in Sarayupara in the modern Gorakhpur district and the other, the most powerful ruled in Chedi country in Bundelkhand.

The kalachuri of Chedi, also known as kings of Dahala-mandala, had their capital at Tripuri. 9.5 km. from Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. In the early years of ninth century A.D., the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III, conquered the Dahala country. In A.D. 841-42 it was ruled by one Lakshmanaraja whose relationship with the Rashtrakutas or with Kokalla I, who followed him, remain unknown.

With the accession of Kokalla I in or about A.D. 845, the real history of the Kalachuris of Tripuri may be said to have begun. Kokalla I is credited with victories over many powerful kings. He came into conflict with the Pratihara king Bhoja I and his feudatories like the kalachuri Sankaragana of Sarayupura in U.P., the Guhila Harsharaja of Mewar and, the Chahamana Guvaka II of Sakhambari near Ajmer. He gained a resounding victory over the Pratihara king and came to amicable terms with the latter assuring him that he would not disturb the territories of his feudatories. In the course of his invasions in Rajputana, he defeated the Turushkas, who were obviously Turkish soldiers in the service of the Arab governors of Sind. He is said to have plundered Vanga or east Bengal and vanquished the Rashtrakuta king Krishna II, who was his son-in-law and invaded northern Konkan. Thereafter the Kalachuris entered into a series of matrimonial alliances with the Rashtrakutas till the time of Krishna III and the two families maintained amicable relations.

All these conquests made by Kokalla I raised the Kalachuris to the status of the imperial dynasties of his age. Kokalla I married the Chandella Princess Nattadevi and had 18 sons. The eldest son, Shankaragana, succeeded him on the throne while the

others were appointed rulers of provinces. One of them founded a separate kingdom in South Kosala with its capital at Tummana.

Shankaragana who ascended the throne sometime between A.D. 877 and 888 defeated the Somavamsi king of Kosala and wrested from him Pali situated in the Bilashpur district, Madhya Pradesh. His brother-in-law, the Rashtrakuta Krishna II ingratiated his favour against the eastern Chalukya king Vijayaditya III, who had invaded the Deccan. But the combined army proved to be of no avail and suffered a disastrous defeat at Kiranapura, now a small town in the Balaghat district, Madhya Pradesh.

Shankaragana was succeeded by his son, Balaharsha who enjoyed a brief reign. Nothing is known about him and he was succeeded by his brother Yuvaraja I, who flourished in the 2nd quarter of the 10th century A.D. He invaded Gauda or North Bengal and defeated its ruler who was either the Pala Rajyapala or his successor Gopala II. Next he overwhelmed the Kalinga ruler, who probably belonged to the Ganga dynasty. But he had to suffer defeat at the hands of the Chandella Yasovarman though this did not lead to the diminution of the Kalachuri dominions. Notwithstanding the close relationship between the Kalachuris and the Rashtrakutas, the latter under Krishna III invaded the Kalachuri kingdom and acquired the whole of Dahala-mandala. Later Yuvaraja I succeeded in driving the Rashtrakutas from his kingdom.

Yuvaraja I was succeeded by his son Lakshmanaraja who ruled in the third quarter of the 10th century. He invaded Vanga or Bengal and defeated its king Trailokyachandra. The king of Odra or Orissa conciliated him by offering him a bejewelled effigy of the serpent Kaliya. He also won a victory over the king of Kosala, who was the Somavamsi king Mahabhavagupta. He humbled the chief of Lata, who was a feudatory of the Rashtrakutas, and won a victory over the Gurjaras king, Mularaja I, the founder of the Chalukya dynasty. Thereafter he processed to Somanatha and dedicated the effigy of Kaliya to the God Somesvara. The claim of Lakshmanaraja having conquered Kashmir and the Pandya country may be missed as fanciful.

Lakshmanaraja was succeeded by his son Shankaragana II. After a short and uneventful reign, he was succeeded by his brother Yuvaraja II. He lacked martial ardour and the kingdom suffered serious reverses during his rule. His maternal uncle Chalukya Tailya II attacked his kingdom. Hardly had he recovered from this shock, when he was overwhelmed by the Paramara king Munja and the latter made a triumphal entry into Tripuri. Yuvaraja fled from the capital. After the withdrawal of the Paramaras, the ministers placed his son Kokalla II on the throne.

Under Kokalla II, The Kalachuris recovered their power. He invaded the Gurjara country and defeated its ruler who was either Chalukya Mularaja or his son Chamundaraja. He also invaded the Deccan and avenged the defeat inflicted upon his father by Taila II. In the east he advanced upto the Gauda country and forced its ruler Pala Mahipala I to take shelter in the watery fort of the sea. Thus by the end of the 10th century A.D. the Kalachuris reappeared again as a great power in the political horizon of India.

Kokalla II was succeeded by his son, Gangeyadeva during whose reign the Kalachuris became the greatest political power in India. The most important factor contributing to his success was that the Kalachuris remained unaffected by the marauding raids of Sultan Mahmud which devastated the great powers in the north and north west. He assumed the title Vikramaditya and followed an aggressive policy for the expansion of the kingdom. He made an alliance with the Paramara Bhoja and Rajendra Chola and led an expedition against the Chalukya Jayasimha II (c.A.D. 1015-43). The Chalukyas succeeded in defeating the confederate troops. Somewhat later, the confederacy broke up and Bhoja turned against Gangeya, his erstwhile ally and defeated him. He also suffered humiliation when he tried to assert supremacy over the Chandellas of Budelkhand.

In the east, however, Gangeyadeva achieved brilliant success. He avenged the humiliation inflicted upon the Kalachuris formerly by the Somavamsi king of South Kosala when he defeated its ruler Mahasivagupta Yayati. Emboldened by the success he carried his arms to Orissa as far as the sea-coast. He commemorated this great victory by assuming the proud title of 'Trikinga'. He sent an expedition under his son Karna against Anga (Bhagalpur) and Magadha which were under the Pala king Nayapala. But he failed to annex any part of Magadha. In the north-east he advanced as far as Banaras and conquered it from Mahipala I of Bengal. But he failed to extend his supremacy beyond Banaras on the west as the Pratiharas remained in possession of the Allahabad region.

Hardly had he conquered Banaras, when the holy city was plundered by the Muslim troops under Ahmad Niyaltigin, governor of the Punjab under the Ghaznavids. As a sort of retaliatory measure, Gangeyadeva led a successful expedition against the Muslim power in the Kira country, modern Kangra valley in the Punjab. He died at Prayag about A.D. 1040.

Gangeyadeva was succeeded by his son Lakshmi-Karna, better known as Karna. He was one of the greatest generals of his time who won imperishable fame by his numerous victories. He wrested Allahabad from the Pratiharas and won a victory

over the Muslim in the Kira country during the reign of his father. He invaded Vanga or East Bengal, whereupon its ruler Jatavarman concluded a treaty with him and married his daughter Virasri. But his encounter with the Gauda kings, Pala Nayapala and the latter's son Vigrahapala II, proved to be abortive. A treaty was concluded with the Palas which was cemented by the marriage between Yauvanasri, Karna's daughter and Vigrahapala.

After overrunning Odra and Kalinga along the eastern coast Karna reached Kanchi, modern Conjeevaram, Madras, which was then ruled by the Cholas. He defeated a confederacy of the kings of the Pallavas, Kungas (Salem and Coimbatore districts) the Muralas (of the Malabar Coast) and the Pandyas, organised under the leadership of the Chola king. He claims to have subdued the Chalukya Somesvara I who was in possession of Kuntala. All these Southern expeditions took place before A.D. 1048. But these victories left little impact as these were not followed by annexation.

Shortly after A.D. 1051, Karna defeated the Chandella Kirttivarman and occupied Bundelkhand. But ultimately Gopala, a feudatory of the Chandellas freed the country from the Kalachuris and restored Kirttivarman to the throne. Far more important was Karna's invasion of the Paramara Kingdom of Malava in alliance with Bhima I, the Chalukya king of Gujarat. When the war was in progress, the Paramara king Bhoja died (c. A.D. 1055) and the two allies got possession of Malava. In this dark hour, Bhoja's son Jayasimha appealed to the Chalukya Somesvara for help and with his help recovered his kingdom. Subsequently a quarrel broke out between Karna and Bhima on the question of division of spoils. Bhima invaded Dahala and appropriated the rich booty conquered from Malava.

Despite the numerous wars fought with many powers throughout the greater part of his life, the results achieved by Karna were too insignificant. Allahabad was the only addition to his paternal kingdom. The series of reverses which Karna suffered particularly at the end of his reign diminished his earlier glory and loosened his hold over his feudatories. In A.D. 1072 Karna abdicated the throne in favour of his son Yashkarna.

The new king tried to follow the aggressive imperialism of his predecessors by leading two military expeditions, one against Champaran in North Bihar and the other against the Andhra country which was then ruled by the eastern Chalukya king Vijayaditya VII. But soon afterwards a series of invasions overwhelmed him. The Chalukya Vikramaditya VI raided his kingdom, Chandradeva of the Gahadavala dynasty wrested Allahabad and Banaras, the Chandellas defeated him and Paramara Lakshmadeva plundered his capital.



Yashkarna's successor was his son Gayakarna who began to rule some time in the first quarter of the 12th century A.D. Gayakarna lost Bundelkhand to the Chandella Madanavarman. He also suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Ratnadeva II of a collateral branch of the Kalachuris ruling in South Kosala.

Gayakarna ruled atleast upto A.D. 1151 and was succeeded by his elder son Narasimha. Very little is known about Narasimha's reign but at least he succeeded in recovering from the Chandellas a portion of his ancestral dominions.

Narasimha died childless and was succeeded by his brother Jayasimha, who ascended the throne between A.D. 1159 and 1167. He recovered the fallen fortunes of the Kalachuris by defeating the Chalukya Kumarapala as well as the king of Kuntala, identified with the Kalachuri Bijjala of the Deccan. He also repulsed an invasion of the Turushkas, led by Khusrav Malik.

Vijayasimha Jayasimha's son was the last known king of any importance of the Kalachuri's, who succeeded to the throne sometime between A.D. 1177 and 1180. He succeeded in maintaining his hold over the kingdom at least up to A.D. 1211 but within a year Chandella Trailokyavarman conquered the whole of the Dayala mandala. Vijayasimha had a son, named Mahakumara Ajayasimha but nothing is known of him.

From the eighth century A.D., a collateral branch of the Kalachuri family ruled in Sarayupara i.e. the bank of the Sarayu river, modern Gogra in Uttar Pradesh. Rajaputra's son and successor was Shivaraja I. The next successor was Shivaraja I's son Shakaragana, who suffered a defeat at the hands of the Kalachuri Kokalla I. Shankaragana's son and successor Gunambodhideva, also known as Gunasagara I ruled in the second half of the ninth century. He defeated the king of Gauda and joined the Pratihara Bhoja against the Pala Devapala. In recognition of this service, Bhoja granted some territories to these Kalachuri chief. After Gunambodhideva's death, his two sons Ullabha and Bhamanadeva successively ascended the throne. Bhamanadeva lent assistance to the Pratihara Mahipala I in wresting Malava from the Paramaras. After Bhamanadeva the throne was successively occupied by Shankaragana II, Mughdhatunga, Gunasagara II, Sivaraja II, Bhamana, Shankaragana III and Bhima each being the son of his predecessor. In the early part of the 11th century Bhima lost his kingdom as a result of the civil war and in A.D. 1031 Vyasa, son of Gunasagara II, was raised to the throne. The last known king of the dynasty was Vyasa's son Maharajadhiraja Sondhadeva ruling in A.D. 1079 whose kingdom extended from the Gogra to the Gandak.

Early in the 11th century A.D. a scion of the royal Kalachuri family founded a kingdom in south Kosala, with its capital first at Tummana, modern Tummana in the Bilaspur district and later at Ratanpur, 25 km north of Bilaspur. The family remained subordinate to the Kalachuris of Dahala till the early 12th century A.D. When Jayalladeva declared independence. He extended his power over parts of Orissa and Central Provinces. Another branch of the Kalachuris ruled in the neighbourhood of Kasia in the Garakh district, and another conquered the Deccan by defeating the Chalukyas and ruled for a brief period.

### **The Paramaras :**

The kingdom of the Paramaras was situated to the West of the Kalachuris. According to the earliest Paramara record (Harsola Granyt) The Paramara rulers were born in the family of the Rashtrakutas. The Rashtrakuta king Govinda III conquered Malava from The Pratihara Nagabhata II and placed the province under the rule of Upendra (Krishnaraja), the earliest member of the Paramara family. Dhara, modern Dhar, in Madhya Pradesh, was the capital of the Paramaras.

Upendra had two sons of whom the elder Vairisimha I, succeeded to the throne of his father while the younger Dambarisimha and his successors ruled in Vagada as feudatories of the main branch till the beginning of the 12th century. Vairisimha I was succeeded by his son Siyaka I, whose son and successor was Vakpati I. Vakpati's son and successor was Vairisimha II. During his reign, the Pratihara Mahipala I conquered Malava from the Paramaras and posted his own governor at Ujjavini. But shortly after A.D. 946. Vairisimha II, taking advantage of the weakness of the Pratiharas reconquered Malava, apparently with the help of the Rashtrakutas (Krishan III). Sometime before A.D. 949 Vairisimha II was succeeded by his son Siyaka II, also known as Harsha.

The history of the Paramaras really begins with the accession of Siyaka II. He defeated the Chalukya Avanivarman Yogaraja II, the ruler of Saurashtra. He also invaded the country of the Hunas to the north west of Malava and defeated their king. But he had to suffer a defeat at the hands of the Chandella Yasovarman, the latter pushing the boundary of his kingdom up to the Malava river, identified with modern Betwa.

But his greatest triumph was to defy the authority of the Rashtrakutas, acknowledged so far by the Paramaras. The death of the Rashtrakuta Krishna III presented him an admirable opportunity and he declared himself independent. The new Rashtrakuta King, Khottiga advanced against the rebel and opposed the latter

(A.D. 972) at a place called Kalighatta on the banks of Narmada. It was a hard fought battle and Siyaka's Vagada relative Kanka died fighting. At last the Rashtrakuta army gave way and Siyaka II pursued them up to Manyakheta the capital of the Rashtrakutas and sacked the city. Siyaka eventually had to withdraw from the Deccan but meanwhile he had extended the Southern boundary of the Kingdom to the Tapti. On the North the kingdom extended upto the border of the old Jhalwar state. In the latter part of his life Siyaka II abdicated the throne and took to asceticism of his two sons, Munja and Sindhuraja—he was succeeded by the former between A.D. 970 and 973.

Munja, also known as Vakpati and Utpala, is the most glamorous king of early medieval India. He defeated the Kalachuri king Yuvaraja II and captured Tripuri. But instead of being dispirited by this discomfiture, the Kalachuris rallied their forces and compelled Munja to withdraw from their country. His major effort was directed towards expanding the area of his kingdom in Rajputana. He defeated the Guhilas of Mewar and plundered the capital Aghata, modern Ahar, in Udaipur Rajputana. He attacked the Chahamanas of Naddula and wrested from their king Baliraja, Mount Abu and the southern part of Jodhpur. Munja divided the conquered territories between the princes of his family for efficient administration. He placed his two sons, Aranyaraja and Chandana at Mount Abu and Jalore respectively while his nephew Dusala, son of Sindhuraja was established in Bilamala or Srimala modern Bhinmal in Jodhpur. Munja next defeated Mularaja of Chalukya dynasty of Anahilapataka, who fled with his family to the desert of Marwar.

But the greatest enemy of Munja was the Chalukya Taila II, who had established his authority over the Deccan after overthrowing the Rashtrakutas and wanted to assert his authority over Malava which once belonged to them. Taila invaded Malava no less than six times, but on all occasions he was repulsed by Munja. In order to get rid of this chronic menace Munja decided to launch an aggressive campaign against Taila II by crossing the river Godavari, a move which was vigorously opposed by his minister Rudraditya. Disregarding the advice of his minister Munja pursued the enemy beyond the river, but soon after was entrapped by the enemy and taken prisoner. He was put to death after suffering terrible indignities. His death took place sometime after 993 A.D.

Munja was succeeded by his younger brother Sindhuraja who defeated the Chalukya king Satyasraya and recovered the territories which Munja had to surrender to Taila II. Poet Padmagupta who lived in his court composed a book *Navasahasankacharia* on the life of Sindhuraja where he suggested that Sindhuraja helped the Naga king of Bastar against a non-Aryan chief of Vajra, modern Wairagarh, in the Chanda

district, Madhya Pradesh. He plundered the territory of the Somavamsis of south Kosala, defeated the Silaharas of Konkan and the ruler of Huna mandala. He also conquered Lata (South Gujarat) but his attempt to assert supremacy over north Gujarat was foiled by the Chalukya ruler Chamundaraja, son of Mularaja I.

Sindhuraja died about A.D. 1000 and was succeeded by his son Bhoja, the greatest celebrity of the Paramaras. Bhoja's reign spanning for half a century was a series of strenuous campaigns against numerous kings which brought him little glory or accession of territory.

Early in his reign Bhoja, in alliance with the Kalachuri ruler Gangeyadeva and Rajendra Chola invaded the western Chalukya Kingdom, then under Jayasimha II, possibly to avenge Munja's death. Despite the initial gain obtained by the allies, they were ultimately routed by Jayasimha. Later when Jayasimha's son and successor, Somesvara I plundered Dhara, Ujjain and Mandu sometime after 1042 A.D., Bhoja made a precipitate retreat from his capital.

In the southern campaign Bhoja probably in alliance with Rajendra Chola defeated Indraratha, the ruler of Adinagara or Nagara, modern Mukhalingam in the Ganjam district, Orissa. In A.D. 1020 Bhoja conquered Konkan by defeating the Silaharas, but his attempt to subjugate Bundelkhand was frustrated by the Chandellas. He also failed to capture Gwalior from the Kachchhapaghatas and his conflict with Rastrakutas of Kanauj was of little consequence to him. He was, however successful against the Chahamanas of Sakambhari but his expedition against the Chahamanas of Nadol (in Southern Malwa) proved to be disastrous.

In A.D. 1008 Bhoja sent an army to help the Shahi ruler Anandapala against Sultan Mahmud and in the next year afforded protection to Anandapala's fugitive son, Trilochanapala, who was pursued relentlessly by Mahmud. In A.D. 1043 he took a prominent part in the defence of northern India against the incursions of the Muslims by joining the confederacy of Indian kings, who besieged Lahore.

With his Western neighbours, the Chalukyas of Gujarat Bhoja also entered into conflict. He plundered Anahillapataka, the capital of Gujarat, when its king Bhima I was away. Unable to cope with the paramaras alone, Bhima I entered into an alliance with the Kalachuri Karna, whose father Gangayadeva was once an ally of Bhoja. The Paramara king in his old age was unequal to conduct the war against his neighbours in the east and the west and died in the midst of war. Malwa fell into the hands of the Kalachuris and Chalukyas in c.A.D. 1055.

Despite the ceaseless wars which Bhoja waged against numerous kings throughout

his life, he could acquire no new territory except Konkana. But what distinguished him from his contemporaries was his profound scholarship and patronage of learning.

With the passing of Bhoja the era of Paramara ascendancy was over and thence forward the Paramaras mainly played a defensive role in Indian politics. Bhoja's death was followed by a disputed succession, one of the claimants, Jayasimha who was probably Bhoja's son seized the throne with the help of his erstwhile enemy Chalukya prince Vikramaditya VI of the Deccan. Henceforth Jayasimha became a staunch ally of Vikramaditya and helped the latter in an unsuccessful expedition against the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. But Somesvara II, the Chalukya King disliked the alliance between the two and suspected that his younger brother Vikramaditya was conspiring against him. Somesvara II made an alliance with the Chalukya king Karna, son of Bhima II and invaded Malwa. Jayasimha died fighting and Malwa was occupied by the two allies.

In this desperate situation, Udayaditya, a brother of Bhoja sought help from the Chahamanas of Sakambari and recovered his kingdom. His known dates are A.D. 1080-86. His kingdom was bounded by the Nimar District of the South, Jhalawar state on the north, and Bhilsa on the east.

Udayaditya had a number of sons and one of them, Lakshmadeva and Naravarman, ruled in succession after his death. Lakshmadeva donned his career with great military successes. He raided Gauda, plundered Anga and Kalinga, defeated the Kalachuri Yasahkarna and entered into conflict with the Chola Kulottunga I. He successfully repulsed an attack of Mahmud governor of the Punjab, when the latter invaded Ujjain and in retaliation invaded the Kaira country i.e. Kangra valley in the Punjab. He defeated near Mount Abu the Chalukya Karna and in alliance with Chalukya Vikramaditya VI, invaded Dorasamudra, the dominion of the Hoysalas.

Sometime before A.D. 1094, Lakshmadeva was succeeded by Naravarman whose kingdom extended upto old Bundi state on the north, and Chanda District (Madhya Pradesh) on the south. He secured the possession of Nagpur. But his wars with the Chandellas and the Chahamanas ended in complete defeat. But the most severe blow sustained by him was from the Chalukya Jayasimha Siddharaja of Gujarat, with whom he had been engaged in a prolonged conflict for a period of twelve years. He was taken prisoner and though he secured his release, the power and prestige of the family suffered irreparably.

The full effect of this defeat was to be seen in the reign of Yasovarman who ascended the throne sometime before A.D. 1033, Dewas, situated in the heart of

Malava, became an independent state and the Chandellas occupied the Bhilsa region. To crown all, the Chalukya Jayasimha Siddharaja, accompanied by the Chahamanas Asaraja of Nadol, annexed the whole of Malava and captured Yasovarman. The fate of Yasovarman is not known, but his son Jayavarman succeeded in recovering Malava. But he could not retain it for a long period as the joint forces of Chalukya Jagadekamalla of Kalyana and the Hoysala Narasimha I conquered Malava and placed one Ballala on the throne. Shortly after A.D. 1143, Ballala was dethroned by Chalukya Kumarapala, successor of Jayasimha Siddharaja, who annexed the whole of Malava up to Bhilsa.

The Chalukya domination over Malava continued for two decades after which Vindhavarman, son of Jayavarman recovered Malava by defeating the Chalukya Mularaja II. But no sooner had he numbed the Chalukyas than he was faced with two new powers—the Hoysalas and the Yadavas who led repeated invasion against Malava. Despite the reverses suffered by him in wars with these two powers, Vindhavarman ultimately succeeded in restoring the power of the Paramaras before his death which took place sometime after A.D. 1193.

His son and successor Subhatavarman invaded Gujarat. He made himself master of Lata, stormed Anahilapataka and advanced up to Somnath before he was forced to retire. Eventually he had to withdraw from Gujarat and his prestige declined when he suffered defeat at the hands of the Yadava Jaitugi. He was succeeded by his son Arjunavarman before A.D. 1210.

Arjunavarman defeated Jayasimha who had usurped the throne of Gujarat and married the latter's daughter which forms the main theme of the drama *Parijatamanjari* of Madana. But he was badly defeated by the Yadava king Singhana in which struggle his feudatory Sindhuraja lost his life. He seems to have left no son and was succeeded by Devapala sometime between A.D. 1215 and 1218.

Devapala was again attacked by Singhana, the Yadava king who took prisoner his vassal chief of Lata named Sankha. Soon afterwards a treaty was concluded between Devapala and Singhana and Sankha was set free. While the Chalukyas were engaged in resisting the invasion of the Muslims, Devapala in alliance with the Yadava Singhana attacked southern Gujarat. Fortunately, the shrewd diplomacy of the Chalukya governor Vastupala averted the danger by sowing seeds of dissension between the two allies. By this unwise policy, Devapala lost southern Lata to the Chalukyas and his kingdom was invaded by Iltutmish who captured Bhilsa and plundered Ujjain in A.D. 1233. Before his death, Devapala seems to have captured Bhilsa.

Devapala was succeeded by his son Jaitugideba sometime before A.D 1243. A series of invasions engulfed the kingdom during his reign. The Yadavas invaded Malava and Balban also invaded it in A.D. 1250 at the same time when the Vaghelas of Gujarat sacked the capital city, Dhara.

Jaitugi was succeeded by his younger brother Jayavarman II. The next known king was Jayasimha II, who reigned from 1269 to 1274. He suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Chahamanas of Ranthambha and shut himself up in the fort of Mandu. His death in A.D. 1270 was followed by a disastrous civil war between his successor Arjunavarman II and his minister which eventually led to the partition of the empire. Arjunavarman II had to encounter a series of invasions from the Chahamanas, the Yadavas and the Vaghelas. During the reign of the next king, Bhoja II, who came to the throne after A.D. 1283, Malava was again plundered by the Chahamanas and Sultan Jalauddin Khalji.

The last known king of the Paramaras was Mahlak Deo who was defeated by Alauddin Khalji when the latter invaded his kingdom. Mahlak Deo was executed and Malava became a province of the Sultanate.

There were several minor branches of the Paramaras ruling in various parts of Rajputana Mount Abu, Vagada (modern Banswara and Dungarpur) Javalpure (Jalor) and Bhinmal (in Southern Marwar). All these were ultimately conquered by the neighbouring states such as the Guhilas and the Chahamanas.

### **The Guhilas of Mewar :**

The Guhilas of Mewar occupied a unique place in the medieval history of India. The earliest epigraphic record, Atpur Inscription dated A.D. 977 furnishes a list of 20 kings from Guhadatta to Saktikumara. Gunadatta is represented to have flourished in the second half of the sixth century A.D. But the name of the most famous Guhila ruler, Bappa Rawal, found in bardic chronicles and later records, does not occur in the Atpur inscription. This Bappa who has been identified by some with the eighth king Kalabhoja and by others with the ninth king Khommana or Khummana I respectively in the geneological list of the Atpur inscription, occupied the throne in the first half of the eighth century A.D. Bappa Rawal was evidently a designation and not a proper name.

The earliest seat of their power was Nagahrada in Mewar and its place was taken by Aghata in the 10th century. Chitor also became prominent in the 8th century A.D. when Bappa captured it after expelling the Arabs.

Bappa was followed on the throne by Mattata, Bhartribhata I, Simha and Khommana II's succession. Khommana II fought against the Arabs under the leadership of the Pratihara. After Khammana II followed in succession the uneventful rules of Mahayaka, Khommana III and Bhartripatta II. Bhartripatta II was succeeded by his son, Allata who killed the Pratihara Devapala. Allata was succeeded by Naravahana who is known to have been ruling in A.D. 971. His son and successor was Salivahana who had a short reign and was succeeded by his son Saktikumara sometime before A.D. 977. It was during his reign that the Paramana Munja overran Medapata and plundered Aghata. But the occupation of the Paramaras was temporary and Saktikumara ruled up to the close of the 10th century.

Saktikumara was succeeded by his son Ambaprasada who lost his life in a battle with the Chahamanas of Sakambhari. Ambaprasada was succeeded by his brother Suchivarman. The history of the Guhilas after Suchivarman is obscure. It appears that Naravarman, Anatarvarman, Kirtivarman alias Yasovarman, Yogaraja and Vairata succeeded Suchivarman one after the other.

The history of the Guhilas during the 11th century was dull and insipid. It appears that during most of this period a large part of Mewar was conquered by the Paramaras of Malava. During the next century the Guhilas had to submit for sometime to the Chalukya rulers Jayasimha and his successor Kumarapala. But sometime in A.D. 1171 the Guhila chief Samantasimha recovered his ancestral kingdom which he could not retain for long as it was conquered by Kirttipala of Naddula.

Kumarasimha younger brother of Samantasimha, drove out Kirttipala from Mewar before A.D. 1182 with the help of the Chalukya Kumarasimha was followed in succession by Mathanasimha, Padmasimha and Jaitrasimha, The Guhilas of Mewar leapt into prominence during the reign of Jaitrasimha whose known dates range between A.D. 1213 and 1252. This was due in large measure to the fall of the Chahamanas of Sakambhari and the decline of the Paramaras of Malava and the Chalukyas of Anahivada. Early in his reign, Sultan Iltutmish overran Mewar and destroyed the capital Nagahrada. But on receipt of the news that the Vaghela Viradhavala was advancing with his forces to help Jaitrasimha the Muslims hastily retreated.

Despite this early reverse, Jaitrasimha fought successfully with his Hindu neighbours. This enervating policy which, in the long run, weakened the Hindu resistance against the Muslims was to a certain extent reversed by his grandson Samarasimha (A.D. 1273-1301) who helped the Vaghela Sarangdeva in routing the Muslim forces who invaded Gujarat sometime before A.D. 1285. But towards the



end of the 13th century, when Ulugh Khan, the brother of Alauddin Khalji marched against Gujarat, Samarasimha abjectly submitted to him.

Samarasimha was succeeded by his son, Ratnasimha who ascended the throne in A.D. 1302. When Alauddin Khalji invested the fort of Chitor in A.D. 1303, he bravely resisted for two months, but ultimately surrendered himself to the Sultan.

The existence of the Guhilas of Chatsu is known from a record found at Chatsu, a town in Jaipur state. This Guhila branch was founded about the beginning of the 7th century A.D. which continued to rule down to the middle of the 10th century. Bhartipatta was the earliest known king of the dynasty, Nothing is definitely known about his next three successors. In A.D. 725, Dhanika is said to have ruled with his capital at Dhavagarta, modern Dhod in the Jaipur district, Udaipur. Dhanika was followed by his son Auka and his grandson Krishna I. It was probably in the second half of the 8th century A.D. that the Pratiharas began to assert their supremacy over this branch of the Guhilas.

Krishna's son and successor was Sankaragana who probably flourished in the first quarter of the 9th century A.D. He was succeeded by his son Harsha who claims to have defeated kings of Northern India and presented horses to the Pratihara Bhoja. But he suffered defeat at the hands of the Kalachuri Kokkalla I. Harsha was succeeded by his son Guhilla II who seems to have been a vassal of Bhoja's son and successor, Mahendrapala I. Guhilla II's successor was his son Bhatta. He helped his overlord the Pratihara Mahipala I in his war against the Rashtrakuta Indra III, the king of the Deccan. Bhatta's son and successor was Baladitya. Nothing is known about the successors of Baladitya. It may be that their principality was gradually swallowed up by the growing power of the Chahamanas of Sakambhari.

### **The Chahamanas :**

The bardic tradition of the Rajputs regard the Chahamanas, later known as the Chauhans, as one of the four fire-born races. The cradle land of the Chahamanas was the region round Sambhar and Ajmer. There were several branches of the Chahamana dynasty, Chahamanas of Sakambhari of Lata, of Dhavalapuri, of Partabgarh, of Ranthambhor, of Satvapura. The main branch ruled in Sakambhari, modern Sambhar in Jaipur and the others ruling in different places were collateral. Some of these were unquestionably the feudatories of the Pratiharas.

Vasudadeva was the founder of the Chahamanas of Sakambhari in the middle of the 6th century A.D. with Ahichhatra near the border of the Jaipur and Jodhpur states,

as the seat of his power. In his lineage was born Samantaraja, who may be placed in the middle of the 7th century A.D. Samantaraja was followed in succession by Purnatalla, Jayraja and Vigharaja I. Vigharaja's successors were his two sons Chandraraja and Gopendraraja, who ruled in succession in the 2nd half of the 8th century A.D.

The next ruler was Durlabharaja, the son of Chandraraja, who ruled in the last quarter of the 8th century. Durlabharaja was a feudatory of the Pratiharas and it was in this capacity he fought on the side of his sovereign Vatsaraja against the Gauda king Dharmapala. Durlabharaja's son and successor was Govindaraja alias Guvaka I, a feudatory of the Pratihara Nagabhata II. He repulsed an attack of the Sultan Vega Varisha, identified with Bashar, the governor of Sind under Caliph Al-Mamun.

Govindaraja was succeeded by his son Chandraraja II (c. 836-63 A.D.) also known as Sasinripa. His Son Guvaka II (c-863-90 A.D.) followed him on the throne. He gave his sister Kalavati in marriage to the king of Kanauj identified with the Pratihara Bhoja I. Guvaka II was succeeded by his son Chandanaraja (c-890-917 A.D.) who killed in battle Rudrena, a king of the Tomara dynasty. His son and successor was Vakpatiraja, who ruled during 917-944 A.D. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Pratiharas consequent to their struggle with the Rashtrakutas, Vakpatiraja defied the authority of the Pratiharas. During his reign, the Chahamanas family acquired a distinctly higher status as is revealed by his assumption of title Maharaja.

Vakpati had three sons, Simharaja, Vatsaraja and Lakshmana. The first succeeded him on the throne while the last carved out for himself a principality in Naddula, in southern Marwar, where his successors ruled for several centuries. Simharaja defeated the Tomara leader Salavana and captured a number of princes. Simharaja was the first prince of the family who assumed the title Maharajadhiraja. This indicates that he made himself independent of the imperial Pratiharas of Kanauj.

Simharaja's son and successor Vigharaja II (c.971-98 A.D.) was the real founder of the future greatness of the family. He overran Gujarat, forced the Chalukya Mularaja to take refuge at Kanthakot in Cutch. He extended his conquest as far south as the Narmada. Subsequently Vigharaja withdrew from Gujarat after concluding a treaty with Mularaja.

Vigharaja was succeeded by his younger brother Durlabharaja III (c. 1065-70 A.D.) who lost his life in fighting against the Matangas, explained by the commentator as Muslims. Durlabha III was succeeded by his brother Vigharaja III (1070-90 A.D.). He helped the Paramara Udayaditya to recover Malwa against the Chalukya

Karna. Vighraharaja's son and successor Prithviraja I (c.1090-1110A.D.) is reputed to have killed a body of 700 Chalukyas who had come to Pushkara to rob the Brahmins.

From the time of Prithviraja I's son and successor Aryaraja II (c.1110-35 A.D.), the Chahamanas began to pursue an aggressive imperial policy. He took up the first step towards the conquest of the northern plains of Hindustan by bringing the country at least up to Bayana under his direct control.

Ajayaraja was succeeded by his son ( Arnoraja 1135-50 A.D.). He had to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Chalukya rival Siddharaja Jayasimha who gave his daughter in marriage to him. This matrimonial alliance established peace for a short duration between the two neighbouring dynasties but hostilities broke out afresh with the accession of Kumarapala to the Chalukya throne. Arnoraja suffered two defeats and was forced to give his daughter in marriage to Kumarapala. Nevertheless Arnoraja dealt a crushing blow to the Muslim army of invasion led by Bahram Shah, the king of Ghazni, Arnoraja had another queen named sudhava, a Marwar princess, who had three sons. The eldest Jagaddeva murdered his father and occupied the throne for a short time. He was soon after ousted by his younger brother, Vighraharaja IV, also called Visaladeva.

The reign of Vighraharaja IV (c.1150-64 A.D.) is a landmark in the history of the Chahamanas dynasty. He raised his family to an imperial status by defeating or overawing practically all his political rivals in Northern India. He was a great conqueror and extended the frontiers of his kingdom in different directions. He conquered Delhi from the Tomaras and took possession of Hansi in the Hissar district in the Punjab. The Delhi Siwalik Pillar Inscription credits him with having made Aryavarta free from the Muslims.

Vighraharaja IV was succeeded by his son Aparajit Gangaya. He died after a short rule (c. 1164-65 A.D) and the throne was occupied by Prithviraja II, a grandson of Arnoraja. During his rule (1165-69 A.D), the age long conflict with the Muslims was renewed.

Prithviraja-II was succeeded by his uncle Somesvara (1169-78 A.D) son of Arnoraja by the Chalukya princess Kanchanadevi. When Somesvara died, his son Prithviraja III (c.1178-92 A.D) was still a minor and the government was conducted by his mother Karpuradevi. One of the early exploits of Prithviraja III was to suppress the revolt of his cousin, Nagarjuna, son of Vighraharaja IV. He invaded the Chandella Kingdom and defeated its King Paramardi in A.D. 1182. But the Chandella lost no time in recovering the lost territory. Shortly before A.D. 1187, Prithviraja

invaded the Chalukya Kingdom of Gujrat. Though the result of the battle was not very flattering to the Chahamanas King, the Chalukya Bhima II concluded a treaty which he tried to observe punctiliously.

Prithviraja II also entered into hostility with Jayachandra, Gahadavala ruler of Kanauj, who was the main obstacle in his attainment of sovereignty over the country.

Prithviraja III had to face a serious situation when Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghori became the Governor of Ghazni in 1173 A.D. He launched a series of invasions to conquer India. But it was not till the capture of the strong port of Tabarhidah identified with Sirhind, in the old Patiala State in 1191 A.D. by Shihab-ud-din that Prithviraja became conscious of the gravity of the situation. The Governor of Delhi along with other chiefs came to Ajmer and reported to Prithviraja III the unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by the Muslims on the Rajputs. On hearing this, Prithviraja advanced with a huge army and met the enemy at the field of Tarain in A.D. 1191. The first battle of Tarain was disastrous for the Sultan. His two wings gave way, he himself was seriously wounded and carried away from the battlefield by his faithful followers.

Despite this victory, Prithviraja did not take adequate steps to guard the north western frontier of his empire and allowed himself to dissipate his energy in company with his newly married queen Samyukta and in fighting the domestic enemy, the Gahadavala king Jayachandra of Kanauj. Meanwhile, Shihab-ud-din raised a fresh army and came to Tarain in A.D. 1192 practically unopposed by passing through Multan and Lahore. One Lakh of Hindu soldiers were killed in the battle including Govindaraja, the chief of Delhi. Prithviraja himself was taken prisoner and was executed afterwards.

The defeat of Prithviraja III in 1192 not only destroyed the imperial power of the Chahamanas (Chauhans) but also gave the Sultan the key to the gates of Hindusthan. The Sultan set up Prithviraja's young son on the Chahamanas throne and left, Ajmer for Delhi. He conquered Delhi from Govindaraja's son but restored it on condition of his paying tribute regularly. Shortly after words. Shihab-ud-din left for Ghazni leaving his general Qutb-ud-din in charge of Indian affairs. Meanwhile Prithviraja's brother Hariraja overthrew his nephew and usurped the suzerainty of Ajmer. But his voluptuous conduct made him unpopular and he was not a match to Qutb-ud-din when the latter came to Ajmer. Ajmer fell into the hands of Qutub-ud-din and thus the rule of the Imperial Chahamanas came to an end.

## **Tomaras**

The Tomaras are reckoned as one of the 36 Rajput clans. According to the bardic tradition Anangpal Tuar founded Delhi in A.D. 736 and established the Tomara dynasty. The Tomaras ruled the Haryana country from their capital city Dhillika or Delhi. But it appears from other sources that the Delhi region was then under the sway of the Chahamanas of Ajmer from whom it was wrested by Muhammad Ghori. So the tradition relating that Delhi was founded by the Tomaras or Tuars in A.D. 736 deserves little credence.

The earliest reference to the Tomaras is found in the Pehowa inscription of the Pratihara emperor Mahendrapala I (A.D. 892-902) which indicates the settlement of the Tomaras in the Karnal district of the Punjab. It states that the king Jaula of the Tomara dynasty obtained prosperity by looking after the affairs of a king. He was apparently a petty feudatory chief in the service of a powerful king. The next important member of the family was Vajrata, who seems to have flourished in the middle of the ninth century. Vajrata was succeeded by his son Jajjuka, who had three sons Gogga, Purnaraja and Devaraja. Gogga who succeeded his father was a feudatory of the Pratihara Mahendrapala I. With the decline of the Pratihara power in the beginning of the tenth century, the Tomaras probably founded an independent principality round Delhi.

In the first half of the eleventh century, the Tomaras came into conflict with the Muslim invaders. With the rise of the Chahamanas of Sakambhari, they soon felt their irresistible pressure. A Tomara chief named Rudrena, who was probably a descendant of Gogga, lost his life in a battle with Chahamana Chandanaraja II. The struggle practically ended with the capture of Delhi by the Chahamanas under Vigraharaja Visaladeva in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## **Chalukyas of Gujarat**

The Chalukyas or Solankis ruled in Gujarat and Kathiawar for nearly three centuries and a half (c.950-1300 A.D.) Mularaja, the founder of the family established an independent kingdom with its capital at Anahilapataka now represented by Patan. His known dates range between A.D. 942 and 994. He abdicated the throne in favour of his son Chamundaraja whose reign ended in A.D. 1008. He placed his second son Durlabharaja on the throne. Durlabha was childless and in A.D. 1022 abdicated the throne in favour of his nephew Bhimadeva I,

Bhima I ruled from 1022 to 1063. In A.D. 1025 his Kingdom was rudely shaken by the insatiable ambition of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni who overran Gujarat and

plundered the immense riches of the famous temple of Somanatha. The panic stricken Bhima who had fled to Kanthakot in Kutch at the approach of the Sultan Mahmud, returned to his capital after the departure of the invader. After his return to Gujarat, Bhima entered into an alliance with the Kalachuri Karna and the combined armies completely devastated Malava. It was during the course of this invasion that the great Paramara King Bhoja died. But the coalition also broke down subsequently with the result that Karna suffered a reverse at the hands of Bhima I. Bhima abdicated the throne in favour of his son Karna in 1064 A.D.

Despite a long reign of about 30 years (1064-1094), Karna could not achieve anything substantial. Jayasimha, who assumed the title Siddharaja, succeeded his father Karna in 1094 and wielded the sceptre for nearly half a century. He embarked upon a career of conquest and extended the kingdom to the size of an empire. In the north he annexed Bhinmal after defeating the Paramaras. He then subdued the Chahamanas of Sakambari, the rulers of which state henceforth became his vassals. He carried on protracted war against the Paramara rulers Naravarman and Yasovarman, imprisoned the latter and annexed Avanti to the Kingdom. He also invaded the Chandella Kingdom and proceeded as far as Kalanjara and Mahoba. In the south, he won a victory over the Chalukya Vikramaditya VI of Kalyana. He defeated and imprisoned Navaghana, the Abhira Chief of Saurashtra and appointed Sajjana as governor of that country.

Jayasimha died in A.D. 1043. As he had no son, he nominated his minister's son Bahada, as his successor. But after his death, the throne was seized by his distant relation, Kumarapala, a man who was hated most by Jayasimha. He defeated the Chahamanas Rajyapal of Nadol and compelled the Parmar Somesvara of Bhinmal to acknowledge his sway. His most remarkable exploits was the defeat of Mallikarjuna of Kankana, who was killed and whose kingdom was annexed to Gujarat.

Kumarapala's death in A.D. 1171-72 precipitated a struggle for the throne because his sister's son and brother's son, supported respectively by the Jains and the brahmanas. The latter, Ajayapala emerged victorious and ascended the throne. He fought against the Chahamanas of Sakambari and compelled its ruler Somesvara to pay him tribute. With the assistance of the Paramaras, he defeated the Guhila chief, Samantasimha of Mewar when the latter invaded Gujarat. Ajayapala died in an encounter with the Pratihara Vayajaladeva in A.D. 1176 and was succeeded by his young son Mularaja II.

During the minority of Mularaja II, his mother, Queen Naikidevi, the daughter of the Kadamba Paramardin, king of Goa, acted as regent. In A.D. 1178 Muizuddin

Muhammad Ghuri invaded Gujarat, but the queen mother with the boy king on her lap, bravely led the army against the Muslims and defeated them near Mount Abu. Mularaja died in A.D. 1178 and was succeeded by his younger brother Bhima II, who ruled for sixty years.

During Bhima II's reign, the kingdom was threatened with complete disintegration owing to internal disorder and foreign invasions. Taking advantage of this situation, the provincial governors declared independence and some of the ministers carved out independent principalities in different parts of the kingdom. Fortunately, the situation was saved by the Vaghela chief, Arnoraja, who put down the recalcitrant elements with a heavy hand. But Arnoraja lost his life in the course of the struggle. The legacy which he left behind was carried on by his son Lavanaprasada. He carried on the administration of the state in the name of the king from his headquarters at Kholka with the assistance of two brothers, Tejapala and Vastupala who served as his ministers. Lavanaprasad successfully repulsed the repeated invasions of the Yadavas and routed the Paramaras. But the greatest enemies were the Muslims who under Qutb-ud-din invaded Gujarat in 1197 and plundered Anahilapatak, retired shortly afterwards. During the reign of Bhima all arrangements for defending Gujarat against foreign invasions were made by Lavanaprasad and his able son Viradhavala. Later on Sultan Iltutmish invaded northern Gujarat but was repulsed by Viradhavala assisted by Vastupala.

Bhima II died in 1239 and was succeeded by Tribhunapala during whose reign the Yadava Singhana in alliance with the Paramaras and the Guhilas invaded Gujarat but Visala, son of Viradhavala, routed the enemies. Shortly after this Tribhunapala was supplanted by Virama, another son of Viradhavala.

With the death of Tribhunapala the line of Bhima became extinct and the Vaghelas became king in the absence of any legal heir. Virama was again deposed by his brother Visala before 1251. After reigning for a decade, Visala abdicated the throne in favour of his nephew Arjuna. Sarangadeva, Arjuna's son succeeded his father in 1274. He has to maintain a precarious existence against Balban before 1285, but ultimately succeeded in repulsing him with the help of the Guhila Samarasimbha. Sarangadeva died in 1295-96 and was succeeded by his nephew Karna, the last Hindu king of Gujarat. Shortly afterwards the whole of Gujarat was conquered by Alauddin Khalji.

### **Kachchhapaghatas**

The Kachchhapaghatas are generally taken to be the progenitors of the Rajput

clan Kachwaha. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries at least three families of Kachchhapaghatas ruled in and around eastern Rajputana and the region round Gwalior. They ruled in Gwalior, Dubkund and Narwar. They were first feudatories of the imperial Gurjara Pratiharas. But a member of one of these families made himself master of the fort of Gwalior by defeating the Pratihara ruler who may be identified with one of the successors of Mahipala I

### **The Shahis (Shahiyas)**

A dynasty of Indianised foreigners ruled in Kabul Valley and Northwestern Frontier Province up to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. A.D. They were called Turkish Shahiyas and descendants of Kanishka by Alberuni. Its last king Lagaturman antagonised the people by his blatant misrule and his Brahmin minister named Kallar occupied, the throne after over-throwing his master. He founded a new royal dynasty known as Hindu Brahmana Shahiyas with its capital at Udabhanda, modern village of Und, 24 kilometers above Attock in the Rawalpindi district, Punjab

### **Minor States**

In addition to the powerful Kingdoms, a large number of minor states flourished in different parts of northern India. Though they did not play any dominant role in contemporary politics, they were of sufficient local importance. Four of these were in Kathiawar Peninsula which formed an integral part of the Pratihara empire : Saindhavas, Chalukyas, Abhiras, Varahas of Saurya-mandala.

#### **4.2.5. The Cholas**

The Chola dynasty is one of the most popular dynasties of South India, which ruled over Tamil Nadu and parts of Karnataka and Tanjore as its capital. Ashoka's Rock edicts II and XII are the earliest historical documents in which the Cholas find mention. The Karikala Cholas, who ruled in the second century A.D. were amongst the earliest Chola rulers. After them, the Chola dynasty remained in a state of political dormancy for centuries before re-emerging in its full splendour A.D. 850 under Vijayalaya. He captured Tanjore, exploiting the strife-ridden Pandya-Pallava relationship to the fullest. He built a temple at Tanjore to commemorate his accession.

Vijayalaya was succeeded by his able son, Aditya I, c.A.D 875. He considerably enhanced the power and prestige of the family overthrowing the Pallava Aparajitavarman and bringing Tondamandalam under his sway in A.D-890.



Aditya was succeeded by his son Parantaka whose reign began with brilliant promise and ended in disaster. At the time of Parantaka's accession, the Chola Kingdom embraced the whole region between Madras and Kalahasti in the north, and the Kaveri in the South, with the exception of the Mysore tableland and the strip along the west coast. The conquest and subjugation of the Pandyas was, however a gradual process. While Parantaka was engaged in the war against the Pandyas, he had to incur the hostility of the Rashtrakutas from the north Parantaka uprooted two Bana kings and conquered the Vaidumbas.

Parantaka began to experience increasing difficulty in defending his farflung empire and the death of his loyal vassal Ganga Prithivipati II in A.D. 940 weakened his hold over the North West and presaged his downfall. The disaster that befell the Chola Kingdom not only resulted in the loss of the northern possessions of Parantaka, but loosened served his hold on the South. The Pandyas once more asserted their independence and the Chola empire ceased to exist.

The thirty years that followed the close of Parantaka's reign formed a period of weakness and confusion in the history of the Cholas. Parantaka's immediate successor was his son Gandaraditya whose territory was a Shrunken one as Krishna III was in occupation of large parts of the Chola Kingdom. The son of Gandaraditya being an infant, the next ruler was his younger brother Arinjaya. No details are available of the events of Arinjaya's short reign. But he had begun the task of recovering the territory occupied by Krishna III by striking a matrimonial alliance with the Banas.

Arinjaya was succeeded by his son Sundara Chola Parantaka II (A.D 957-973) the latter's son Aditya II being made Crown Prince almost at the beginning of the reign. Sundara first waged war against the Pandya in which he defeated Vira Pandya. Aditya II killed Vira Pandya on the second occasion. Sundara's forces also led an unsuccessful expedition against ceylon (A.D. 959). But the Chola success against the Pandyas was not sufficient to re-establish their authority in the Pandya country. It was left to Rajaraja to complete the subjugation of the Pandyas.

Uttama Chola, son of Gandaraditya conspired to murder the heir apparent Aditya II and having done so, he forced Sundara Chola to make him heir apparent.

Uttama Chola became king at Sundara's death in A.D. 973. His reign of twelve years though devoid of political interest determined the course of future events by his wisdom in selecting Rajaraja as his successor in preference to his son.

The accession of Rajaraja ushered in a century of grandeur and glory for the dynasty of the Cholas. The thirty years of his rule constitute the formative period of

Chola imperiation. A relatively small state at the time of his accession and shattered by the Rashtrakuta invasion, the Chola Kingdom grew under him into an extensive and well-knit empire efficiently organised and administered.

The first great triumph of Rajaraja was secured against the Chera ruler, Bhaskara Ravivarman. He destroyed the Chera navy at Kandalur (Trivandrum) and attacked Kollam or Quilon. Next he conquered Madura and captured Amarabhujanga Pandya. Subsequently he turned his attention to Malai-nadu or Kuda-malai-nadu or Coorg and got into his possession of the stronghold of Udagai which proved to be of great strategic importance in his wars against both the Pandyas and the Cheras. He sent a naval expedition to Ceylon or Ilamandalam which resulted in the overthrow of its king Mahendra V and the annexation of the northern part of the island to the Chola empire. He destroyed Anuradhapura, the capital of Ceylon for over one thousand years and made Polonnaruva the capital under the Cholas. Rajaraja signalled the Chola occupation of Ceylon by the construction of a stone temple of Shiva in Polonnaruva, one of the few Hindu monuments of Ceylon.

In about A.D. 991 Rajaraja conquered almost the whole of Mysore which was then divided into a number of small Chieftainships such as Gangavadi, Tadigaivadi and Nolambavadi. The expanding power of the Cholas brought the latter into conflict with their northern neighbours, the western Chalukyas. Though Tailapa II, the western Chalukya ruler, claims to have won a victory against the Chola king, his successor Satyasraya, fared badly against Rajaraja, who captured Rattapadi or the kingdom of the western Chalukyas in A.D. 1003. At the head of a strong army Rajaraja's son, Rajendra marched up to Donur in the Bijapur district in A.D. 1007 and plundered the entire country and killed women, children and Brahmins. Stunned for a time by the rapidity of the Chola onslaught, Satyasraya soon recovered himself and succeeded in confining the Cholas to the south of the Tungabhadra. Taking advantage of the distracted condition of the Vengi kingdom, Rajaraja was able to place his protégé Saktivarman on the throne of Vengi against Bhima the Telegu Choda chief, who was helped by Satyasraya. Rajaraja cemented the alliance by marrying his daughter Kundavvai to Vimaladitya, the younger brother of Saktivarman a marriage which proved strategically beneficial to the Cholas. The subjugation of Vengi was followed by Rajaraja's conquest of Kalinga. Towards the end of his reign he conquered the Maldives. In A.D. 1012 he formally installed his son Rajendra as Yuvaraja. During his reign he cultivated friendly relations with Sri Mara Vijayottungavarman, the sailendra ruler of Sri Vijaya, the maritime empire of Sumatra, who built the Chudamani Vihara in Negapatam.

Rajaraja was one of the greatest rulers of South India who laid the foundation of the mighty Chola empire. He not only perfected the administrative organisation of the country by the creation of a strong and centralised machinery, but also started a great land survey in A.D. 1000 for purposes of land revenue, and encouraged local self-government through out his dominions. He followed the practice of associating his son in the administration which prevented struggles for succession and gave valnerable practical experience to the future king. He constructed the magnificent Shiva temple at Tanjore, named after him as Rajarajesvara, which stands to this day as the most beautiful specimen of Tamil architecture at its best.

Rajendra Chola (A.D 1014-1044) was the worthy son of a worthy father who raised the Chola power to an amazing height of glory. Early in his reign, he appointed his son Rajadhiraja as Yuvaraja to assist him in the discharge of his royal duties. In A.D. 1018 Rajendra completed the conquest of Ceylon and brought its imprisoned ruler Mahendra V to the Chola country where he died twelve years later. But the Sinhalese never reconciled themselves to Tamil rule and waged a war of resistance till Mahendra V's son, Kassapa made himself king of the southern half of the island in A.D. 1029.

In A.D. 1019 Rajendra reasserted the Chola supremacy over the Pandya and Kerala countries and appointed his son Jatavarman Sundara, as Viceroy over both with the title Chola-Pandya. About A.D 1020-1021 Rajendra had to turn his attention towards the western Chalukya. The Chola-Chalukya wars were waged on two fronts—the western front in which Manyakheta and Kalyani were the objectives of the Cholas, and the eastern front which centred round Vengi the possession of which was coveted by both the parties. In the west though Jayasimha II was defeated in a battle at Maski, the Chalukya ruler continued to be master of the country up to the Tungabhadra. Rajendra supported the claim of Rajaraja to Vengi and expelled his rivals by defeating them in a battle. The expedition proceeded further north into Kalinga, probably because the eastern Ganga ruler of that country had sided with Jayasimha. From there the Chola army started on a grand expedition to the valley of the Ganga. Rajendra himself advanced to the Godavari and beyond to protect the rear of this expeditionary force which was threatened by the sullen rulers of Kalinga and Orissa. The Chola army defeated not only three petty rulers of west and south Bengal, but even the great Pala king Mahipala. The victorious army joined Rajendra on the banks of the Godavari and the latter celebrated of his nephew Rajaraja at Vengi with due pomp on August 16, 1022. But Rajaraja was seldom free from trouble during his long reign of forty-one years. It was doubtless a bold campaign and to commemorate

it he adopted the title of Gangai-Konda. Though the campaign lasted less than two years, it was nothing more than a plundering raid across a vast stretch of territory without yielding any permanent result.

In A.D. 1025 Rajendra sent a large fleet for the conquest of the powerful maritime state of Srivijaya which ruled the Malaya peninsula, Sumatray, Java, and the neighbouring islands and controlled the sea-routes from India to China. He was probably actuated by the motive of controlling the rich trade between India and the Far East. The expedition was a complete success. Sri Vijaya and Kadaram (Kedah on the west coast of Malaya) were taken. The Kingdom was restored to its ruler on his acknowledging Chola suzerainty. Apparently the campaign did not lead to any permanent result, as there is no evidence to show that the Cholas made any attempt to rule these lands as provinces of their empire.

The rest of Rajendra's reign which lasted for about 20 years after the campaign of Sri Vijaya, was far from peaceful. There were rebellions in the Pandya and Kerala kingdoms which were put down by Rajadhiraja. There was trouble in Ceylon where its king Vikramabahu put up resistance against the Tamils and forced Rajadhiraj to lead an expedition against him in A.D. 1041. Rajadhiraja also claim to have fought successfully against the Western Chalukya ruler, Somesvara I Ahavamalla.

Rajendra's reign formed the most splendid period of the history of the Cholas of the Vijayalaya line. The extent of the empire was at its widest and its military and naval prestige stood at its highest, Rajendra founded a new capital called after him Gangaikonda Colapuram (modern Gangakundepuram) which boasted of a magnificent palace and a temple adorned with exquisite granite sculptures. In the vicinity of the new city, he constructed a magnificent irrigation tank sixteen miles in length. He also established a Vedic college with 340 students leaving the Vedas. Vyakarana, Mimamsa and Nyaya under fourteen teachers. Rajendra I was succeeded by his son, Rajadhiraja I.

Rajadhiraja (A.D. 1044-1052) had been associated with his father in the administration of the kingdom as early as 1018. When he came to the throne, he had to encounter many troubles. He adopted a repressive policy in maintaining the Chola control over Ceylon. He renewed the war with Vengi and forced the Chalukya prince Vikramaditya to retreat in disorder. He then invaded western Chalukya territory, demolished the Chalukya palace in the city of Kampili and won a victory over the enemy in a pitched battle at Pundur on the banks of the Krishna. He then gained Yadgir sacked the Chalukya capital Kalyani and assumed the title 'Vijayarajendra'. But before A.D. 1050, the Chalukya king Samesvara succeeded in driving the Chola

forces out of his territory and on re-establishing his influence in Vengi. The war with the Chalukyas culminated in A.D. 1052 in the hotly contested battle at Kopam on the bank of the river Krishna. Rajadhiraja lost his life in the battle but the day was retrieved by Rajadhiraja's younger brother, Rajendra II who crowned himself on the battlefield and turned the defeat into victory.

Rajendra II (A.D 1052-1064) sought to curb the power of Chalukya Somesvara when the latter interfered in vengi following the death of the Chola protege Rajaraja in A.D. 1061. Somesvara also sent his forces into Gangavadi to invade that part of the Chola territory. Aided by his son Rajamahendra and his brother Virarajendra, Rajendra II met the challenge on both the fronts. In Vengi, he defeated and killed the Chalukya general Chamundaraja and at Kudal-Sangaman (A.D.1062), at the junction of the Tunga and the Bhadra in the Mysore country, beat back the Chalukya invaders of Gangavadi. Soon after Rajendra and his son Rajamahendra died and Virarajendra became king in A.D. 1063.

Virarajendra I (A.D 1063-1070) carried on the traditional hostilities with the Chalukyas. In 1067 he invaded the western Chalukya empire in response to a challenge of Somesvara to meet him at Kudal-San-gamam again. But the latter did not turn up owing to protracted illness and after waiting for one month, the Chola monarch returned home after creating a pillar of victory on the banks of the Tungabhadra. Virarajendra then proceeded towards Vengi, defeated the western Chalukyas near Vijayawada regained Vengi, and bestowed it on Vijayaditya VII before returning to Gangai-Konda-Cholapuram.

Some time before A.D. 1067 Virarajendra foiled the attempt of Vijayabahu I of Ceylon to terminate Chola rule on that island. In A.D 1068 he is said to have conquered Kadaram and placed a friendly ruler on its throne. Virarajendra came into conflict with the Western Chalukya ruler Somesvara II, the son of Somesvara I. The conflict was accentuated by the quarrel between Somesvara II and his younger brother Vikramaditya VI and on the latter's appeal to the Chola emperor, the former was forced to surrender a part of his dominions to his brother, who married Virarajendra's daughter. Thus it appears that the perpetual animosity between the Cholas and the Chalukyas had at last been healed by the bond of matrimonial alliance.

Virarajendra died early in A.D. 1070 and was succeeded on the throne by his son Adhirajendra (C.A.D. 1070) He had a very short reign of some week's duration and was followed by Rajendra II or Kulottunga Chola in June 1070.

Kulottunga I (C.A.D-1070-1122), the son of eastern Chalukya king, Rajaraja, had

a great deal of Chola blood in him. His father's mother was the daughter of Rajaraja the Great his mother was the daughter of Rajendra Chola Gangaikonda and he himself married the daughter of Rajendra II, the victor at Koppam kulottunga enjoyed a long reign characterised by unparalleled success and prosperity.

Kulottunga's reign synchronised with the loss of Ceylon where its ruler Vijayabahu captured Polonnaruva in A.D 1070 and crowned himself king of Ceylon in A.D. 1073. Kulottunga made peace with him in A.D. 1088 and gave his daughter in marriage to a Sinhalese prince.

Kulottunga had to deal with the western Chalukya Vikramaditya VI who tried to undo the amalgamation of Vengi with the Chola kingdom. With the help of Somesvara II, brother of Vikramaditya VI, Kulottunga pursued the Western Chalukya king up to the Tungabhadra and made himself master of Gangavadi. But judged in terms of real gain, it was a defeat for Kulottunga for his ally, Somesvara II was imprisoned by Vikramaditya and the latter proclaimed himself king in A.D 1076. Kulottunga put down the stubborn opposition of the Pandya and Kerala rulers and established a number of military colonies along the important routes of communication in both the kingdoms. But he did not revive the Chola-Pandya viceroyalty and left the local rulers in charge of internal affairs.

In the north, Kulottunga left the administration of the Vengi kingdom in the hands of Vijayaditya VII. But after his death in A.D. 1076, Kulottunga appointed his sons as Viceroy's of Vengi. About A.D. 1097 when southern Kalinga, a part of the Vengi province, revolted against the Chola Viceroy of Vengi, the rebellion was suppressed. Some years later, about A.D. 1110 Kulottunga had to send another expedition to Kalinga when its ruler, Anantavarman Choda-Ganga withheld tribute. Despite the humiliating defeat of Anantavarman and the capture of immense booty, the campaign was devoid of any permanent results.

Barring the loss of Ceylon, the empire of Kulottunga up to A.D. 1115 remained unimpaired and included the entire country south of the Krishna and Tungabhadra extending up to the Godavari of the east coast. But towards the end of his reign, the Chola empire had to encounter the onslaughts of Chalukya Vikramaditya and Hoysala Vishnuvardhana. In A.D. 1016 Kulottunga lost the province of Gangavadi to the rising power of the Hoysalas. In Vengi the Chola power disappeared in A.D. 1018 when Vikrama Chola left Vengi for the Chola country as heir apparent. Vikramaditya VI seized this opportunity to annex Vengi which remained under him till his death. Thus at the end of Kulottunga's reign, the extent of the Chola empire considerably diminished than what it was at his accession.

Kulottunga I was succeeded by his son Vikrama Chola (A.D. 1122-1135). There was a partial revival of Chola power under Vikrama Chola, who recovered Vengi after the death of Vikramaditya VI in A.D. 1126. Taking advantage of the Hoysala preoccupation with the western Chalukyas Vikrama Chola recovered Kolar and some other parts of Gangavadi.

Vikrama Chola was succeeded after his death in A.D. 1135 by his son Kulottunga II (A.D. 1135-1150). His reign was marked by a period of peace and prosperity.

Kulottunga II was succeeded by his son Rajaraja II (A.D. 1150-1173). Though Rajaraja II's reign was a continuation of the peaceful reign of his predecessors, there was visible sign of weakness of the empire towards the end of his reign.

Rajaraja II had no son, so he was succeeded by his cousin Rajadhiraja II (A.D. 1173-1178), a grandson of Vikrama Chola. Like his predecessor, he soon embroiled himself in the succession dispute of the Pandyan kingdom in which one of the rival parties appealed to the powerful Sinhalese ruler Parakramabahu I (A.D. 1153-1186) and the other to the Chola monarch. The war assumed a new dimension owing to the existence of a powerful rivalry between the Chola and Ceylon Kingdoms. But the intercession brought no good to either party. Out of the ashes of the civil war emerged the Pandya power which with its renewed vitality swallowed up both the Chola and Ceylonese Kingdom. During Rajadhiraja's reign, the independence of the feudatories became more pronounced.

Rajadhiraja's successor was Kulottunga III (A.D. 1178-1216) but the relation between the two is not known. By his personal ability, Kulottunga delayed the forces of disintegration which had already started eating into the vitality of the Chola Kingdom. He was the last of the great Chola monarchs, whose rule marks the last great epoch in the history of Chola art and architecture. But towards the close of his reign, Kulottunga had to suffer a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Pandya king, Sundara Pandya. Kulottunga III did not survive after the Pandya invasion.

Kulottunga was succeeded by Rajaraja III (A.D. 1216-1246) who was perhaps his son. Utter confusion prevailed during his reign and the king had not the capacity to arrest the forces of disruption. The Chola kingdom was exposed to attacks from different sides by the rise of new powers like the Pandyas in the South, the Hoysalas in the West, the Telegu Chodas in the northeast and nearer home the Kadavas.

Rajendra III (A.D. 1246-1279) who was recognised as heir apparent in A.D. 1246 was not altogether devoid of ability. There is no evidence that Rajendra was followed immediately by another Chola prince, 'so it seems that the Chola kingdom was

completely absorbed in the Pandyan empire. But the name of Chola-mandalam was not cast into limbo, it retained its hold in popular imagination by its subsequent corruption into Coromandel.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century the Chola power declined and their place was taken by the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra and the Pandyas of Madurai.

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### **4.3 Conflict for Riches: Tripartite Struggle**

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The struggle for control over Kanauj among the three dynasties—the Gurjara Pratiharas, the Palas and the Rashtrakutas known as the Tripartite struggle in Indian History. Kanauj was located on the Ganga trade route and was connected to the silk route. It made Kanauj strategically and commercially very important. It was also the erstwhile capital of Harshavardhana's empire in North India.

Yashovarman set up a kingdom at Kanauj around 730 A.D. He was followed by three kings namely Indrayudha, Vijrayudha and Chakrayudha who ruled over Kanauj between the end of the 8th century and first quarter of the 9th century. Unfortunately, these rulers proved to be weak and the kingdom of Kanauj, the Gurjara Pratiharas of Bhinmal (Rajasthan), the Palas of Bengal and Bihar and the Rashtrakutas of the Manyakheta fought war against each other to take advantage of the immense economic and strategic potentialities of Kanauj.

Epigraphist D.C. Sircar, however, added a different perspective to this struggle. According to Sircar, the struggle between the Pratihara empire and the Rashtrakuta empire had begun earlier than the struggle over Kanauj. These two powers shared common frontier in the Gujarat and Malwa regions. The frontier was a shifting one and far from permanent, causing enmity between the two powers. Even before the struggle over Kanauj started, Dantidurga the founder of the Rashtrakuta empire had defeated Nagabhata I of the Gurjara Pratihara dynasty as evident from the Dashavatara Temple inscription of Dantidurga at Ellora and the Sanjan Inscription of Amoghavarsha I, both belonging to the Rashtrakuta dynasty. On the other hand the conflict between the Palas of Bengal and Bihar and the Ayudha dynasty of North India was the continuation of an old power struggle that has started between Harshavardhana of the Pushyathuti dynasty and Sasanka of Gauda in the seventh century and would continue till the twelfth century. These regional struggles were escalated to a greater pitch over the issue of succession of the Ayudha dynasty. Also, the involvement of the four powers i.e. the Pratihara empire the Pala empire, the Rashtrakuta empire and the Ayudha dynasty meant that it was actually a four-power.



Towards the end of the successor of Nagathata II (of the Gurjara Pratihara dynasty, he successfully attacked Kanauj and established control there. This was short-lived as he was soon after defeated by the Rashtrakuta ruler Govinda III. However, the Rashtrakutas also formed a matrimonial relationship with the Gangas and defeated the kingdom of Vengi.

By the end of the Ninth century, the power of the Rashtrakutas started to decline along with the Palas. This was seen as an ideal opportunity by the feudal king Taila II who defeated the Rashtrakuta ruler and declared his kingdom there. This came to be known as the Later Chalukya dynasty. By the end of the tripartite struggle the Pratiharas emerged victorious and established themselves as the rulers of Central India.

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## 4.4 Conclusion

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The numerous kingdoms and principalities that had mushroomed throughout the length and breadth of India owing to the lack of any centralized authority, continued to thrive for more than four centuries before the formal establishment of the Sultanate rule in the Indian subcontinent. During this period, there was continuous intermingling amongst the Rajput clans, lending Indian society and culture a new shape. The glorious dynasties of both northern and southern India, which emerged in this era, contributed to the making of a common culture that had a direct impact on the political, socio-economic, religious and cultural life of the people of India.

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## 4.5 Summary

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After the death of Harshavardhana, there was confusion in northern India and a large number of small kingdoms were established on the ruins of his vast domain. Several Rajput states of varying sizes were formed during the early medieval period. The pratiharas and Rathors of Kanauj, the Chauhans of Ajmer and Delhi, the Paramaras of Malwa, the Chandelas of Bundelkhand the Palas and Senas of Bengal and the Solankis of Gujarat were some of the more prominent ruling dynasties of northern India during this time. The more prominent Deccan and other far southern kingdoms in early medieval India were the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed, the Western Chalukyas of Kalyani, the Cholas of Tanjore, the Pandyas of Madurai, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, the Gangas of Kalinga, the Yadavas of Devagiri and the Kakatiyas of Warangal.

Despite the frequent quarrels between various Rajput and southern Indian states, there was a high level of prosperity in India between the eighth and the twelfth centuries.

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## 4.6 Model Questions

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1. How did the Gurjara Pratihars established their kingdom in northern India?
2. What is the significance of kings Rajaraja I and Rajendra Chola in the history of the Chola kingdom?
3. Locate the major Rajput clans in Northern India and their states.
4. Who were the Gurjara Pratihars? How did they emerge out as independent Rajput clan?
5. Give a critical account of the tripartite struggle among the Palas, Gurjara Partiharas and Rashtrakutas.
6. Explain the growth of Bengal as a regional power under Dharmapalas and Devapala.
7. What was the symbolic object of contestation in the tripartite struggle? Which three powers were involved in this struggle?
8. What was the importance of Kanauj in the 7<sup>th</sup> century?
9. Why did Rajendra Chola designate his capital as Gangaikonda Cholapuram?
10. Who assumed the title of Gangaikonda and why?

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## 4.7 Suggested Readings

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## **Unit-5 □ Legitimization of kingship, Brahmanas and Temples, royal genealogies and rituals**

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### **Structure**

- 5.0 Objectives**
- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Concept of Legitimization of Kingships**
- 5.3 Role of the Brahmanas**
- 5.4 Importance of Temples**
- 5.5 Royal Genealogies and Rituals**
- 5.6 Conclusion**
- 5.7 Summary**
- 5.8 Model Questions**
- 5.9 Suggested Readings**

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### **5.0 Objectives**

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By going through this unit we will be able to—

- Understand the concept of Legitimization of Kingships
- Know about the role of Brahmanas in the society and state affairs.
- Explain the growing importance of the temples during early medieval period.
- Understand Royal Genealogies.
- Know about rituals.

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### **5.1 Introduction**

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The origin and growth of Legitimacy refers to ‘a situation in which the rulers and the ruled shared the conviction that the rule of the government is right. Legitimacy means the justified existence of concentrated political power wielded by a portion of a community. A new state generally justified its new institutions, hierarchy and

power, by introducing new cultural ideas and maintaining traditional 'belief system'. Historians have identified a few steps in the process of legitimation of power of the kingdom emerging from tribal phase. First step was the construction of a fabricated genealogical link of the ruling (tribe) family, Redistribution of concentrated surplus through the construction of public works and building of religious institution was another step. Third step was 'adoption of Indo-Aryan (non tribal) culture' including language and literature. This adoption and cultivation of new culture went alongside the maintenance of the primordality, including in synthesis, of adopted and 'primordial culture' 'synthesis of culture' that resulted from kingdom formation process eventually resulted into the evolution of new cultural phenomena' in northeast India.

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## **5.2 Concept of Legitimization of Kingships**

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Construction of a fabricated divine kingship was an essential pre-requisite of early medieval Indian kingdoms and empires. Prior to the formation of the kingdoms, traditional structures of tribal society were based on clan villages maintained through lineage and kinship. With the territorial extension and growth of complexity, the chief and his allies came forward to assume the responsibility of management of the emerging kingdom. Thus the tribal chief was declared as 'King' by the Brahmins who performed the rituals of coronation. The position of the king with regard to both the control of his central area and his relations with his samantas called for a specific emphasis on the legitimacy of kingship to enhance his personal power. This was done by means of highlighting his divine mission and his ritual sovereignty. The Brahmins were instrumental in providing the necessary ideology for this purpose. In the Gupta empire such land grants had often been made in distant, uncultivated area where the Brahmins were obviously meant to act as missionaries of Hindu culture. But from the tenth century onwards land grants followed a rather different pattern kings adopted the practice of granting land, or rather the revenue of whole villages, to Brahmins sometimes even in the territories of their Samantas. Such a grant was really at the expense of the Samanta rather than the king who gained a loyal follower, because the Brahmin would look upon his loyal patron as his true benefactor. The samantas could not object to such grants as they were sanctified by tradition. There was another important change in the policy of granting land to Brahmins. Whereas previously single families or at the most, small groups had received such grants, the records of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries suddenly mention large numbers of Brahmin of the Gahadavala dynasty, for instance, granted one and a half revenue districts with

more than a hundred villages to 500 Brahmins in 1093 and 1100 CE. The area concerned was in the immediate vicinity of Varanasi which was the second capital of the Gahadavalas. The king was obviously keen to strengthen his hold on this newly conquered region and did not mind the substantial loss of revenue which he incurred in this way. The following methods are adopted for the legitimation of kingship.

It was a common phenomenon in tribal politics of northeast India that the Brahmins projected and popularized the ruling tribe as ruling caste or as Kshatriya to legitimize their rule. The king also brought Brahmins from different places of India and settled them in the kingdom with land and honour and adopted culture of the Hinduism to legitimize his kingship. The Brahmins conferred him a kingship of an extraordinary origin. There was a super-structured construction of divine link of the founder king of the kingdom and it was a by-product of state patronage to the Brahmins. Through propagation of the religious myths, the authority of kings received natural acceptance from the ruled or the common people by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Coronation of the king in Hindu style was a means of legitimation of kingship. At the time of coronation, the king and his successors were compared with the popular deities like Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Indra, Aditi, Vayu, Varuna, Kuvera and Ganesh. The Brahmins had also upgraded the status of the kings and mentioned them in same inscriptions at par with the epic heroes of ancient India like Arjuna, Dadhichi, Karna and Kandarpa. Composition of inscribed verses of extra-ordinary origin in Sanskrit and performance of coronation ceremony of the kings by the Brahmins helped in reimagining of tribal control. On the contrary, the king established his control over the tribe. Adoption of Hindu titles also had elevated the social status of the chiefs to that of Kshatriya king i.e. legitimate ruler.

Another step in legitimation process of pre-colonial kingdoms of eastern and north-eastern India was the distribution of concentrated surplus through the universal construction of beneficial construction projects and diffusion of new cultural ideologies. They adopted a policy of constructing roads and public tanks for the benefit of the people. Construction of roads and tanks are considered to be a sort of distribution of the surplus accumulated by the kings to popularize their rule among the people.

The construction of these temples coincide with the increasing samantisation of the regional kingdoms of India. The temples were obviously supposed to be a counterweight to the divisive forces prevailing in those kingdoms. In order to fulfil this function they were endowed with great grants of land often located near the

capital but also sometimes in distant provinces and even in the territories of the samantas. For the performance of the royal ritual hundred of Brahmins and temple servants were attached to these temples. The very detailed inscriptions of donors at the great temple of Tanjavur tell us exactly from which villages the 137 guards of the temple came. The inscription contain instructions to the respective villages to supply the guards coming from those villages with rice. Samantarajas and royal officers were obliged to perform special services in the temple.

The kings also paid attention to the diffusion of Indo-Aryan (non-tribal) culture which they adopted voluntarily. They found the neo-Vaishnavism and Brahmanical Hinduism as the dominant religious form having deep and great impact and influence on the ordinary people of the region. The democratic values and simplicity advocated by religious leaders of that time had united the different communities of the kingdom in the name of a particular sect of religion. The discourse of the Saints and their disciples also touched the hearts of the heterogeneous communities through their teachings and transformed the neo-Vaishnavism into a popular cult of the region. In return the Brahmanas, priests and servants of the temples were provided the grant of lands with the attachment of the temples. Lucrative grants had allured te Brahmins to settle in the region.

The knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature was considered a prerequisite for entering into the service of the royal courts in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century CE.

In the Hindu tribal frontier area, legitimacy of political power had a two fold aspect-Internal (or vertical) and external (or horizontal). The kings of early medieval India followed the principle of internal or vertical process of legitimation. The impact of the new kingship required special means of legitimation to win and maintain the loyalty and compliance of social groups within the territory.

Tribal deities had always played an important role in the process of legitimation of kingships. Patronage to a specific tribal deity for the purpose of royal legitimation was a common phenomenon in northern India throughout the medieval period. Whether the Hindunized chiefs of Hindu king had ascended from the local tribes or whether they had entered the respective areas as roaming freebooters, most of them accepted the dominant deities for their territories as family and tutelary deities of their principalities. Ritual space and legitimation of the new power was linked to the extension of political power. The kings or the rajas accepted them as the new istadevatas. They donated land for the maintenance of their priests and rituals and in all cases they either built, or considerably enlarged, temples for the new tutelary deities.

In order to keep the loyalty of the non-tribal populace the kings constructed many Hindu temples in their territories. It only served, 'as symbol of a new Hindu kingship, was still the main source of external or horizontal legitimation rather than of any great significance for the political status of the rajas within the society. They build many Hindu temples in different parts of their kingdom and made extensive donation of villages and land grants for regular and elaborate performance of these temples. The rise of the great royal temples symbolized the power and religious identity of the respective realm.

The economic and political functions of the temple were realized in the role of the king in the royal ritual. The Linga, the phallic symbol of Shiva, in the sanctum of the temple was often named after the king who had donated it, e.g. the Udayeshvara-Linga or the Rajarajeshvara-Linga in the temples established by Udayaditya and Rajaraja in their respective capitals. Paintings in the temple and sculptures outside it showed the king depicted like a God and the Gods in turn were decorated with royal attributes. In order to gain additional legitimation some kings even solemnly transferred their realm to the royal god and ruled it as the God's representative or son (Putra). In this way they could use the royal temple and its staff as instruments of government and could threaten disobedient samantas with the wrath of the royal god if they did not obey the king's order.

In order to consolidate their supremacy over a vast geographical area the kings followed the policy of matrimonial alliance with different feudatories. Marriage was an institution explicitly used to build political alliance and open avenues of economic exchange between 'house' families as politico economic units.

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### **5.3 Role of the Brahmanas**

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The Indian social organization during 500 years under discussion (8<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries) was extremely vibrant and responsive to changes taking place in the realms of economy, polity and ideas. There is an extremely wide ranging source material, both literary and epigraphic for the construction of social organization during half a millennium (circa eight to the thirteenth centuries). It is not merely the writings on dhannashastras in the form of commentaries and other dharma-nibandhas' which tell us about the ups and downs in the social system. Even work belonging to the realms of Kavyas, dharma, technical and scientific works as well as treatises and architecture throw enormous light on the post-Gupta developments in the sphere of society.

During the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, Buddhism and Jainism raised doubts about the rationale of castes based on birth. Simmering discontent against the brahmanical social order raised its head at regular intervals. In *Dhanuapariksha* (11<sup>th</sup> century) Jaina Amitagati determined caste on the basis of personal conduct. The caste superiority of the Brahmanas was challenged by the Jainas in such works as the *Khthakushprakarana*. A satirical work called *Latakamelaka* mentions a Buddhist monk who denies importance of caste, regards it as baseless and denounces pollution and caste-based segregation. Kshemendra the literary genius of Kashmir refers to *Kula-Jati-darpa* as a disease of the society for which he himself was a physician. The *padmapurana* reveals a conflict of two ideologies—the orthodox one enjoining the shudras, a life of penury and the heterodox one urging upon him the importance of wealth. An eleventh century work focuses on social ranks and divisions based not on birth but on occupations. While the priests of different religions are called hypocrites, the second broad social classification of householders take note of the following six categories (i) the highest included chakravartins, ii) the high ones comprised the feudal clite, iii) the middle ones included traders, moneylenders, possessors of cows, buffaloes, camels, horses etc. iv) small businessmen and petty cultivators v) the degraded ones such as the members of the guilds, artisans and craftsmen and vi) the highly degraded included Chandala and others following ignoble occupations such as killing of birds and animals.

The above conflicting trend shows that the social organization was in a flux and far from being harmonious. One single factor which seems to have set the tone of the post Gupta society was the every growing phenomenon of land grants which changed the entire social outlook. This was coupled with i) a fillip to tendencies of localization ii) its bearing on fluctuations in the urban setting iii) its nexus with the monetary system, iv) its role in increasing social and economic immobility and subjection of peasantry, v) non-agricultural taling workers, and the resultant hierarchy of ruling landed aristocracy. A new social ethos was in the making and that was the feudal formation.

The post eighth century social organization which seems to have prevailed till at least the establishment of the Turkish political power in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was marked by i) newly founded brahmanica order in Bengal and South India where in the intermediary varnas were absent, ii) modifications in the varna system such as the transformation of Shudras into cultivators thereby, bringing them closer to the vaishyas, iii) rise of the new literate class struggling for a place in the Varna order, and iv) reduced position of the brahmins.



Eventually, by the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami, and the Pandyas of Madurai emerged as the rulers of the three major states. The Chalukyas were succeeded by the Rashtrakutas in the western Deccan and the Pallavas were succeeded by the Chola in the Kaveri plain. Besides in the Andhra region the eastern Gangas and several minor ruling dynasties come into existence. All the above dynasties patronized Brahmanas by extending land grants to them and the Brahmins help them to strengthen their rule in frontier region of their kingdoms. This resulted in spread of Brahmana culture. The earlier period is marked by numbers crafts, internal and external trade, widespread use of coins, and a large number of towns. Trade, towns and coinage seem to have been in a state of decline in the subsequent period, but in that phase numerous land grants free of taxes were made to the temples and brahmanas. The grants suggest that many new areas were brought under cultivation and settlement. This period, therefore, saw a far greater expansion of agrarian economy as well as spread of Brahminical religion to remote areas.

There was the march of triumphant Brahmanism in the peninsula as it records many instances of the performance of vedic sacrifices by the kings. This phase also marked the beginning of the construction of stone temples for Shiva and Vishnu in Tamil Nadu under the Pallavas, and the Karnataka under the Chalukyas of Badami. Culturally, the Dividian element seems to have dominated the scene in the first phase, but during the second phase Arganization and Brahmanisation came to the fore. This happened because of land grants made by the rulers who were either Brahmanas or firm supporters of them. As managers of temple lands, the Brahmanas guided cultural and religious activities. They spread Sanskrit, which became the official language.

In northern Maharastra and Vidarbha (Berar), the Satavahanas were succeeded by the Vakatakas, a local power. The Vakatakas, who were Brahmanas themselves, are known from a large number of copperplate land grants issued by them. They were great champions of the Brahmanical religion and performed numerous vedic sacrifices.

The Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Chalukyas of Badami, and their other contemporaries were great champions of Vedic sacrifices. They performed ashvamedha and vajapeya sacrifices which legitimized their position, enhanced their prestige and enormously increased the income of the priestly class. The Brahmanas, therefore, emerged as an important class at the expense of the peasantry, from whom they collected their dues directly. They also received as gifts a substantial portion of the taxes collected by the kings from his subjects. Later the Rashtrakuta and the imperial Chola accelerated the process of Brahmanisation of Southern India. Besides, the

performance of vedic sacrifices, the worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, especially of the last two, was becoming popular.

The expansion of the rural space and agricultural activities had been responsible for changes in notion about persons entitled to undertake these. The law books of the post Gupta centuries include agriculture in the Samanya dhrum (Common Occupation) of all varnas. The smriti of Parashar further emphasizes that in addition to their traditional six-fold duties (studying, teaching, sacrificing officiating as sacrifice to help others acceptance of gifts from a worthy person of three higher varnas and making of gifts), the brahmanas could also be associated with agricultural activities, preferably through labour of Shudras. It was also enjoined upon Brahmanas that in order to avoid any kind of sin, they should do proper treatment to oxen and offer certain fixed quantities of corn to king, Gods and fellow Brahmanas.

Such formalities indicate that very significant development was being made in the brahmonical social order and the varna norms were being sought to be redefined. A major indicator of this effort was the bridging of the gap between the Vaishyas and the Shudras. While this trend makes its beginning in the early christian era, it is significant that in the post gupta centuries the Vaishyas practically lose their identity as a peasant caste. The famous Chinese traveller of the early seventh century, Hiuen Tsang mentions Shudras as agriculturists, Alberuni who came to India along with Mahmud of Ghazni in the first quarter of the eleventh century, also notes the absence of any difference between the Vaishyas and Shudras. The Skanda Purana talks about the pitiable condition of the Vaishyas. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century they came to be treated with the Shudras, both ritually and legally. Alberuni, for example, says that both Vaishyas and Shudras were punished with amputation of the tongue for reciting the Vedic texts. There were certain Shudras who were called Bhojyanna, i.e. food prepared by whom could be taken even by brahmanas. Many trantic and Siddha teachers were Shudras performing works of fishermen, leather workers, washermen, black-smiths etc. A text of the 8<sup>th</sup> century states that thousands of mixed castes were produced as a result of marriages between Vaishya women and men of lower castes. There is also a mention of 'anashrita shudras' who were well-to-do and sometimes became members of the local administrative committees and even made their way into the ruling aristocracy.

The emergence of a social order typified by an absence of intermediary Varnas in Bengal and South India. The new brahmanical order in these areas provided mainly for brahmanas and Sudras. This may have been partly due to the influence of non-Brahmanical religions in these regions. However, the nature of the progress of Brahmanism also contributed to this development. Tribal and non-brahmanical

population of the peripheral regions were admitted to the brahmanical system as Shudras. In South India, a Shaiva brahmana teacher called Basava preached religious equality of men and women.

A class of writers and record keepers was mentioned in pre-Gupta inscriptions from Bengal, who were involved in record keeping activities. A part from Kayasthas, these classes included karnas, karanikas, pustapala, lekhaka, aksharachanchu, dharmalekhin, aksyapatalika etc. Though these classes were being recruited from different varnas, later they got crystallized into distinct castes. From the ninth century we hear of a large number of Kayastha families, such as Valabha, ganda, mathur, katana, Shrivastavya, Negam to play leading role in learning and literature. Tathagatarakshita of Odisha who belonged to a family of physicians by professions and Kayastha by caste, was a reputed professor of tantras in the Vikramashila University in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

There was phenomenal increase of the new mixed castes because no varna seemed to have remained homogeneous and got fragmented on account of territorial affiliations, purity of gotras and Pursuance of specific crafts, professions and vocations. The multiplication of castes as a phenomenon appears to be most pronounced among brahmanas. They were no longer confined to their traditional six-fold duties. Apart from occupying high governmental positions such as those of ministers, purohitas, judges etc. they had also started performing military functions. For example, the senapati of Prithviraj Chauhan was a brahmana named Skanda and another brahmanas named Rak was leading the army of a ruler of Sapadalalaksha (in Rajasthan). The eleventh century kashmiri writer Kshemendra mentions brahmanas performing functions of artisans, dancers, horse dealers and betel sellers and indulging in the sale of wine, butter, milk, salt etc. Mitakshara, the famous commentary on the Smriti of Yagyavalkya speaks of the ten fold gradation of brahmanas ranging between Deva and Chandal, who does not perform Sandhya three times a day. In between were the Shudras-brahminas who lived by profession of arms and temple priests.

Division within the brahmana Varna were also caused by territorial affiliations. In north India we heard of Sarasvat, Kanyakubja, Maithi, Ganda and Utkal Brahmanas. In Gujarat and Rajasthan they were identified in terms of their 'mula' (Original place of habitation) and divided into modha, Udichya, Nagara etc. By the late medieval times, the brahmanas were split into about 180 mulas. There were also the feelings of superiority. While there was a phenomenal migration of brahmanas, certain regions were considered to be papadeshas. These included Saurashta, Sidh and Dakshmapath.

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## 5.4 Importance of Temples

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Temples had a central place in the predominantly agrarian economy of medieval India, especially in South India. Temples began to enjoy a growing sense of power in the Pallava period, and came to enjoy a place of seminal importance in the tenure of the cholas. Evidence for this can be gathered from the number of land grants made to temples during this period. This is the period when we see the emergence of great royal temples, which symbolised the power of the ruling kingdom. From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, a large number of temples were built in various regional kingdoms. These temples, which enjoyed royal support, had unrestricted access to agricultural produce and came to wield tremendous power and influence in matters of everyday life. They were also used to counter the divisive forces prevailing in those kingdoms. Thriving on land grants and cash endowments, temples came to acquire iconic status in terms of offering employment to countless people, in terms of encouraging a culture of usury—temples would make a lot of money by charging huge rates of interest on money loaned out to village assemblies, cultivators, traders and artisans in return for various articles of use given in lieu of interest ranging anywhere between 12-5 to 15 percent—and in terms of advocating mass consumerism as there could be no end to how much could go into what constituted the basic needs and requirements of these temples.

Archaeological and literary sources like the *Mitakshara*, *Prayagmanjari* and *Tahkik-e-Hind* offer tremendous help in terms of reconstructing the socio-economic role of temples. Corroborating evidence is provided by copper plates, stone inscriptions and numismatic findings.

Land endowments were the most important source of money and sustenance for temples in South India. Land granted to temples had two functions of note i) to provide the income required for the ritual service that had to be made in the name of the donor, and ii) to provide a productive platform upon which to invest funds required for the performance of services in the name of the donor of the money. The plethora of land and village grants made to temples gave rise to several important developments. In the first place, there was a significant increase in the number of temple employees and personnel who were paid either in kind or through the allotment of land. This resulted in a growth in feudal land tenure which is evident enough from the various epigraphic references made to tenants. Fiscal concessions which accompanied many grants only succeeded in making the lot of an already disadvantaged peasantry even worse than it already was and weakened the central authority.

The temples in medieval India, especially those in South India, began to acquire the importance of a tourist industry of modern times. Pilgrims flocked to temples in huge numbers during festival times and this was what generated greater employment possibilities. People could now find jobs as guildmen, inn-keepers, surveyors, food shelter supervisors and priests. In fact, temples soon became miniature towns.

Temples also encouraged the spread of education. Larger temples would maintain Vidya mandapams where efficient teachers were employed and free board and lodging was provided to students. Most Shiva temple during this period maintained a fleet of teachers who taught the Vedas, the Sastras, the Agamas, the Puranas, Itihasas, Kavyas and the Saiva philosophy. In the Andhra region such Kalmukha Saiva mathas existed in Vemulvada where eminent teachers were employed to impart knowledge to their disciples.

Kings and nobles made liberal grants of land and villages to provide funds for customary rites and festivals in temples and also for a sound system of education in temples. The Brahmins who received immense gifts and land grants often made wise investments, particularly those of gold, with the village assemblies and thereby received an additional bonus for the maintenance, worship, burning of the perceptual lamp and similar other purposes. Temples also acted as a tool of urbanisation by fostering commercial activity in and around the centre. Sizeable urban settlements became an adjunct of great temples. The inscriptions carved in various temples reveal the names of the Vyasabenefactors. Merchant guilds like those of Ayyavolu and Nakaramu in the Andhra region supported temple building activities. Temples were surrounded by numerous shops selling various articles of worship. Fairs and Santos were conducted around the temple and these gave a lot of impetus to inland trade.

Land was the main source of revenue for the state and improved agricultural facilities added to this income. Care was taken to provide cultivable lands with a regular supply of water. Irrigation was carried through tanks, canals, wells. Further, trade and commerce was an additional source of wealth and as a result of this extensive inland and foreign trade the demand for articles of luxury increased and industrial art developed. Many occupations connected with industrial art developed. People found occupation as silversmiths, goldsmiths and sculptors thereby collectively forming the Visvakarma community. We also came across artisans like oil mongers, pot-makers, barbers, washer-women, merchant and craft and agricultural guilds during this period. The guilds catered to the diverse needs of different strata of society and generated a large amount of wealth.

The temples had become a citadel of economic power located almost at par with the state. Temples directed agricultural development through the endowments they received. Endowments were made in order to provide funds for the maintenance of temples, for festivals and for food offerings made to the deities. Provisions were made for the donor or someone designated by the donor. Temples did not have ownership rights over land endowments, but had a major share in the revenue and the income. The money received by temples was frequently loaned out to village assemblies and commercial firms for a perpetual interest and this added to the income of the temples. Temples became the citadel of the socio-economic activities of the people. It was the nucleus around which villages, towns and commerce flourished. The temple was closely associated with territorial and administrative bodies of local areas. It was both a landlord and an employer. Its treasury was a bank, which received deposits and loaned out money.

Its construction and maintenance offered employment to a number of architects and craftsmen who vied with one other in the bold planning and skillful execution of tasks allocated to them. The daily routine especially of the larger temples, gave constant employment to number of priests, choristers, musicians, dancing girls, florish, cooks and many classes of servants. The practice of adorning images, particularly those used during processions with numerous jewels set with precious stones encouraged the art of jewellery making to considerable extent.

During the early medieval period of a lucrative overseas trade, agricultural and trade alliances and the development of towns and temples were closely interdependent phenomena. The provision of agricultural capital for trade and the influx of gold and copper from overseas trade probably contributed to the establishment and growth of centers of trade in already existing towns, particularly the ports and also contributed to the development of many minor redistributing centres throughout the Peninsula. There was a close relationship between the sectarian movement and the development of commerce.

Hence, the medieval period in the Deccan saw a proliferation in the number of temples. Temples were supposed to confer on their builders, several merits and benefits such as those of longevity, health, wealth, prosperity and religious merit. Kings would have temples constructed as a gesture of gratitude and as a token of appreciation for the attainment of victory. Sometimes temples were raised to consecrate the dead or to placate an overlord. The temples were built for parents or perceptors. We also have instances of temples being built to mark the measure of one's or to establish the religious merit of gotras. Thus, there was a total institutionalisation of the temple. These temples flourished because the ruling warrior

groups provided them with support and protection. A vast range of officials and warlords came to play an important role in temple functioning. Besides these functionaries, there was substantial participation by pilgrims.

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## 5.5 Royal genealogies and Rituals

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There were various ritual functionaries attached to the temples who were given monetary endowments by temples. These functionaries included members of educational institutions (mathas), reciters of Sanskrit and Tamil sacred works, teachers, scholars, musicians and poets. They also received their share of the consecrated food offered to the deity. Distributing consecrated food among devotees began to play a tremendously important role in terms of raising temple funds. Temples also came to play a part in the field of agricultural development. It provided agriculturists with irrigation facilities. Caste consciousness had become a marked feature in social relationship with society divided between Brahmins and non Brahmins. The medium of education in temples was Sanskrit. Debates were held in various mathas and colleges regarding the tenets of Hindu theology Sankaracharya's idea continued to be developed and improved upon and diverse schools of thoughts were also discussed. It is to be noted that Ramanuja, the famous Vaishnava philosopher spent a considerable part of his life teaching at the famous temple of Shrirangam.

During the early medieval period, temple rituals in the honour of God became amazingly elaborate and complex. D.N. Jha says that the growth of a heirarchised land owing leisured class with a king placed at the head articulated itself through the patronage of art, religion and literature. Kalhana provides interesting references to the construction of temples by the kings and members of the royal family of Kashmir. Lalitaditya (699-736) built the Martand temple at Hushkapura (Ushkar) and his wives and ministers consecrated hundreds of images of Vishnu and Shiva to it. In the Gujarat-Rajasthan region the temples at Somanath and Mount Abu were built by the Chalukyas (Solankis) and in Orissa those at Jagannatha and Konarak were built by the Gangas. At Khajuraho in Central India, the Chandella kings claim credit for the construction of major temples like the Lakshmana (954), the Vishvanatha (1002) and the Kandariya Mahadeva (c1050) temples. Jain clerics also supported the construction of several religious establishments of their faith one Kokkala landowing family is said to have built a temple in 1001. In the Deccan, the remains at Badami and Aihole bear testimony to the interest of the Chalukyas in the construction of temples just as those at Halebid and Belur tell us of Hoysala patronage to it. In Tamil Nadu, the

Pallavas began the practice of constructing cave temples, through the best free standing temples during their rule are seen in the shore temple at Mahabalipuram and the Kailashanath temple at Kanchipuram, both belonging to the eighth century—More than the Pallavas, however, the Cholas spent abundantly on temple building. The Rajarajeshwar temple at Tanjore built by Rajaraja I (985-1016) and the Brihadeshvara temple at Gongaikondacholapuram erected by his successor Rajendra—(1012-44) are the most impressive and monumental structures of South India. Construction of and support to temples by kings and feudal lords was common throughout the country, and the early medieval Indian landscape was dotted with large number of temples, many of which were unrivalled in terms of elegance and grandeur. In a sense, therefore, temple architecture entered a new phase of development.

Temples, along with religious establishments and centres of education became the storehouses of the fabulous wealth and gifts and donations that the kings and their feudatories inundated them with. The Chola king Rajaraja I alone presented the Tanjore temple with articles of gold weighing nearly as much as 41,557 Kalanju or about 484 Lbs, jewellery worth 10,000 pan, worth its weight in gold; and as many as 57 villages. The temples of Somanatha, had the benefit of revenue pouring in from as many as 10,000 villages. Similarly, the educational centres at Nalanda and Valabhi were funded by the revenue that accrued from nearly two hundred villages. Examples of this kind abound. Temples and religious centres attracted both Indian rulers and foreign invaders. In Kashmir several kings laid claim to the wealth that temples had. Shankaravarman (883-902) is said to have plundered as many as 64 temples. King Kalasha (1063-89) destroyed the image of Surya and purloined images from Buddhist monastic establishments. Since temples were the repositories of wealth, they became the most sought after military target as well.

According to Burton Stein, kings encouraged the construction of temples giving all possible helps to their feudatories. Before the Cholas rose to political ascendancy, power was divided among small segmentary units. The Chola rulers by expressing their symbolic and ritual sovereignty through the brahmadeyas and through patronizing temples, tried to integrate the disparate units of power under the Chola dominion. Temples and Brahmadeyas began to play a seminal role in this search for greater social and political cohesiveness. An additional job allocated to them was the maintenance of irrigational works. Many a time regional kingdoms patronized the religion and deities of the tribals and through the construction of imperial temples to the cause of the tribal deities, achieved political integration.



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## 5.6 Conclusion

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Thus the basis of sovereignty during this period was a mixture of the Divine Right Theory and the Contract Theory. On the one hand the masses as well as the authors of the treatise on polity regarded the ruler as a partial incarnation of Vishnu. On the other hand, they also held that he was the representative of the people who conferred sovereignty on him. So the natural duty of the ruler was to rule in the interest of the people, while the duty of the people was to be loyal and faithful to him. Thus the basis of sovereignty was a sort of contract between the king and the people. This was the theory of kingship under the Nature of Political Structure during the Early Medieval Period. The legitimization of kingship happens when the situation is so when the subjects or the ruled and the king or the ruler-both the sides agree to the righteous of ruling, i.e. the rule of the government is right.

The legitimacy of kingship depended on the one hand on king's control of the core area of his rule and on the other hand on the relationship he shared with the Samantas. The Brahmins provided the king with the necessary ideologies for this purpose. Temples had a central place in the predominantly agrarian economy of medieval India, especially in South India. Temple rituals in the honour of God became amazingly elaborate and complex.

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## 5.7 Summary

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Political processes and the idea of Kingship have always been central to the understanding of the culture and history of early medieval India. Several scholars viz. Prof Hermann Kulke, Prof. Bhaivabi Prasad Sahu, Dr. Yaaminey Mubayi and Meenakshi Vashisth have contributed significantly to this field of study through their works on state formation. Historians are unanimous on the fact that this phase in Indian history had a distinct identity and as such differed from the preceding early historical and succeeding medieval. This in turn brings home the presence of the elements of change and continuity in Indian history. It is identified as a phase in the transition to the medieval. Perception of a unilinear and uniform pattern of historical development is challenged. Changes are identified not merely in dynastic upheavals but are also located in socio-economic, political and cultural conditions.

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## 5.8 Model Questions

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1. Evaluate the role of temples in early Medieval India.

2. What were the different forms of legitimization of Kingship?
3. What were the various ritual functionaries attached to the temples?
4. Evaluate the role of the Brahmanas in early Medieval India.

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## 5.9 Suggested Readings

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Heitzman, James, '*State Formation in South India, 850-1280*'. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XXIV, (1), March 1987.

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## **Unit-6 □ Arab Conquest of Sind : Nature and Impact of the New Set-UP, Ismaili Dawah**

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### **Structure**

- 6.0 Objectives**
- 6.1 Introduction**
- 6.2 Sind on the eve of Arab conquest**
- 6.3 Conquest of Sind-causes and the course**
- 6.4 Nature and Impact of the New set-up**
- 6.5 Arab Administration in Sind**
- 6.6 Ismaili Dawah**
- 6.7 Conclusion**
- 6.8 Summary**
- 6.9 Model Questions**
- 6.10 Suggested Readings**

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### **6.0 Objectives**

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In this unit, we are going to study Sind.

- How it was on the eve of Arab conquest.
- The reasons for the capture of Sind by the Arabs.
- The phases of conquest of Sind.
- The nature and impact of the new set-up.
- Arab administration in Sind.
- Ismaili Dawah.

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## 6.1 Introduction

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The political situation of the sub continent in the eight century was such that in the absence of a paramount centre of authority there was widespread political disintegration, resulting in the frequent plundering of the land. The eastern expansion of the Arabs and their consequent conquest of Kabul had brought them to the very frontiers of India. Arab marchants relayed to their fellow countrymen accounts of the fabulous wealth and luxuries of India. As a result, many Arabs ventured abroad for trading ties with India, while others made repeated attempts to plunder the Indian coasts.

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## 6.2 Sind on the eve of Arab Conquest

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Sind roughly denoted the lower Indus valley from Multan down to the sea; in the west it sometimes included large portions of Baluchistan and in the east it was bounded by the Indian desert. Our knowledge of its early history is extremely scanty, almost limited to what the Arab historians have written about it. We learn that at the time of the Arab invasions Sind was under the dynasty founded by the Brahman Chach. It was preceded by the Rai family comprising of five kings, who are said to have held power for 137 years with Alor (near modern Rohri) as their capital. The kingdom was divided into four provinces, each of which was in charge of a semi-independent governor. The king's direct jurisdiction extended over the central part of his kingdom, while the governors were the real masters of the provinces and were described as tributary rulers. When Hieun Tsang was travelling India (A.D 629-45), Sind was ruled by a Buddhist monarch of the Shudra caste. At the beginning of the seventh century A.D., reigning sovereign Sahiras fell in a battle with Nimruz of Persia who had invaded Sind and entered Kirman. He was succeeded by his son, Sahasi Rai II, who was overthrown by his Brahmin minister Chach who put his royal master to death, and seized the throne. The usurper married the widowed queen of his predecessor, and suppressed the rebellious governors who had refused to acknowledge his authority. He also conquered a part of Makran in modern Baluchistan and imposed his authority on Kandabil in that country. Chach was succeeded by his brother Chander. But the latter died soon after, and there was a dispute for the throne between his son Duraj and the eldest son of Chach, named Dahir. Eventually Duraj was defeated and ousted, and Chach's two sons, Dahir and Daharsiah (both of whom were born of the widowed queen of Sahasi Rai II), divided the kingdom.

On Daharsiah's death, Dahir became the sole ruler of Sind. On the eve of the Arab conquest, the country was very much weakened on account of political changes and internal strife. Its heterogeneous population was sparse and lacked social solidarity owing to the oppression of the lower orders of the society by the ruling hierarchy. Its resources were too small. Above all king Dahir was unpopular, as he was a usurper's son. It was this ruler who had to face a large scale invasion of his country by the greatest and most mighty empire of the age.

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### **6.3 Conquest of Sind—Causes and Course**

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From time immemorial there had been commercial intercourse between India and Arabia. Long before the Arabs embraced Islam in the seventh century A.D., they used to visit our western coastal regions for trade and commerce and received a cordial welcome here. Our rulers and people, anxious to foster material prosperity, accorded generous treatment to these foreigners. There was hardly any change in our attitude towards them even after the Arabs had become Muslims. But certainly the Arab attitude towards our people and country underwent a great change owing to their religious and political cohesion and to the enthusiasms brought about in their native land by the teachings of Muhammad. Though commercial profit continued to be the avocation of a section of them, as before, the Arabian people, as a whole, had now begun cherishing the ambition of conquest and propagation of Islam.

Their first expedition which aimed at the conquest of Thana near Bombay was undertaken as early as 636 A.D. (15 A.H) during the Caliphate of Umar, but it was repulsed. This was followed by successive expeditions to Broach, to the Gulf of Debal in Sind and to Baluchistan (Makran), then a part of the kingdom of Sindh. In spite of difficulties and defeats the Arabs continued raiding the frontier of Sindh both by land and sea. They concentrated their attacks on Kikan (Kikanan), a hilly region round the Bolan pass which was peopled by hardy Jats who led pastoral lives and who bravely defended their country from the Arab invaders. In 659 A.D (39 A.H) al-Haris gained some initial success, but was defeated and killed in 662 A.D. Another fruitless expedition was that of al-Muhallab in 664 A.D. He was followed by Abdullah who was defeated and slain. Sinan bin Salamah seems to have been fortunate in gaining a short-lived triumph in Makran, but Rashid bin Amir lost his life in an expedition in that very region. The same fate overtook another Arab adventurer named al-Mudhir.

Notwithstanding these successive failures the Arabs persevered on and captured

Makran, that is, modern Baluchistan, most of which then formed a part of Sindh, 'after a fierce and successful campaign' under Ibn al Harrial-Bahitti in the first decade of the eight century A.D. The way to the conquest of sind proper now lay open and the ambitious al-Hajjaj, the Arab governor of Iraq secured the Caliph's support to his forward policy. He despatched one after another two well-planned expeditions against Dahir, but both these expeditions were beaten and their commanders, Ubaidullah and Budail, were slain on the fields of battle. Stung by these successive reverses and humiliation, Hajjaj selected his own cousin and son-in-law Imad-ud-din Muhammad bin Qasim, an ambitious and daring youth of seventeen, and dispatched him to Sind at the head of a powerful force, starting from Shiraz, he reached Makran which now belonged to the Arabs, and passing via Panjgur, Armbil and Qaubati, he arrived at Debal near Karachi. This attempt proved a success, and Sind and Multan were conquered in 712-23 A.D. Sind, thus lost its independence after more than seventy five years' brave resistance against the mightiest empire of the medieval age.

Some modern scholars, naturally Woolseley Haig seem to hold that the main cause of the conflict between the Arabs and Sind was the provocation given by the latter owing to its ruler's failure to make a reparation for certain Arab ships plundered by some pirates off the coast of Sind. The details given above from contemporary sources, however, reveal the fact that ever since their rise to power the Arabs had cast their eyes on our rich ports and had before their final success in 712 A.D. made many unsuccessful attempts to capture Sind and the kingdom of Kabul and Zabul by force of arms. Their design on India and their successful conquest of Sind was only a part of their general aggressive scheme which brought under their sway, within a hundred years of the death of their prophet, Syria, Mesopotamia, Aemenia, Iran, Baluchistan, Trans Oxiana, the whole of the northern coast of Africa, upper and lower egypt, Spain and Portugal and the southern part of France, besides their own native Arabia. Thus, the political and territorial ambition of the Arabs and not the brigandage of the Sind pivates, constituted an important cause of their invasion of Sind.

Coupled with this was the over-powering economic incentive, the desire to acquire wealth by easy and quick means, that is, fighting and plundering, and there by to improve their material condition.

But the principal driving force was the religious zeal which made them feel and act as if God was using them as agents for the propagation of Islam and the uprooting of infidel faiths from the face of the earth.

Almost all the modern writers, have either ignored or minimized the religious cause, forgetting the stark naked truth that the Arabs not only imposed their own religion and culture on the conquered people everywhere, but even almost completely wiped out the indigenous faiths and ways of life from most of the countries that they subjugated. Verily the Arab ambition of imposing Islam on Sind was one of the most powerful cause of this invasion.

The occasion or rather the pretext for the final conflict was the charge that some Sindhi pirates had plundered a few Arab vessels off the coast of Debal near Thatta. The story is variously related by different writers and seems to be apocryphal. One version is that the ruler of Ceylon had despatched to Hajjaj, governor of Iraq a part of the Arabian empire, orphan daughters of some Arab merchants who had died in his country and when the ships carrying them and their belongings reached the coast of Sind they were plundered by Sind pirates.

Another writer says that the king of Ceylon, who had embraced Islam was sending tribute and valuable presents to the Khalifa himself and that these were plundered.

A third source has recorded that the Khalifa had sent agents to India to buy some female slaves and certain other articles and these were plundered and carried off by brigands near Debal. It is said that Hajjaj was deeply affected by the outrage. He wrote to king Dahir of Sind to punish the culprits and make reparations for the loss. Dahir replied that the pirates were not his subjects and that he was powerless to punish them. This infuriated Hajjaj, who obtained Khalifa Walid's permission to send an expedition against Dahir. Accordingly, Ubaidullah was despatched at the head of a respectable army, but he was defeated by Dahir and slain on the battle field. The next expedition under Budail was also beaten and the commander killed. Muhammad Bin Qasim, an ambitious and daring youth of seventeen, was now chosen to punish the king of Sindh.

The story of Muhammad-Bin-Qasim's invasion of Sind is one of the romances of history. Advancing through Makran, Muhammad reached Debal in A.D. 711 and stormed the fortress. For three days the inhabitants were mercilessly slaughtered by the Muslims. From Debal, Muhammad proceeded to Nehrun, modern Haidarabad. The Buddhist priests who had been carrying on treasonable correspondence with Hajjaj, surrendered the town without any opposition. Muhammad then conquered Siwistan (Sehwan) and advancing along the western bank of the Indus he reached a point on the river opposite the army of Dahir, the Brahmin king of Sind. Here he entered into an alliance with an important chief called Mokah, who had deserted

Dahir. After waiting on the bank of the Indus for two months, Muhammad crossed the river by a bridge of boats and surprised Dahir near the fort of Raor. A pitched battle was fought in which the Muslim army was nearly routed but the sudden death of Dahir in the thick of the fight led to the virtual collapse of the Hindu resistance. Dahir's wife took refuge in the fort of Raor and put up a brave resistance. Being reduced to the last extremity, she along with other ladies burnt herself to escape dishonour. Muhammad took the fort, massacred about 6000 men and seized Dahir's wealth accumulated there. Muhammad then proceeded towards Brahmanabad where Jaisimha Dahir's son made elaborate preparations for defending it as well as the capital city Alor. After a siege of six months the fort of Brahmanabad surrendered. The capture of the fort of Alor followed. The last stronghold of the Hindu resistance was Multan, which surrendered after a brave resistance for two months.

The triumphant career of Muhammad-bin-Qasim was cut short by political vicissitudes at home. Hajjaj died in A.D. 714 and the Caliph Walid a year later. The new Caliph Sulaiman, was the sworn enemy of Hajjaj and wreaked vengeance on the members of his family. Muhammad was taken prisoner and put to death by torture. Such was the tragic end of the great hero, who laid the foundation of Muslim power in India.

The internal discord of the Caliphate induced the chiefs of Sind to defy its authority. Jaisimha reoccupied Brahmanabad. The next Caliph Umar II (A.D. 717-20) offered virtual independence to the chiefs of Sind provided they adopted Islam. They accepted the offer but during the Caliphate of Hisham (A.D. 724-43), Jaisimha quarrelled with Junaid, the Governor of Sind. Jaisimha was defeated and imprisoned. Thus ended the dynasty of Dahir and the independence of Sind. Junaid now planned extensive conquest of the interior of India. The Arabs advanced through Rajputana and proceeded as far as Malwa in the east and Broach in the south. But they were signally defeated by the Pratihara king Nagabhata I, and the Chalukya chief of Gujarat, Pulakesi. Henceforth their power was confined to Sind. Even here their position became so insecure that they built a new city Mansurah as a place of refuge for them. Thus the last years of the Umayyads witnessed the virtual collapse of the Arab power in Sind.

The Abbasid caliphs made a determined effort to re-establish the power of Islam in Sind. Hisham, who was appointed Governor of Sind by Al-Mansur (A.D. 754-785) occupied Multan and Kandahar. But he could not make any headway against Lalitaditya Muktapada of Kashmir. Caliph Al-Mahdi (A.D. 775-85) who sent a naval expedition against India, failed to achieve any success. Though the Arabs conquered



a few places in western Sind during the caliphate of Harun Al-Rashid (A.D. 786-809), frequent conflicts took place with the Jats and the Meds in the neighbourhood of Alor, the old Hindu capital of Sind, in which the Muslims did not fare well. During the Caliphate of Al-Mamun (A.D. 813-33) the Hindu chiefs of Sind rose against its ruler and killed him.

On the whole, the Abbasids failed to consolidate the Muslim power in Sind. This was undoubtedly due to the indomitable spirit of the chiefs of Sind which defied subordination as well as to the spirited resistance of powerful Indian states bordering on Sind.

The powerful Pratiharas proved to be a bulwark against any Arab aggression. The Chahamanas also successfully defended the border states against the Arabs.

With the decline of the Abbasid power, Sind became virtually independent and formed a part of Saffarid kingdom (A.D. 872-903). After its downfall, Sind was divided into two independent states with Multan and Mansura as their respective capitals. Constantly exposed to Indian attacks both the states maintained a precarious existence. Multan was in constant dread of a Pratihara invasion, but found its security against this in the famous image of the sun-God which the Muslims threatened to destroy whereupon the Hindu retreated. Mansura was constantly engaged in war with a nation called the Meds and also with other races on the frontiers of Sind.

Thus, after more than three hundred and fifty years, the Arabs could establish their authority only over the frontier region and the lower valley of the Indus. Compared with their military achievements elsewhere especially in Africa and Europe, their performance in India appeared to the poor. The Arabs were a spent force and carried favour with the Indian kings to save their title possessions in India.

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## **6.4 Nature and Impact of the New Set up**

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The Arab conquest of Sind has been seen as “a triumph without results” by scholars like Stanley Lane Poole, Elphinstone, etc. because there was no major victory for either the Muslim Arabs or the Indian rulers. They opine that this victory of the Arabs was without any impact or result on the history of the Indian subcontinent. It could not affect the political or military conditions of the rest of India. The Arab rule only got confined to the Sind region, and the Indian rulers ruled their states without fearing or ousting the Arabs from their frontiers. The influence of the Arabs was restricted to only a small part of the subcontinent. They could not get a foothold in Indian subcontinent, unlike the Turks who had established a full fledged state a few centuries later (i.e. the Delhi Sultanate from 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards.)

However, the scholars critiquing this viewpoint have given varied arguments for refuting it. They hold that even though the conquest did not have any substantial effect on the political geography of India, it had definite political influences on both sides. As seen before from the sources, Muhammad Bin Qasim was as able an administrator as a warrior. After his victories, he maintained the law and order of a region and believed in placing good administration under the Muslim rule. The arrangements made by him with the non Muslims provided the basis for later Muslim policy in the subcontinent. Under the able guidance from his uncle, Hajjaj, he had given socio-cultural and religious freedom to the defeated population. By the time Islamic law had been codified, stringent provisions were given for the idolaters. The reasons why we find these provisions were not followed on the Hindus was mainly due to the tolerant policies of Qasim. He exhibited the political acumen to keep the native social customs and traditions intact. Neither did he lead to forceful conversion of the non-Muslims nor to end the social institutions like caste system etc. This was how the caste system remained untouched and was followed as ever before.

The prevalence of such practices showed the internal weaknesses of the Indian social and political systems to the Arabs and the Muslim world. Therefore, these fissures in the social fabric were used by them to their own advantage. The Brahmins of Brahmanabad were termed as faithful people by him to continue their all round support in running the Arab polity and administration. Undoubtedly, the Arab invasion did not affect the political set up of India then, but it definitely gave a good view of the social weaknesses of the region. These were used by the invaders a few centuries later.

Further, the cultural intermingling between the Indian and Arab cultures showed its effect on various other fields like literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy etc. Such contacts at an intellectual levelled to the mutual growth and development of both the cultures. The Barmakis, a family of Buddhists (probably of Indian origin) who were in charge of No Bahar (Nav Vihar), a Buddhist temple at Balkh, became Prime Minister of the Abbasid Caliphs (Saffah, Mansur and Harun-al-Rashid) after their conversion to Islam and dominated the Baghdad court for about fifty years (753-802 A.D). They were responsible for inviting Indian scholars and scientists, physicians, astrologers and mathematicians from Sindh to Baghdad in 771 A.D. Other missions followed, and Indian scientists like Bhola, Manoka, Bazigar and Sindbad acquired great fame at the Caliph's capital and were frequently mentioned in Arabic works.

The earliest recorded Indo-Arab intellectual contact happened in 771CE when a Hindu astronomer and mathematician reached Baghdad with a Sanskrit work called

Brahma Siddhanta by Brahmagupta. This text was translated into Arabic with the help of an Arab mathematician, and was named as Sindhind. Brahmaguptas Khanda Khandyak was also translated into Arabic with the help of Hindu scholars. It had the greatest influence on the development of Arab astronomy even though three other works on mathematics were also translated into Arabic. In mathematics, the most important contribution of the Indian culture to Arab learning was the Arabic numerals.

Similarly, even greater attention was given to Indian medicine by the Arabs. At least 15 Sanskrit works were translated, including those of Charaka and Sushruta. The Indian doctors were given great prestige and honour at Baghdad and so they were found in good numbers there. Manka was one such doctor who had earned prestige and money by curing the ailing Caliph Harun-al-Rashid. Dhana was appointed chief medical officer of a hospital at Baghdad.

Further, astrology and palmistry also gained the Arab attention, and many books from these fields were translated into Arabic. They, too, have been preserved in the Arab historiographies. Other translations were from the fields of statecraft, art of war, logic, ethics, magic etc. This is how the famous Panchatantra was translated and known as the story of Kalita and Dimna in Arabic.

Indian music had a considerable influence on Arabic music even if no translated works have been found. The work of an Arab author named Jahiz reveals the appreciation got by the former at Baghdad. He called the music of the people of Indian subcontinent as pleasing. Another such reference on Indian music was from an Arab author who talks about an Indian book on tunes and melodies. It has been suggested by some scholars that many of the technical terms for Arab music were borrowed from Persia and India. Likewise, even Indian music incorporated many Perso-Arab airs like Yeman and Hijj.

The Arabs left few memorials in the shape of buildings or administrative or cultural institutions that might have exerted influence on us or served as memorials of their rule. They employed Indian masons and painters to build and decorate their mosques and polaces.

The Arabic civilization was thus greatly enriched by its contact with our land. The Arabs carried Indian philosophy, numerals, astronomy and other branches of knowledge to Europe. Much of the enlightenment of the early Europeans of the eighth and the ninth centuries A.D. was therefore, due to the Arab contact with India.

As against the availability of such information from the Arab works on the vibrant relations between the Indian and Arabic cultures, it will be unreaonable to call the Arab conquest of Sind as a triumph without result. In other words, it would

be incorrect to give leverage to the political consequences alone and negate the socio-cultural or other impacts or results.

Many causes contributed to the subjugation of Sind. In the first place, the province was internally disunited and unable to resist a mighty invader like the Arabs. Its population was sparse and heterogeneous. Besides the Hindus, who formed the bulk of the population a considerable number consisted of Buddhists and a fraction probably of Jains too. The lower order of the society were badly treated. Owing to these circumstances, social solidarity was conspicuously lacking. In the second place, the ruler and his government were unpopular and also inefficient in war and probably also in peace. Only a generation before Muhammad-Bin-Qasim's invasion the throne of Sind had been usurped by the hated Chach. His son Dahir, was equally disliked. In fact, there was little sympathy between the people and their king. Dahir's governors were almost semi independent princes and did not seem to have co-operated with him in the time of crisis. Owing to these causes, many of Dahir's subjects, particularly the Buddhists and the traders refused to fight on the plea that it was none of their business. Mr. S.N Dhar protests against what he calls making the Buddhists 'the Knaves of the story', but the Buddhist defection is based on recorded evidence, and facts must always have more weight than logic. Some of the Hindus, too must share with the Buddhist the ignominy of treachery of their country, and the example was shamelessly set by a priest from the sacred temple of Debal.

Thirdly, defection and treachery were, without doubt, important causes of the fall of Sind. Ignorant cosmopolitanism, combined with lack of patriotism, had produced a frame of mind in the generality of the Hindus that made little difference between their own countrymen and foreigners and induced the disgruntled among them to go over to the side of the enemy of their country.

Fourthly, Sind was then an economically poor and deficit province. Its meagre resources could not support a large standing army or finance a long war with a superior enemy.

Fifthly, the Arab invading force was vastly superior to that of Dahir both in number and equipment, though not in the qualities of courage, daring and contempt of death.

Sixthly, Sind was isolated from the rest of the country for a pretty long time. While it was overwhelmed by superior military force, it could not look to the rest of India for assistance.

Seventhly, while the Arabs were spurred on to an adventurous and aggressive warfare by a firm, though misguided conviction that divine providence was pleased

to use them as agents for forcing on the infidel people the blessing of Islam, our people possessed no such inspiring ideology to sustain their spirits in that fateful hour of their country's history. A curious irony of fate prevented them from facing hard facts and from realizing that their religion and culture as well as homes and hearths were in imminent danger.

Finally, Dahir's ignorance, initial lethargy and want of leadership and his silly mistakes furnished an adequate explanation for his defeat and the enslavement of Sind. It was an unperdonable sin on the part of the government of Sind and Punjab in particular not to have maintained touch with the great revolution in Arabia that created a mighty empire there in the seventh century A.D. and to have failed to make adequate arrangements for the defence of their frontiers after the Arab conquest of Makran (modern Baluchistan) which borders on, and is contiguous to Sind.

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## 6.5 Arab Administration in Sind

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The conquered province was divided into a number of district (iqtas) held by the Arab nobility on condition of military service. Some soldiers held grants of land while others received fixed salaries. Lands were cultivated by the local people who were reduced to the condition of villeins and serfs. Religious endowments were made and land was given in waqf (free gift) to holy men. The Arab soldiers settled in the country, married Indian women and thus there came into existence a number of military colonies. The most important colonies in Sind were Multan, Mansura, Kuzdar, Kandabel, Baiza, Mahfuza. These colonies became centres of trade and learning. The Arabs in Sind kept up a regular communication with the rest of the Muslim world both by land and sea. Arab merchants carried Indian goods through Sind to Turkistan, Khorasan and thence to Constantinople.

The land tax and the Jeziya formed the principal sources of revenue. The landtax or Khiraj varied between  $\frac{2}{5}$  and  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the produce. There were additional taxes which were generally farmed out to the highest bidder. The Jeziya imposed on the unbelievers or the Zimmis was always exacted with utmost vigour and punctuality. When the administration became lax and lost its efficiency, the Muslims were subjected to various kinds of exactions which led in turn to frequent unrest in the country.

There was no well organized judiciary. The nobles took cognizance of all crimes committed within their jurisdiction and inflicted capital punishment in serious case. The Qazi decided cases according to the principles of the Quran and made no

distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims in the matter of public and political offences. In some cases there was discrimination against the Hindus. For instance, theft by a Hindu was considered to be a serious crime and it was punished by burning to death the members of the culprit's family. All suits relating to debts, contracts, adultery, inheritance, property and the like were decided by the Hindus in their panchayats.

The consequent naturally began with the destruction of temples and the persecution of the unbelievers, but it was soon realised that Hinduism was too deeply entrenched in the roots of the soil. Henceforth, the Arabs pursued a liberal policy towards the Hindus. Hajjaj epitomises this policy in this way.

As they (the Hindus) have made submission and have agreed to pay taxes to the Khalifa, nothing more can be properly required from them. They have been taken under our protection and we cannot, in any way, stretch out our hands upon their lives or property. Permission is given them to worship their Gods. Nobody must be forbidden or prevented from following his own religion.

At Multan, Muhammad-Bin-Qasim granted toleration to all unbelievers. He declared, "The temple shall be inviolate like the Churches of the Christians, the synods of the Jews, and the altars of the Magians". Even to the revenue officers, Muhammad said : "Deal honestly between the people and the Sultan and if distribution is required, make it with equity and fix the revenue according to the ability to pay".

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## 6.6 Ismaili Dawah

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The word dai means "caller", "Summoner", or "inviter" and comes from the Arabic verb da 'ā' which means "to summon" "to invite", "to call", "to call upon" etc. The original name of the Shia Ismaili path (tariqah) of Islam in the eighth and ninth century was Dawatal-Haqq (summoners of Truth) and al-Dawah al Hadiyya (Rightly Guided Summons). The dawah here refers to the act of inviting people to the recognition of the absolute oneness of God (tawhid) through the guidance and recognition of the Iman of the Time.

The Quran refers to the concept of God's Dawah (summons, calling, invitation) on numerous occasions. God "Summons" humankind to Himself. "And God Summons to the Abode of Peace and leads whom He wills on the straight path". On God's behalf the Prophets 'call' people to Divine guidance and Prophet Muhammad is instructed to "invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful discourse".

In this context, the Quran refers to the Prophet as a Dai (inviter) to God by his permission and urges believers to “respond” when the Prophet summons (daā) them to what gives spiritual life. According to the Quran, God will issue a “Summons” on the Day of judgement and the Summons of God will reach human beings through the Imam of the Time.

The Summons (Dawah) of God is specifically connected to the Imanat. Thus, in every period of human history, the essential role of the Imam is to invite and summon all human beings to the recognition of the absolute oneness of God through providing divine guidance of the straight Path. This mandate of the Ismaili Imam is expressed in the Arabic inscription found on a Fatimid Coin which reads :

The Imam Ma ‘add (al-Muizz) summons the tawhid of God, the Absolute.

Throughout history, individuals have “responded” to the Imam’s “Summons” (Da‘wah) to the recognition on God– by entering into a bayah (spiritual covenant) with the Imam. As part of this covenant, the Imam guides them spiritually towards the gnosis of God in this world and the next world and also helps safeguard their material quality of life. Those who give their bay‘ah to the Imam become a part of the Imam’s Summons, becoming his spiritual children, and also play their own part in calling and inviting others to the recognition of the Imam. In the pre-modern period of Ismaili history, the Imam’s summons was executed through a formal esoteric teaching institution called the “Ismaili Dawah”. Those Ismailis who were of sufficient spiritual, moral, and intellectual stature became da‘is (summoners”) and instructed other Ismailis in knowledge and practice on behalf of the Imam of the Time.

Throughout history, the Ismaili dawah consisted of a formal hierarchy of spiritual teachers and scholars working under the Iman of the time. The most basic form of the Ismaili dawah hierarchy is as follows :

- i) Imam
- ii) Bab (Gate)
- iii) Hujjah (proof)
- iv) Da‘i (summoner)
- v) Ma’dhun Akbar (Senior Teacher)
- vi) Ma’dhun Asghar (Junior Teacher)
- vii) Mustajib (Respondent or Initiate)

It must be remembered that the Ismaili Da‘wah hierarchy is based on esoteric

(knowledge) and gnosis (ma'ilmrifah), not material wealth or political power. The concept of the ranks of knowledge is found in the several verses of the Holy Quran.

The above seven Dawah Ranks are called the "Hudud al-Din" (the Ranks of Faith) in Ismaili terminology. Together, these seven Dignitaries are the "Seven Heavens" and "Seven Earths" mentioned in the Quran. This means that each Rank from the Iman to the Mustajib is a "Heaven" for the rank immediately below; likewise, each Rank from the Bab to the Mustajib to the person outside the Dawah Hierarchy is an "Earth" for the Rank immediately above it. For example, the Bab is an "Earth" compared to the Imam and a "Heaven" compared to the Hujjah. The Mustajib is an "Earth" compared to the Ma'dhun Asghar and a "Heaven" compared to those outside the Ismaili Dewan.

The above Ismaili Dawah Ranks exist and are active in every age and time—both before Prophet Muhammad and after him. Prophets of past periods used to receive spiritual training and initiation into prophethood from the dignitaries of the Dawah. For example, Prophet Muhammad himself was spiritually initiated by Iman Abu Talib and his Bab, Hazrat Khadi-Jah al-Kubra, Prophet Adam was spiritually initiated by Imam Hunayd. Prophet Jesus was spiritually initiated by Mary, the Bab of the Imam Khuzaymah. Prophet Abraham was spiritually initiated by Imam Malik at Salam (called Melchizedek in the Bible).

The Ismaili Dawah Ranks collectively make up what is called "The World of Faith" (alam al-din), which exists parallel to the "World of Nature" (alam al dunya). The structure of the world of Faith (din) and the physical world (dunya) exist in a symbolic correspondence. Just as the Sun, Moon, and stars give light to the Natural World (dunya) in the World of Faith, the Imam is the sun, the Babs are the Moon, the 12 pairs of Hujjahs are the 12 constellations of the Zodiac and their Da'is and Ma'dhuns are the stars; these religious dignitaries (hudud al-din) convey the light of knowledge to the World of Faith (din).

Similarly, just as the "Physical time" of the material world is measured through years, seasons, months, days, and hours, in the "Spiritual time" of the world of Faith, the Imam is the year, the 4 Babs are the 4 seasons, the 12 pairs of Hujjahs are the 12 months, the 360 Da'is are 30 Days of each month, the 12 Ma'dhun Akbar are the 12 hours of Night and the 12 Madhun Asghar are the 12 Hours of the Day.

Along the same lines, in the world of Faith, the Imam is the Heaven, the 4 Babs are the elements of the Earth, the Hujjahs are the Mountains, the Da 'is are Rivers and streams, and the believers are the Vegetation that grows.

The most detailed description of the proper Ismaili da'i comes from a book



called Code of Conduct written by Ahmad, Ibrahim al Naysaburi a leading Ismaili Dai. A summary of this text follows below:

The dai is first and foremost somebody who has self-discipline—they are those who are regular in their religious obligations; they live without engaging in bad or evil habits like drinking alcoholic beverages, they act righteously towards others, are selfless, and are well-mannered.

A dai must be firmly learned in the Root-Principles of Faith (usulal-din) as the core mission of the dai is to educate and teach about the Imam and the doctrines of religion. They have knowledge of both exoteric and esoteric principles of the Ismaili Faith, of the history of the Imams, and also of all of the other Muslim communities, religions and cultures of the world.

The dai is additionally skilled in argumentation and debate. Being caretakers of religious knowledge, they are always ready to defend and refute those who seek to defile or reject the Imams.

Lastly, the dai is neither somebody who is overly ambitious nor is somebody who seeks recognition from others. Although the dai must be skilled in social manners, administration and governance, they do not choose after political leadership.

As a totality, the overall mission of all the Ismaili da'is is to discover the ultimate truth (haqa'iq) of God's creation that is, knowledge of things as they truly are—with their own intellects through the guidance of the Imam of the time. This knowledge often took the form of what is today called philosophy, metaphysics, physics, science, theology and cosmology. Such knowledge is extremely important—because the Ismaili were responsible for educating and teaching it to the Ismaili da'is believers every time, on behalf of the Imam of the Time. In pursuing this goal, the Ismaili da'is sometimes arrived at different viewpoints, would occasionally disagree, and debate their ideas with one another. However, in doing so, the da'is always remained respectful and humble—recognizing that the totality of the spiritual and religious sciences is known to the Imam alone, while every believer can only exert his or her best efforts in attaining and discoursing about this knowledge.

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## 6.7 Conclusion

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The Arabs occupied Sind, Multan and other important cities in the northwest but could not settle there permanently on account of the death of Qasim. It became difficult for them to expand or even maintain the kingdom because of the tough resistance offered by the Rajputs and the Chalukya rulers. The Arabs had to leave

India by the end of the ninth century. After the Arabs, the Turks invaded India. They were attracted to the fabulous wealth of the garbhagriha of the temples.

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## 6.8 Summary

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The rise of Islam in the early medieval period had far-reaching political socio economic and cultural implications around the world. Its first contact with the Indian subcontinent in the 8<sup>th</sup> century is mostly known from the Persian text named ChachNama, a source that enumerates the history of Sind in general. However, the colonial understanding of it was one of origin of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. The trend of seeing it only as a source on the rise of Islam or conquest of Sind sprang from this understanding, and it has largely been refuted by the contemporary historiographers. They see the details of the conquest only as one of its aspects. The text is an enumeration of the history of Sind in general. The descriptive account of the conquest involves the discussion of a young general named Muhammad Bin Qasim, who valiantly conquered the region of Sind. The text elucidates the tolerant and broad minded approach of this Muslim conqueror towards the vanquished Hindu population. However, his rise as well as fall depended upon his relations with the Caliphate and the change of the Caliph led to the downfall and decline of him and many other able and promising Arab conquerors. Such politics at the court of the Caliphate greatly affected the fate of Arab conquests in Indian subcontinent and around the world. The containment of Arab empire to the north-western region of India should be understood under this light. The inability of the Arab conquerors and rulers of Sind to extend their influence into India cannot be seen as their complete failure; their triumph over Sind cannot be belittled under this light by simply calling it a triumph without results. Even if the Arabs could not affect the political situation inside India, they definitely influenced the Indian culture in various other ways. The cultural proximity between the Indian and Arab cultures has its definite imprints on their literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy etc. Over and above this, the successful invasion of India by the Muslim Turks like Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghorī in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively can be seen as the climax of the background prepared by the conquest of Sind in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

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## 6.9 Model Questions

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1. Give an account of the Arab conquest of Sind.
2. What is the significance of the Arab invasion of Sind?

3. What were the causes that led to the fall of Sind?
4. What was the condition of Sind on the eve of Arab conquest?
5. Write a short note on Ismaili Dawah.

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## 6.10 Suggested Readings

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Asif, Manan Ahmed (2016) : *A Book of Conquest : The Chachnama and Muslim origins in South Asia*, Cambridge. Harvard University Press.

Chandra, S. (2007): *A History of Medieval India*. New Delhi : Orient Blackswan.

Chattopadhyay, B.D. (1994) : *The making of the Early Medieval India*, New Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Singh, Upinder (2008): *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India : From the Stone Age to 12<sup>th</sup> century*, New Delhi : Pearson Education.

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## **Unit- 7 □ Causes and Consequence of early Turkish Invasion: Mahmud of Ghazni, Shahab-ud-din of Ghor**

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### **Structure**

- 7.0 Objectives**
- 7.1 Introduction**
- 7.2 Coming of the Turks**
- 7.3 Mahmud of Ghazni**
- 7.4 Assessment of Mahmud of Ghazni**
- 7.5 Impact of Ghaznavid Invasions**
- 7.6 Muhammad of Ghor**
- 7.7 Impact of the Ghurid Invasions**
- 7.8 Factors leading to the success of the Turks**
- 7.9 Conclusion**
- 7.10 Summary**
- 7.11 Model Questions**
- 7.12 Suggested Readings**

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### **7.0 Objectives**

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The rise of the Turks, their rapid conquest and expansion between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries, marks the beginning of a momentous period in history. Its consequences for India were direct, palpable and far reaching. After reading this unit we would be able to

- Know who The Turks were and what precisely was their role in an exciting period of history.
- Know about Ghaznavid and Ghurid invasions.
- Know about the result of the Turkish invasion.
- What led to the success of the Turks.

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## 7.1 Introduction

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It was the Arabs who, in the eighth century, led the first Muslim foray through the western seacoast into the Indian subcontinent, establishing the presence of Islamic trading communities in India. The significant and permanent military movement of Muslims into northern India, however, was left to the Turks who invaded India almost two centuries later to amass riches and establish a power that was to remain strong for centuries to come.

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## 7.2 Coming of the Turks

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The Arab success in Sind, though noteworthy in certain ways, was short-lived and in the centuries that followed India enjoyed comparative immunity from Islamic invasions. Meanwhile, the caliphate in West Asia—which was once a strong and inspiring entity for the entire Muslim world—grew gradually decadent till it was eventually destroyed by the Turks who established a large number of small independent principalities on the ruins of the old empire.

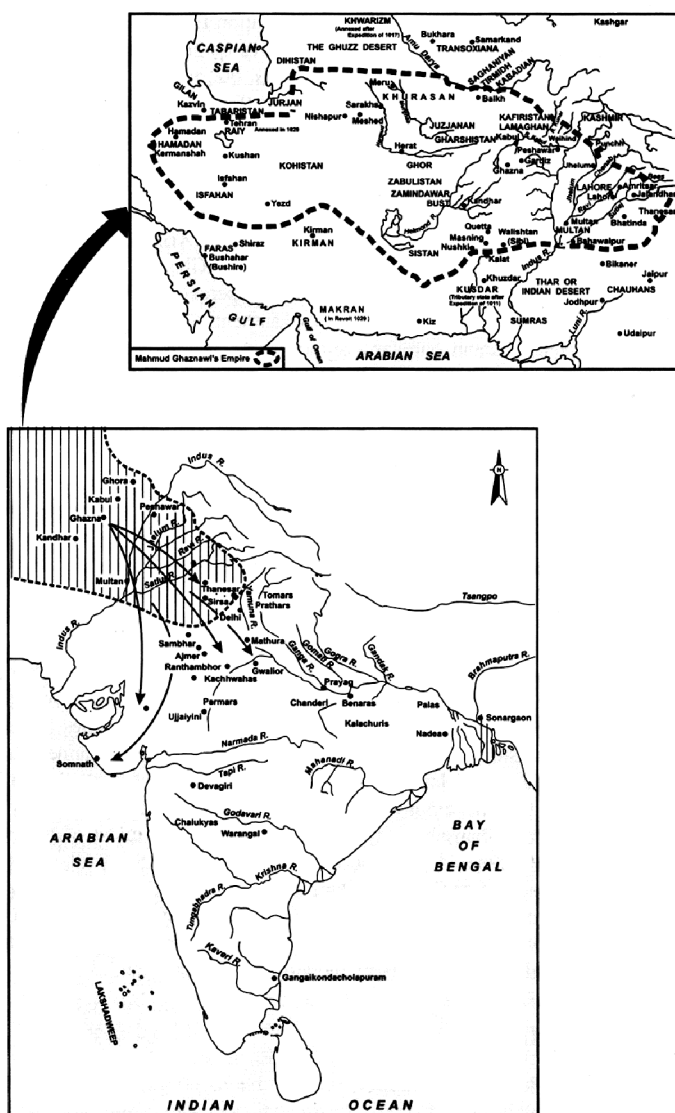
The most zealous and ambitious amongst the chiefs of these small independent principalities, not satisfied by the narrow territorial limits of their kingdoms, followed an aggressive policy of expansion at the expense of their weak neighbours. One such chieftain was Alaptagin who seized Ghazni (a city in east central Afghanistan originally known as Ghazna) and established his independent power in 962 CE. His successor Sabuktagin (977-97CE) was a former Turkish slave who was recognized by the Samanids (an Iranian Muslim dynasty) as governor of Ghazni in 977CE. As the power of the Samanid dynasty weakened, Sabuktagin consolidated his position and expanded his dominions as far as the Indian border. A talented general of remarkable ability, he further consolidated his position by strengthening the Ghazni kingdom through conquests and a sound administration. The eastward expansion of the Ghazni kingdom was, however, restricted by Jayapala, the Hindu raja of the Punjab who in the ninth century had taken over Gandhara and the Kabul Valley from a Turkish chieftain during the time, there were extremely close political and economic ties between Punjab and Afghanistan, with Afghanistan in turn being closely involved in Central Asian politics.

Understandable, a war ensued between the expanding power of the Turks and the North Western frontier kingdom of the Punjab, in which Sabuktagin led a huge army into the Indian territories and advanced as far as Peshawar. After a stiff struggle, Jayapala, who did not have adequate resources to meet the invading hoards, was finally defeated. He was compelled to cede the territory around Kabul, pay a heavy

tribute and recognize the Muslim ruler’s sovereignty. After Sabuktagin’s death, his son, Mahmud, took over the principality of Ghazni—by then an extensive and well-established kingdom with a full treasury.

### 7.3 Mahmud of Ghazni

Mahmud, the eldest son of Sabuktagin, had inherited his father’s martial spirit and organizational abilities. Even while very young he had acquired military expertise by



MAP 1: CAMPAIGNS OF MAHMUD GHAZNAWI AND HIS EMPIRE

becoming his father's constant companion during wars. At the age of thirty, he succeeded his father's throne after a brief struggle with his brother. Continuing with the same expansionist policy launched by his father, within a short span of a few years, Mahmud strengthened the Northern Frontier-completely destroyed by the Samanid Empire by 1005 CE-and extended his kingdom as far as the River Oxus, thus establishing a large but short-lived empire. The Oxus formed the boundary between the two successor states of the Samanid empire-the Ghaznavids to the West and the Qarakhanids to the east. Mahmud's status as Sultan was recognised by the Caliph who bestowed on him the title of Yamin-ud-Daula.

Mahmud launched a series of raids on India until his death in 1030 CE with the primary objective of acquiring wealth required to finance his successful campaign in Central Asia and strengthen the empire. He led as many as seventeen raids into North India between 1001-27CE, successfully establishing his hold over the Punjab. With this his kingdom, stretching from Khurasan (Northeastern Iran) and Afghanistan to northern Indian, became the first Muslim empire of Afghanistan, with Ghazni as its capital.

The fabulous wealth of India aroused Mahmud's greed and his fanatic streak made him raid the rich temple towns of northern and western India in particular. These raids, though militarily successful, were primarily meant to plunder rather than conquer. In 1001 CE, he crossed the Indian frontier and in the following year he defeated Jayapala, the raja of Bhatinda and captured him. The captives were set free after an immense booty fell into the hands of Mahmud and his army. Following his release it is said that Jayapala killed himself in order to uphold his Rajput dignity.

The rich spoils from this expedition encouraged Mahmud to repeat his raids; the second and third raids being directed against the Rai of Bhera on the River Jhelum in 1004 CE and the Muslim state of Multan in 1005 CE, respectively. The fourth raid was conducted against Anandapala, the son of Jayapala, who realizing the seriousness of the situation, organized a confederacy of the rajas of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kalanjar, Kanauj, Delhi and Ajmer before marching against the plunderer in the Punjab. History recounts that men and women stood together to withstand the attacks, with men offering themselves as army recruits while women offered their jewels for the war funds. The massive onslaught of the Indian warriors, who fought fiercely and with conviction, almost caused Mahmud to retreat, but fate had something else in store. Anandapala's elephant suddenly took fright and fled from the battle field, completely turning the tables. Mahmud swiftly proceeded against the Nagarkot fort and looted an immense booty of gold, silver, pearls and precious stones.

The lure of plunder attracted a number of mercenaries and the raids continued with remarkable frequency. The most significant one was the loot of Thaneshwar in 1014 CE. The Indians were defeated after a desperate fight. Temple idols were vandalized, except for the famous idol of Vishnu which is said to have been taken to Ghazni to be trampled underfoot.

The success of these operations induced Mahmud to go beyond the Punjab and reach the heart of India. In 1017 CE, he led a huge force to the sacred Vaishnavite city of Mathura, whose shrines there were looted and razed to the ground. He then marched against Kanauj, where the ruler Rajyapala, was taken by surprise and surrendered without resistance. The Sultan returned after sacking the town, destroying temples and seizing immense wealth. The surrender of Rajyapala infuriated the Rajput chiefs who, under the leadership of the Chandela king of Kalanjar, defeated and slew him. Mahmud regarded Rajyapala as his vassal since he had surrendered to him. Upon seeing him slain, he marched against the Chandala prince and defeated him. On his journey back home, Mahmud captured Lahore after dispossessing Trilochanapala, the son of Anandapala, and annexed Lahore to Ghazni.

An important exploit of Mahmud's career was his attack on the great temple of Somnath in the Kathiawar district of Gujrat in 1024 CE. After a dangerous and skillful march across the Thar desert, he crushed and looted the city despite the valiant struggle put up by its residents, before destroying the sacred Shiva lingam, and returning to his capital triumphant. His last expedition took place in 1027 CE against the Jats who had attacked his army on his return from Somnath. Worn out with war and ill with illness, he finally died in 1030 CE.

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## **7.4 Assessment of Mahmud of Ghazni**

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Mahmud's objective in undertaking his Indian expeditions was primarily to plunder the land and not to establish any empire. Only the Punjab was annexed to the Ghazni Sultanate in his encounters with India. Being a devout Muslim, Mahmud reshaped the Ghaznavids from their pagan Turkish origins into an Islamic state, spreading the philosophy of Islam across his conquered lands. While he was kind towards his family, fellow brethren and the poor, and though he displayed pity in worship, he could not rise above the social conditioning of the age he belonged to, and betrayed a basic dichotomy in his character though his religious fanaticism towards non-Islamic groups. With his dream of founding a Perso-Turkish empire, his expeditions were, interestingly, aimed more at financing his wars rather than enforcing



Islam. From this perspective it may be concluded that his raids were driven more by economic than by any zealous religious considerations. It is believed that he did not force the conquered races to accept Islam in all cases, and that he even extended toleration towards some Hindus settled at Ghazni. Whatever his primary motives might have been, it still does not exonerate Mahmud from the charges of idol destruction and plunder of Hindu temples.

Although Mahmud acquired the reputation of an iconoclast, his contribution to the socio-cultural development of his time was significant. He was responsible for sending to India the noted scholar, Alberuni, whose study *Tuhqiq-i-Hind* is a source of valuable information on contemporary developments. Utbi, the historian, Baihaqi whose memoirs are of immense historical value, and the earliest poets of the Persian revival—Unsuri, Faruqi and Asjadi—all resided in his kingdom. The Persian poet, Firdausi, completed his epic *Shah Namah* (Book of kings) at the court of Mahmud in about 1010 CE. Mahmud's patronage of these scholars and literary luminaries is evident from the huge grants of money that were given to them. He is also credited with building a University at Ghazni and equipping it with a library, museum and salaried teachers. He enhanced the image of Ghazni as a centre of civilization that rose from the Shackles of lawlessness into a cultured city.

Ghaznavid power reached its zenith during Mahmud's reign. He created a colossal kingdom that stretched from the Oxus and the Indus valley to the Indian Ocean. He also captured the Iranian cities of Rayy and Hamadan (from the Buyids) in the west. Despite his huge conquests, Mahmud could not consolidate them with a firm hand. He lacked the genius for civil administration, and neither did his reign create any lasting institutions. There were no enduring bonds between the conqueror and the conquered in a state that was built and maintained by force alone. Yet, it was no mean achievement to have developed a small mountain principality into a large and prosperous kingdom. His military genius, strategic planning abilities and undaunting courage helped in controlling his soldiers, who came from varied stocks, inspiring them with a passion for adventure.

Mahmud's son, Masud I (1031-41 CE) was unable to preserve the power and integrity of the Ghaznavids. In Khurasan and Khwarezm, Ghaznavid power was challenged by the Seljuq Turks. Masud also suffered a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Dandangan (1040 CE), resulting in the loss of all Ghaznavid territories in Iran and Central Asia to the Seljuqs. In the end, the Ghaznavids were left in possession of only eastern Afghanistan and northern India, where they continued to rule until 1186 CE, when Lahore fell to the Ghorids/Ghurids.

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## 7.5 Impact of Ghaznavid Invasions

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Mahmud's invasions shook the entire political fabric of northern and western India. The hindushahis, the heroic defenders of Punjab and the northwestern frontier perished; Khyber pass, the Gateway of India, was lost to the foreigners forever. The powerful rajput princes were defeated, humiliated or liquidated resulting in the disintegration of their states. The political division and disunity of the country was exposed. The defective military structure and poor leadership took a heavy toll of the martial talent, thousands of brave fighters laid down their lives battlefields. Those who survived felt throughly humiliated and demoralised. The citizens were massacred in cold blood by the marauders who took thousands with them as slaves, to be sold in the markets of Baghdad, Samarkand and Bukhara. Flourishing cities were laid waste; magnificent temples were desecrated and plundered and the centuries old edifices of art, architecture and culture were ruined. The entire habitats were razed to the ground and millions of people rendered homeless and heartless while within their own country, Quite a few were forcibly converted to Islam. Long after the departure of Mahmud, northern India must have presented the picture of a vast refugee camp. The problem of resettlement of the uprooted people must have baffled the petty chieftains who lacked moral courage, resources and foresight to help their subjects.

The economic and cultural impact of the Ghaznavid invasions on India is important for the bridges they built between clashing cultures. Following the invasions, persian, Arab and Indian traders were seen augmenting their trade network with various parts of South Asia, including China. It is believed that Asian traders entered Europe, and eventually Rome, via central Asian trading routes. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE international trade competition escalated, gradually paving the way for subjecting Asia to European encroachment. Interestingly, the game of chess made its way to Persia from India and was thence taken to Europe. By the eleventh century, chess had become known throughout Europe. It is also possible that it reached Central Europe via contemporary trading routes. Through trade and territorial conquests, language, and religious and cultural practices were being dispersed from one region to another.

Mahmud of Ghazni was the only militarist sovereign of the era to maintain a large army over a considerable period of time to sufficiently develop a language. It is for the same reasons that the earliest surviving texts from this period are that of sufisaints who accompanied the Ghaznavids on their expeditions. The language in which these texts were written was similar to Urdu, which was to develop much later. This

assertion is based on the premise that this early Urdu-like language was derived from Ghaznavid Persian, which in turn was derived from Avestan via Sassanid Pahlavi. But trade and religion channelled through the Ghaznavid invasion could not spread sufficiently due to the advent of the Ghurids.

The Ghaznavid period is also important for its influence on the Seljuq Turks in Iran and on later Islamic art in India. Although little survivors of Ghaznavid art, the introduction of the four eyvan ground plan in the place at Lashkari Bazar, located on a plateau above the Helmond River just north of Qalchye Best in Afghanistan, is noteworthy. An eyvan is a large vaulted hall, closed on three sides and open to a court on the fourth. The design of a court being surrounded by four eyvans dominated seljuq mosque architecture, and was later used throughout the Timurid and Safavid periods in Persia. The victory tower of Masud III, built from 1099-1115 CE, had a complete floor covered with ornamental inscriptions. The tower is a precursor of the Seljuq, tomb-tower. The excavations at the site of the palace at Lashkari Bazar have also uncovered figurative paintings with stylistic elements similar to early seljuq work.

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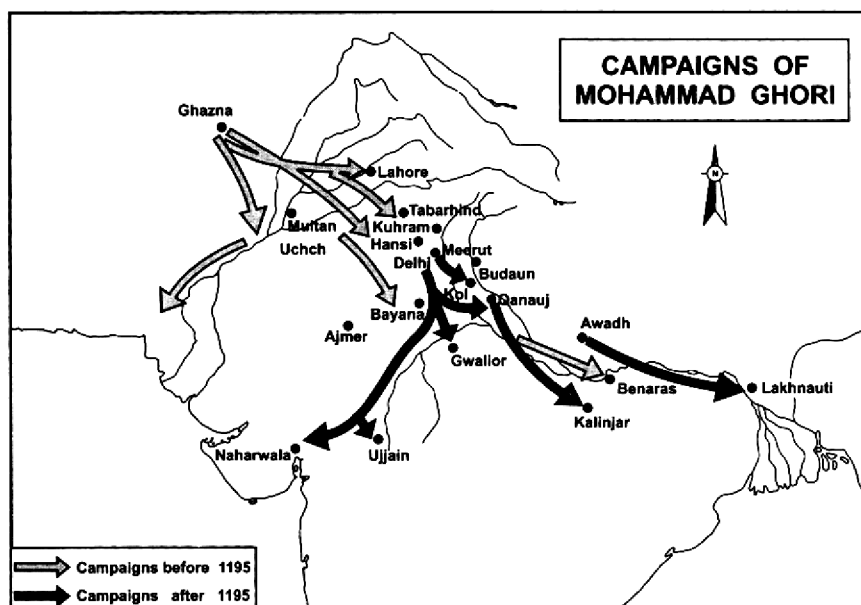
## **7.6 Muhammad of Ghur (1173-1206 CE)**

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The early history of the Ghurids is closely associated with the changing balance of power in Central Asia. The Ghurids who inhabited the region between Ghazni and Herat, rose rapidly to power during the last half of the twelfth century. It was a time when the non-Muslim Karakital Turks were moving westwards into the region dominated by the Seljuq Turks. Iran and parts of Afghanistan had already been under Seljuq control over the past fifty years, and the Seljuq defeat in 1141 CE led to a struggle for power among the Karakitau, the Khwarezm Shahs and the Ghurids over parts of central Asia and Iran. In 1149 CE there was a brief conflict between the last Ghaznavid ruler, Bahramshah and a local Ghurid leader, Qutbuddin. The former poisoned the latter, who had taken refuge in the city of Ghazni following a family quarrel. In retaliation, the Ghurid chief, Alauddin Hussain, sacked and burned the city of Ghazni. The Ghaznavids regained control over Ghazni for a short period assisted by the Seljuks. The struggle with the Ghurids continued in the subsequent years and eventually Ghazni was lost to a group of Oguz Turks.

In 1152 CE. Ghazni was again captured by Alauddin Hussain, who was unable to retain it under his control for long. His initial success, however, helped his nephews, Ghiyasuddin and Muizzuddin, to once again capture the city in 1173 CE from the Oguz Turkmen nomads who had ruled it since the fall of the Ghaznavids.

A cooperative relationship between the two brothers—unusual in Muslim dynastic annals—was to greatly contribute to the Ghurid success.



**MAP 2: CAMPAIGNS OF MOHAMMAD GHORI**

The first important ruler of this dynasty Ghiyasuddin Muhammad, who ruled over Ghur from Firoz Kuh had ambitious plans of capturing Khurasan. He brought Ghazni under his control and appointed as governor his brother, Muizuddin Muhammad Ibn Sam, popularly known as Shihabuddin Muhammad of Ghur. Shihabuddin began to try his luck over expanding the Ghurid Kingdom into India. The Ghurid invasions of northern India were thus part of this Central Asian struggle for power.

Between 1173 and 1202 CE, Ghurid power rose to its peak under the rule of both Ghiyasuddin and Muizuddin. Ghiyasuddin struggled with the Khwarezm Shah for control of the Seljuq Turks' former holdings in Khurasan (in northeastern Iran). He also captured Herat in Western Afghanistan (1176 CE) and then went on to establish control over most of Afghanistan, eastern Iran, and what is today known as Turkmenistan, by 1200 CE.

Meanwhile, Muhammad of Ghur and his lieutenant Qutubuddin Aibak, were busy establishing Ghur rule over Northern India—from Multan in Sind to Gaur in Bengal. Muhammad of Ghur's expansionist programme into northern India led to the country being subjected to Muslim invasions once again in the third quarter of the twelfth

century after an interval of nearly a hundred and fifty years. By this time, however, most of northern India was already in contact with Ghur through an extensive trading network, particularly that for horses. The Ghurids were well known as horse breeders and also had a reputation for supplying Indian and Turkish slaves to the markets of central Asia. Muslim merchants and saints had already settled in the regions of Sind, the Punjab and a number of towns in the areas of what we today recognize as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Ghurids were familiar with the fabulous wealth of western and central India too. They, therefore, first followed the southern route into India via the Gomal pass, with an eye set on eventually getting Gujrat. It was only after suffering a severe defeat at the hands of the Chalukya army of Gujrat that they turned to the northern route through the Khyber pass.

Unlike Mahmud of Ghazni, Muhammad of Ghur was more interested in permanently annexing northern India under a Muslim banner. He was opposed to the senseless destruction of temples and plundering of riches, being keener on organizing his newly conquered regions through a sound and enduring system of administration.

Muhammad first seized Multan from the Karmatian heretics led by Abd Allah the Karmati, in 1175 CE, following it up by occupying the important fort of Uchh—all former Ghaznavid provinces. Muhammad eventually returned to Ghazni after stationing a strong garrison at each place of conquest. He invaded India yet again after three years, and marched against Bhimdev, the ruler of Anhilvara in Gujrat. The Indian ruler was more than a match for Muhammad, who was forced to retreat with heavy losses in 1178 CE.

Not discouraged by his initial defeats, Muhammad once again invaded India in the following year, capturing Peshwar and Sind. He was, however, unable to capture the fort of Lahore, which was well defended by Sultan Khusro Malik, the last of the Ghaznavid dynasty; and Muhammad was forced to come to terms with the Sultan. As soon as he left the scene, Sultan Malik tried to gain control of Sialkot too. Upon hearing this, Muhammad evolved a strategy to capture the Sultan, which turned out to be successful. This invasion got the Ghurids a foothold in Lahore in 1185 CE, leading to the end of the Sabuktigin dynasty. Muhammad had now become the master of the Punjab, which made a clash with the Rajputs inevitable. The Tomaras of Delhi, the Chauhans of Ajmer, the Rathors of Kanauj, the Baghelas of Gujrat and the Pala and Senas of Bihar and Bengal stood in stiff opposition to Muhammad by forming a confederacy. The leader of this confederacy was Prithviraj Chauhan. The Rajput and

Muslim forces met in a decisive battle at Tarain, near Thaneswar in which the Rajputs emerged victorious. known as the First Battle of Tarain (1191 CE), it forced Muhammad to retreat with heavy losses.

The very next year Muhammad planned a fresh attack on India and met the Rajputs for a second time at the same battle field. At this second Battle of Tarain (1192 CE) Muhammad emerged victorious. Prithviraj Chauhan was captured and killed; and with his death ended the Rajput resistance. Ajmer and Delhi were occupied first, followed by the conquest of Sarsuti, Samana, Kohram and Hansi, Muhammad left his lieutenant, Qutbuddin Aibak, in charge of his Indian conquests and returned to his capital. Qutbuddin made Delhi his headquarters in 1193 CE before embarking on a campaign of expansion.

Muhammad was clever enough to realize that his Indian dominions would not be secured until he had defeated Jayachandra, the Raja of Kanauj, who had not stood along with the other Rajputs, being a fierce opponent of Prithviraj Chauhan. Chand Bardoi in his ballad, Prithviraja Raso, mentions that Jayachandra's daughter, the princess Sanyogita had eloped with Prithviraj. This was the main cause of animosity between Jayachandra and Prithviraj. But now with the death of his sworn enemy, Jayachandra nurtured fond hopes of leading the Rajputs. In 1194 CE Muhammad marched against Jayachandra with a huge force of 50,000 mounted men clad in armour and coats of mail' and killed Jayachandra, forcing the Rathors to migrate to modern Jodhpur.

Muhammad's adventure in India was not yet over. After the Rajput escaped, he proceeded against Benaras, destroying temples and constructing mosques. Meanwhile Bakhtiyar Khilji, the sagacious general of Qutbuddin Aibak, had conquered Bihar and Nadia (1202 CE), the capital of the Sena kings of Bengal, with incredible ease. Within two years Bakhtiyar had embarked upon a campaign to conquer Tibet for plundering the treasures of its Buddhist monasteries. With this Tibetan campaign he also wanted to gain control over Bengal's traditional trade route, which led to southeast Asia's gold and silver mines. The attempt, however, proved disastrous, and Bakhtiyar managed to return to Bengal with only a few hundred men, dying there in 1206 CE.

Despite Bakhtiyar Khilji's Tibetan misadventure, almost the whole of northern India was soon to be brought under Muslim h... When Qutbuddin Aibak marched against the Chandela king of Bundelkhand, seizing the fortresses of Badaun, Kanauj (1198-99 CE) and Kalinjar (1202 CE), the few remaining Indian bastions came under foreign rule.

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## 7.7 Impact of the Ghurid Invasions

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Muhammad returned to Ghazni laden with rich spoils, and was crowned king on the death of his brother. In 1205 CE, however, he suffered a severe defeat at Andkhvoy (Andkhui) at the hands of the Khwarezm Shah. As news of his defeat stirred up a rebellion among some of his followers in the Punjab, he was forced to return to India to suppress the Gakkars who had taken advantage of his absence. It was mainly because of the timely arrival of Qutbuddin's troops from Delhi that this formidable rebellion could be suppressed. While returning to Ghazni from his last Indian campaign, Muhammad was assassinated by the Gakkars in Lahore (1206 CE). The Ghurids by this time were in firm control of the major towns of the Punjab and of much of the Gangetic plains but most of the rural/semi urban areas outside these cities remained under the control of Hindu chiefs. Even in the Doab (the land between the Ganga and the Yamuna, near Delhi), the Gahadavalas held out against the Turks. Most significantly, the chiefs of Rajasthan had not yet been permanently subdued.

Yet, in spite of all these political short comings, Muhammad's conquests had far reaching results in India—laying down the foundations for subsequent Muslim rule in the land. He not only crushed Rajput power, but also consolidated his conquests by providing all resources necessary for the continuance of Muslim rule. He left behind him a band of trusted workers, well trained in the art of administration, who fulfilled his expectations. Muhammad's political exploits, and his slightly more enlightened religious posture, when compared with Mahmud of Ghazni, prepared the ground for the advancement of Islam into India.

One of the important factors for the quick Ghurid conquest of the major cities and forces of the northern Indian plains was the availability of a large number of Central Asian military adventurer who travelled with the successful commanders. Other important factors included better horses that facilitated swift movement during war, and also deft handling of weapons, armour and stirrups by the Ghurids than most of their opponents. The Ghurids were well aware of organizing and planning on a centralized level, which was necessary after the end of large scale military campaigns. They also knew the art of effective consolidation of post campaign occupation. The Rajputs considered the Ghurids as a potent force competing for power in northern India, while the Ghurids looked upon Mahmud of Ghazni's vast centralized kingdom as a model successor state to the Caliphate. A confused struggle would eventually ensue among the remaining Ghurid leaders, making it easier for the Khwarezm Shah to take over Ghurid conquests by 1215 CE.

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## 7.8 Factors leading to the success of the Turks

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One of the debatable point on the issue of the success of the Turks is to why did India become such easy prey to Muhmud's sword or for that matter to Mohammed Ghori's invasions? Is it possible that the Turks were militarily better equipped than their Indian counterparts.

Various reasons have been assigned for the success of the Turkish conquests of north India. Most contemporary chroniclers do not go beyond the standard explanation of attributing this major event to the 'will of god'. Some British historians, who initiated the study of Indian history in greater depth, felt that it was the belligerence of the Turks that led to their success. According to them, the Turkish armies were drawn from the warlike tribes inhabiting the difficult region lying between the Indus and the Oxus. They had immense military prowess and had acquired much expertise that came from fighting the Seljuq armies and other tribes of Central Asia. On the other hand, the Indians were pacifists and were not used to warfare at all. Moreover, they were divided into small states which hampered expansionist ambitions.

This presumption of the British historians seems to be rather imbalanced as it does not take into account the well known fact of Indian history. The Rajputs, whom the Turks conquered, were not lacking in valour or in martial spirit. The period ranging from the eighth to the twelfth centuries is one long story of warfare, violence and struggle. It therefore makes no sense to attribute Turkish success to the peace-loving Indian disposition.

Some historians have said that the peculiar social structure created by Islam proved conducive to the success of the Turks. Jadunath Sarkar, for instance, puts emphasis on the three unique characteristics of Islam. To begin with, the religion laid much emphasis on complete equality and social solidarity as regards legal and religious status. Unlike Indians, the Turks were not caste stratified in any way. Secondly, it advocated absolute faith in God and His will, which provided the devout with a sense of mission. Finally, Islam spoke at length about the demerits of drunkenness, which according to Sarkar, was the ruin of the Rajputs, the Marathas and various other Indian rulers. But the argument has not gained much support from other modern historians.

Perhaps the most important reason is the fact that the period was marked by political turbulence and there were unending feuds between the northern and north western kingdoms. After the fall of the Gurjara Pratihara empire, no single state



could really take its place. Instead, there arose small independent powers like the Gahadavalas in Kanauj, the Parmaras in Malwa, the Chalukyas in Gujarat, the Chauhans in Ajmer, the Tomars in Delhi and the Chandellas in Bundelkhand. There were constant conflicts amongst these kingdoms and the period in question remained unacquainted with peace. Lack of centralised power was also an important factor in weakening the strength and efficiency of the armed forces. Fakhr-i-Mudabbir in his *Adab-ul-Harb wa-al Shuja't* mentions that Indian forces consisted of feudal levies. Each military contingent was under the command of its immediate overlord and not that of the king. The army, lacked 'unity of command'.

Mohammad Habib suggests that caste divisions in Hindu society also played their part in weakening the resistance of Hindu Kings. And since not many castes and clans took to the military profession, the bulk of the population was excluded from military training. The general population of the country never really understood that matters like the defence of the country were serious issues to reckon with and were thus entirely ill equipped to deal with the series of Turkish invasions that took place in the period. The concept of physical pollution or Chhut also hampered military efficiency since it made the division of labour impossible, soldiers had to do all the work on their own, from fighting to the fetching of water. Thus, the professionalism and egalitarianism of Muslim armies, many of which allowed slaves to rise to the top, was nowhere to be seen amongst the Hindus.

Another important reason for the success of the Turks was their superior military technology and art of war. They used horses for warfare with greater skill. The Turks used iron stirrups and horse-shoes that reinforced their sinking power and strengthened their cavalry. Horse shoes provided greater mobility to the horse and stirrups provided advantage to the soldiers which could not possibly be trivialised. On the other hand, Rajputs had training in the customary styles of fighting aided with slow-moving elephants as Simon Digby 'seems to believe in his book entitled. War-Horse and Elephant in Delhi Sultanate.

Andre Wink argues that the Turkish army had a light cavalry with superior archery abilities. They had the ability to stand up on their stirrups and the bows, arrows, spears, swords and the likes of these. Further they also possessed the power of quick penetration because of the swift movement of the cavalry.

Andre Wink also highlights another distinct advantage that the Turks had over their Indian counterparts which was that the Turks largely relied on professional and slave soldiers on horseback, while the Indians normally made use of an untrained peasant infantry. Further, while the Indian rulers depended heavily on elephants, the

Turks relied more upon horses which were faster, weightedless than elephants did and were that much more agile than elephants could ever be. Another interesting point raised by Andre Wink in his book is that the Turks were able to establish and dominate north India largely because of the fact they had better access to good war-horses and some of the best breeding grounds for horses in the Oxus region which was under the Ghaznavids to begin with and later came under the rule of the Delhi Sultanate, it was the policy of the Delhi Sultans to deprive the 'Hindu rulers' of access to war-hor-ses.

Peter Jackson feels that it is very difficult to come up with a satisfactory explanation for the success of the Turks on the basis of the primary source available. The Muslim writers, who took note of these events, are of the view that God granted victory to the Sultan and his forces. Therefore, any analysis of the causes of Turkish success rests on fragmentary evidence and any conclusion drawn can only be speculative.

On the basis of observations made by Alberuni about the caste system, Mohammad Habib is of the view that the resistance of the Hindu rulers, when confronted by the invading Ghurid armies, was undermined in two respects—first, the caste system seriously impaired the military effectiveness of the Hindu Kingdoms. It restricted participations in war only to the warrior castes or the Kshatriya. The rules of untouchability dictated that menial tasks could not be left to the lower castes. The second disadvantage of the caste system was that it eroded the idea of social cohesiveness. Islam preached equality and Muhammad Habib says that the urban masses could not help but draw up a contract between the liberating message of Islam and the social shackles that bound them. Can they really be blamed for wanting to throw in their lot with the newcomers. Thus, according to Habib, this was not really a conquest of sorts. This was in fact a turnover of public opinion which was long overdue.

Peter Jackson says the arguments given by Mohammed Habib do not withstand closer scrutiny. As far as military effectiveness is concerned, Simon Digby has mentioned that Hindu armies included members of other castes such as Vaishyas and Shudras. He believes that Alberuni's Brahman informants may have exaggerated the effectiveness of the caste regulations. Jackson believes that a recognition of one's low social status and an urge to improve it do not necessarily go hand in hand in a society like India which by that time had remained untouched by the eighteenth century European enlightenment. Therefore, the question of turnover of public opinion seems irrelevant.

## **7.9 Conclusion**

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The success of the Turks against the Rajputs led to the establishment of Turkish rule in North India. It affected the fortunes of India in many ways. The Turks made efforts for establishing a strong centralised government and, therefore, attempted to overthrow feudalism in India. They also succeeded in establishing one uniform system of administration as well in North India. According to Jadunath Sarkar “India forewent its aloofness during the rule of the Turks.” India had lost its contact with the outside world during the so-called Rajput age. It revived its contact with countries of Asia and Africa during the rule of the Turks. Professor A.B.M Habibullah has expressed the opinion that the conquest of north India by the Turks created an urban revolution. The Turk rulers permitted every person to live within cities without any discrimination on grounds of class, caste or religion.

Thus contacts with outside world, administrative unity, growth of cities, coinage system etc. helped in the growth of trade and industries which increased the prosperity of India. During the rule of the Turks, Persian was accepted as the court language. Therefore, both the Hindus and the Muslims studied it which helped in integrating the culture of both.

The Turkish rule attacked severely the caste system of the Hindus. Ofcourse, the caste system could not be banished from among the Hindus, yet caste distinctions and untouchability received setbacks and lower castes got protection of the state.

The Turks improved the military organisation and fighting tactics of the Indians. The feudal organisation of the army was disposed off, centralised armies were raised, cavalry organisation was emphasized, arms were improved, men of all creeds and castes were enrolled in the army and the mobility of the army was increased. All these changes improved the efficiency of the Indian army and it came on par with the best armies in Asia.

The rule of the Turks brought Islam and Hinduism together in India, which helped in growth of that culture what we may call Indo-Muslim culture. Both the Hindus and the Muslims contributed into the formation of that culture which created a society in India which was different from the past.

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## **7.10 Summary**

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Muhammad bin Qasim’s conquest of Sind, although short lived, was of great political economic and socio-cultural significance. Though the Arabs did not conquer

India, they led the way for later Islamic invasion. Alaptagin established an independent kingdom with the capital at Ghazni. His successors Sabuktagin, extended his kingdom through conquests and sound administration.

Mahmud, the eldest son of Sabuktagin, succeeded his father's throne. Within a short span Mahmud strengthened the Northern Frontier, completely destroyed the Samarid empire and extended his kingdom as far as the River Oxus, thus establishing a large but short-lived rule. Mahmud conducted a series of almost annual raids in India till his death. This was mainly done to acquire wealth required to finance successful campaigns in Central Asia and strengthen his rule there. Following his 17 raids into northern India between 1001 and 1027 CE, Mahmud succeeded in establishing a firm hold over the Punjab. This established the first Muslim Kingdom of Afghanistan with Ghazni as its capital.

After the Ghaznis came the Ghurids. The early history of the latter is closely associated with the changing balance of power in Central Asia. Ghurid power rose to its zenith during the reign of both Ghiyasuddin and Muizuddin. (popularly known as Muhammad of Ghur) between 1173 and 1202 CE. While Ghiyasuddin's political exploits were concentrated in Central Asia, Muhammad of Ghor and his lieutenant Qutubuddin Aibak, established Ghurid rule over northern India—right from Multan in Sind to Gaur in Bengal. Muhammad of Ghor unlike Mahmud of Ghazni, was more interested in the permanent annexation of northern India as the founding Islamic state in India. He desired to achieve this by organising his fresh conquests through a sound and enduring system of administration. After crushing all the remnants of Rajput power over northern India, Muhammad consolidated his conquests by consolidating all necessary resources for a continued Islamic rule in India. In comparison to Mahmud of Ghazni, Muhammad's political exploits, and his more enlightened religious posture, prepared the ground for the advancement of Islam into India.

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## 7.11 Model Questions

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1. What were the primary motives behind Mahmud of Ghazni's raids on India?
2. Bring out the difference between the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad of Ghur.
3. What was the impact of the Ghaznavid invasion?
4. What led to the success of the Turks or the failure of the Rajputs in India?
5. Why did Muhammad Ghori invade India?
6. Why was the victory of Tarain a watershed in Indian history?

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## 7.12 Suggested Readings

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**Module - III**  
**Agrarian Structure and Social Change**



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## **Unit- 8 □ Agricultural Expansion; Crops**

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### **Structure**

#### **8.0 Objectives**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

#### **8.2 Agrarian expansion**

##### **8.2.1 Geographical and Chronological Patterns**

##### **8.2.2 Ideological Background.**

#### **8.3 Agrarian Organisation**

##### **8.3.1 Character and role of various types of Agrarian Settlements**

##### **8.3.2 Rights in Land**

#### **8.4 Technological Improvements**

#### **8.5 Rural Tension**

#### **8.6 Agriculture and the Exchange Network**

#### **8.7 The Characterisation of Early Medieval Agrarian Economy**

#### **8.8 Conclusion**

#### **8.9 Summary**

#### **8.10 Model Questions**

#### **8.11 Suggested Readings**

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### **8.0 Objectives**

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After reading this unit we will be able to explain the :

- Factors responsible for the expansion of agriculture in the Indian subcontinent.
- Chronological pattern of landgrant system.
- Ideology behind land grants.
- Character and role of various types of agrarian settlements.
- Growth and nature of land rights.



- Technological improvements in the sphere of agriculture.
- Characterisation of early medieval agrarian economy.
- Know the extent of cultivation : main crops grown; means and methods of irrigation in India.

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## 8.1 Introduction

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The people in medieval India pursued diverse range of economic activities to earn their basic livelihood. The sphere of their works varied from agricultural to artisanal production, trade and commerce and associated commercial financial services. These activities underwent various changes through out the course of this period. The state mobilized its resources through collection of different types of taxes for its survival and expansion.

In the early medieval period agricultural expansion meant a greater and more regular use of advanced agricultural techniques, plough cultivation and irrigation technology. Institutional management of agricultural processes, control of means of production and new relations of production also played an important role in this expansion. With this expansion, new type of rural tensions also increased. All these aspects have been dealt in this unit which ends with a discussion on the characterisation of early medieval agrarian economy. Let us start with the aspects related to agrarian expansion.

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## 8.2 Agrarian Expansion

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The agrarian expansion, which began with the establishment of brahmadeya and agrahara settlements through land grants to Brahmanas from the fourth century A.D onwards acquired a uniform and universal form in subsequent centuries.

The centuries between the eighth and twelfth witnessed the processes of this expansion and the culmination of an agrarian organisation based on land grants to religious and secular beneficiaries i.e. Brahmanas, temples and officers of the King's government. However, there are important regional variations in this development, both due to geographical as well as ecological factors.

### 8.2.1 Geographical and Chronological Pattern

Cultivation was extended not only to the hitherto virgin lands but even by clearing forest areas. This was a continuous process and a major feature of early medieval agricultural economy.

The chronological appearance of the land grant system shows the following pattern :

1. **Fourth-fifth centuries:** Spread over a good part of Central India, northern Deccan and Andhra
2. **Fifth-seventh Centuries:** Eastern India (Bengal and Orissa), beginnings in Western India (Gujrat and Rajasthan).
3. **Seventh and eight centuries:** Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
4. **Nineth centuries:** Kerala, and
5. **End of the twelfth century:** Almost the entire subcontinent with the possible exception of Punjab.

### 8.2.2 Ideological Background

Ideas relating to the gift of land emphasize the importance of dana or gift. The idea of dana or gift to Brahmanas was developed by Brahmanical texts as the surest means of acquiring merit (punya) and destroying sin (pataka). It appears to be a conscious and systematic attempt to provide means of subsistence to the Brahmanas. Grants of cultivable land to them and registration of gifts of land on Copper Plates are recommended by all the Smritis and Puranas of the Post-Gupta centuries.

#### **There were different items of gifts :**

- food, grains, paddy etc.
- movable assets like gold, money etc. and
- the immovable assets, i.e. cultivable land.

Among the gifts are included the plough, cows, oxen and ploughshare. However, the gift of land was considered to be the best of all types of gifts made to the learned Brahmana. Imprecations against the destruction of such gifts and the resumption of land donated to a Brahmana ensured their perpetuity. Thus land grants began to follow a set legal formula systematised through law books (Dharmashastras).

While the early landgrants were made mainly to Vedic priests, from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries, grants were also made to temple priests. The temple, as an institution, assumed a more central role in agrarian expansion and organisation from the eighth century A.D. Grants to the temple either plots of land or whole villages, were known as devadana in the South Indian context. It needs to be stressed that what began as a mere trickle, became a mighty current. The process of acquiring landed property was not confined to Brahmanical temples. The non Brahmanical religious establishments such as the Buddhist and Jain monasteries (Sanghas and

basadis) too, specially in Karnataka, Andhra, Gujarat and eastern India (Bihar and Orissa) vied with one another to become landed magnates.

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## 8.3 Agrarian Organisation

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The Agrarian organisation and economy were highly complex. This can be understood on the basis of intensive studies of the regional pattern of land grants and the character and role of the brahmadeya and non-brahmadeya and temple settlements. The growth and nature of land rights, interdependence among the different groups related to land and the production and distribution processes also help in a better understanding of the situation.

### 8.3.1 Character and Role of various types of Agrarian Settlements

**Brahmadeya:** A brahmadeya represents a grant of land either in individual plots or whole villages given away to Brahmanas making them landowners or land controllers. It was meant either to bring virgin land under cultivation or to integrate existing agricultural settlements into the new economic order dominated by a Brahmana proprietor. These Brahmana donees played a major role in integrating various socio-economic groups into the new order, through service tenures and caste groupings under the Varna system. For example, the growing peasantisation of Shudras was sought to be rationalised in the existing brahmanical social order.

The practice of land grants as brahmadeyas was initiated by the ruling dynasties and subsequently followed by chiefs, feudatories, etc. Brahmadeyas facilitated agrarian expansion because they were :

- Exempted from various taxes or dues either entirely or at least in the initial stages of settlement (e.g. for 12 years).
- Also endowed with ever growing privileges (pariharas). the ruling families derived economic advantage in the form of the extension of the resource base, moreover, by creating brahmadeyas they also gained ideological support for their political power.

Lands were given as brahmadeya either to a single Brahmana or to several Brahmana families which ranged from a few to several hundred or even more than a thousand, as seen in the South Indian context. Brahmadeyas were invariably located near major irrigation works such as tanks or lakes. Often new irrigation sources were constructed when Brahmadeyas were created, especially in areas dependent on rains and in arid and semi-arid regions. When located in areas of intensive agriculture in the river valleys, they served to integrate other settlements of a subsistence level production sometimes, two or more settlements were clubbed together to form a

brahmadeya or an agrahara. The taxes from such villages were assigned to the brahmana donees, who were also given the right to get the donated land cultivated. Boundaries of the donated land or village were very often carefully demarcated. The various types of land, wet, dry and garden and within the village were specified. Sometimes even specific crops and trees are mentioned. The land donations implied more than the transfer of land rights. For example, in many cases, along with the revenues and economic resources of the village, human resources such as peasants, artisans and others were transferred to donees. There is also growing evidence of the encroachment of the rights of villagers over community lands such as lakes and ponds. Thus, the Brahmanas became managers of agricultural and artisanal production in these settlements for which they organised themselves into assemblies.

#### **Secular Grants :**

From the seventh century onwards, officers of the State were also being remunerated through land grants. This is of special significance because it created another class of landlords who were not Brahmanas.

The gift of land on officials in charge of administrative divisions is mentioned as early as cAD 200 (the time of Manu) but the practice picks up momentum in the post-Gupta, period. Literary works dealing with Central India, Rajasthan, Gujrat, Bihar and Bengal between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries make frequent references to various kinds of grants to ministers, kinsmen and those who rendered military services. The rajas, rajaputras, ranakas, mahasamantas etc. mentioned in Pala land charters were mostly vassals connected with land. The incidence of grants to state officials varies from one region to another. To illustrate, while we hear of about half a dozen Paramar official ranks, only a few of them are known to have received land grants. But very large territories were granted to vassals and high officers under the Chalukyas of Gujarat. The available evidences suggest that Orissa had more service grants than Assam, Bengal and Bihar taken together. Further, the right of various officials to enjoy specific and exclusive levies—irrespective of the tenure of these levies was bound to create intermediaries with interests in the lands of the tenants.

**Devadanas :** Large scale gifts to the religious establishments, both brahmanical and non-brahmanical, find distinctive places in inscriptional evidences. These centres worked as nuclei of agricultural settlements and helped in integrating various peasant and tribal settlements through a process of acculturation. They also integrated various socio-economic groups through service tenures or remuneration through temple lands. Temple lands were leased out to tenants, who paid a higher share of the produce to the temple. Such lands were also managed either by the sabha of the brahmadeya or mahajanas of the agrahara settlements. In non-Brahmana settlements

also temples became the central institution. Here temple lands came to be administered by the temple executive committees composed of land owning non-Brahmanas e.g. the velalas of Tamil Nadu, the Okkalu Kampule etc of Karnataka different groups were assigned a caste and ritual status. It is in this process that people following “impure” and “low occupations” were assigned the status of untouchables, kept out of the temple and given quarters at the fringes of the settlement.

The supervision of temple lands was in the hands of Brahmana and non-Brahmana landed elite. The control of irrigation sources was also a major function of the local bodies dominated by landed elite groups. Thus the Brahmana, the temple and higher strata of non-Brahmanas as landlords, employers and holders of superior rights in land became the central feature of early medieval agrarian organisation.

The new landed elite also consisted of local peasant clan chiefs or heads of kinship groups and heads of families, who had Kani rights i.e. rights of possession and supervision. In other words, several strata of intermediaries emerged between the king and the actual producer.

### **8.3.2 Rights in Land**

An important aspect relating to land grants is the nature of rights granted to the assignees. Rights conferred upon the grantees included fiscal and administrative rights. The taxes, of which land tax was the major source of revenue, theoretically payable to the king or government, came to be assigned to the donees. The reference to pratiharas or exemptions in the copper plate and stone inscriptions registering such grants indicate that what was theoretically payable to the king was not being completely exempted from payment but the rights were now transferred to the grantees. This was apparently based on the sanction of the dharmashastras, which sought to establish the royal ownership of land and hence justify such grants, creating intermediary rights in land.

Although there is some evidence of a communal basis of land rights in early settlements, the development of private ownership or rights is indicated by the fact that the grantees often enjoyed rights of alienation of land. They also enjoyed other hereditary benefits in the settlements. Land gifts were often made after purchase from private individuals. Hereditary ownership seems to have developed out of such grants, both religious and secular.

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## **8.4 Technological Improvements**

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During the early medieval period there was an increase in irrigation sources such as canals, lakes, tanks (tataka, eri) and wells (Kupa and Kinaru). That the accessibility

to water resources was an important consideration in the spread of rural settlements is shown by regional studies, Keres or tanks in South Karnataka, nadi (river), pushkarini (tark), Srota (waterchannel) etc. in Bengal and araghatta-wells in western Rajasthan used to be natural points of reference whenever distribution and transfer of village lands had to be undertaken. Naturally, the concern for water resources contributed to the extension of cultivation and intensification of agricultural activities water-lifts of different kinds operated by man and animal power were also known. Epigraphic sources record the construction and maintenance of such irrigation works between eighth and thirteenth century. The step wells (vapis) in Rajasthan and Gujarat became extremely popular in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries. They were meant for irrigating the fields as well as for supplying drinking water.

Lakes or reservoirs were more commonly used in semidry and rain fed areas, as well as river basins where the rivers dried up in summer. Construction of water reservoirs was initiated by ruling families and maintained by local institutions such as the Sabha (Brahmana assembly) and Ur (non Brahmana Village assembly) in Tamil Nadu. Maintenance of tanks/teaks etc. i.e desilting, bund and sluice repair was looked after by a special committee of local assemblies and cesses were levied for the purpose.

Royal permission was accorded for digging tanks or wells, when gifts were made to Brahmanas and temples. Land was demarcated for construction and maintenance of canals and tanks etc. Digging of tanks was considered a part of the privileges enjoyed by the grantees and an act of religious merit. Hence, resourceful private individuals also constructed tanks.

No less significant were the improvements in agricultural implements. For example, a tenth century inscription from Ajmer refers to 'big' plough. Similarly, separate implements are mentioned for weeding parasitic plants. Vrikahayavede mentions steps to cure diseases of trees. Water lifting devices such as araghatta and ghatyantra are mentioned in inscriptions and literary works. The former was specially used in the wells of Rajasthan in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Krishisukti of Kashyapa prescribed that the ghatyantra operated by oxen is the best, that by man was the worst, while the one driven by elephant was of the middling quality.

Advanced knowledge about weather conditions and their use in agricultural operations is noticeable in such texts as the Gurusamhita and Krishinarashwara.

More than one hundred types of cereals including wheat, barley, lentils etc. are mentioned in contemporary writings on agriculture. According to the Shunya Purana

more than fifty kinds of paddy were cultivated in Bengal. The knowledge of fertilizers improved immensely and the use of the compost was known. Cash crops such as arecanuts, betel leaves, cotton, sugarcane etc. find frequent mention. Rajashekhara (early 10<sup>th</sup> century) tells us about the excellent sugarcane of north Bengal which yielded juice even without the use of pressing instrument. Commodity production of coconut and oranges assumed special importance in Peninsular India during this period.

Macro Polo hints at increased production of spices when he says that the city of Kinsay om China alone consumed ten thousand pounds of pepper everyday which came from India. He also mentions the great demand for Indian ginger in European markets. Harvesting of three crops and rotation of crops were known widely. Thus, advanced agricultural technology was being systematised and diffused in various parts of the country causing substantial boom in agricultural production.

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## 8.5 Rural Tension

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Notwithstanding agrarian expansion the rural landscape was far from being a homogenous scene. There is, to begin with heterogeneous and stratified peasantry. Unlike the age old and pre-Gupta gahapatis we now have graded personnel associated with land. Kshetrik, Karshaka halin and ardhik. Regretably, there is hardly any indication of landownership in these terms, which seems to be referring the various categories of cultivators. The conversion of the brahmadeyas into non-brahma-deyas and that of the latter into agraharas were potential sources of tension in rural areas. The damara revolts in Kashmir, rebellion of the Kaivartas in the reign of Ramapala in Bengal, acts of self immolation in situation of encroachments on land in Tamilnadu, appropriation of donated land by Shudras in the Pandya territory, are indices of distrust against the new landed intermediaries. The fact that donors often looked for land where cultivation was not disputed also shows the seeds of turmoil. The possibility of the hero-stones in and around agraharas also has the potential of throwing light on rumblings beneath the surface in agrarian settlements.

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## 8.6 Agriculture and the Exchange Network

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It is sometimes maintained that in the early medieval economic organisation, production was mainly subsistence oriented and was not in response to the laws of the market. Hence, there was little scope for economic growth. Craftsmen and artisans were attached either to villages or estates or religious establishments. Hence there was no significant role for traders and middle men, who only procured and

supplied iron tools, oil, spices, cloth etc. to rural folk.

The aforesaid, picture is certainly true for the period 300-800 A.D. However, the subsequent 500 years witnessed a rapid increase in the number of agrarian settlements and the growth of local markets initially for local exchange. Subsequently, the need for regular exchange within a region and with other regions led to organised commerce. This in turn led to the emergence of merchant organisation, itinerant trade and partial monetisation from the ninth century. Though the relative importance of these features varied from one region to another, the increasing role of agriculture in this new economy is easily seen.

Agricultural products came to be exchanged with items of long distance trade carried on by itinerant traders. This development also led to a change in the pattern of landownership towards the close of the early medieval period. Merchants and economically influential craftsmen like weavers, invested in land, i.e. purchased land called the Jagati Kottali (community of weavers) and the community of Telligas (oil pressers) were active participants in agriculture. The former are repeatedly mentioned as excavating tanks and laying out gardens.

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## **8.7 The Characterisation of Early Medieval Agrarian Economy**

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Different views have been put forward regarding the nature of the overall set up of early medieval agrarian economy. On the one hand it is seen as a manifestation of feudal economy, while on the other it is dubbed as a peasant state and society.

The salient features of 'Indian Feudalism' are—

1. Emergence of hierarchical landed intermediaries. Vassals and officers of state and other secular assignees had military obligations and feudal titles. Sub-infeudation by these donees to get their land cultivated led to the growth of different strata of intermediaries. It was a hierarchy of landed aristocrats, tenants, share croppers and cultivators. This hierarchy was also reflected in the power/administrative structure where a sort of lord-vassal relationship emerged.
2. Another important feature was the prevalence of forced labour. The right of extracting forced labour (*vishti*) is believed to have been exercised by the Brahmana and other grantees of land. Forced labour was originally a prerogative of the king or the state. It was transferred to the grantees, petty officials, village authorities and others. In the Chola inscription alone, there are more



than one hundred references to forced labour. Even the peasants and artisans came within the jurisdiction of vishti. As a result, a kind of serfdom emerged, in which agricultural labourers were reduced to the position of semi-serfs.

3. Due the growing claims of greater rights over land by rulers and intermediaries, peasants also suffered a curtailment of their land rights. Many were reduced to the position of tenants facing ever growing threat of eviction. A number of peasants were only ardhikas (share croppers). The strain on the peasantry was also caused by the burden of taxation, coercion and increase in their indebtedness.
4. Surplus was extracted through various methods. Extra economic coercion was a conspicuous method. With the rise of new property relations, new mechanisms of economic subordination was evolved. The increasing burden is evident in the mentioning of more than fifty levies in the inscription of Rajaraja Chola.
5. It was relatively a closed village economy. The transfer of human resources along with land to the beneficiaries shows that in such villages the peasants, craftsmen and artisans were attached to the villages and hence were mutually dependent. Their attachment to land and to service grants ensured control over them by the beneficiaries.

In brief, a subject and immobile peasantry, functioning in relatively self-sufficient villages buttressed by varna restrictions, was the marked feature of the agrarian economy during the five centuries under survey.

The theory of the existence of autonomous peasant societies is put forward in opposition to the theory of Indian feudalism. It is based mainly on the evidence from South Indian sources.

According to this theory, autonomous peasant regions called the nadus evolved in South India by early medieval times. They were organised on the basis of clan and kinship ties. Agricultural production in the nadus were organised and controlled by the nattar. i.e. people of the nadu, organising themselves into assemblies i.e nadu. Members of this assembly were velalas or non-Brahmana peasants. Their autonomy is indicated by the fact that when land grants were made by the kings and lesser chiefs, orders were issued with the consent of the nattar. Orders were first addressed to them. They demarcated the gift-land and supervised the execution of the grant because they were the organisers of production. The Brahmanas and dominant peasants became allies in the production process. Apparently, the exponents of this hypothesis share the notion of rural self-sufficiency, which is an important component of Indian feudalism. The theories of Indian feudalism and autonomous peasant

societies have their adherents and claim to be based on empirical evidence. However early medieval agrarian economy was a highly complex one. In order to understand its character and to provide a general framework for its study, detailed studies of its regional pattern will have to be worked out.

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## 8.8 Conclusion

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The above survey undoubtedly reveals that the period from c.A.D-800-1200 may unequivocally be regarded as a period of great agrarian expansion which is evident from the overall importance paid to agriculture during the period. Donation of land in backward areas by different political authorities created obvious possibilities for the expansion of agriculture during the period under study. Several factors including socio, economic, political, geographical and climatic factors worked together to bring this phenomenon.

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## 8.9 Summary

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The survey of agrarian economy during the five centuries between the eight and thirteenth highlights:

1. perceptible expansion of agriculture in practically all over the Indian sub-continent as a result of land grants. While the hitherto virgin lands and forested areas attracted this expansion, grants were also made in regions which were already under cultivation.
2. the deep rooted ideological interests of religious establishments—both brahmanical and non-Brahmanical which sang praises of gifts of land.
3. the emergence of various types of agrarian settlements with graded land rights.
4. growing interests of non-agriculturists in land, specially those of state officials, traders, artisans etc.
5. the spurt in technological improvements—in irrigation, agricultural implements, crops and cropping pattern etc.
6. the mutual relationships amongst different groups related to land underlining seeds of rural tension, and
7. the debate on the characterisation of early medieval agrarian economy focussing on the distinguishing traits of “Indian Fedalism” and “Peasant State and Society”.

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## 8.10 Model Questions

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1. What were the different items of dana to Brahmanas? Which was considered as the best gift?
2. How did brahmadayas help in agrarian expansion?
3. What is the difference between brahmadeya, secular and devadana grants.
4. What was the nature of rights enjoyed by land grantees?
5. Describe briefly the main methods of irrigation.
6. Give a few causes for tension in rural areas during the period under review.
7. What was the pattern of commerce in early medieval period? Did it affect the pattern of land ownership?
8. Give the salient features of Indian feudalism.

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## 8.11 Suggested Readings

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## **Unit- 9 □ Landlords and Peasants**

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### **Structure**

- 9.0 Objectives**
- 9.1 Introduction**
- 9.2 Landgrants**
- 9.3 Landholders**
- 9.4 Landlord and Peasant relationship**
- 9.5 Peasant revolts**
- 9.6 Villages**
- 9.7 Conclusion**
- 9.8 Summary**
- 9.9 Model Questions**
- 9.10 Suggested Readings**

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### **9.0 Objectives**

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By going through this unit, we will be able to understand :

- landgrants
- land holders
- landlord and peasant relationship
- peasant revolts

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### **9.1 Introduction**

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The early medieval economy was in many ways different from that of the earlier period. The economy was in a state of flux, given the fact that there was a steep decline in trade and commerce. This change led to an agrarian organisation based on the landgrant system. Numerically superior to other types of sources, landgrants itself are indicators of the changing socio-economic and political processes from A.D 600.

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## 9.2 Landgrants

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The donation of land was a part of Indian tradition, which became popular in C.750-1206 CE due to changed economic situation. We can divide land grants broadly into two categories, i.e. religious and secular awards. Spiritual gifts include Brahmadeya, Devadana and Agrahara Mangalam, which was started by the ruling dynasties and subsequently followed by chiefs, officials and feudatories. Secular grants were made from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards for secular purposes to officials and royal kinsmen who were assisting the king in administration and defence.

The regular creation of agraharas in favour of religious personages and establishments (Buddhist Viharas, Jaina Vasadis and Brahmanical mathas and temples)—a process initiating from the fourth-fifth centuries A.D.—bestowed the donees with distinct material advantages. The donee (s), whether individual, collective or institutional, emerged as major landholders. Nalanda, the famous Buddhist Vihara and educational institute in present Bihar figures prominently in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Ijing (In India from A.D. 675 to A.D. 695). He had documented that the monastery received no less than 209 villages for the maintenance of the establishment. To this were further added five more villages during the time of the Pala ruler, Devapala, who granted these villages at the request of Balaputradeva the ruler of Yavadvipa (Java). The Buddhist establishment with its jurisdiction over as many as 214 villages is therefore viewed as a landholder. That individual brahmanas too could enjoy extensive holdings is clearly illustrated by the grant of as much as  $339\frac{1}{2}$  unmanas. (a particular unit of land measurement) of land in favour of Halayudhasarman, a leading religio-scholarly figure in Bengal under the later Senas. Many grants were made in the Pratihara realm but interestingly enough only to individual brahmanas and not to a group of donees or a religious establishment. The Rashtrakuta Kings took considerable pride in their inscriptions for having created numerous agraharas and also renewed older grants. In the Tamil areas, two types of grant are encountered : i) Kaniyatchi or the right to possess land or village, mostly associated with brahmadeya endowments and ii) the right to enjoyment of revenue from a land or village, generally found in the instances of devadanas or endowments to temples.

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### 9.3 Landholders

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The wide spread practice of issuing landgrants created a distinct class of landholders, who could not normally cultivate the soil themselves. The priestly community did not engage in actual tilling of the land that was granted to them. The granted area could also have been too large or scattered to be tilled by the donee himself (for example in the case of Halayudha's land holding). This assumed a special significance in the interpretative model of Indian feudalism. There has been epigraphic injunction to the donee to cultivate the donated plot or to get it cultivated (Krishyata Karshayatava), to do the work himself or get it done. (Kuryat Karayet Vo) to enjoy it himself or get it enjoyed. The profusion of the use of causative verbs in the grant had led to the belief that there emerged a distinct group of workers employed by the donees for the utilization of lands granted to them.

An inscription from Bengal (AD 675) speaks of the enjoyer of the land (bhujyama naka) who is clearly distinguished from the actual tiller (Krishyamanaka). Owing to this sharp distinction between the two categories in the land system, it is likely that the actual tiller of the soil did not own any land. The inscription also seems to have distinguished the enjoyer of the land (bhujyamanaka) from Mitralahi, on owner whose name figures in the record in the sixth case-ending (Mitralahyah), thereby suggesting the ownership of a plot. This seventh century A.D inscription speaks of a complex land system in eastern Bengal consisting of at least three distinct tiers—the owner, the enjoyer and the tiller of the soil (krishyamanaka). It has already been suggested on the basis of the Dharmasastra norms that the donee (Svami) under such circumstances, would assume the position of landed intermediaries between the ruler (mahipati) and the tiller (Karshaka).

According to R.S. Sharma's classic study of Indian feudalism, the donee enjoyed the transfer of many local resources of considerable importance besides receiving the grant of land e.g. with low areas (satala), high areas (soddesa), marshy area (Sajalasthala), dry areas and ditches (Sagarhoshara), with mango, mohua, jackfruit, coconut, betel, fishes and tortoise (samramadhuka, samrapanasa, Saguvakanarikela, Samatsya, Sakacha hapa). Occasionally, the state's right to levy cess on salt production (Salavanya) was also transferred to the donee. In many charters of the Palas and Pratiharas, the boundary demarcations of the granted plot (s)/area are only vaguely described as extending upto the grasslands and pasture grounds at the outskirts of the village (Svasimatrinarayutigocharaparyanta). This has led to the argument that the imprecise boundary markings would prove advantageous to the

dence, who could verify, extend the area of cultivation and his authority beyond the actual limits of the granted area.

The large number of instances of revenue transfers are likely to have impoverished the treasury as the ruler relinquished the rights over revenue. That is why such grants were made according to the custom and principle of transferring, unyielding type of plots (bhumi-chhidranaya), which no longer generated any revenue for the ruler.

The next step in the construction of the feudal economy is that such transfer of resources and revenue resulted in the transformation of royal rights over land into private individual rights. This further corroded the economic prerogatives of the state authority.

D.D. Kosambi pointed out that prior to the granting of land, many resources of the village were generally enjoyed and utilized by the entire community; the granting of the land ensured the mastery of the donee (s) over these resources. Kosambi saw in this process the conversion of the communal property into feudal property.

The growth of individual landholdings seems to have received a further impetus in the sastric recognition of the divisibility of joint family holdings in the early middle ages. Epigraphic data have been utilized by Nobaru Karashima to throw light on the changing character of landholding in the lower Kaveri valley under the Cholas. During the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century. A.D. the brahmadeya grants indicated the prevalence of individual holdings. While the non-brahmadeya villages with its ur assembly as a local body provided a contrast by their strong notions of community-holding of the land. Ten out of the eleven grants of this period leave a strong impression that the ur as a whole participated in land transactions. The monetary gains from such transactions too were utilized by the ur assembly for the development of the locality and did not contribute to the financial gain of an individual. The later phase of the Chola rule however, yields 15 records of transaction in land involving individuals (including Kshatriyas or irachukulavaras), even in the ur areas, which seems to have experienced private holding of land under changing circumstances. Karashima has cited epigraphic evidence to show that steps were sale recommended to check widespread purchase and role of land in ur areas.

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## **9.4 Landlords and Peasants' Relationship**

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The above discussions suggest the rise of new, wealthy and powerful landholding groups, either as owners or enjoyers of the soil, to the crucial position of an intermediate between the ruler and the actual tiller of the soil and hence ruthlessly exploring both.

The emergence of landed intermediaries is diagnosed as a typical symptom of the Indian feudal economy. While their rule is hardly considered beneficiary to the economic and political interest of the ruler, their growing strength seriously impoverished the peasant. Textual references prior to AD 600 gave synonyms to peasants as gahapati, Kutumbika, mahattara, etc. impressing upon the possibility of landholding by peasants themselves.

According to B.N.S Yadava, the early medieval texts seem to have been less familiar with these terms and better acquainted with epithets like halakara, halika, karshaka, krishivalajana—all related to his function as a ploughman. This change in epithets is thought to have reflected the impoverished status of a tiller of the soil, especially in relation to the grantee who owned or enjoyed the landed property. The advent of the arddhika (share cropper as a social group in early medieval Deccan) is taken as an indicator of the worsening plight of the ordinary peasant. Acute poverty of cultivators (krishivala janah) and the distressed economic condition of peasants (dhanojjita) is portrayed in Padmapurana. The poverty of peasants stands in sharp contrast to the flourishing State of the landlords (akshinadhana-Sampanna)

The Skandapurana made the pseudo forecast that kings of the Kali age would oppress tillers. This oppression could easily take the shape of unbearable fiscal burden imposed on peasants by both the ruler and the landlord. This possibility gains ground in the light of the frequent use of the term pida (literally oppression, affliction or disease) as a synonym of revenue in the copper plate. On several occasions, the copper plates enlist the different heads of revenue (bhaga, bhoga, kara, hiranya, samastapratyaya etc.) transferred to the donee. At the end of such a list, frequently figures the term adior adikam, meaning eteetera. R.S. Sharma draws a logical inference that this further empowered the donee, or in other words, the landed intermediary, to appropriate resources from unspecified and extra-legal sources from the peasants. The imposition of vishti or forced labour, figuring in inscription since the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries, becomes increasingly regular in early middle ages. It leads to replace, according to the proponents of Indian feudalism, the institution of slavery, with forced labour as the principal form of exacting involuntary labour demanded by the donee (s) from the peasant. In the Rajatarangini, king Lalitaditya Muktapida is said to have strongly recommended the appropriation of all surplus from the peasant, leaving the barest minimum for the latter's subsistence. The extortionate measure ensured, as Kalhana narrated, that the peasant could never accumulate enough resources to transform himself into a damara or feudal lord in the future.

D.D. Kosambi situated this statement in the light of the improved irrigation and crop production in the Vitasta valley, but in this very prosperity, he also found the



origins of the feudal economy in Kashmir, hardly beneficial to peasants. The frequent description of the peasant as *baddhahala* (tied to the plough) and *asritahalika* (dependent peasant) led scholars to infer that he was imposed of further restrictions by the landlord.

Sharma and Yadava have provided us with the image of the immobility of the peasant. The debarring of the peasant to renounce the world by the *sastras* is seen as another impediment to his movements and to his chance to run away from the harsh realities of object poverty. Readings into various early medieval texts by B.N.S. Yadava impress upon the deteriorating condition of peasants. The *Saravali* presents an image of the subordinate position of the peasant (*Preshyakrishibala*). *Jinasenasuri* lays down in his *Kathakosaprakarana* (eleventh century A.D) that the status of the peasant was marginally better than the *antyajas* (the lowest social groups) and the *karus* (artisans). *Dhanapala's* Lexicon, the *Paiya-lacchi-namamala* explains *Kasaya* (*krishaka*) and *haliya* (*halaka*) as *pamara* (mean/wicked). *Amarakirtti* (A.D. 1218) wrote about the *paradasattana* (i.e. *paradasatva* or subjected condition) of the *halika* or the tiller. Peasants could however flee the lands of an extremely extortionate lord as their last resort, as has been narrated in the *Subhashitaratnakosha*. Though this is a telling commentary on the severe conditions of cultivators, they were not tied to the land like the serfs in European feudal society. As serfdom, an attribute of feudal social formation, was unlikely to have been present in early medieval India, the alternative perception of a subject or dependent peasantry (the epithets like *baddhahala* and *asritahalika*) looms large in the framework of Indian feudalism.

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## 9.5 Peasant Revolts

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These scholars have cited literary accounts of peasant protests and uprisings although these rarely resulted in the realization of the peasants' aims. The organization of the *Karshakas* into a *sreni* or guild like organization and their valiant resistance to intermediaries with inadequate wooden weapons have been highlighted. The *Yasastilak acampu* of *Samadevasuri*, remarkable for the author's awareness of the situation in the Deccan under the *Rashtrakutas*, portrays the breakdown of the peasant's patience, and eventually to the outbreak of an armed uprising against the oppression of landlords. The armed resistance, however, was abortive and the cultivators met with death.

The historiography of Indian feudalism has exhaustively dealt with the capture of *Varandri* in North Bengal by the *Kaivarta* chief *Divya*; it temporarily eclipsed the *Pala* rule there. Scholars assumed that the *Kaivartas* belonged to cultivator caste and

this has led to Sharma's hypothesis of a successful peasant rebellion in early medieval Bengal. The point has been contested on the grounds that the only available evidence (the Ramacharitam of Sandhyakarnandi) did not conclusively prove that Divya captured power in Varendri as the accepted representative and leader of the discontent Kaivarta group. The Ramacharitam, on the other hand, may offer the reading that Divya actually captured power by taking advantage of the waning authority of the Palas in North Bengal.

R.S. Sharma has presented epigraphic data mainly from the far South, on the discontent among peasants following grants of lands to temples and priests. Occasional violent protests against indiscriminate grants of land by rulers and/or their vassals are not unheard of. It is significant to note that a ninth century A.D. grant from South India warns people in general not to create any trouble (upadrava) to the donee, as disobedience amounts to treason (mahadroha). Loss of old registrars and deeds regarding grants of land and subsequent resistance to brahmana donees by the non Brahmana population in village have been recorded in the inscriptions of 5th, 6th and 11<sup>th</sup> regnal years of Rajaraja III.

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## 9.6 Villages

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The arguments presented in the formation of the feudal milieu highlight that the large number of grants enjoyed by landed intermediaries-explaining both the ruler and the peasant-resulted in the emergence of the self-sufficient, enclosed village community. The economy thriving on land grant was solely dependent on agriculture, the non-agrarian sectors of the economy dwindled in a conspicuous manner. The rapid ruralization of the material milieu is explained by Kosambi, Sharma, Yadava, D.N Jha and Shrimali in terms of the signs of decline in craft, commerce and urban centres.

D.C Sirkar effectively questioned whether the transfer of revenue to the donee by royal charter would at all amount to the corrosion of the ruler's economic prerogatives. The numerous instances of Karasanas, especially from medieval Orissa, suggest the King's retaining his right to collect levies even from granted areas. The perpetual relinquishing of royal power over granted areas can be questioned on the basis of administrative interventions into the conditions of the previous grant. Instances of such interventions in favour of devadasi can be traced to the history of Rajasthan. In view of the brahmana's known dependence on material support (landgrants) from the ruler, it may be logically posited that the ruler's position possibly was strengthened by creating a loyal group of recipients of royal favour.

Kulke demonstrated how the sasani (grant-holding) brahmanas became a major support group for the ruler in Orissa. A major critique to the idea of Indian feudalism lies in the absence of contractual elements in land grants either between the ruler and his vassals or between the landlord and the 'subject peasantry'. The absence of this trait in so many documents have been taken to negate the prevalence of any feudal element in the Indian scenario.

Critiquing Sharma, Mukhia concluded that the peasant's control over the production process remained intact and was not jeopardized with the issuing of landgrants.

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## 9.7 Conclusion

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A thorough study of epigraphic evidence has led Sircar to conclude that the granting of revenue transfer need not be interpreted as detrimental to the economic interests of the king, since the person or the vassal or the administrative officer requesting for such a concession was to pay to the royal treasury a lumpsum amount beforehand. Seen from this point of view, the disastrous consequences of issuing landgrants have been doubted. This has further been followed up by piling data to show that–

- 1) There were no dismemberment of polity and the emperor exercised his superiority over his subordinates; and
- 2) No decline in the economy can be related to the issue of land grants. The Marxist historians have been criticized for their inability to distinguish landlordism and tenancy in ancient India from feudalism. Sircar strongly upheld this position and contested the formulation of Indian feudal polity and economy.

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## 9.8 Summary

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Land, revenue system and agricultural relations between landlords and peasants were the essential part of feudalism developed in c.750-1206 CE. The revolutionary changes occurred in these sectors compared to the situation that existed in c.600 CE, which brought broad changes in early medieval Indian socio-economic and political conditions. In this way, we can question the popular notion of the millennia changelessness of Indian society. The land became crucial and a valuable resource in the era, both politically and economically. Land-grants led to the emergence of new religious and secular landed intermediaries and feudatories. Peasants loudly

remained as owner of their areas and almost turned into labourertiller. The cultivators were paying numerous legal and extra-legal taxes to landlords and king including Vishti (forced labour). The state shared its revenue resources with fedual lords.

Land grants led to the availability of new lands hitherto utilized. It became beneficial for both the state and peasants. The state started generating more revenue through access to new areas and local resources base. The State aslo carried forward its authority to each corner of the kingdom. The ruler became more powerful politically and economically by creating a loyal group of receipients of royal favour with additional facilities such as irrigation sources. The peasant also got new lands to work since the feudal lords, temples, and Brahmins did not work themselves. New agrarian settlements out of brahmadeya, agraphara, manglam, devadanas and secular grants provided enough oppurtunities to farmers to acquire land and work. It led to the expansion of agriculture all over India. The peasants remained the sole producer and commanded the directions of the early medieval agrarian economy.

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## 9.9 Model Questions

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- 1) What are the differences between brahmadeya devadana and secular land grants?
- 2) What was the nature of rights enjoyed by land grantees?
- 3) Write five lines on the role of land in the early medieval polity, economy, society and religion.

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## 9.10 Suggested Readings

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Chakravarti, Ranabir — *Exploring Early India upto c.A.D 1300* (Macmillan) 2013).

Raychoudhuri, Tapan and Irfan Habib (Edn.) : *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol.-I, c.1200 – c.1750.*

Yadava, B. N. S., *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad, 1973.

Sharma, R. S. : *Early Medieval Indian Society*, 2001.

Mukhia, Harbans : *The Feudalism Debate*, 2003.

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## **Unit- 10 □ Proliferation of Castes; Status of Untouchables**

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### **Structure**

#### **10.0 Objectives**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

#### **10.2 Proliferation of Castes**

##### **10.2.1 Kshatriyas**

##### **10.2.2 Brahmanas**

##### **10.2.3 Vaishyas**

#### **10.3 Untouchables**

##### **10.3.1 Untouchability : Temporary and Permanent**

##### **10.3.2 Untouchability arising Out of Performing Sinful Acts**

##### **10.3.3 Untouchability Arising Out of Following Certain Occupations**

##### **10.3.4 Untouchability of the Shudras**

##### **10.3.5 The Chandala and his polluting influence**

##### **10.3.6 Untouchability arising out of physical Impurities**

##### **10.3.7 Untouchability arising out of adherence to Heretical Religious sects**

#### **10.4 Conclusion**

#### **10.5 Summary**

#### **10.6 Model Questions**

#### **10.7 Suggested Readings**

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### **10.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit, we will come to know about :

- The concept of 'caste'
- Proliferation of caste, untouchables, different ways of becoming untouchables.

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## 10.1 Introduction

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The term “caste” comes from the Portuguese *casta*, which takes no account of *varna* but does encode ranks among status groups. We cannot advance one single acceptable definition for explaining the caste system. Caste can be viewed as a multifaceted status hierarchy composed of all members of society, with each individual ranked within the broad fourfold class (*varna* or color) divisions or within the fifth class of untouchables-outcastes and the socially polluted. The four fold caste divisions are Brahman (Priests and scholars), Kshatriyas or Chhetri (rulers or warriors), Vaisya or Vaisaya, merchants and traders) and Sudra (farmers, artisans and laborers). In each system, each caste (*Jati*) is ideally an endogamous group in which membership is both hereditary and permanent. The only way to change caste status is to undergo Sanskritization. Sanskritization can be achieved by migrating to a new area and by changing one’s caste status and/or marrying across the caste line, which can lead to the upgrading or down-grading of caste, depending on the spouse’s caste. The term “caste” came to mean an ethnic group with a ranked position in social relations.

At the core of the caste structure is a rank order of values bound up in concepts of ritual status, purity and pollution. Further more, caste determines an individual’s behaviour, obligations and expectations. All the social economic, religious, legal and political activities of a caste society are prescribed by sanctions that determine and limit access to land position of political power, and command of human labor. Within such a constructive system, wealth, political power, high rank and privilege converge, hereditary occupational specialization is a common feature. Nevertheless, caste is functionally significant only when viewed in a regional or local context and at a particular time. The assumed correlation between the caste hierarchy and the socio economic class hierarchy doesnot always hold.

The term *Jati* came to connote a specifically South Asian style of multi-cultural ethnic identity. The term could denote virtually any type, category or group of people with similar characterization, who tended to inter-marry, live together, engage in similar customs, worship alike, dress alike, eat similar food, speak alike, and be represented by group leaders.

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## 10.2 Proliferation of Castes

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The caste system, which had been established much earlier continued to be the

basis of the society in the early Medieval times as well. But there were important changes within the caste system. The orthodox section during the period accepted 'heredity' instead of 'culture' as the deciding factor in the determination of castes. Varna and Jati began to be regarded as virtually synonymous. The varnas were far outnumbered by ever proliferating jatis. The problems of understanding the social organization of early medieval times from the points of view of the unchanging four varna model have been sometimes recognized by the then theorists themselves, tacitly or explicitly. This is seen in the attempt at presenting an image of the society divided into only two tiers : the dvija (literally twice born, but actually denoting the brahmana) and advija (literally the non-twice born, but actually meaning the Sudra). This view at least theoretically omits the existence of the Kshatriya and the Vaishya as significant social groups. Such a situation is particularly noticeable in early medieval Bengal and Tamil speaking areas. The law givers of early medieval times were clearly aware of the rise in the number of Jatis, a social phenomenon explained by them in terms of innumerable matrimonial combinations and permutations within the over-arching four-fold varna order. The Jati or more precisely mishrajatis, according to the latest startum of the Vedic literature numbered eight in addition to the four varnas.

### **10.2.1 Kshatriyas**

This period also witnessed the emergence of the Rajput class in India. These Rajputs were considered leaders of which dominated certain tracts of land, and provided the core of the armed forces. The leaders of the clan, most of whom were related to the ruler by tiers of blood, considered the state to be ruled jointly by them. There is a good deal of controversy among scholars about the origin of the Rajputs. Some of them consider them to be of mixed origin some being descendents of foreigners, such as Sakas, Hunas, etc. and indigenous tribes, and even Brahmans. On the other hand, many of the Rajput clans, traditionally numbering thirty six, trace their genealogy to the solar and lunar families of the Kshatriyas which are mentioned in the Mahabharata. Modern scholarship lays emphasis on the process by which people belonging to different social groups tried to legitimize their newly acquired power and position by being accorded the status of Kshatriyas. Sometimes a mixed Brahman-Kshatriya status was sought by claiming descent through a Brahman mother. According to scholars this was a part of a complex process of social growth. Thus, in some areas of Rajasthan, tribal lands were colonized, and Brahmans, traders and warriors settled on the land. In many areas, this was accompanied by introducing

a superior type of economy based on irrigation through wells, bunds, etc. and bringing in superior crops. In the process, some of the cultivators became Rajputs, while some remained Shudras.

The concept generalized as 'Rajputization' is accompanied by the growth of the agrarian economy and also of acquisition of political power by some sections. The Brahmana played an important role in this process. Thus there was the agnikula legend, traced to the eleventh century, whereby the sage, Vashistha, produced four Rajput clans the Pratiharas, Solanki or Chalukyas, Parmar or Paware, and Chahamanas or Chauhan out of the sacrificial fire. During the period, Brahmans wrote many genealogies of ruling families, linking them to ancient Kshatriya families. Thus, the Gurjar-Pratiharas, who are reputed to originate from the Gurjar stock, were linked to Lakshman who had acted as the door keeper (pratihara) of Rama.

### 10.2.2 Brahmans

The most exalted position in the hierarchical Jati-Varna society was obviously enjoyed by the Brahmanas. The Brahmins stood at the top of the social hierarchy. In addition to his highest ritual status in the society, the Brahmana as a literate person interpreting the vedic epico-puranic and various other textual traditions, were naturally in a pre-eminent and advantageous position vis-a-vis the lower jati, whose number steadily proliferated. Contemporary literature and inscription show that the Brahmins had numerous subsections. The contemporary digest also show the continuation of the privileges of the Brahmanas like claiming reverence from all varnas by the mere fact of birth, expounding the duty of all classes, freedom from death sentence, exemption from taxes and many other such privileges.

This Brahman Rajput alliance had many political and cultural consequences. The Rajputs, acting as champions of the newly expansionist Hinduism, symbolized their power by building grand temples, and endowed them and the Brahman priests with large grants of lands, gifts, endowments etc.

Therefore as it could be seen that caste (Jati) is not as rigid as has sometimes been believed : individuals and groups could rise in the varna scale, and they could also fall. Sometimes, it was found difficult to classify new castes in the varna scale. An instance of this is the Kayastha caste, which begins to be mentioned more prominently from this period. It seems that originally people from different castes, including Brahmans and Sudras, who worked in the royal establishments, were called Kayastha.



Theoretically the Brahmana is supposed to have the most intimate linkage with the Kshatriya. The early medieval period in Indian History, albeit abounding in ruling houses, did not invariably witness a conspicuous Kshatriya varna. That a Kshatriya origin was not a precondition for gaining and establishing ruling power is amply borne out by many historical instances of this period. There have been cases where the ruling authorities did not suppress their Sudra origin in their official records. One such example is the Kakatiya dynasty of Warangal.

The traditional Kshatriya group were possibly going through a process of change during this time. Some of them were incorporated into the Rajput structure if they continued to be in power. The proliferation of Rajputs contributed to the undermining of the political status of the early Kshatriya groups which were taking to less potent occupations and also, that the preferred term for the ruling stratum now was not Kshatriya but Rajput. Kshatriyas occupation is assumed as of ruling and fighting. The avenue of possible upward social mobility, labelled as Kshatriyazation by historian Herman Kulke or Rajputization as termed by Surajit Sinha proved advantageous to the ruling houses.

### **10.2.3 Vaishya**

It is, however, no less difficult to find an identifiable Vaishya Varna than constructing the image of a cohesive kshatriya Varna. The Sruti ideal of the Vaishya performing agriculture, cattle rearing and trade was given up in early medieval times as numerous occupational Jatis took up multifarious crafts and professions without having to be subsumed within the Vaishya varna. If there were any Vaishyas, they became synonymous with the Vanij or the merchant. There are some early medieval epigraphic documents that narrate about the creation of settlements for trader by political authorities. Such a group or merchants were known as vaniggrama (more prominent in South India as manigraman). Both local (vastavya) and non-local/outsider (vaideshya) merchants could have belonged to the Vanig grama (the term grama here denotes a body or group, and not a village). That local rulers occasionally invited a vajnigrama community of merchants to settle in their realm is known from an inscription of AD 592. There is also atleast one known case of the creation of a Vaishyagrahara or a revenue free settlement for the Vaishyas in early medieval Orissa.

### **10.2.4 Sudra**

Theoretical treatises that champion the cause of brahmanical social norms have

an expected bias against the sudra—the lowest of the four varnas. These tests are once again replete with contradictory statements that suggest growing complexities and variances in their assessment of the Sudra's position. An interesting departure from the previous definition of the Sudra attracts our attention—the Sudra stands for all non-brahmana groups in the perception of many early medieval texts. The protracted and slow process of bracketing the Vaishya with the Sudra thus comes to a culmination. The approximation of Vaishyas to the Sudra began as early as Manu and Baudhyana-dharma sutra. Contemporary writers as well as modern historians are of the opinion that there were hardly any difference between the Sudras and Vaishyas and that the Vaishyas were brought down to the position of the Sudras from during the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE.

There has been a systematic attempt to pronounce greater disabilities on the Sudras. The Parasara Smriti debar food from the hands of a Sudra and prohibits sharing his seat with the Brahmana. The touch of the Sudra and subsequently his sign are also considered to cause pollution to the brahmana, who stood ward off the impurity by achamana (ceremonial sipping of the water). In the Sutras and the early Dharmashastras, the Sudra had been enjoined upon to serve the higher three varnas, for e.g. by washing the feet of brahmanas and guests, serving the three upper varnas or the dvijas was his only duty. The early medieval treatises often view the Sudra's touch as impure as that of the nishada. The same derogatory attitude is evident in the injunction of taking out the corpse of the sudra (also that of the Vaishya) by a city gate other than the one meant for the brahmana. Medhatithi emphatically rules out any possibility of emancipation for the sudras.

The emerging similarity between the vaishya and the sudra may suggest that agriculture, cattle rearing and artisanal activities, previously associated with the vaishyas, now could be performed by the Sudra. This implies, according to Sharma, that the sudra in the early medieval times would not have been bound by the sastric norms of merely serving the higher three varnas as his sole source of sustenance. The expansion of sedentary settlements, especially in the hitherto non-arable tracts in the early middle ages, must have provided the sudra with the scope to engage in agriculture. This was further facilitated by the vaishya's identity with the vanik or trader.

Two non-brahmana social groups, and hence theoretically placed in the sudra category, the Kayasthas and Vaidyas. The Kayasthas, often synonymous with the term *karana*, is known since the early historical times as the scribe or the clerk. There is little evidence to show that the Kayastha prior to AD 900 assumed any Jati-

like feature, it denoted a profession that could be taken up by different varnas and social groups. Since A.D. 900 can be discerned a marked tendency to claim a distinct lineage on the part of the kayastha. Being a literate person in a society with little scope of literacy for the masses—largely dependent on oral traditions and verbal communications—generated position, power and prestige for the Kayastha. His access to the political and administrative circles of course enhanced his status. The Kayastha now was considered to be the most important non-brahmana group in eastern India and was second only to the brahmanas. In an age which abounded in the issuance of royal copper plate charters, the Kayastha as the scribe or clerk was indispensable.

Apart from the Kayasthas, the other non-brahmana social group was formed by the Vaidya or physicians. As physicians, also called ambashthas, they were generally held in low esteem in law books. The hostile attitude to the Vaidyas has sometimes been attributed to the superstitious and anti-science view in the brahmanical treatises. It may be possible that the close association of the physician with Buddhism and Buddhist monasteries probably made them further disagreeable in the brahmanical normative texts.

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### 10.3 Untouchable Castes

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A sizeable section of the population, engaged in the manual artisanal production and the rendering of a number of 'unclean' services, was undoubtedly at the receiving end in a brahmanical varna-jati society. They are grouped under the antayajas, the lowest rung in the society, placed below the Sudras and hence defiled as the fifth varna. They include the rajaka, the charmakara, the nata, the buruta, the kaivarta, the Meda and the Bhilla. These were clearly menial castes about whom Alberuni was well aware; the law books typically explain their origins out of pratiloma unions. The law-giver's idea was to relegate menial professional groups and some erstwhile tribal groups to the lowest position in the social ladder. Even lower than these antayaja groups were the chandala, the hadi, the dom and the bhadatau.

It is in this context that untouchability—the most deplorable and the most inhuman aspect of caste society—has to be looked into the varna-jati system, which institutionalizes inequality bares its entire range of social and cultural intolerance in the garb of untouchability. The notion and practice of untouchability is associated with the antyaja groups, particularly the chandala. The practice of assigning the habitat outside the settled society in rural and urban areas for the chandala had

already been noted in the early fifth century by Faxian. The segregational attitude intensified to such an extent that it required a pond in the outskirts designated to be used by the chandalas in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This goes on well with the subsequent injunctions in the Mitakshar and the Aparakatika on the purification of the well used by the chandala. The word asprishya, denoting an untouchable, appears for the first time in the law book of Vishnu. If the Chandala was the first and foremost to be included among the antyajaja asprishya category, Katyayana brought in the Mlechchhas and the Parasikas too. While the touch or sight of other antyajajas and Sudras required ceremonial sipping of purificatory water, the touch of any of these three asprishya during a meal led to defilement and needed to be cleansed away, by bath. Untouchability reached an unprecedented peak during the early middle ages in India. It was used as an effective weapon to ostracize the downtrodden and also the dissenter.

The period 600-1200 A.D. witnessed the systematization of the rules regarding untouchability and the intensification of the process that bred much spite between one social group and another leading to segregation of untouchables. This segregation was a natural corollary to the disabilities and taboos which were designed to be associated with the “untouchables”.

### **10.3.1 Untouchability : Temporary and Permanent**

Untouchability was deemed as arising in various ways : by birth, by the pursuit of improper or impure occupations, by being guilty of certain acts which were prohibited and were regarded as sinful, by adherence to heretical religious sects and by certain physical impurities. However, the distinction between an untouchable person whose impurity passes from one generation to another, and another person who is considered impure only for a short period or who has the option of getting rid of his impurity and polluting influence by performing penance and undergoing purificatory rights is clear in the writings of various law givers from our period. To have a clear understanding of the purity pollution complex, we shall examine various categories of untouchables with special reference to the restrictions imposed on associating with them and the nature of disabilities associated with them.

### **10.3.2 Untouchability Arising Out of Performing Sinful Acts**

Manu says that those who are guilty of killing a brahmana, stealing a brahmana's gold or drinking intoxicating drinks should be excommunicated and no one should dine with them or teach them or officiate as priests for them, nor should one enter

into matrimonial relationships with them and they should wander over the world excluded from all Vedic dharmas. However, Manu also prescribes certain penances for them whose performance would restore their original caste status and make them touchable once again.

The Vrddha Gautama Smriti says that if a person has his food without offering prayers then his status is reduced to that of a chandala for ten years. Here in this case also, the lawgiver has prescribed ways of getting rid of this temporary status of a chandala. The distinctive examples of temporary untouchability arising out of association with those who are considered to be permanently impure can be seen in the injunctions laid by various lawgivers on touching an untouchable, accepting food and water from him or entering into sexual relationship with him. It is interesting to note that while penances and purificatory rights are prescribed for all such persons from a touchable caste who became an untouchable after doing any of the above mentioned things, no such prescriptions are made for those untouchable groups who are condemned to that position by birth.

### **10.3.3 Untouchability Arising out of Following Certain Occupations**

In the period of our study, 600-1200 A.D, we not only get references to the impure occupations, but also find injunctions and prohibitions being prescribed for the followers of these occupations, many of whom are condemned as untouchable castes. Samvarta quoted by Apararka says 'On touching a fisherman, a deer-hunter, a hunter, a butcher, a birdcatcher and a washerman' one must first bathe and then take one's meal. Apararka also prohibits food given by a thief, an acrobat, bard, musician, usurer, physician, goldsmith, blacksmith, weaver, dyer, hunter, washerman, wine seller, oilseed presser and charioteer, astrologer, bell maker, smuggler, painter, leather worker and wine makers. Angira says that on touching a rajaka, a charmakara, a nata, dhivara and a buruda, a dvija becomes pure after sipping water.

The spirit of exclusiveness and exaggerated notions of ceremonial purity were carried to such an extreme by the smriti writers and commentators from the early medieval period that the Sudras also came to be regarded as untouchables and source of pollution.

### **10.3.4 Untouchability of the Shudras: A New Development During This Period**

Some of the orthodox writers of the Smritis went so far so as to hold that on touching even a sudra, a dvijati has to bathe-some thought that only the sudras of inferior types were untouchables, but others extended the observance of the practice

of untouchability to Sudras in general prescribing different means of purification. The Smrtyarthasara prescribes purificatory rights, if a vessel made of brass or bronze is touched by an asatsudra. Angira says that even the intelligent and meritorious people are condemned, if they eat food given by the Sudras, sit with a Sudra, remain in touch with a Sudra or try to gain knowledge from a Sudra. He says that food grains given by a Sudra are like blood and should not be eaten. Markandeya says that not only grain given by a Sudra but also that which has been touched by a Sudra should not be eaten.

Under these circumstances, the traditional view that a person could take food from a Sudra, who was his slave, his cowherd, his family friend or his sharacropper was modified by some and even rejected by others. Thus Aparaka and Haradatta opined that it was applicable only in times of extreme distress caused by natural calamities and Devannabhata regarded it as forbidden in the Kali age.

The degradation of the Sudras to the rank of untouchables and the references to various occupational groups under new labels of untouchable castes did not lead to the creation of a homogenous group of untouchables in which every group was treated equally contaminating and impure. Though the sudras were themselves regarded as untouchables, yet the Angiras smrita reveals that even the sudra was required to perform a penance after drinking water from the pot of a Chandala. It is interesting to note that differential penances and purificatory rights prescribed for members of different varna who come in contact with a chandala.

However, the Chandalas remains the most despised condemned and depressed and grave anxiety and horror are expressed at having any kind of contact with them. The rules of derivative pollution become more stringent and the touch-taboo is extended to be passed to three persons who, in a sequence come into contact with the first one actually touched by a Chandala etc. one after another.

### **10.3.5 The Chandala and his polluting influence touches New Heights**

Apararka and Vijnanesvara takes a different line from Manu, Yajnavalkya and Vishnu and regard even the shadow of a chandala impure and polluting if he came within the length of a cow's tail but such a view was not expressed by Medhatithi or Kulluka bhata. However, Sridhara in Smrtyarthasara does not even specify the distance and says that it is necessary to bathe with the garments on if the shadow of a chandal and svapaka falls on others. According to Parasara, a chandala embodies in his person various kinds of pollution for a dvija and also for a Sudra. He is said to be infecting the roads, and water drawn from a well or vessel touched by him is

not allowed. The Atri Samhita says that if a Chandala woman enters the house and stays there incognito, then that house should be burnt. The attitude of the early medieval smriti writers and commentators regarding the polluting influence of the Chandala is attested by Bana, Alberuni, Kalhana and Hemachandra.

Banabhatta in his Kadambari (A.D. seventh century) talks about the touch taboo associated with the chandala described as the low born. There is the famous story of a Chandala girl coming to the court of the king Sudraka and the king looking at her from a distance as she was unfit to be brought closer to him. The Kadambari also describes the nisada, sabara, pulinda and svaposaka as matanga or chandala whose untouchability is clearly established.

Alberuni also talks about the antyajias who were placed below the Sudras in the social scale and who rendered various kinds of service. However, he says that the antyajias were not reckoned among the castes but only as practitioners of a certain craft or profession who were organised in their respective guilds and who did not live near the villages and towns of the four varnas (brahmana, kshatriya, vaisya and sudra). The occupational groups which were regarded as antyajias included the fuller, shoe-maker, juggler, basket and shield maker, sailor, fisherman, hunter of wild animals and of birds, and the weaver. These groups fully intermarried with one another except the fuller, shoemaker and the weaver, for no others would condescend to have anything to do with them'. Alberuni also talks about the people called hadi (singers of ballads), doma (domba), Chandala and badhatau (hunters and fowlers), who were not reckoned among any caste or guild and were considered as illegitimate progenies of Sudra males and brahmana females. These 'degraded outcastes' were treated as one social group who were distinguished only by their occupations.

The Desi-nama-mala of Hemachandra indicates that the Chandalas used a stick called jhajhari and the dombas, another called Khikkhiri by striking which they made themselves known and the people thus avoided coming into contact with them. The segregation of the Chandala is evident in the use of the term antya, bahya, ant yayoni and antyavasayin by numerous law givers.

The segregation of the Chandalas and some other untouchables too, is talked about in the Laghu Harita Smriti as well, where the lawgiver says that if one comes to know of the place of residence where the antyas and the patitas live in hiding, one has to keep three Krcchha vratas to get purified.

What is most striking is the prescription regarding a menstruating woman coming in contact with the chandala. While the polluting influence of a menstruating

woman is mentioned side by side with the chandala and other untouchable castes and is a running theme in the writings of early medieval writers, it is surmised that a rajasvala (menstruating woman) should avoid the Chandala, and if she touches a Chandala she becomes impure, as in more impure than before and has to keep fasting for three nights to regain her purity.

It is interesting to note that while many law givers regard the temporary untouchability of a menstruating woman arising out of her physical impurity, as polluting and as contaminating as the permanent and hereditary untouchability of a Chandala or an antyaja and prescribe almost similar purificatory rights for those coming in contact with either of the two, the Chandala or antyaja are considered to be more despised and impure than the menstruating woman.

### **10.3.6 Untouchability Arising out of Physical Impurities**

Temporary inaccessibility can't be equated with permanent untouchability and the seclusion of the pure and touchable for a definite period is certainly different from the exclusion of socially deprived and despised lot whose untouchability is hereditary in nature and whose position in the society is irretrievable.

In a Jain text of circa 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. it has been clearly stated that there were two forms of worldly segregation :

- 1) for a definite period.
- 2) for the whole life.

As an example of the temporary segregation, the author refers to the typical Indian custom of segregating those families for a period of ten days where a death or birth had taken place. Whereas various despised castes like that of the nada, varuda, chimpaga, cammara and dumba have been cited as examples of the permanent segregation, by those who considered themselves ritually and socially superior.

### **10.3.7 Untouchability Arising out of Adherence to Heretical Religious sects**

Religious hatred also led to the degradation of followers of some religious sects and cults to the rank of untouchables. Mitaksara and Apararka quote Brahmanda Purana to say that "after touching the saivas, pasupataslokayatikas, nastika, those twice born who have taken up duties not meant for them, and the Sudras, one should get into water with all the garments on. The Vrddha Harita Smriti says that a brahmana who worships Siva becomes like a sudra and if he worships Yaksha and Bhuta, he at once becomes a Chandala. It also says that Durga, Gana and Bhairava,



these are to be worshipped by the pratilomas and the anulomas and Yaksa, Raksasa and Bhuta are worshipped by the Chandala who eats meat and drinks alcohol. Siva is worshipped by the Sudra according to Vrddha Harita smriti. Thus we see that association with saiva tantric and sakta cults is abhorred and said to be defiling and contaminating. The hatred for the followers of these cults is also evident in the passage from Brahmanda Purana which is elaborated by Apararka. He says that when the daityas (monsters) were defeated by the devatas (Gods) some of the defeated became Kapaladharis, (those who hold a skull in their hands), some of them started roaming naked, some shaved their heads, some started wearing saffron coloured clothes and some others covered their bodies with human bones and hair. Obviously, here, the reference is being made to the followers of fantric or non-conforming religious cults who are equated with the monsters and who are abhorred by the brahmana law givers. Atri prohibits physical contact with a Kapalavratadhari and keeps him in the same category as that of Chandala, mleccha and Svapacas.

The contempt for the followers of new religious sects was not without reason. The orthodox brahmanical religion with its narrow caste outlook was challenged by rival schools of religious thought in the early medieval period. Nevertheless, in practice it doesnot seem to have gathered any momentum. However, faced with the challenges posed by the new religious sects and cults, the brahmanical lawgivers were quick to make exceptions to the rules of untouchability to ensure continued patronage of a large number of devotees of the dominant brahmanical religion. Generally, no blame was deemed to have incurred by mixing with the untouchables in festivals, in battles, in religious processions, in calamities or invasions of the country or village, in the presence of great men, etc. The Smrtiyarthasara even permitted the untouchables to enter temples which is very striking. Surprisingly, while on the one hand, some lawgivers are seen making an attempt to widen the social base of the brahmanical religion by introducing an element of flexibility through provisions like exceptions to the rules of untouchability, some Puranas, on the other, talk of the exclusion of the Sudras from places of worship. Thus, references to complete segregation remain abound and the picture does not seem to have changed significantly during A.D. 600-1200 in North India.

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## 10.4 Conclusion

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Romila Thapar rightly pointed out that the four varna model was at the most a theoretical or ideal one. While in the Jati, one finds the functional category. That the sharp rise in the number of Jatis in the early medieval times is to be appreciated in

terms of the spread of sedentary settlements and brahmanical varna model in the erstwhile simpler lineage societies, of the crystallization of occupational groups into endogamous jati and of the gradual absorption of the non-indigenous people into the Indian society has already been dealt with the law books and sacred texts did not present a uniform code. This should not be seen as a scenario for a society in decadences and degeneration. On the other hand it speaks of enough scope of regional variations, relevant to respective local-level formations. The image of changing society gains ground and questions the representation of static and stagnant society on the threshold of the medieval gloom.

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## 10.5 Summary

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The process of consolidation and proliferation of the caste and jati was initiated in the early historical phase as the urbanisation spread in the subcontinent under the Mauryan imperium. This process was consolidated in the early medieval context. It engulfed the agrarian as well as the non-agrarian groups such as the pastoralists, the gatherers hunters and the forest dwellers.

The process was not limited to the higher caste groups alone as has been observed above, but was certainly geared to gain a high caste status in order that wealth and power could be obtained and legitimised. The high ranking in the caste group went with resultant wealth and power. The process was certainly hierarchical in nature and sought to legitimise the power and the wealth of the high caste groups. Thus these social changes can be understood against the framework of feudalism or integrated polity where for both it was essentially the growth of the local and the regional.

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## 10.6 Model Questions

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- 1) What do you mean by proliferation of castes?
- 2) Was the proliferation of castes limited to the upper castes alone?
- 3) Who were the untouchables?
- 4) Critically analyse the proliferation of castes in early medieval India.
- 5) Analyse the importance of caste in the early medieval India.
- 6) Identify the untouchables. Enumerate the differences between temporary and permanent untouchables.
- 7) Enumerate the ways of becoming untouchables.

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## 10.7 Suggested Readings

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Chakravarti, Ranabir, *Exploring Early India upto c.AD 1300 (2010)*, Macmillan Publishers India Limited.

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## **Unit- 11 □ Tribes as Peasants and their Place in the Varna Order**

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### **Structure**

- 11.0 Objectives**
- 11.1 Introduction**
- 11.2 Tribes**
- 11.3 Sources of livelihood**
- 11.4 Peasantization of Tribes**
- 11.5 Place of the Tribes in the Varna Order**
- 11.6 Rise of the Sudras in early medieval times**
- 11.7 Conclusion**
- 11.8 Summary**
- 11.9 Model Questions**
- 11.10 Suggested Readings**

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### **11.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit we will come to know about:

- The definition of tribes, their sources of livelihood, peasantization of tribes place of the tribes in the varna order, concept of the Sudras and their place in early medieval times.

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### **11.1 Introduction**

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Apart from the broad social categories within the Hindu fold, there also existed nomads, tribes and other itinerant groups who had nothing to do with any concept of fixity within the social hierarchy. They believed in a more equitable structuring of society and their leader was at best one among equals. These societies, which thrived in various parts of the subcontinent, did not follow the social rules and rituals prescribed by the Brahmanas and were not stratified along classlines. For such societies, the generic term 'tribes' has been used. They usually lived in forests, hills, deserts and in places where it was difficult for others to reach them. In various ways,

the tribes tried to retain their freedom and preserved a separate culture. In the process, they had occasional clashes with caste based societies.

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## 11.2 Tribes

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A tribe is a group united by a common name and ancestor, in which the members have a common language, a common territory, and a feeling that all who do not share this sense of name and identity are outsiders. Members of each tribe are united by kinship bonds. A tribal group controlled land and pastures jointly and divided these amongst households according to its own set of rules. Likewise, there were also Nomads and Itinerant groups. The Nomads were wandering pastoralists who roamed about from the pastureland to another accompanied with their families and herds of cattle. Similarly, itinerant groups such as those of artisans, craftsmen, traditional story tellers and entertainers simply travelled from place to place practising their different occupations. Both groups would often visit the same place every year. Even today we would see many of these wandering groups from Rajasthan visiting cities like Delhi and other surrounding territories in search of greener pastures during the dry winter season.

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## 11.3 Sources of Livelihood

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Many tribes obtained their livelihood from agriculture. Others were hunter gatherers or herders. More often than not they combined these activities to make full use of the natural resources of the area in which they lived. Nomadic pastoralists travelled long distances along with their animals. They exchanged wool, ghee, milk and so on and so forth with settled agriculturists for grain, cloth, utensils and other products. One nomadic group was that of the Banjaras. They were the most important trader-nomads in the medieval period. Their caravan was called tando.

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## 11.4 Peasantisation of Tribes

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The tribal people followed pastoralism as the method of subsistence. There was a subtle movement of the tribal towards the settled way of life. Expansion of agriculture and increase in the number of land grants and moreover including forest lands in the land grants brought about certain changes in their life. In areas where Brahmadeya villages were situated close to tribal communities, the latter was introduced to plough agriculture. The tribal communities who got incorporated in the agrarian society have to absorb their tribal identity in to some sort of caste in the then

prevalent varna-Jati caste system. This new assimilation of the tribal groups of people into the social structure made the position of the tribal communities very fragile. As a result of this inclusion, the tribal people had to take up certain works for their livelihood. Whatever work they decided to do or rather was allowed to do in a society where the lowest rank of people faced the maximum amount of oppression, decided what caste they belong to. Mostly these tribal communities were given the work and status of the peasants in the early Medieval agrarian society.

During the early medieval period agriculture expanded and more and more forest land was brought under cultivation. This resulted in the assimilation of many tribal communities into the social fold and led to the peasantisation of tribes living in the forest area. This whole process not only influenced the tribal culture, but the tribal culture and customs also got assimilated and absorbed into the mainstream social set up. The worship of the Jagannath cult in Orissa is one such example, the origin of which could well be traced to the early medieval tribal culture.

The Jats who were a pastoral nomadic tribe in Sind gradually moved to the Punjab and became agriculturists cum warriors. Although in the Varna system they were classified as Shudras, they formed a higher section and considered themselves on par with the Rajputs. Marriages between the higher castes and the Sudras were frowned upon, but that they existed is shown by dubbing the marriage of a high caste man with a lower caste woman as anulom (according to norm) and the marriage of a low caste man and a high caste woman as pratilom (against norm). The origin of new castes, which often consisted of professional groups such as potters, weavers, barbers etc, or tribals, were explained as the result of such mixed marriages.

The origin of the Rajputs, during the early medieval period can be attributed to the emergence of various tribal groups. They belonged to different lineages, such as those of the Hunas, the Chandelas and the Chalukyas who became immensely powerful towards the eleventh and the twelfth centuries. They gradually replaced the older rulers, especially in agricultural areas and came to be regarded as the Rajputras (sons of the king).

In the Kshatriya community proliferation was caused mainly by the emergence of a new people called the Rajputs. No other community developed so much of racial and family pride as the Rajputs did. Some of them may have descended from the original kshatriya stock. The practice of ascribing solar and lunar origins to ruling dynasties in inscriptions started from about the seventh century. Probably the Chalukyas, Chandellas, Palas etc were local tribes who were given respectable

Kshatriya lineage by the brahmana genealogists. The rule Katriyo, raja Ucyate operated throughout the length and breadth of the country in early medieval times. The term *samskaravarjitah*, deprived of rituals, applied to the neo-Kshatriya called *Vratya* was euphemism for his admission to the brahmanical social order through inferior rites.

The Bactrian Greeks, Sakas, Parthians, etc. because of the absence of any strong religion or culture of their own, were absorbed into the Hindu social system as second class Kshatriyas. Really the Kshatriya castes multiplied from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Central Asian peoples such as the Hunas and Gurjars joined their ranks as Rajputs. Probably, the Solankis (Chalukyas), Paramaras Chahamanas, Tomaras, Gahadvalas etc. also had Central Asian origins. Although the Jats are not regarded as Rajputs, they had racial affiliations with Central Asian people. The composition of their present caste unions called *khaps* suggests that there was a composite caste of peasants and soldiers who were recruited from the Gurjara, Tomara and other Rajput clans. We hear of Tomar Jats and Gujar Jats, and a document of the 13<sup>th</sup> century shows that Tomar and Gujar representatives sat on the Jat assembly. We also find that the Jats, the Abhirs, and the Gujars smoke and drink together. It would be wrong to think that all foreigners were accepted as Kshatriyas and Rajputs for in course of time the Gujar people broke up into brahmanas, banias, potters, goldsmiths not to speak of herdsmen and cultivators (*Kunbis*) who were looked upon as *Sudra*'s.

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## 11.5 Rise of the Sudras in Early Medieval Times

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*Sudra* came to have the largest number of castes in early medieval times. A huge increase in the number of *Sudra* castes can be inferred from the *Vaijayanti* of *Yadavaprakasa* and also from the *Abhidhanacintamani* of *Hemachandra*. The *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, a work of about the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D, states that thousands of mixed castes are produced as a result of the connection of *Vaisya* women with men of lower castes although these are not specified.

The conquest of the backward peoples living in the jungles, forests, etc. by brahmanised princes from agriculturally advanced areas enormously added to the number and variety of *sudra* castes. The suppression of *Sabaras*, *Bhillas*, *Pulindas* etc. is referred to in a medieval inscription from Central India. For five hundred years from the ninth century almost all the Deccan powers fought against the *Abhira*s, who could not be easily assimilated into the brahmanical order. An inscription of AD 861 shows that the *pratihara* prince *Kakkuka* destroyed and conquered a village of *Abhira*s near *Jodhpur* and settled it with brahmanas and *Vaisyas*, who were promised safety and

livelihood. A Kalachuri inscription of the 12<sup>th</sup> century speaks of the deliverance of the Ratanpur prince Jajalladeva II from the clutches of a tribal people called Thirus or Tharus, which was celebrated by his donation of a village to two brahmanas. It is not clear whether this village lay in the Thiru area, but priests were granted land in many subjugated territories, where they inducted the indigenous aboriginal tribal people into their cultural fold. This process may have been also peaceful, but peaceful or otherwise it succeeded because of the superior material culture of the brahmanas who not only taught new scripts, language and rituals to the preliterate people, but also acquainted them with plough cultivation, new crops, seasons, calendar, preservation of cattle wealth etc.

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## 11.6 Place of the Tribes in the Varna Order

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The tribal people were not always given the same place in the brahmanical order, and even the same tribe broke up into several varnas and castes. We hear of Abhira brahmanas, Abhira Kshatriyas, Abhira Vaisyas, Abhira mahasudras and of Abhira carpenters and goldsmiths although most Abhira seem to have been admitted into Hindu society as sudras. However, in all such cases, jatidharma was strictly respected, and each constituent caste was allowed to retain its customs and manners. The Abhiras, Agaris, Ambasthas, Bhillas, Chandalas, Kauncas etc. mentioned as mixed castes in the Brahmavaivarta Purana and other texts, were originally tribal people who were accommodated in the brahmanical social framework either as pure or impure Sudras.

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## 11.7 Conclusion

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The estimation of social changes during the centuries between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> highlights the following :

- a) extremely rich and varied source material for the survey.
- b) the Brahmanical perspective with a concern for social rigidity and the need to maintain the varna order.
- c) questioning of the bases of caste system where an emphasis is put on consideration of economic factors in the determination of social status.
- d) changing the material base and its impact on the emergence of the new social ethos.
- e) modification in the varna order, particularly the changing position of the



vaishyas and Sudras and the disappearances of intermediary Varnas, especially in Bengal and South India, rise of Kayastha– a new literate class.

- f) multiplication of castes in all varnas
- g) the linkage between a land distribution and the emergence of feudal ranks and
- h) absence of a harmonious and egalitarian society marked by various sources of tension.

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## 11.8 Summary

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Apart from the broad social categories within the Hindu fold, there also existed nomads, tribes and other itinerant groups, who had nothing to do with any concept of fixity within the social hierarchy. They believed in a more equitable structuring of society and their leader was at best one among equals. These societies did not follow the social rules and rituals prescribed by the Brahmins and were not stratified along class lines. For such, societies, the generic term ‘tribe’ has been used. They usually lived in forests, hills, deserts and in place where it was difficult for others to reach them. During the early medieval period agriculture expanded and more and more forest land was brought under cultivation. This resulted in the assimilation of many tribal communities into the social fold and led to the peasantisation of tribes living in the forest area. This whole process not only influenced the tribal culture but the tribal culture and customs also got assimilated and absorbed into the mainstream social set up.

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## 11.9 Model Questions

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1. Who are the Tribes?
2. Discuss the process of peasantization of tribes in early medieval India.
3. What are the sources of livelihood of the Tribes?
4. Assess the place of the Tribes in the Varna order.

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## 11.10 Suggested Readings

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Chakravarti Ranabir, *Exploring Early India up to c.A.D 1300*, Macmillan Publishers India Limited (2010).

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**MODULE - IV**  
**Trade And Commerce**



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## **Unit- 12 □ Inter Regional Trade**

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### **Structure**

#### **12.0 Objectives**

#### **12.1 Introduction**

#### **12.2 Trade : Definition**

#### **12.3 Different Types of Market Places**

##### **12.3.1 Hathas**

##### **12.3.2 Mandapikas**

##### **12.3.3 Pentha**

##### **12.3.4 Nagaram**

#### **12.4 Aspects of Trade**

##### **12.4.1 Commodities of Inland Trade and their consumers**

##### **12.4.2 Trade routes and Means of Communication**

#### **12.5 Conclusion**

#### **12.6 Summary**

#### **12.7 Model Questions**

#### **12.8 Suggested Readings**

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### **12.0 Objectives**

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In this unit, we will discuss :

- The importance of trade and commerce in the overall economic history of India during the early medieval period.
- The different types of market places and various aspects of trade during the period under review.

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### **12.1 Introduction**

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Trade and commerce is an integral component of the Indian economy in the early medieval centuries. The nature and extent of the use of money, the functioning of the

market, the role of agricultural production, and stages in the condition of urban settlements are interrelated developments.

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## **12.2 Trade :Definition**

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The collection, distribution and exchange of goods is called trade. It is a process which depends on a number of factors such as the nature and quantity of production, facilities of transport, safety and security of traders, the pattern of exchange etc. It also involves different sections of society including traders, merchants, peasants and artisans. In a somewhat indirect manner, even political authorities have a stake in it as taxes on the articles of commerce imposed by them constitute an important source of revenue of the state.

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## **12.3 Different Types of Market Places**

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It is true that landgrants, which provide us with the bulk of information, was concerned with the agrarian sector. But painstaking and insightful studies of the meager and marginal notices on commercial life in copper plates and other inscriptions would acquaint us with different type of merchants and various levels of market places over greater parts of the subcontinent during the six centuries in question.

### **12.3.1 Hatta**

Recent studies of early medieval trade emphasize on the inapplicability of blanket terms like 'merchant' and 'trade centre'. At one end of the wide range of exchange centres stood rural market, places, generally called hatta or hattika. They appear to have closely corresponded to addas in the eastern Deccan and santhes in the western and central parts of the Deccan. Despite their difference in names, all these probably shared the common feature of being held on certain day (s) of the week or in other words their periodicity. They probably enjoyed direct links with the rural hinterland, which supplied exchangeable agricultural and crafts products.

It must be pointed out that in certain early medieval records, hattas appeared as market places within urban areas (the mention of a hatta in the purva or easter quarter of the urban centre or pattana st Siyadoni). The same element of periodicity is also inseparably associated with the fair or yatra, which appears to have been held at a specific season or during a particular festival. On the other hand, these must have stood larger market places including ports, capitals and major urban centres.

### 12.3.2 Mandapikas

The early medieval commercial scene witnessed the advent of mandapikas (literally, a covered pavilion) in northern and western India. Inscriptions distributed over Kangra, Gwalior, Pehoa, Bharatpur, Jabalpur and with a definite concentration in Gujarat and Rajasthan, eloquently speak of brisk commerce at mandapikas, corresponding to modern mandis in more or less the same regions. One cannot miss the fact that the epigraphic evidence showing mandapikas as active centres of trade belongs to the period from AD 750 to AD 1000, which is projected as a period particularly lacking in trade, according to the concept of Indian feudalism. The brisk trade at mandapikas is impressive, where staples and luxuries are even better seen in inscriptions after AD 1000, when feudal elements are said to have attained their peak. The range of commodities transacted at mandapikas is equally wide and available. A very significant feature is the availability of different types of agricultural products from neighbouring and distant areas at mandapikas. The mandis of modern times are also known principally as centres of grain trade. At the early 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. mandapika at Bilhari near Jabalpur converged betel/areca (Pugaphala), black pepper (maricha) and elephants side-by-side with agrarian items like green vegetables (SakavarHaku).

The impression that emerges is the role of mandapika as a linkage between the rural exchange network and trade in urban areas. In fact, some of the mandapikas became important and distinctive enough to be called mahamandapikas (indicating their impressive size) and pattanamandapikas (i.e. with urban dimension or located in an urban space). No less important is the fact that several records, especially from Rajasthan and Gujarat, inform us of cess/duty imposed by political authorities and also voluntarily by mercantile groups (in the latter case, collected levies were bestowed in favour of a deity or a religious establishment) at mandapikas. This resulted in the marking of some of the existing mandapikas as sulkamandapikas, i.e. mandapikas where tolls and customs (sulka) could be collected. Under such circumstances, there would be a strong likelihood of recognizing the significance of mandapikas by administrative authorities. This is indicated not only by the presence of important officials during prominent socio-cultural events at mandapikas, but also by the reference to the creation of an administrative department concerning mandapikas (mandapikakarana) in the Lekhapaddhati.

### 12.3.3 Pentha

Both epigraphic and literary data indicate the advent of a new type of market centre in the Deccan, viz, Pentha, variously called pentha sthana, pintha, pemta etc.

The pentha (probably a hyper sanskritised form of Petha), according to yasastilaka champu by Samadevasuri was divided into many well-laid out chambers. Vibhaktanekapa varakarachanasalini), it had also large storage areas for merchandise (mahabhandavahini) and was provided with drinking places (Prapa), feeding house (Sattra), assembly hall with seats (Sabhasanatha) and streets or shops (vithi). Merchants from different areas flocked here (nanadisopasarpanayujam venijam). Covering an area of a couple of miles (gorutpramana), the pentha was marked by ditches (kulyah), rampart (vapra), fortification (prakara) and a moat (parikha). The text highlights the impressive size of the pentha, where excellent items were stored in boxes, which were watched over by adequate number of guards (bhandanarambhodbhatabharira)-petaka-paksharakshasaram). The most important point here is its commercial character; the pentha is described as a putabhodini, a technical expression denoting a place where boxes of merchandise were unsealed. It would therefore refer to a stockade with ware housing facility. Spaces in the pentha were let out to merchants for storage, display and sale of their commodities against the payment of tolls, shares and rent at a moderate rate.

Somadevasuri, who wrote a treatise on polity-Nitivakyamrita-speaks of pintha, obviously the same as pentha, as a centre of trade which was, also toll collecting centre. The pentha/pintha as a centre of trade closely corresponds to modern peth in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Infact the term peth as a locality-level administrative centre figures in a sixth century A.D. inscriptions from Bundelkhand and in a 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. inscription from Satara district, Maharashtra. The petha seems to have a trade centre larger than an adda (hatta or rural level market places) and santhe (weekly fair) but smaller than a sizeable urban centre (pura/pattana). The pentha continued to exist as a middle category centre of trade in the Deccan in subsequent centuries (13<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D). Like the mandapikas in North India, the pentha (peth) in the Deccan was in a position to reach out both to rural hinterlands and large urban market areas.

#### **12.3.4 Nagaram**

That the early medieval nagaram in the Tamil area had a distinct commercial character, has been well-recognized. The study of as many as 33 nagarams in the Chola territories by Hall tends to suggest their close association with nadus or locality-level centres. Though Hall's conclusion that each nadu (with a number of villages under them uniformly had a nagara, has been questioned by B.D. Chattopadhyay, the inter-nadu and intra-nadu contacts of the nagaram have been more or less agreed upon. The close interaction between the nagaram as a locality-

level merchantile centre and the nanadesi commercial body has also been impressed upon on the basis of the Chola inscriptions.

Early medieval India thus witnessed three types middle-tier commercial centres mandapika, pentha and nagaram—rooted to their respective regions, the like of which had not been seen before. That they shared the common characteristics of providing linkages between the rural and urban market places cannot be overlooked.

The active presence of merchants of various types, including the vaidehaka (petty trader), banjara (hawker or pedlar), sarthavaha (caravan merchant), sreshthin (very rich merchant, often as an investor), vadduvyavahari (the senior merchant) and nauvittaka (ship-owning merchant, equivalent and synonymous with the nakhuda in Persian and Arabic sources) can hardly be missed in the light of early medieval inscriptions and literary texts (particularly the voluminous Jaina literature).

Recent economic historiography shows the awareness of not treating merchants as a blanket type, but of the possibility of arranging them in an order of primacy. The importance of the extensive network of two south Indian commercial organizations, viz, the 500 svamis of Ayyavole and the Manigramam (derived from the term Vaniggrana) has also been effectively driven home by the researches of Appadurai, Abraham, Karashima and Subbarayula. There are also interesting epigraphic data on the significant linkages of these bodies with the ruling group and also on their presence in Srilanka, lower Burma and maritime South-East Asia from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

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## 12.4 Aspects of Trade

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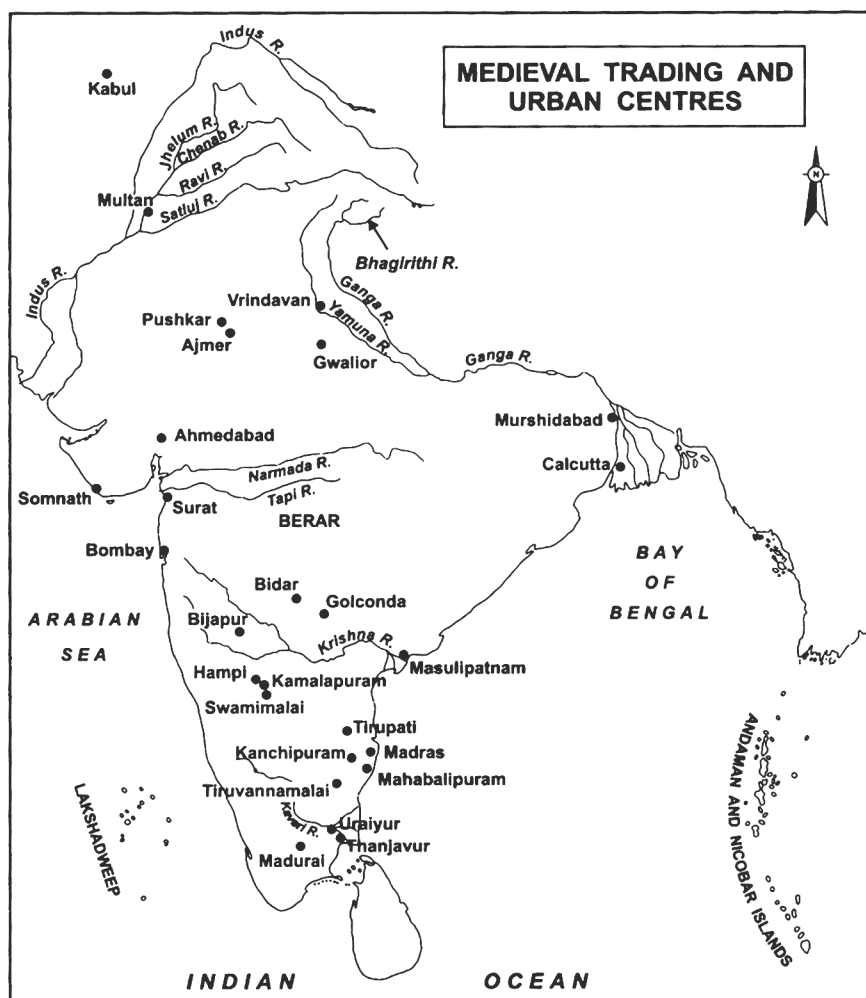
The increased agricultural production and the momentum picked up by industrial and craft production were responsible for giving rise to a hierarchy of exchange centres. The inter regional and intra-regional exchange networks were creating cracks in the relatively closed village economy and a large variety of commodities were carried for trading through a network of trade routes in the country.

### 12.4.1 Commodities of Inland Trade and their Consumers

There are numerous inscriptions which refer to merchants carrying food grains, oil, butter, salt, coconuts, arecanuts, betel leaves, madder, indigo, candid sugar, Jaggery, thread cotton fabrics, blankets, metals, spices, etc. from one place to another and paying taxes and tolls on them. Benjamin Tudela a Jesuit priest from Spain (12<sup>th</sup> century) noticed wheat, barley and pulses, besides linsed fibre and cotton cloth brought



by the traders to the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf on their way home from India. Al Idrisi also refers to the transshipment of rice from the country of Malabar to Srilanka in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The export of palm sugar and coir for ropes is noted by Friar Jordanus who wrote in about 1330 CE. Marco Polo refers to the export of indigo from Quilon (on the Malabar coast) and Gujarat. Besides cotton fabrics, carpets, leather mats, swords and spears also appear in various sources as important articles of exchange. High value items such as horses, elephants, jewellery, etc. also came to various exchange centres.



MAP 3: MEDIEVAL TRADING AND URBAN CENTRES

The chief customers of Indian goods were of course the rich inhabitants of China, Arabia and Egypt. Many of the Indian goods might have found their way to Europe as well as via Mediterranean. It needs to be highlighted that the domestic demand was not insignificant. A new class of consumers emerged as a result of large scale land grants from the eighth century onwards. The priests who earlier subsisted on a meagre fees offered at domestic and other rites were now entitled to hereditary enjoyment of vast landed estates, benefices and rights. This new land owning class, along with the ruling chiefs and rising mercantile class, became an important buyer of luxuries and necessities because of their better purchasing power.

The brahmanical and non-brahmanical religious establishments, which commanded vast resources in the form of landed estates and local levies, developed as important consumers of almost all marketable goods. They required not only such articles as coconuts, betel leaves and arecanuts, which had acquired great ritual sanctity, but also increased quantity of food for presentation to Gods or for distribution as prasadau. The personnel of religious establishments, which numbered up to many hundreds in case of big and important temples, constituted an important consuming group to be fed and clothed by peasants, artisans and merchants. Thus big temples with their vast resources and varied requirements also helped in generating commercial activity. This phenomenon was more marked in South India where many temple sites became important commercial centres.

#### **12.4.2 Trade routes and Means of Communication**

A vast network of roads connected different ports, markets and towns with one another and served as the channel of trade and commerce. The overland connections amongst different regions is indicated by the itinerary of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who came to India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century from across the Hindukush and visited various towns and capitals from Kashmir in North to Kanchi in South and from Assam in East to Sindh in West.

An inscription of 953 CE refers to merchants from Karnataka, Madhyadesha, South Gujarat and Sindh coming to Ahada in Rajasthan for mercantile activities. Bilhana, an eleventh century poet from Kashmir tells us about his travels from Kashmir to Mathura, and how he reached Banaras after passing through Kanauj and Prayaga. From Banaras he proceeded to Somanatha (on the Saurashtra coast) via Dhar (near Ujjain) and Anahilavada (in North Gujarat). From Somanatha, he sailed to Honavar (near Goa) and then went overland to Rameshwadm on the eastern coast.

Finally, he came to Kalyani in Arabic and Persian accounts provide us a more detailed information on the contemporary trade routes.

Alberuni (1030 CE) mentions fifteen routes which started from Kanauj, Mathura, Bayana etc. The route from Kanauj passed through Prayaga and went eastward up to the port of Tamralipti (Tamluk in the Midnapur district of West Bengal), from where it went along the eastern coast to Kanchi in South-Towards the Northeast, this route led to Assam, Nepal and Tibet from where one could go overland to China. Kanauj and Mathura were also on the route to Balkh in the North West. This also joined Peshawar and Kabul and ultimately the Grand Silk route connecting China with Europe. This North Western route was the chief channel of commercial intercourse between India and Central Asia in the pre-Gupta centuries. But in the early medieval period, it was largely under the control of Arab and Turkish traders who used it primarily to bring horses from Persia, Balkh and other regions. The route starting from Bayana in Rajasthan passed through the desert of Marwar and reached the modern port of Karachi in Sindh. A branch of this route passed through Abu in the Western foot of the Aravali Hills, and connected ports and towns of Gujarat with Bayana, Mathura and other places in North and North-Western India. Another route from Mathura and Prayaga proceeded to the port of Broach on the Western coast via Ujjain. These routes played an important role in opening the interior of India to the international sea trade which acquired a new dimension in the post-tenth centuries. Besides roads, the rivers in the plains of Northern India, and the sea route along the eastern and western coasts in South India also served as important means of inter-regional contacts.

The pleasures and pains of travel in ancient times depended on the geographical conditions of the trade routes. The routes through desert and hilly areas were certainly more arduous and difficult. In the plains, bullock carts were the chief means of conveyance but where they could not ply animals human carriers were employed to transport goods from one place to another. In the contemporary literature, there are references to different types of boats which must have been used in river traffic whereas big ships plied on the high seas.

A significant development in the post tenth centuries was the keen interest shown by rulers to keep the highways in their kingdoms safe. They took measures to punish thieves and robbers and provided military as well as monetary help to villagers to protect the traders and travellers passing through their region. The Chalukya Kings of Gujarat has a separate department called the Jiala-Patha-Karana to look after highways. They also built new roads to connect important ports and markets in their state and excavated tanks and wells for the benefits of travellers. Trade being an important source of revenue, political authorities had to be concerned about the safety

and well being of traders and merchants. Marco Polo's reference to combay as a place free from pirates indicates that Indian kings also took steps to safeguard their ports against piracy which was a major threat all along the sea route from South China to the Persian Gulf.

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## 12.5 Conclusion

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It is rather strange that the perception of Indian feudalism have taken relatively few notice of the consistent and profuse information on the remarkable expansion of the Indian Ocean trade from around the eight century A.D. in which India's role and involvement can hardly be minimized. There are insurmountable difficulties to reconcile and account for the assumed decline in the volume of India's long distance trade precisely at a time of the obvious growth in the Indian Ocean trade. The rise of Islam, with its distinct thrust on commerce and urbanity, undoubtedly provided a very major fillip to long distance trade particularly across the Indian Ocean.

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## 12.6 Summary

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The overall picture of trade and commerce during the six centuries under discussion is that of feudalisation. The way in which money transactions took place, the manipulations of landed interests including those of state officials and ruling chiefs, functioning of the ruling elite in the interests of big traders and merchants and putting restrictions on artisans and craftsmen are indicators of the process of feudalisation.

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## 12.7 Model Questions

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1. List the main items of land trade.
2. How did the religious establishments help in trading activities?
3. Describe briefly the main land routes used for trading purposes.

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## 12.8 Suggested Readings

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Chakravarti, Ranabir, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, Monohor, 2007.

Chakravarti, Ranabir, *Exploring Early India upto c.AD 1300*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (2016) Primus Books

Chandra, Satish, *History of Medieval India (800-1700)*, (2020), Orient Black Swan.

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## **Unit- 13 □ Maritime Trade**

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### **Structure**

- 13.0 Objectives**
- 13.1 Introduction**
- 13.2 The Chief Participants**
- 13.3 South East Asia**
- 13.4 Trade with China**
- 13.5 Commodities Exchanged**
- 13.6 Conclusion**
- 13.7 Summary**
- 13.8 Model Questions**
- 13.9 Suggested Readings**

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### **13.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit on Maritime Trade we will come to know about :

- Maritime trade and the chief participants involved in maritime trade
- The commodities exchanged through this trade.

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### **13.1 Introduction**

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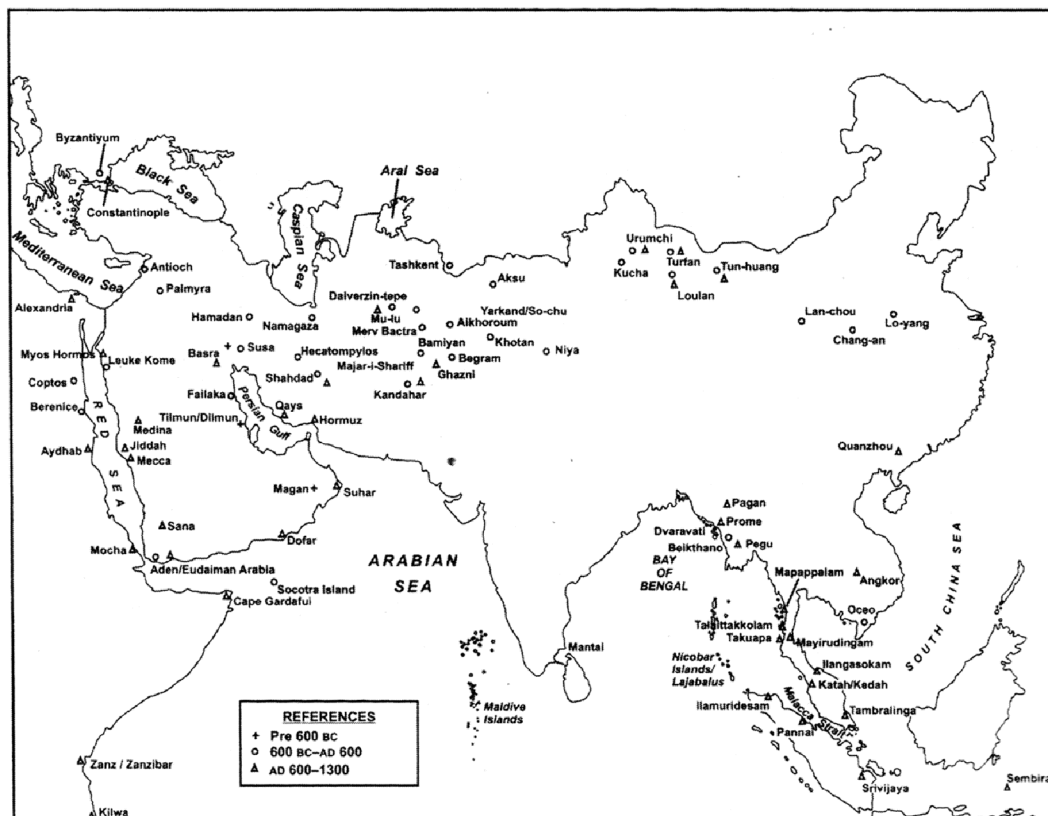
The economic situation, especially trade and commerce in the country during this period, is a matter of debate among historians. Some consider it a period of stagnation and decline, a set back both for foreign trade and long distance trade within the country, decline of towns and greater localism and regionalism. The virtual absence of gold coins till the 10<sup>th</sup> century is considered a proof of this.

We cannot examine all these points in detail. Suffice is to say that the fall of the Roman empire did not seriously affect India's trade with the West since two large empires, the Byzantine empire with its base in Constantinople and the Sassanid empire based in Iran, rose during the subsequent period. Both of them took keen interest in trade with India and the Indian Ocean region. After the rise of the Arab empire in the

seventh century, the Arabs expanded the trade of the West to India, South East Asia and China.

There is no reason to believe that Indian traders were excluded from this expanded trade. Hence, gold and silver continued to come to India in return for its favourable trade. That is why India continued to be considered a country full of gold and silver, and hence an attractive prize for foreigners to invade and trade with.

In some of the Dharmashastras written during this period, a ban is put on travel beyond the areas where the munja grass doesnot grow or where the black gazelle does not roam, that is, outside India proper. Travel across the salt seas was also considered polluting. These bans were not taken seriously for we have accounts of Indian merchants, philosophers, medical men and craftsmen visiting Baghdad and other Muslim towns in West Asia during this period. Perhaps the ban was meant for Brahmans only, or was meant to discourage too many Indians going to the areas



Map 9: India's Contacts with the Outside World

dominated by Islam in the West and Buddhism in the East for fear of their bringing back heretical religious ideas which could be embarrassing and unacceptable to the Brahmans and the ruling groups.



Map 10: Ports and Harbours of Early India

The ban on sea travel did not interfere with the growth of India's overseas trade with the countries of Southeast Asia and China. A brisk trade between South India and the countries of Southeast Asia had started from the sixth century onwards. The growing geographical knowledge about the countries of the area is reflected in the literature of that time. The peculiar features of the languages of the area their dresses etc. are mentioned in the books of the period such as Harisera's Brihat Katha-Kash. There are many stories about the adventures of Indian merchants in the magical waters of the area, stories which became the basis of the well known story of Sindbad the sailor. The Indian merchants were organized into guilds, the most famous of them

being the Manigraman and the Nandesi, which had been active since early times. These guilds displayed a spirit of enterprise, engaging in retail and wholesale trade in many foreign countries. They also gave handsome grants to temples, which became centres of social and cultural life and sometimes also advanced money for trade. Many of the Indian traders settled down in these countries. Some of them took wives from the local population. The priests followed the traders. In this way, both Buddhist and Hindu religious ideas were introduced in the area. The Buddhist temple of Borobudur in Java and the Hindu temple of Angkorwat in Cambodia testify to the spread of both these religions there. Some of the ruling families of the area were semi-Hinduized, and they welcomed trade and cultural relations with India. In this way, Indian culture mingled with the local culture to establish new literary and cultural forms. Some observers think that the material prosperity of the South east Asian countries, the growth of civilization, and establishment of large states was based in large measure on the introduction of the Indian technique of irrigated rice cultivation.

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### **13.2 The Chief Participants**

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The sea-borne Asian trade had well-known termini in the west and east, represented respectively by Siraf and Basra under the Seldjuk and Abbasid rule and al Fustat (old Cairo) under the Fatimid Caliphate (since A.D. 965) on the one hand, and the harbours of China on the other. The movement of ship in this expansive maritime space was largely and favourably controlled by the more or less predictable alterations of the monsoon wind. As the round trip between the western and the eastern termini of the Indian Ocean trade was virtually impossible under these circumstances in a single voyage, harbours on both the sea-boards of India reaped conspicuous advantage out of this segmented voyage (K.N. Chaudhuri) as inevitable stopovers, transshipment points, besides participating in the exports and imports from the subcontinent. The western sea-board, having greater indentations, was naturally suitable to the growth of estuarine ports. There were a string of ports of outstanding importance on the West Coast, starting from Debal in the Indus delta to the harbours on the Gujarat Littorals. Like Somnath, Stambhaka (Khambaya/Kanhaya or Combay) Sthanaka (Thana), Samyana (Sindan of the Arabic texts or Sanjan), Surparaka (Subara in Arabic geographical texts or Sopara), Chemuliya called Saimur by the Arabs (Chaul to the South of Bombay) Chandrapura on Sindabur near Goa on the Konkan littorals and finally, the ports in Malabar, for example, Mangalapura or Manjrur (Mangalore), Fandarina or Pantalayani and Kulam mali or Quilon. Epigraphic evidence of unimpeachable nature throw light on the regular settlements of Sirafi,



Baghdadi, Omani and Hormuzi merchants on the western coast. Sanskritization of Arabic names of these merchants corroborates their intimacy with the Indian situation. Jewish merchants were also present in Malabar in the early eleventh century A.D. These merchants labelled as 'Indian traders' by Goitein were involved in the brisk trade network with Aden and al Fustal.

The eastern littoral was naturally oriented towards movements of men and traffic in the eastern sector of the Indian Ocean, which was further linked up with Java and the China seas. The Coromandel coast thrived on Mamallapuram of the Pallava times and Nagapattinam during the Chola rule as premier ports for overseas commerce. In the Andhra-Kalinga coast was situated Visakhapattinam, known at least since A.D 1068, which offers the unique example of being renamed after Kulottungi I as Kulottungacholapattinam. The sustained Chola interests in the long distance seaborne trade is particularly evident from the three embassies sent by the Cholas to the Sung emperors in China (AD 1014, A.D 1033 and AD 1079).

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### **13.3 South East Asia**

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The close ties between the Chola realm and Srivijaya (Palembang) in South East Asia are shown by the cultural patronage of the Srivijaya king to a Buddhist monastery at Nagapattinam; such cultural interests appear to have been strongly backed by material gains from maritime trade. The likelihood of such an interpretation lies in the well documented role of Srivijaya as an intermediary between south India and China.

Recent researches by Karashima and Subbarayalu in the Chola attitude towards economic activities and particularly to mercantile groups would go to show the awareness of the Cholas of the importance of commerce. This, in its turn, would suggest that the Cholas undertook the maritime expeditions to South-East Asia not for short term plunder motive, but with a long range view of minimizing the role of Srivijaya as the intermediary between the Cholas and Sung China. Tansen Sen's analysis of the Sung sources demonstrates that the Chola rulers involved prominent Muslim Arab merchants in course of as many as three Chola missions to the Sung court in AD 1014, AD 1033 and AD 1070. It was this appreciation of the importance of trade on a long term basis that prompted Kulottunga I to abolish tolls and customs at a time when he consciously enhanced the status of the port of Visakhapattanam.

The Bengal coast during the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was particularly famous for the port of Tamralipta which seems to have decayed around 8<sup>th</sup> century. The

adverse economic effect of Tamralipata was however, offset by the rise of another port of considerable importance to the east of the Meghna. This port generally called Samandar by Arab writers and Sudkawan by Ibn Batuta has been located near present Chittagang in Bangladesh. The Arab Chronicles furnish evidence of the maritime voyages from Samandar to Uranshin (Orissa), Kanja (Kanchipuram and Serendib or Silandib (Sri Lanka). The cultural linkages of eastern and southern India with both mainland and maritime South East Asia could indirectly point to the commercial contracts among these areas.

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### 13.4 Trade with China

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On account of its prosperity, China had become an main focus of trade in the Indian Ocean. The Chinese consumed enormous quantities of spices, which were imported from Southeast Asia and India. They also imported ivory, the best of which came from Africa, and glassware, which came from West Asia. To these were added medieval herbs, lac, incense, and all types of rare commodities. Generally, products from Africa and West Asia did not go beyond Malabar in South India. Nor did many Chinese ships go beyond the Moluccas in South east Asia. Thus, both India and South-east Asia were important staging centres for trade between China and the countries of West Asia and Africa. Indian traders-especially from the Tamil country and Kalinga (modern Odisha and Bengal)—played an active role in this trade, along with Persians, and at a later stage, the Arabs. Much of the trade to China was carried in Indian ships, the teakwood of Malabar, Bengal and Burma providing the basis of a strong tradition of ship building. The weather conditions were also such that it was not possible for a ship to sail straight from the Middle East to China. The ships would have to wait for a long period in ports in between for favourable winds which blew from the west to the east before the monsoon, and from east to west after the monsoon. Indian and Southeast Asian ports were preferred by the merchants for the purpose.

The main seaport for foreign trade in China during this period was Canton, or Kanfu as the Arab travellers called it. Buddhist scholars went from India to China by the sea route. The Chinese chroniclers tell us that the number of Indian monks in the Chinese court towards the close of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century was the highest in Chinese history. A Chinese account from a slightly earlier period tells us that the Canton river was full of ships from India, Persia and Arabia. It says that in Canton itself, there were three Hindu temples in which Indians resided. The

presence of Indians in the Chinese sea is testified to by Japanese records, which gave the credit for introducing cotton into Japan to two Indians who were carried over to the country by the black current.

Indian rulers, particularly the Pala and Sena rulers of Bengal and the Pallava and Chola rulers of South India, tried to encourage this trade by sending a series of embassies to the Chinese emperors. The Chola ruler, Rajendra I, sent a naval expedition against Malaya and the neighbouring countries to overcome their interference in the trade with China. The embassy sent to China by Rajendra I travelled in an Indian ship. There is evidence to show that there were many shipyards which were located on the West coast, including Gujarat. Thus, the growth of India's foreign trade in the area was based on a strong maritime tradition, including ship building, and the skill and enterprise of its traders. The Chinese trade was very favourable to the countries engaged in it, so much so that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese government tried to restrict the export of gold and silver from China. Indian ships gradually gave way to the Arabs and the Chinese ships, which were bigger and faster. We are told that the Chinese ships were several storeys high and carried 600 passengers, apart from 400 soldiers. An important factor in the growth of the Chinese ships was the use of the mariner's compass—an invention which later travelled from China to the West. Already Indian science and technology were being left behind.

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### **13.5 Commodities Exchanged**

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India seems to have exported textiles of diverse type, aloe wood, teak (for ship building, coconut coir, grains including rice, iron of various types (known from letters of Jewish merchants), spices both indigenous and those brought from South East Asia.

The list of imported items is dimly known, Silk, wine, tin, precious metal like silver, gold and different spices appear to have been imported to India. Talking of expensive import items, attention must be paid to war horses, always a rarity in India and therefore, it was invariably imported. The major area of the supply of horses to India had been up to AD 600 the Central Asian Steppes wherefrom, horses were sent overland to the northwestern borderlands. Nomadic depredations after AD 600 led to the increasing preference for sea-trade in horses to the previous overland transactions. The proliferation of regional powers and their protracted military designs appears to have caused a manifold increase in the demand for the best quality war horses from Arabia, Fers (Persia) and Sham (Syria), which fetched enormous prices and were

generally called bahri (sea borne) horses. Marco Polo, providing insights into the overseas import of horses to India, accused the ruler at Tana (Thana in the Konkan coast) of conniving with local pirates for illegally procuring war horses from ships. Early medieval Bengal, too, became noted for trade in horses. The Pala transcriptions from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century. AD repeatedly describe the supply of the best quality horses from the northern quarter (Uttarapatha). Bengal during the Sena rule seems to have received supply of horses from the mountainous north Eastern parts. Minhajuddin in his *tabaqat-i-Nasiri* (13<sup>th</sup> Century A.D) clearly mentions Lakhnauti (in North Bengal) and Nudia (in West Bengal) as two important horse-trading centres, many of which were brought by Arab merchants.

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### 13.6 Conclusion

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Thus, India's trade with the western areas and with Southeast Asia and China grew steadily. The lead in this trade was taken by South India, Bengal and Gujarat. This was an important factor in the wealth and prosperity of these areas.

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### 13.7 Summary

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The rapid survey of sea borne trade during the early medieval ages clearly conveys a message contrary to the perception of a languishing trade, which is viewed as a major ingredient of the feudal formation in India. There was no decay of India's role in the maritime commerce of the Indian Ocean. In fact, many of the facets in the Indian Ocean network of this period reached their fruition during the post 1300 days. It should be emphasized that the historiography of early medieval trade in India has often put an undue thrust on the transactions in high-value, small quantity, portable luxury items. Without negating the financial advantages arising out of trade in luxuries, it needs to be stressed that there is a growing body of evidence in favour of the more sustained and important, although less spectacular, trade in daily necessities. The marked tendency to confine the study of trade history to India's participation (or lack of it) in long distance foreign trade requires rethinking and revision in the future economic historiography of early medieval India.

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### 13.8 Model Questions

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- 1) Write a note on important articles involved in the Indian maritime trade.
- 2) List the important ports of India during the period under study.

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### 13.9 Suggested Readings

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Chakravarti, Ranabir, *Exploring Early India up to c.AD 1300* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Primus Books 2016.

Chakravarti, Ranabir, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, Monohar, 2007.

Chandra, Satish, *History of Medieval India (800-1700)*, Orient Black Swan.

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## **Unit- 14 □ Forms of Exchange**

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### **Structure**

- 14.0 Objectives**
- 14.1 Introduction**
- 14.2 Cowry Shells**
- 14.3 Gold Coins**
- 14.4 Silver Currency**
- 14.5 Debate on Currency System**
- 14.6 Conclusion**
- 14.7 Summary**
- 14.8 Model Questions**
- 14.9 Suggested Readings**

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### **14.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit we will come to know about :

- The different forms of exchange and
- The debate on the currency system.

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### **14.1 Introduction**

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The revival of trade received considerable help from the re-emergence of metal money during, the centuries under discussion. There is, however, substantial discussion about the degree and level of monetization. Very often the contenders of the penetration of money in the market invoke literary and inscriptional references to numerous terms purporting to describe various types of coins of early medieval India. The texts such as Prabandhachintamani, Lilavati, Dravya Pariksha, Lekhapaddhati, etc. mention bhagaka, rupaka, vimshatika, Karshapana, dinar, dramma, nishka, gadhaiya-mudra, gadyanaka, tanka and many other coins with their multiples. No less prolific are inscriptional references. For example the Siyadoni inscription alone refers to varieties of drmmas in the mid-tenth centuries. The Paramara, Chalukya, Chahmana, Pratihara, Pala, Chandella and Chola inscriptions corroborate most of the terms found in contemporary literature. There has also been considerable speculation about the

value of these coins, their metal content and their relationship with one another. Nothing could be more simplistic than to suggest the penetration of money in the market simply on the basis of listing of numismatic gleanings from a mixed bag of inscriptions and literature. We need to scrutinize the contexts of such references. Aspects requiring detailed exploration are

- 1) whether references to coins are in the context of exchanges in the rural area or in the urban setting?
- 2) the types of exchange centres and the nature of 'market' where such transactions take place.
- 3) the personnel involved in these transactions, and
- 4) how far are the inscriptional references to coins only notional. etc.

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## 14.2 Cowry Shells

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The formulation of Indian feudalism has a major underpinning on the virtual absence of gold (and also silver) coins which, under worsening trade situations, were said to have made the way for cowry shells as the principal medium of exchange that was suitable merely for petty trade at local level. There are grounds to accept the wide use of cowry shells (kaparadaka) and the lesser number of coins in precious metals minted by political powers in the period between AD 600 and AD 1000. One cannot, however, turn a blind eye to the specific information from early medieval, Arab chronicles that cowry shells were in fact itself an item of long distance maritime trade, being shipped from Maldives to Bengal.

Bengal has been particularly marked for its dependence on cowry shells and hence cited as a typical area suffering from dwindling trade and endowed with other features of feudal socio-political formation. The availability of cowry shells in an area like Bengal cannot straightway speak of slump in trade, since Bengal exported rice to Maldives in exchange of cowry shells. Cowry shells (like trade in grains and rice) have alternatively been perceived as performing the role of ballast and small exchanges in the Indian Ocean maritime trade.

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## 14.3 Gold Coins

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As far as the actual specimens of coins are concerned, one can say that the practice of minting gold coins was revived by Gangayadera (1019-1040 CE); the Kalachuri king of Tripuri (in Madhya Pradesh) after a gap of more than four centuries. Govinda Chandra, the Gahadavala king near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, the

Chandella rulers. Kirtivarman and Madanavarman in Central India, king Harsha of Kashmir and some Chola Kings in Tamil Nadu also issued gold coins. Reference has



Plate 7.1: Gold coin of Kalachuri Gangeyadeva with the figure of seated Lakshmi (obv.)

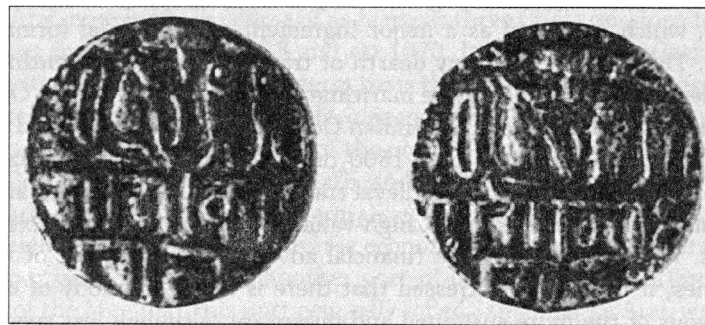


Plate 7.2: Gold coin of Chola King Rajendrachola

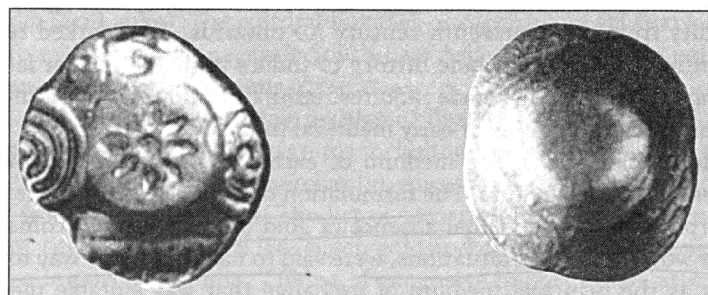


Plate 7.3: Gold coin of Yadava king Ramachandra

been made to certain early medieval coin types in Western and North-Western India. According to one estimate, about nine mints were founded in different parts of Karnataka during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century. An important mint functioned at Shrimol (near Jodhpur) in Rajasthan.

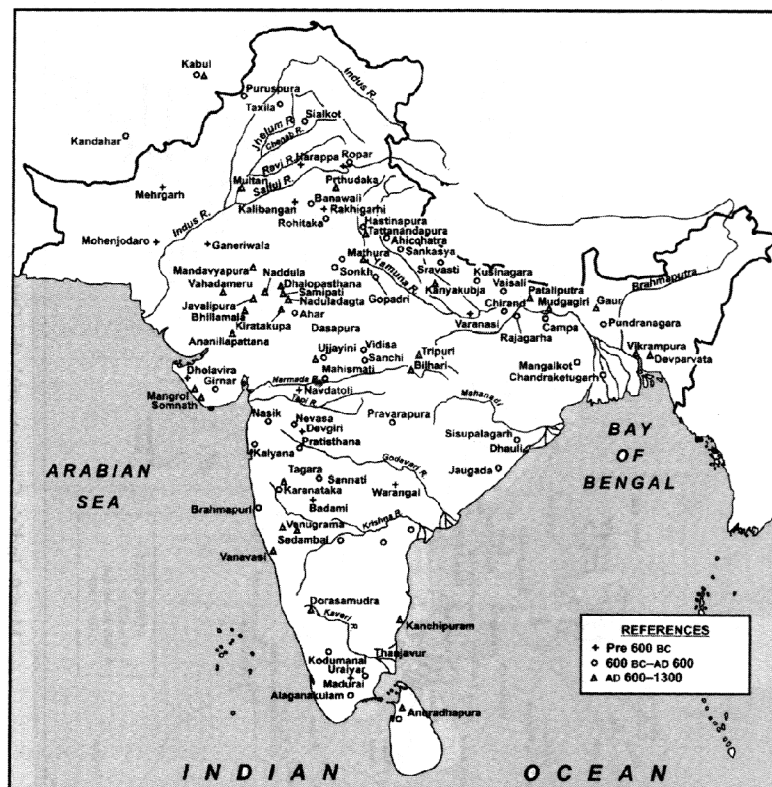


## 14.4 Silver Currency

On the other hand, the South-eastern most parts of early medieval Bengal (Harikela and Pattikera for example), as B.N. Mukherjee shows were thoroughly acquainted with high quality silver currency of 57.6 grains (i.e. struck on the well known metallic standard of Karshapara, Purana and dramma), marked by their uninterrupted minting and circulation from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The same area has yielded Abbasid gold coin too.

## 14.5 Debate on Currency System

The above numismatic evidence has strongly challenged the suggested absence of metallic currency of precious metal in Bengal and by extension, in north India, B.N.



Map 8: Centres of Trade/Exchange and Urban Centres of India

Mukherjee has further pointed to the changes in the metrology, shape and execution of the Harikela coinage from 9<sup>th</sup> century. A.D. onwards that complies with the

reformed Arabic currency of the same time. This numismatic evidence sets at naught the proposed incompatibility between money-based economy and land grant economy, both of which are reported from Bengal. Traditional arithmetic tables from Bengal indicates the exchangeability between a silver coin and cowry shells at the ratio of 1:1280. This further highlights the role of cowry shells as small exchange in realms without having a metallic currency of its own.

Despite the plethora of references to coins, the evidence of overall volume of money in circulation is almost negligible. Nor can one overlook the poor purchasing power of early medieval coins, irrespective of the metal used. All coins of the period were highly debased and reduced in weight. Also, in terms of the rising population and expanding area of settlement, the use of money seems to have been highly restricted. The case study of early medieval Rajasthan shows that the revival of trade, multiplication of exchange centres and markets and prosperity of merchant families took place only with the help of “Partial monetization.” Similarly, the cash nexus on the Western coast (Konkan area) under the Shilaharas (850-1250 CE) was also marked by limited use of money. The types and denominations of coins remained not only extremely localised but could not penetrate deep into the economic ethos. Masses were far away from handling of coins.

The currency system of South India during 950-1300 CE also shows that transactions at all levels of the society were not equally affected by coined money. For example, the fabulous expenses reported to have been less incurred by the Pandyas as regular buyers of imported horses cannot be thought in terms of what we know as very poor Pandyan currency. Barter was still an important means of exchange in local inter-regional and perhaps even in international commerce. There are references which indicate that carvanas of merchants exchanged their commodities with those of other regions. According to one account, horses imported from abroad were paid for not in cash but in Indian goods which may have been silk, spices or ivory. These Indian goods enjoyed constant demand in the markets all over the world.

Though the revival of even “partial monetization” was contributing to economic growth, yet no less significant was the parallel development of credit instrument by which debits and credits could be transferred without the handling of cash money. In the texts of the period we find references to a device called hundika or the bill of exchange which might have been used by merchants for commercial transactions. Through this device credit could be extended by one merchant to another and thus the obstacle to commerce due to shortage of coined money could be overcome. The *Lekhapaddhati*, a text which throws light on the life of Gujarat in the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>

centuries, refers to various means of raising loan for consumption as well as commercial ventures through the mortgage of land, house and cattle.

The minting of coins as a prerogative of the state power began in India with the Bactrian Greeks, followed continuously there after upto seventh century A.D. The apparent lack of dynastic coinage in India from seventh to the end of the tenth century A.D. has been sought to be explained in terms of changed political attitude to coinage, which was not regarded as an expression of sovereignty till the foundation of the Sultanate. In the fresh assessment of numismatic evidence, the numerous occurrences of coin-terms in inscriptions even in areas without dynastic coinages cannot be brushed aside. Twelfth century A.D. inscriptions from Bengal and Orrisa mention such a term, Churnni, in association with Kaparadaka and Purana, in the context of assessment of the annual revenue in cash (samvatsarika hiranya, abbreviated in the record as samhi) from a village. The term stands for something powdered to dust or tiny pieces. Its mention along with other media of exchange may indicate that it too was a medium of exchange in gold or silver dust, equivalent to the prescribed weight standard of gold and silver coins. The disadvantages of dealing in coins of uncertain metallic purity and weight standard and/or transporting a huge number of cowry shells as a substitute to the metallic coin could be effectively minimized or countered by the alternative use of easily portable dust of precious metal of the same weight and value of the said coin. B.N Mukherjee, therefore, argues for the use of a dust currency, located between the cowry shell-the basic medium of exchange—and a coin of precious metal.

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## 14.6 Conclusion

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The possibilities of a complex three tier currency system in eastern India have been extended to the overall north Indian situation on the basis of the Arabic accounts that report use of gold dust in the kingdom of Juzr (the Gurjar Pratihara realm). To this must be added the recent indepth enquiry into the various North India coin hoards belonging to the early medieval times. Deyell demonstrates the fragility of the interpretative model of feudal economy; he also questions the ideas of the monetary anaemia, of a slump in trade and of self sufficient closed village societies.

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## 14.7 Summary

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The formulation of Indian feudalism has a major underpinning on the virtual absence of gold (and also silver) coins which, under worsening trade situations, were said to have made the way for cowry shells as the principal medium of exchange that

was suitable merely for petty trade at local level. But one cannot turn a blind eye to the specific information from early medieval Arab chronicles that cowry shells were in fact itself an item of long distance maritime trade, being shipped from Maldives to Bengal.

The ‘monetary anaemia thesis’, fundamental to the formulation of Indian feudalism has been questioned by John S. Deyell. He says that metals like gold, silver or copper were not the only forms of money in medieval societies and cowries functioned well as medium of exchange in the backdrop of an acute silver crisis in the Arab world.

Harbans Mukhia, in support of this argument, has illustrated that in medieval Europe almost anything could function as a medium of exchange. He suggests that in India procuring cowries actually involved long distance trade, for cowry shells were obtained from the far off Maldives and this serves to highlight its significance.

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## 14.8 Model Questions

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1. Can we describe the economy between 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> CE centuries as fully dependent on minted coins?
2. What are the different forms of medium of exchange?

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## 14.9 Suggested Readings

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Chakravarti, Ranabir, *Exploring Early India Upto A.D c1300* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Primus Books

Singh, Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India. From the Stone Age to the 12<sup>th</sup> century*, Pearson, 2000.

Singh, Vipul, *Interpreting Medieval India*, Vol-1, 2009 Macmillan Publishers India Limited.

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## **Unit- 15 □ Process of Urbanization**

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### **Structure**

#### **15.0 Objectives**

#### **15.1 Introduction**

#### **15.2 Form and Substance of Urban Centres**

#### **15.3 The General Pattern**

#### **15.4 Regional Variations and Types**

##### **15.4.1 Rural Centres Transformed into Urban Centres**

##### **15.4.2 Market Centres-Trade Network and Itinerant trade**

##### **15.4.3 Sacred/Pilgrimage Centres**

##### **15.4.4 Royal Centres or Capitals**

#### **15.5 Conclusion**

#### **15.6 Summary**

#### **15.7 Model Questions**

#### **15.8 Suggested Readings**

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### **15.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit,—

- We will come to know about the form and substance of urban centres, regional variations and types.
- We will also study the different aspects of urbanization process in early medieval India.

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### **15.1 Introduction**

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Urbanisation in the early medieval period (600-1300 CE) of Indian history was connected with the growth of regional kingdoms and an expansion of Indian Ocean trade. Macro level changes took place which produced new patterns of interaction. Agrahara system of landgrants by the royalty created a new class of land holders which was a new socio-economic formation based on landgrants. There was a

substantial change in the material milieu from the earlier period as a result of these land grants. Expansion of agrarian economy could be perceived along with state formation and expansion of state societies in the periphery. Villages were neither isolates nor undifferentiated, and were connected with the apex or supra-local political centres through administrative tiers at locality levels. Agrarian economy gave fillup to non-agrarian sector thereby leading to a process of urbanisation. Thus early medieval urbanisation could be characterised by changes in the agrarian economy, greater complexities in the political sphere and an expanding Indian Ocean trade network. However to locate the urban centres and then to explain their growth remain a vexed problem and shifting through the vast epigraphic and other types of textual data and looking for a *pura*, *nagara* or *Pattana*, different terms denoting urban centres would be a preliminary way of approaching the problem.

Epigraphic and textual sources are generally used for understanding early medieval urbanisation. Many epigraphs describe towns, exchange centres and commercial networks. Texts like travel accounts, *Kavya* literature, secular texts etc are often replete with description of a city. Archaeology is not always very helpful in this regard as it is in the case of early historic urbanism, due to lack of excavations in early medieval sites. Past studies that talked of urban centres, in general, relied heavily on textual sources. Arab Geographers' accounts, Alberuni's evidence or normative, prescriptive treatises like *Manasara*, *Mayamata* or *Samaranga Sutradhara* were used to discuss the presence or absence of urban centres in India in the early medieval period. Thus Pushpa Niyogi writes, "Towns and cities along the main or subsidiary trade routes easily developed into commercial centres. Innumerable reference to cities flourishing along such routes are found in the writings of Muslim historians".

In a section on instances of planned towns, Niyogi states on the basis of *Kumarapakacharita* that there were eighty four market at Anahilapura in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and therefore it was a great emporium of trade. Stress is laid on texts like *Mayamata*, *Aparajitaprachha* or *Sukranitisara* to understand town planning. According to B.B Dutt, whose work is largely based on *Manasara*, *Mayamata*, etc., "the streets of India were arranged and planned according to what is known as rectangular chess board system of planning." The existence of urban centres is taken for granted in such works and no reference is usually made to the historical context in which they may have emerged. Therefore these works finally appear as compilations of urban place names from literature and epigraphs. The problem with the use of text for understanding urban planning is that in most cases the date of a text cannot be ascertained with certainty.

B.N.S Yadav argued that, though the description of cities in the texts belonging to post-Gupta period became conventional in nature, yet it was possible to deduce some broad features of city life from these texts. The texts mainly discussed by him were the description of Ujjayini in *Padataditakam* (c. 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE), the *Kadambari* (7<sup>th</sup> century CE) and the *Navasahasankacharita* (10<sup>th</sup> century CE) of Kundinapura in the *Nalachampu* (10<sup>th</sup> century CE) and the *Naisadhiyacharita*, of Pravarapura in the *Vikramankadevacharita* etc. The urban features in these texts are in the first place, strong fortifications of cities consisting of ramparts and moats, localisation of trading community or professional/occupational groups within the precincts of a city, presence of magnificent mansions and bustling trading activities. These works thus refer to urban centres without attempting to understand the process of urbanisation.

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## 15.2 Form and Substance of Urban Centres

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Study of urban centres is an important aspect of socio-economic history. Urban centres in early medieval India have generally been studied in two ways :

- i) As a part of economic history i.e. history of trade, commerce and craft production, etc. and
- ii) as a part of administrative or political history, i.e. as capitals, administrative centres, centres of major and minor ruling families and fort towns.

Hence the focus of urban studies has so far been mainly on types of urban centres. Accordingly, towns or cities have been listed under various categories such as market, trade or commercial centres, ports, political and administrative centres, religious centres, etc. However, there has been no sufficient attempt to explain the causes behind the emergence of towns. In other words the form of an urban centre is studied but not its meaning or substance. In order to understand both the form and substance of urban centres, and to define their nature and meaning it is necessary to study the processes of urban growth as a part of the broader socio-economic changes.

### Phases and Definition

How do we define an urban centre and what are its essential trends; are some of the questions that we take up here. Prior to the coming of the Turks, the Indian subcontinent experienced at least three phases of urban growth :

- i) During the Bronze Age Harappan civilization (4<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE)
- ii) Early historic urban centres of the Iron Age (i.e. 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE)

iii) Early medieval towns and cities 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE).

Amongst the earliest attempts to define an urban centre one can easily mention Gordon Childe's notion of 'Urban Revolution'. He listed monumental buildings, large settlements with dense population, existence of such people who were not engaged in food production (rulers, artisans and merchants) and cultivation of art, science and writing as prominent features to identify an urban centre. Further, Childe laid great stress on the presence of craft specialish and the role of agricultural surplus which supported non food producers living in cities. Not all these traits which were spelt out in the context of Bronze Age cities, are to be seen in the towns of Iron Age. There has been no dearth of urban centres with sparse population and mud houses.

Though agrarian surplus collected from rural areas is almost indispensable for the existence of a town, merely a settlement of non-agriculturists cannot be regarded as an urban centre. Early medieval literary texts refer to towns inhabited by people of all classes surrounded by a wall and moat and marked by the prevalence of laws and customs of the guilds of artisans and merchants. A recent study based on excavated data from 140 sites spread over the entire Indian subcontinent focusses on :

- 1) quality of material life and the nature of occupations, and
- 2) need to study urban centres not as parasites thriving on agricultural surplus but as centres integrally linked with rural hinterland.

Accordingly, some prominent traits of urban centres which can be applied to early medieval settlements as well, are identified as :

- 1) Size of a settlement in terms of area and population.
- 2) Proximity to water resources-river banks, tanks, ring wells etc.
- 3) Presence or absence of artefacts representing activities of artisans, e.g. axes, chisels, plough-shares, sickles, hoes, crucibles, ovens, furnaces, dyeing vats, moulds for beads, seals, sealings, jewellery, terracotta etc.
- 4) Evidence of coin moulds signifying mint towns. The discovery of metallic money, when listed with the presence of artisans and merchants, certainly lends a clear urban character to such sites.
- 5) Presence or otherwise of luxury goods such as precious and semi precious stones, glassware, ivory objects, fine pottery etc. The possibilities is not ruled out that luxuries of ancient towns might become necessities for superior rural classes of early medieval times.
- 6) Considering the moist, rainy climate of many alluvial plains such as the middle Ganga plain, baked brick (not just burnt bricks) structures on a good scale



assume special importance. Though in Central Asia towns consisting of mud structures are also not unknown.

- 7) Streets, shoppes, drains and fortifications also give a good idea of the nature of the urban settlement. At several places in the Deccan and elsewhere silos and granaries occur at historical sites like at Dhulikatt in Andhra Pradesh.

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### **15.3 The General Pattern**

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The post-Gupta centuries witnessed a new socio-economic formation based on the system of land grants. The gradual expansion of cultivation and agrarian economy through land grants had an impact on the growth of towns and cities between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Though the overall picture of the Indian subcontinent is that of revival, of urban centres, there are some regional variations as well. Such variations are seen in the nature, category and hierarchy of such centres due to operative economic forces, ecological and cultural differences and the nature of political organisation. Regional studies of urban centres are, therefore, essential for providing the correct perspectives. Such studies are available only for a few regions like Rajasthan, Central India and South India.

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### **15.4 Regional Variations and Types**

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In a vast country like India there are a lot of regional variations in the pattern of emergence and growth of urban centres. In this section we will discuss some important variations.

#### **15.4.1 Rural Centres Transformed into Urban Centres**

The brahmadeyas and devadanas which are seen as important sources of agrarian expansion of the early medieval period, also provided the nuclei of urban growth. The Brahmana and temple settlements clustered together in certain key areas of agricultural production. Example of such centres of urban growth are datable from the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries and are more commonly found in South India. The Chola city of Kumbakonam (Kudamukku-Palaiyarai) developed out of agrarian clusters and became a multi temple urban centre between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Kanchipuram is a second major example of such an urban complex. While Kumbakonam's political importance as a residential capital of the Cholas was an additional factor in its growth, Kanchipuram too had the additional importance of being the largest craft centre (textile manufacturing) in South India.

#### **15.4.2 Market Centres, Trade-network and Itinerant Trade**

Early medieval centuries also witnessed the emergence of urban centres of relatively modest dimensions, as market centres, trade centres (fairs, etc) which were primarily points of the exchange network. The range of interaction of such centres varied from small agrarian hinterlands to regional commercial hinterlands. Some also functioned beyond their regional frontiers. However, by and large, the early medieval urban centres were rooted in their regional contexts. This is best illustrated by the nagaram of South India, substantial evidence of which comes from Tamil Nadu and also to a limited extent by the existence of nakhara and nagaramu in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh respectively. The nagaram served as the market for the nadu or Kurram, an agrarian or peasant region-some of them emerged due to the exchange needs of the nadu. A fairly large number of such centres were founded by ruling families or were established by royal sanction and were named after the rulers, a feature common to all regions in South India. Such centres had the suffix pura or pattana.

Nagarams located on important trade routes and at the points of intersection developed into more important trade and commercial centres of the region. They were ultimately brought into a network of intra-regional and inter-regional trade as well as overseas trade through the itinerant merchant organisations and the royal ports. Such a development occurred uniformly throughout Peninsular India between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. During these centuries South India was drawn into the wider trade network in which all the countries of South Asia, South-east Asia and China and the Arab countries came to be involved.

The nagarams linked the ports with political administrative centres and craft centres in the interior.

In Karnataka nagarams emerged more as points of exchange in trading network than as regular markets for agrarian regions. However, the uniform features in all such nagarams is that they acquired a basic agricultural hinterland for the non-producing urban groups living in such centres. Markets in these centres were controlled by the Nagaram assembly headed by a chief merchant called pattanavami.

A similar development of trade and market centres can be seen in Rajasthan and western parts of Madhya Pradesh. Here, the exchange centres were located in the context of the bases of agrarian production i.e. where clusters of rural settlements occur. In Rajasthan these centres were points of intersection for traffic of varying origins, giving rise to a certain measure of hierarchy. The network was further elaborated with the growth of generations of well known merchant families in the 11<sup>th</sup>

and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are named after their places of origin such as Osawala (Osja), Shrimalis (Bhinmal), Pallivalas and Khandelvalas etc. The resource bases, the main routes for the flow of resources and the centres of exchange were integrated through the expansion of these merchant families. Rajasthan provided the main commercial links between Gujarat, Central India and the Ganga Valley. Such links were maintained through towns like Pali, which connected the sea coast towns like Dvaraka and Bhrigukachcha (Broach) with Central and North India. Gujarat with its dominant Jain merchants, continued to be the major trading region of Western India where early historic ports or emporium like Bhrigukachcha (Broach) continued to flourish as entrepots of trade in early medieval times. Bayana, another notable town in Rajasthan was the junction of different routes from different directions. The range of merchandise started probably with agricultural produce (including dairy products) but extended to such high-value items as horses, elephants, horned animals & jewels.

In the trade with the West i.e. Arabia, Persian Gulf and beyond, the West Coast of Peninsular India played a consistently dominant role from the early historic period. Several ports such as Thana, Goa, Bhatkal, Karwar, Honavar and Mangalore developed during the revival of long distance trade, between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, with evidence of coastal shipping and ocean navigation. Surprisingly this commercial activity was taking place only through limited monetization. Incidentally, the Konkan coast (under the Shilaharas) does not even show any signs of rise of markets and their network.

Wider trade networks also existed between Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu for the presence of Kannada, Tamil and Telegu merchants is well attested in several towns such as Belgaun (Karnataka), Peruru in Nalgonda district (Andhra Pradesh) and coastal towns of Visakhapatnam and Ghantasala. The Andhra coast turned to the south eastern trade with Motupalli, Vishakapatnam and Ghantasala acting as the major outlets. Market centres of inter regional importance are represented by places like Nellore, Draksharama, Tripurantakam and Anumakonda in Andhra Pradesh. On the northern and southern banks of Kaveri in its middle reaches arise a number of exchange points between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu such as Talakkad and Mudikondan.

Kerala developed contracts with the West and foreign traders such as the Jews, Christian and Arabs who were given trading towns under special royal charters. Coastal towns such as Kolikkodu, Kollam etc. became entrepots of South Asian trade. The location of such trading groups as the Anjuvannan and Arab horse dealers enhanced the importance of coastal towns in Karnataka and Kerala.

Major craft centres which developed in response to inter regional trade were weaving centres in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Some of the craft

and commercial centres of the early historic urban phase survived till the early medieval period and were brought into the process of re-urbanisation which linked them with the new socio-economic institutions like the temple. Kashi (Varanasi) in the north and Kanchipuram (near Madras) in the South are two very prominent examples of such processes.

### 15.4.3 Sacred/Pilgrimage Centres

The idea of pilgrimage to religious centres developed in the early medieval period due to the spread of the cult of Bhakti. Its expansion in different regions through a process of acculturation and interaction between the Brahmanical or Sanskritic forms of worship and folk or popular cults cut across narrow sectarian interests. As a result, some local cult centres of great antiquity as well as those with early associations with brahmanical and non-brahmanical religions, became pilgrimage centre. The pilgrimage network was sometimes confined to the specific cultural region within which a cult centre assumed a sacred character. However, those cult centres, which became sacred tirthas attracted worshippers from various regions. Both types of pilgrimage centres developed urban features due to a mobile pilgrim population, trade and royal patronage. The role of emerging market in the growth of tirthas is now being recognised by historians in a big way.

Pushkara near Ajmer in Rajasthan was a sacred tirtha of regional importance with a dominant Vaishnava association. Kasi (Banaras) acquired a pan-Indian character due to its greater antiquity and importance as a brahmanical sacred centre. In South India, Srirangam (Vaishnava), Chidambaram (Shaiva) and Madurai (Shaiva) etc. developed as regional pilgrimage centres, while Kanchipuram became a part of an all India pilgrimage network. While Melkote was a regional sacred centre in Karnataka, Alampur, Draksharama and Simhachalam show a similar development in Andhra Pradesh. Tirupati was initially an important sacred centre for the Tamil Vaishnavas but acquired a pan-Indian character later in the Vijayanagara period.

Jain centres of pilgrimage emerged in Gujarat and Rajasthan where merchant and royal patronage led to the proliferation of Jain temples in groups in centres such as Osia, Mount Abu, Palitana etc.

In South India the elaboration of temple structures in sacred centres show two types of urban growth.

- 1) it was organised around a single large temple as in Srirangam, Madurai, Tiruvannamalai (Tamil Nadu), Melkote (Karnataka), Draksharama and Simhachalam (Andhra Pradesh)

- 2) The second type involves the growth around several temples of different religions such as Shaivism, Vishnism and Saktism.

#### 15.4.4 Royal Centres or Capitals

Royal centres or the seats of power of the ruling families were a major category of urban centres in early medieval India. Some of them had been the seats of royal power even in the early historic period, for example, in the Janapadas of North India or in the traditional politics of South India. Royal families also developed their own ports, which were the main ports of entry into their respective territories and which also linked them with international commerce. Thus, the commercial needs of royal centres created new trade and communication links and built up much closer relationships between the royal centre and their agricultural hinterlands or resource bases. In all the regions south of the Vindhyas, where brahmanical kingdoms came to be established by the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, there is substantial evidence of the growth of such royal centres. Some representative examples are :

- 1) Vatapi and Vengi of the Chalukyas in the northern Karnataka and Andhra,
- 2) Kanchipuram port at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram)
- 3) Madurai of the Pandyas with Korkai as their port.
- 4) Tanjavur of the Cholas with Nagappattinam as their port.
- 5) Kalyana of the Western Chalukyas, Dvarasamudra of the Hoysalas, and
- 6) Warangal of the Kakatiyas with Motupalli at their port.

Warangal was a rare example of a fortified royal city in South India.

Examples of royal centres in North India are:

- 1) The Gurjara Pratihara capital at Kanyakubja (Kanauj).
- 2) Khajuraho of the Chandellas
- 3) Dhara of the Paramaras and
- 4) Valabhi of the Solankis

A fairly large number of cities emerged under the powerful Gurjara-Pratiharas, Chahamanas and Paramaras in Rajasthan. Most of them were fortified centres, hill forts (garhkila and durga). Examples of fort cities in Rajasthan are :

- 1) Nagara and Nagda under the Guhilas.
- 2) Bayana, Hanumangarh and under the Gurjara-Pratiharas and
- 3) Mandor, Ranathambor, Sakambari and Ajmer under the Chauhans and so on.

On the basis of various sources, a list of 131 places has been compiled for the Chauhan dominions, most of which seem to have been towns. Nearly two dozen towns are identified in Malwa under the Paramaras. Gujarat under the Chalukyas was studded with port towns. The number of towns, however, does not seem to be large in Eastern India although all the nine victory camps (Jayaskandavars) of the Palas (Pataliputra, Mudgagiri, Ramavati Vata Parvataka, Vilaspura, Kapilavasaka, Sahasgand, Kanchanapura and Kanauj) may have been towns. The Palas and the Chandellas also account for nearly twenty and twenty four fortresses respectively.

Sometimes, important trade and market centres were also conferred on feudatory families, examples of such minor political centres are numerous in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

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## 15.5 Conclusion

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It may, therefore, be reasonably argued that notwithstanding the decay of a number of prominent towns in India, especially in the Ganga Valley, during AD 300-900, a general urban decay did not engulf the subcontinent as a whole. The diagnosis of urban anaemia leading to ruralization and Peasantization may not serve as an all purpose key. Urban developments in early historical and early medieval times were not primarily conditioned by external trade. So the decline or otherwise of long-distance trade cannot be taken as the principal determinant of urban development and decay in Indian conditions.

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## 15.6 Summary

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The changes introduced by the system of land grants in the post-Gupta centuries were not confined to a new agrarian economy. Urban settlements, which had been in the state of decay in the few centuries after the arrival of the Guptas, saw a new life infused into them. The revival of trade, rise of new markets, dispersal of political authority and consolidation of economic power by religious establishments had given rise to numerous towns and cities in different regions of the Indian subcontinent with only minor variations noticeable in the relative importance of causative factors.

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## 15.7 Model Questions

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- 1) List the three main phases of urban growth in India prior to the coming of the Turks.

- 2) What are the important features of a town spelt by Gordon Childe?
- 3) List the important traits or urban centres applicable to early medieval India
- 4) What led to the transformation of some rural centres into urban?
- 5) How did the trading activities help in the growth of towns?
- 6) Did religious centres play a role in the process of urbanisation?
- 7) Write five lines on “administrative centres as towns”.

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## 15.8 Suggested Readings

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Singh, Vipul, *Interpreting Medieval India Vol-1* (Macmillan)

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## **Unit- 16 □ Merchant Guilds of South India**

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### **Structure**

#### **16.0 Objective**

#### **16.1 Introduction**

#### **16.2 Organisation of Traders**

##### **16.2.1 Guilds : Definition and Functions**

##### **16.2.2 Organisation of Trading Guilds in South India**

#### **16.3 Position of Merchants**

#### **16.4 Relationship between Merchants and Craftsmen**

#### **16.5 Conclusion**

#### **16.6 Summary**

#### **16.7 Model Questions**

#### **16.8 Suggested Readings**

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### **16.1 Objectives**

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After going through this unit, we will come to know about the :

- Organisation of traders of South India.
  - The relationship between merchants and craftsmen.
  - The position of merchants.
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### **16.1 Introduction**

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An attempt has been made here to demarcate the role of traders and merchants in the society with reference to their organised economic activities in South India. The fluctuations in their relative position through centuries have also been shown. It also draws special attention to the overawing influence of big merchants on petty artisans and craftsmen.

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### **16.2 Organisation of Traders**

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The merchants derived their power and prestige not only from wealth but also from the guilds or associations formed by them to protect their interests. In the first



phase the decline of trade weakened the corporate activity of merchants, and many of the guilds were reduced to mere regional or occupational sub-castes. But as trade revived in the second phase, merchant guilds reappeared as an important feature of the contemporary economic life.

### **16.2.1 Guilds : Definition and Functions**

A guild was an organisation of traders formed by them in order to protect their interests. During the early medieval period merchant guilds were an important elementary of the economic life of the period. Various guild names included the Nigama, the Shreni, the Samuha, the Sartha, the Samgha and so on and so forth. The nigama is described as an association of caravan merchants of different castes who travel together for the purpose of carrying on trade with other countries. Shreni, according to Medhatithi, was a group of people following the same profession such as that of traders, moneylenders, artisan etc, though some authors considered it to be a group of artisans alone. The Lekhapaddhati indicates that a special department called the sherni Karana was constituted by the kings of Western India to look after the activities of the guilds of merchants and artisans in their region. Another text Manasollasa reveals that many merchant guilds maintained their own troops (Shrenibala) for personal safety. Inscriptions too refer to the corporate activity of merchants. An inscription from western India refers to Vanika-mandala which was probably a guild of local merchants. Guilds were voluntary associations of merchants dealing in grains, textiles, betel leaves, horses, perfumes, etc. They were formed by both the local as well as the itinerant merchants. Groupings, associations and guilds of local merchants particularly those who had a permanent residential abode in towns, were that much more durable than the guilds of itinerant merchants which were formed as a make shift arrangement to meet the exigencies of either a situational crises or for a specific journey and were terminated at the end of each venture.

The guilds set up their own rules and regulations regarding membership and the code of conduct. They fixed the prices of their goods and could even decide that a specific commodity would not be sold on a particular day by its members. They could even refuse to trade on a particular day or in a particular area or locality if they found the local authorities hostile or uncooperative.

Guilds also acted as the custodians of religions interests. Inscriptions refer to numerous instances when it was decided to collectively pay an additional tax on the sale and purchase of goods for the maintenance of temples or temple functions. These

guilds functioned according to the rules framed by members. Members who violated guild rules could face punitive measures like expulsion. Guilds were required to deal directly with the king and settle the market tolls and taxes on behalf of fellow merchants. A member of the guild worked under a strict code of discipline and to some extent was robbed of initiative and freedom of action but also enjoyed numerous benefits. He received the full backing and support of the guild and was thus saved from the harassment of local officials. It also provided the member a greater credulity in the market. Thus, instead of the fact that guild chiefs tended to be rude and authoritative at times, the merchants found guilds an important means of seeking physical and economic protections.

### **16.2.2 Organisation of Trading Guilds in South India**

The expansion of agriculture and the growth of trade from the 10<sup>th</sup> century led to the emergence of many merchant guilds or organisations in South India too. The inscriptions refer to those organisations often as *samaya*, i.e. an organisation born out of an agreement or contract among its members to follow a set of rules and regulations.

The two most important merchant guilds of South India were known as the *Ayyavole* and the *Manigramam*. Geographically, the area of their operation corresponded to the present day state of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and South Andhra Pradesh. The Chola Kings from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards made a concerted effort to trade and commerce through trade missions, maritime expeditions, abolition of tolls etc. It greatly increased the activities of those guilds which were involved in not only interregional but also inter-oceanic trade across the Bay of Bengal.

The merchant guild called *Ayyavole* was also known as the guild of “the 500 Swami of Aihole” *nanadeshi*. The organisation might have had an initial membership of 500. But there is no denying the fact that with the growth of trade and commerce, the *Vira Bananjas* (representing the trade guild of *Ayyavok*) operated on a trans-regional plane and had developed deep-socio economic interests between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. They spread from *Bhalvani* (in *Sangli* district in Maharashtra) in the north to *Kayalpattinam* (in Tamil Nadu) in the South. The number “five hundred” also became conventional as the guild became a much larger body and drew its members from various regions, religions and castes. It is in this context that the term *Nanadeshi* came to be used for this organisation.

In course of outward expansion, the member of the *Ayyavole* guild interacted with the local markets called *nagaram*, and promoted commercial activity by collecting

agricultural goods from the hinterland and distributing the goods brought from elsewhere. The commercial influence of Ayyavole spread even beyond South India. It is indicated by the inscriptions found at Burma, Java, Sumatra and Sri Lanka. As the mercantile activities of Ayyavole increased, some of its members became quite rich and powerful, and acquired the title of samaya Chakravarti, i.e. the emperor of the trading organisation.

Another important merchant guild of South India was the Manigraman. It first appeared along the Kerala coast in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. However, as it gradually came into close contact, with the Ayyavole, it greatly improved upon its inter regional activities and covered a large part of the peninsula. A 9<sup>th</sup> century Tamil inscription found at Takua Pa on the West coast of Malaya indicates that it was engaged in the long distance sea trade from the very beginning.

Anjuvannam was another body of merchants in South India, which probably represented an association of foreign merchants, and not a group of five communities or castes as some scholars believe. Like the Manigraman, it also began its commercial activity along the Kerala coast in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century, and gradually spread out to other coastal areas of South India by the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It interacted both with local merchants as well as the Ayyavole and Manigraman organisations.

The importance acquired by trading guilds is apparent in the conscious attempt to trace exalted genealogies of traders of various corporations. The Vira Bananjas of the Ayyavole, for instance, are said to have been born in the race of Vasudeva and their qualities are compared with those of various epic heroes. A typical prashasti (panegyric) of the Vira Bananjas may be seen in the following description found in the Kolhapur stone inscription of the Shilahar King Gandarditya dated in 1130 CE.

“Hail! They who are adorned by a multitude of numerous virtues obtained by following the religion of the Five Hundred Heroic Men renowned in the whole world: who are virtuous by reason of the maintenance of the code of the heroic Bananjas consisting of truthfulness, pure conduct, agreeable behaviour, political wisdom, courtesy and mercantile knowledge..... who are exalted with their unfailing adventurous spirit ... who are born in the race of Vasudeva, Khandali and Mulabhadra .... who are invincible when they fight, who are like Brahman in respect of proficiency of the sixty four arts; like Narayana in the possession of Chakra (discuss); like Rudra, who is the fire of the world destruction in slaying their opponents by their gaze..... who are like Rama in perseverance, like Arjuna in valour; like Bhisma in purity of conduct, like

Bhima in adventurous spirit; like Yudhistira in righteousness....like Karna in charity and like the sun in brilliance....

In short, the vast trading network in South India was controlled by a number of merchant organisations which worked in close co-operation and harmony with one another. The guild-chiefs on account of their control on trade and trading organisations, established close links with the royal houses and enjoyed great name and fame in the society.

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### 16.3 Positions of Merchants

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The expansion of agriculture and the availability of surplus from the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century onwards led to increase in commercial exchanges in South India. It resulted in the emergence of a full time trading community looking after the local exchange. This community also participated in wider interregional and inter oceanic trade. South Indian merchants were specialised in the trade of specific commodities such as textiles, oil or ghee, betel leave, honey, etc. The locally regional markets called *n<sup>r-m</sup>* were the centres of exchange. They were situated in a cluster of agrarian settlements, and they integrated not only collection from hinterland but also commercial traffic from other areas.

The number of these nagarams increased considerably during the Chola Period in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the term *nagarattar*, i.e. member of the nagaram, assembly, became a generic term for all Tamil merchants.

*Nagaratns* located on important trade routes and at the points of intersection developed into more important trade and commercial centres of the region. They were ultimately brought into a network of infra-regional and inter-regional trade as well as overseas trade through the itinerant merchant organisations and the royal ports. Such a development occurred uniformly throughout peninsular India between the tenth and twelfth centuries. During these centuries South India was drawn into the wider trade network in which all the countries of South Asia, South-east Asia and China and the Arab countries came to be involved. The *nagaram* linked the ports with political and administrative centres and craft centres in the interior.

In Karnataka *nagarams* emerged more as points of exchange in trading network than as regular markets for agrarian regions. However, the uniform features in all such *nagarams* is that they acquired a basic agricultural hinterland for the non-producing urban groups living in such centres. Markets in these centres were controlled by the *nagaram* assembly headed by a chief merchant called *pattanasvami*.

Wider trade networks also existed between Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu, for the presence of Kannada, Tamil and Telugu merchants is well attested in several towns such as Belgaun (Karnataka), Peruru in Nalgonda district (Andhra Pradesh) and coastal towns of Visakhapatnam and Ghantasala, The Andhra coast turned to the south eastern trade with Motupalli, Visakhapatnam and Ghantasala acting as the major outlets. Market centres of inter-regional importance are represented by places like Nellore, Draksharama, Tripurantakam and Anumakonda in Andhra Pradesh. On the northern and southern banks of Kaveri in its middle reaches arose a number of exchange points between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu such as Talakkad and Mudikondan,

Kerala developed contracts with the West and foreign traders such as the Jews, Christians and Arabs who were given trading towns under special royal charters. Coastal towns such as Kolikkodu, Kollam etc., became entrepots of South Asian trade. The location of such trading groups as the Anjuvannam and Arab horse dealers enhanced the importance of coastal towns in Karnataka and Kerala.

Major craft centres which developed in response to inter-regional trade were weaving, centres in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Some of the craft and commercial centres of the early historic urban phase survived till the early medieval period and were brought into the processes of re-urbanisation which linked them with the new socioeconomic institutions like the temple. Kashi (Varanasi) in the north and Kanchipuram (near Madras) in the south are two very prominent examples of such processes.

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## **16.4 Relationship between Merchants and Craftsmen**

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The exact nature of relationship between the merchants and craftsmen, the two independent section of commercial world, is not recorded in the contemporary sources. It is, therefore, not known whether craftsmen such as weavers, metal workers etc. acted independently or worked under the command of merchants who supplied them money or raw material or both. There is, however, some evidence to suggest that as merchants came to exert greater control on the mobilisation of raw material and finished products, their influence on the activities of artisans increased considerably. An inscription of the 11<sup>th</sup> century from Erode in Tamil Nadu refers to an asylum given by merchants to the craftsmen, and thus indicates the dependence of the latter on the merchant organisations. As trade and commerce developed merchants tended to ability of artisans to market their goods personally. There are references to some oilmen and weavers who sold their goods themselves and became rich enough

to make endowments to temples and priests. In general, the artisans and craftsmen during the early medieval period were economically dependent on big merchants.

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## 16.5 Conclusion

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As Chola power waned in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the merchant guilds of South India became increasingly independent and less dependent on royal support. Trading caravans moved around with armed protection. Merchant guilds jointly fixed tolls and cesses, and made joint donations to temples along with the Chittirameeli and Pandinen Vishaya, which were associations of agriculturists controlling the production and exchange of agricultural commodities.

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## 16.6 Summary

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Seeing traders as an important link between the producer and consumer, this unit underlined:

- 1) The ups and downs in the relative positions of traders and merchants in early medieval South India.
- 2) Emergence of regional merchant groups;
- 3) Organisations of traders, Viz-guilds, which regulated corporate activity of merchants;
- 4) trans-regional and inter-oceanic activities of guilds in South India.
- 5) The role of itinerant traders; and
- 6) The growing hold of big merchants over artisans and craftsmen.

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## 16.7 Model Questions

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1. Define Guilds? List their main functions.
2. What was the role of Ayyavole in the expansion of trading activities in South India?

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## 16.8 Suggested Readings

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**Module - V**  
**Religious and Cultural Developments**





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## **Unit-17 □ Bhakti, Tantrism, Puranic Traditions Buddhism and Popular Religious Cults**

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### **Structure**

- 17.0 Objectives**
- 17.1 Introduction**
- 17.2 Bhakti**
- 17.3 Tantrism**
- 17.4 Puranic Traditions**
- 17.5 Buddhism**
- 17.6 Popular Religious Cults**
- 17.7 Conclusion**
- 17.8 Summary**
- 17.9 Model Questions**
- 17.10 Suggested Readings**

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### **17.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit, we will come to know :

- That there was a great amount of religious expressions ranging from Vedic Brahmanism and
- The popular Bhakti movement to the even more widespread fertility cults.

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### **17.1. Introduction**

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The pre-sultanate period was a time of social and religious erosion. An increasing number of complexities were beginning to set into existing systems, making life difficult and dogmatic for the common man. The new cultural milieu led to a great amount of religious expression, ranging from Vedic Brahmanism and the popular Bhakti movement to the even more widespread fertility cults. Though the distinction between all three were not clearly demarcated in practice, there was a mutual flow of rites and concepts amongst each other.

It is sometimes believed that there were as many as forty two religions extant in India at this time. This may no doubt be a exaggeration, but it only implies the existence of a large number of religious sects. Hinduism in its modern form, as the Sanatana dharma, emerged stronger by replacing the old simplicity of its early vedic avatar. In its new form, Hinduism accepted different modes of worship within its ever increasing fold. Nature was now worshipped in a three fold form—the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Although the Hindu dharma accepted the existence of several Gods or deities, it accepted only one supreme Being, symbolizing the Trinity. The Trinity represented the eternal processes of creation, sustenance and destruction, in that order. The formal worship of Vishnu and Shiva was liberally patronized by the elites, as numerous Vaishnavite and Shaivit temples cropped up all over the subcontinent.

To draw the common man who had converted to Buddhism, back into the Hindu fold, popular epic heroes like Rama and Krishna were elevated to the status of Gods. Each sub-sect tried to formulate elaborate rules and rituals by recomposing the Puranas to incorporate popular trends that would appeal to the masses. This was a time when the Upapuranas were written to place on record the new forms of rites and practices of worship for local deities. Krishna, as the cowherd deity, was worshipped as a popular incarnation of Vishnu. The Krishna cult that emerged during this period contained pastoral and erotic themes of worship. The love between Radha and Krishna became a popular theme that engendered a tradition of beautifully sensitive literature that survives to this day.

Along with the Trinity and demi-Gods, many more deities connected with the fertility cults also emerged, where the mother goddess played an important role. The renewed emphasis on the primordial female power or Shakti, strengthened the status of female deities in the Hindu pantheon, giving rise to the worship of the Mother Goddess as Kali, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Tara, a popular Goddess of Vajrayana Buddhism, was considered to be the Buddhist counterpart of Shakti.

Fertility cults and various Tantrik traditions, apart from giving rise to the element of eroticism in Hinduism, also gave rise to several esoteric sub-sects. The tantric traditions, named after the Tantra scriptures, influenced both Hindu and Buddhist rituals of this time. What had begun as a form of folk religion later gained popularity among the elite, before being counted among the more sophisticated faiths of the times. Around the same time, Buddhism which was hitherto popular with the masses, ceased to exist as an organised religion.

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## 17.2 Bhakti

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The Bhakti cult espoused a virulent rejection of Brahmanical orthodoxy and suggested that salvation was a personal matter, which did not require the intervention of priests and clerics. It could be attained by means of pure devotion to God. The movement took root in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in Tamil Nadu where it had distinctly heterodox origins. The Bhakti cult then spread to other parts of India and finally also to northern India, giving an entirely new perspective to Hinduism. The movement was led by sixty-three Saivite and twelve Vaishnavite Saints called the Nayanars and the Alvars respectively. These Nayanar and Alvar Saints of South India spread the doctrine of Bhakti to different sections of society, irrespective of caste and gender. Not too many Nayanar saints were Brahmins and most others were traders and peasants. Many came from the lower castes and took women into the fold. The saint poets preached Bhakti and promoted religious egalitarianism. They dispensed with rituals in which the lower classes could not afford to participate. They also rejected the caste system. The Alvar and Nayanar saints used Tamil for communicating with people and composing devotional songs. All these features gave the movement a popular character and for the first time Bhakti acquired a popular base.

M.G.S Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat say that the term Nayanar and Alvar are a bit of a puzzle. The word Nayanar may well have been a Tamil rendition of the Sanskrit word *Nayaka*, meaning 'a leader', and thereby implying that the sixty-three Nayanar leaders were the incarnation of Siva. The term Alvar has been derived from the root *al* which could imply the act of plunging or immersing oneself into deep devotion. The term *al* also means 'to rule' or 'to preserve'. Further, Alvar is the literal translation of the Sanskrit word *bhakta*. In Tamil, the root word *al* also means 'to process' or 'to enjoy'.

The South Indian Bhakti saints were critical of the Buddhist and Jain priests who enjoyed a privileged status at the courts of the South Indian kings of that time. Many adherents of Buddhism and Jainism, both of which by now had become rigid and formal religions, defected to the Bhakti fold. The Bhakti cult had serious limitations. It never consciously opposed Brahmanism or the Varna and caste system at a social level. It was integrated into the caste system and the 'lower castes continued to remain a highly disadvantaged group. Brahmanical rituals like the worship of Idols, recitation of Vedic mantras and pilgrimages to sacred places remained in vogue in spite of the fact that the Bhakti cult seemed to offer a simpler and less ritual-ridden mode of worshipping God. The Buddhists and Jains were the main targets, not the

Brahmins. This perhaps was also why Brahmin-dominated temples came to play such an important role in the growth of the Bhakti movement in South India. Since the ideological and social foundations of the caste system were not subjected to a mode of rigorous questioning by the South Indian saint poets, the Bhakti movement of the South, in the long run, ended up supporting the caste system instead of subverting it. Eventually, when the movement reached its Climax in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, it was gradually assimilated into the conventional Brahmanical religion. But despite these limitations, the South Indian Bhakti movement in its heyday succeeded in championing the cause of religious equality. Consequently, the brahmins had to accept lower caste preachers, and had to grant the lower castes access to Bhakti as a mode of worship and also eventually to the Vedic texts.

Saiva and Vaishnava saints, and their followers, practised and propagated the cult of Bhakti in the countryside, and would often proceed upon pilgrimages, singing and dancing along the way. They received royal patronage, often entered into heated debates with the Jains and Buddhists, presumably healed the sick, and performed other miracles of note. Their hymns, addressed to several deities, constitute the bulk of Tamil literature. Therefore, many early scholars have treated Bhakti chiefly as literary movement or an ideological phenomenon with religion as the primary source of inspiration. The Bhakti movement was based on this literary philosophical conception, because there is no clarity regarding either its chronological sequence or its social significance. Historical studies by scholars like S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, R.G. Bhandarkar, T.A. Gopinatha Rao and K.A Nilakanta Sastri have been able to come up with a chronological frame work of sorts, but that has only sparked off bitter and acrimonious scholarly disputes about the matter. These scholars did not highlight the socio-political background of the movement. Further, the Bhakti in South India was viewed as a pure Tamil movement and was never really understood in a large context. Even today historical works have not yet been able to assess the Tamil Bhakti movement from an all-India view point. It was M.G. S. Narayanan and Keshvan veluthat who tried to analyse the movement not only within the larger framework of the development of society and culture in India, but also in its socio-economic context with special reference to the elements of dissent, protest and reform.

The Bhakti tradition did not approve of the Varna system and accepted members from all castes within its fold. Most of the sixty three Nayanars were non-brahmins. However, this does not mean that Bhakti completely rejected the caste system. A Puranic text in fact tell us that 'a man who bows before a linga or a Vishnu idol that has been touched by a Shudra is doomed forever. M.G.S. Narayanan and Veluthat argue that the idea of Bhakti had a deep impact upon popular conciousness in early

medieval India. The philosopher and theologian Shankara, with all his emphasis on unqualified monism and the Upanishadic idea of salvation through knowledge, accommodated the Bhakti doctrine in his philosophy. He himself was a devotee of Shiva and is credited with the authorship of some fine devotional poems, including the *Anandalahari* written in praise of Parvati. Later, Ramanuja (1017-1137), a Vaishnava Tamil Brahmana and an ardent exponent of qualified monism, laid much emphasis on Bhakti as a means to achieve salvation. The cult of devotion was thus the most popular ideology during the early medieval period.

The Bhakti doctrine endorsed the theory of incarnation. Although the concept of incarnation was originally a feature of Vaishnavism it now influenced other religions as well. Most of the twenty-eight avatars of Shiva are said to have been Vishnu incarnations. However, it is only the last of these, Lakulisa, who became popular. In Jainism, the worship of tirthankaras became popular. In Vaishnavism itself, the boar (Varaha) form of Vishnu, seems to have become very common, though the ten avatars of Vishnu came to be standardized and are mentioned in a late seventh century inscription in Mahabalipuram. Rama, as an incarnation of Vishnu, was known as a cult deity, but could not achieve the stature of Krishna. Scenes and episodes from the life of Krishna were etched upon several temple walls and Jayadeva and Nimbarka popularized his worship in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

M.G.S Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat opine that royal patronage seems to have intensified the tempo of the Bhakti movement. Mahendra-Varman is alleged to have destroyed a Jaina monastery and build a Hindu temple in its place. This seems to have been followed by a temple-building spree which spread from the Pallava-Chola territory in the Pala and the Chera territories. This was also where the Bhakti cult found acceptance in popular belief. Hundreds of inscriptions from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries refer to the construction of temples, which naturally could not have been possible without the active support of kings. The kings and chieftains, who supported Brahminical groups, became more powerful than those who opposed them. The Brahmins succeeded in bringing in indigenous people as tenants and temple servants, hierarching them into castes and subcastes and bringing in infinite variations of economic and ritual status. They were in a position to mobilize the manpower of the vast tenant class for royal military service. Thus, the kings and Brahmins helped and supported each other. The more powerful a king became, the greater sense of support and protection a Brahmin had.

Narayanan and Veluthat argue that the ideology of Bhakti served as the cementing force which would bind kings, Brahmin priests and common people into

a harmonious whole. They felt that the intoxication of Bhakti would help people to deal with circumstantial adversity, affliction and grief. It would also help the highly placed to find a sense of worth in a realm that transcended that of material possessions. However, this promise of egalitarianism proved illusory and misplaced because the stranglehold of feudal inequality could not be dismantled. In short, the Bhakti movement contained all the ingredients of popular Hinduism. The ancient classical Brahminical creed of the Vedas and the Sastras found favour with the non-Brahminical and non-Aryan population of South India.

Although the earliest saints did not come from the ranks of royalty, some kings and chieftains like Mahendra-Varman, along with some other unidentified Pallavas and Cholas, were among the patrons of the movements. It is possible that a number of kings made use of the hugely popular cult of Bhakti to enhance their own prestige and power. The destruction of the Jaina monastery and the alleged religious persecution of several thousand Jains under the aegis of the Bhakti movement indicates that many Nayanars prompted rulers to use state power for the promotion of their creed even through the use of violence. Thus, the Bhakti movement may, in effect, have helped rulers to consolidate the power of monarchy as an institution.

The starting point of the Bhakti cult was the system of offering material objects like land, cattle, utensils and lamps, according to Narayanan and Veluthat. In place of material objects, one could offer one's own self in the spirit of true devotion and service. This meant that devotion was offered in return for immunity from death, poverty and disease. A step higher, in the full intoxication of Bhakti, the ideal devotee was not really looking for either wealth, or longevity, or power and security. He believed in and offered pure, unconditional love and devotion to a higher cause. Puja was the most common manifestation of Bhakti. It meant offering land and property and other services to the Lord on return for land, fiscal rights, and protection. This gave encouragement to the idea of construction of temples on a large scale by kings and landed magnates. The idea of the holy abode of God gripped the masses with a sense of religious fervour and the practice of making frequent trips to a tirthasthan gained unprecedented popularity. It is interesting to observe that the genesis of a large number of the nearly 2000 tirthas in India was laid in the early medieval period.

When the popularity of the Bhakti movement in South India was on a decline, a philosophical justification was provided for the decline of Bhakti. Nimbarka tried to establish a careful balance between orthodox Brahmanism and popular cult of Bhakti which was open to all. Though he did not support the idea of the lower castes having access to the Vedas, he advocated Bhakti as a mode of worship for all—including the Shudras and the outcastes. As a Bhakti propagandist, Nimbarka did not observe caste

distinctions and even tried to eradicate untouchability. He is believed to have been a younger contemporary of Ramanuja. He spent most of his time in Vrindavan near Mathura in North India. He believed in total devotion to Krishna and Radha.

Another South Indian Vaishavite Bhakti philosopher was Madhava, who belonged to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Like Ramanuja, he too did not dispute the orthodox Brahminical opinion that was staunchly opposed to the idea of allowing Shudras to read and study vedic texts. He believed that Bhakti provided alternate avenues of worship to the Shudras. His philosophical system was based on the Bhagvat Purana.

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### 17.3 Tantrism

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The practices of Bhakti, Puja and tirthayatra gained popularity in early medieval time. Being open to members of all varnas they achieved universal appeal and became an inextricable part of all medieval religions. Tantrism also emerged as a force to reckon with in early medieval society. R.S. Sharma says that the Tantras served an important social purpose by prescribing numerous rituals and remedies not only for day-to-day common ailments and diseases but also for snake bites, bites by poisonous insects and mice, and assaults by ghost-turned assailant. Remedial measures to protect cereals and food grains from mice and vermin, find ample mention in the records of the period. Rites and occult practices were supposed to avert the adverse impact of poison, planetary movements and diseases. Medication was supposed to be administered along with religious chants and incantations. The medieval tantrika also acted as physician and astrologer/jyotishi. The practice continues even now in Nepal and Mithila where the tantrika foretells the future and the dates of eclipses and festivals.

Taantrism laid down numerous magical rituals to achieve liberation (mukti) and happiness (bhukti) and infact to find fulfillment for all kinds of material desires. D.N. Jha says that tantrism originated in backward tribal areas, where Brahmin settlements took place after they were donated land. The Brahmin beneficiaries interacted with the local people and, in the process, appropriated their deities, especially the female ones.

To R.S. Sharma, Tantrism was the ultimate proof of the Brahminical colonisation of tribal areas through the process of land grants. Land grants gave rise not only to serfdom in the outer circle but also to the cults of Bhakti and Tantrism, all of which eventually penetrated Madhyadda. He argues that the problem of the origin of Tantrism can be looked at from diverse perspectives like. i) the acculturation of peripheral areas through land grants made to monks and Brahmins, ii) the aboriginal background of the Tantric mother goddesses, iii) the antiquity and distribution of the



pithas, iv) the association of the Sabaras and the Matailgas with the different Tantras; v) the dates and provenance of the tantric texts; and finally the survival of Tantrism. All these considerations have led historians to believe that the cult of Tantrism originated in the outer, tribal circles and not in Madhyadda.

Winternitz thinks that the Tantras and the curious religious excrescences described in them are not drawn from the popular traditions of either the aboriginal inhabitants or of the Aryan immigrants, but they are the pseudo-scientific impositions of theologians. While the efforts of the priests to invent gainful rituals cannot be discounted, the close connection of Tantrism with aboriginal areas, tribes, and goddesses cannot be ignored. The mystic diagrams (yantras) and the sacred Chakras or circles invented by the Saktas, and the different rituals observed by the Tantric worshippers, possibly continued the tradition of the veneration of stone tools and weapons as cult symbols, which were often also associated with fertility rites.

The confrontation between the Brahmins and the tribal people resulted in major social and economic problems which were partly resolved through Tantrism. On the one hand, the new religion allowed admittance to women, Shudras and aborigines; on the other hand, it implicitly endorsed the existing social and feudal hierarchy. Therefore, it was acceptable to all sections of people. It was a religious attempt at social reconciliation and integration rather than at the accentuation of the social conflict. Even Buddhism had closed its doors to slaves and debtors, but the Tantric Chakra opened its doors to all sections of people, irrespective of varna, caste, gender and other considerations.

Tantrism popularized puja and adopted the Bhakti doctrine of complete surrender to God and the guru by making various offerings to them. It found sanction with various temples which housed Siva, Vishnu, Sakti and many new folk of divinities, monastic organizations which gave paramount importance to the guru or the acharya; and finally a vast corpus of literature which embodied Tantric traditions and practices. It was, therefore, in effect, identical with Hinduism in medieval times. Its outlook was highly secular and materialistic, and no other sect was as close to the lives of various classes of people as it was. This was perhaps the reason for being in vogue in India for a long period of time, and in some ways survives even today.

N.N. Bhattacharya, however says that the popular belief that Tantra is the same as Saktism is evidently wrong. This misunderstanding is due to the fact that Tantra attaches supreme importance to the doctrine of Sakti. But this doctrine is not the feature of Saktism alone.

By the time Tantrism became a force in early medieval times, Jainism and

Buddhism had ceased to offer only serious challenge to Brahminism. Some people assign psychosexual origins to Tantrism, and others explain its rise and growth in purely spiritual and mystic terms. But a convincing explanation for the series of events that took place in medieval India has not really been provided.

In Bengal, Manasa found her way into the Brahminical religious system during the early phase of the Pala rule. In Orissa, Moninageshvari was elevated to a place of importance in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries through royal donations. The practice of making human sacrifices to placate her are still existent. In the same region, Stambheshvari, a goddess associated with the ancient Shaulika tribe, was observed into the Brahminical fold through the patronage of the Sulki, rulers. In Tamil Nadu the fish eyed goddess, Minaksi, was similarly brought into the Brahminical cult through the patronage of the Pandya rulers. At Tirupati, in Andhra Pradesh, the Goddess Padmavati, who has Tantric powers, had a temple built in her name in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

Almost all the temples of 64 yoginis (mother goddess in 64 forms) were built in the tribal belt of eastern Madhya Pradesh and Orissa during early medieval times, according to N. N. Bhattacharya. Several other tribal deities with strange-sounding names like—Ghasmari, Shavari, Chandali and Dombini were integrated into the Tantric Brahminical tradition through inter action with the tribal people. Several extant Tantric texts have unquestionable tribal leanings like in the Yoginitantra, the Matangaparameshvaratantra and the Vtjrayogini-Sadhana. Bhattacharya feels that the inclusion of tribe cults and deities not only consolidated Brahminical cultural hegemony outside mid India but also led to a demographic explosion in the world of divinity, giving rise to the later hyperbolic statement about India having 330 million gods. Although the cult of the mother goddess has always existed in earlier times, it became central to Tantrism. Unlike the traditional Brahminical religion, it did not ignore women. A tantric text tells us that a woman is born in the family (kula) of the great mother and so one should not so much as lay a finger upon her, not even with a flower. Tantrism not only allowed the initiation of women into the fold, but also permitted them to become preceptors or gurus.

Women enjoyed a higher status in tribal belts, where the cult of the mother goddess was widely prevalent. Since women have always been bracketed with Shudras, it was only proper that their ritual status be also raised, and this was done by initiating them into the Tantric fold. The cult of the mother goddess had prevailed in the country from a much earlier time, but it was only in the 6<sup>th</sup> century or so that it began to find mention in the literature of the Buddhist and Brahminical sects. The

aboriginal mother goddesses came to be worshipped in the form of Sakti or Buddhist Tara. Saktism emerged as a religious factor in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and became a strong force from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The names of the mother goddess, in different areas, reveal their aboriginal origin.

Popular Tantrism emphasized orgiastic rites involving addiction to the five features of makaras-matsya (fish), mamsa (meat), madhya (intoxicating drink), maithuna (sex) and mudra (physical gesture). It introduced a strong element of eroticism in the arts. Erotic depictions abound in the temples of Maharashtra, Gujrat, Rajasthan (e.g. Bavka, Motap, Sunak, Galteshvara, Dabhoi, Eklingaji, Nagda etc). Orissa (Bhuvaneshvara), Karnataka (Halebid, Bengali and Belur) and Tamil Nadu (Madura and Kanchipuram). But these portrayals are most prominent in Konarak and Khajuraho. The widespread influence of Tantric cults and their erotic elements on the artistic idiom and motifs is thus unquestionable. It must be emphasized that patronage of high spiritualism symbolized by grand temple structures and of the extreme sensuality seen in the sculpture of the period came from the feudal landed aristocracy headed by the rulers themselves, whose ideology was a curious amalgamation of the sacred and the profane.

Devangana Desai argues that the patronage of Tantrism is reflective of feudal degeneration as it had only two focus areas—war and sex. But this seems to be a rather narrow and conservative explanation of the emergence of Tantrism. B.D. Chattopadhyay, however, says that the early medieval attitude towards the world of Tantrism was ambivalent. He explains that apart from its obscure, esoteric belief systems, another reason was the wide prevalence and clientele of Tantrism.

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## 17.4 Puranic Traditions

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With the decline of Vedic Brahmanism, several sects emerged which together constituted Puranic Hinduism. Puranic Hinduism is, therefore, a belief system and formalized religion with multiple strands that went on absorbing and synthesizing local religious cultic beliefs and practices. This enabled it to bring people belonging to diverse groups under its fold over a vast geographical area. We know that multiple strands make up Puranic Hinduism because of the large pantheon of gods and goddesses. Puranic Hinduism existed along with Tantric belief and practices.

The transition from the existing Vedic Brahmanism to Puranic Hinduism was not sudden or quick, but rather it was a slow process of assimilation, negotiation and incorporation of local cults. The transition to a new system did not mean that all old ideas relating to Vedic Brahmanism were entirely abandoned. Yet, the difference

between Vedic Brahmanism and Puranic Hinduism is easily identifiable when we look at the differences between textual accounts of both.

The sources of Puranic Hinduism are a class of texts called the Puranas. The Puranas started getting composed from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Their composition continued till early modern times. We, therefore, understand the transition from Vedic Brahmanism to Puranic Hinduism by looking at the differences between the Vedas and the Shastras on the one hand, and the Puranas on the other. Since pre-existing thought did not completely disappear, it may be said that Vedic Brahmanism remained as one of the constituents of Puranic Hinduism.

We may ask the question: Why was such incorporation and assimilation necessary? One of the answers to this question is tied to the economic conditions prevailing at the time. The brahmanas had received land grants of brahmadeyas and it was important for them to engage local people and assimilate their cultic beliefs and practices. Recognising and incorporating local gods and goddesses, therefore, was a key method of expanding Brahmanism and the reason behind its large pantheon.

Mythology and folk lore were also important means to bring the cults within the Brahmanical fold. We know this because the Puranas are full of mythological stories that could appeal to a wide audience. The contents of the Puranas are more popular than didactic.

There were several changes that took place in religious activity in the transition from Vedic Brahmanism to Puranic Hinduism. This period witnessed many changes, like an increase in ritual activity and now the rituals performed were also distinctly different from the Vedic performances. The performance of puja and collective rituals became central as the importance of performing sacrifices decreased. Image worship and worship within temples also became important. The inclusion of leaves and flowers of plants found in forest areas in puja activities is a marker of the relationship between Brahmanism and the cults it imbibed. Similarly, the act of making pilgrimages and pilgrimage places gained prominence. We know this from the Puranas that mention a vast number of pilgrimage sites. The placement of such pilgrimage sites was also strategic in that they were specifically located in areas away from the core Brahmanical zone. This was a step towards the engagement of Brahmanism with local cults.

The main sects of Puranic Hinduism are Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism. All three were able to absorb many local cults and traditions into their respective folds. Local deities were explained as incarnations of the three main gods.

Shaivism gained prominence in several parts of the sub-continent, particularly in Kashmir. The process of assimilation in Shaivism was different. Cults assimilated by Shaivism are identified by the adding of the prefix Isha, or Ishvara in front of the name of a local god, like Bhuteshwara or Chandeshwara. Some historians argue that the children of Shiva were actually major gods of local cults who were incorporated into the larger Puranic narrative. Thus, his son Skanda, also known as Kumara, is worshipped as Subrahmanya, Murugan and Kartikeya. Similarly, his wife Parvati is said to have originally been a mountain goddess.

Another way of identifying cultic incorporation within Shaivism is by looking at the bodily ornaments of Shiva as well as his attire. His attire has also been described as of tribal origin by some historians. They point to the snake as being an essential part of the person of Shiva. Further, Shiva's strong association with fertility may have been derived from local fertility cults and their practices.

### **Vaishnavism**

The first mention of Vishnu comes in the Vedas, where a few hymns are dedicated to him. More mention is made of him in the class of texts called the Brahmanas. These texts treat Vishnu as the highest god. While it spread extensively in the sub-continent, it was particularly prominent in eastern parts of the subcontinent.

As has been discussed above, local cults were absorbed into each of the three strands of Puranic Hinduism. Vaishnavism came to imbibe the cults of Narayana, Jagannatha, Venkateshwara and others. The different incarnations of Vishnu represent a medium for the inclusion of cults. Some historians argue that the inclusion of the Buddha as an avatara of Vishnu stems from attempts to bring Buddhists within this fold. Similarly, a Jain Tirthankara was also added.

Vaishnavism gained prominence from the two important avataras of Vishnu—Rama and Krishna—which was primarily promulgated through the bhakti movement. The Krishna tradition of the Mahabharata and the Rama cult of the Ramayana assimilated social groups by incorporating their folk narratives in the Epic narratives. But, their deities were always subservient to the Brahmanical deities.

### **Shaktism**

Unlike the other two sects, Shaktism did not begin by revolving around a deity. It originally began as the female principle—Shakti—in Brahmanism. As a principle, she was the consort of the three chief gods. Thus, she was Saraswati to Brahma, Lakshmi

to Vishnu and Parvati or Durga to Shiva. It was only in the early centuries of the Common Era that Shakti became Devi and was worshipped as such in a cult dedicated solely to her worship. Since the worship of the female principle as mother goddess is believed to have been common among groups that were as yet untouched by Brahmanism, the Shakti cult developed a large following and further was central to Tantrism. The prime text of Shaktism is the Devi Bhagavata Purana.

There is no prominent female deity in the Vedas. The brief mention of female deities in early literature is not independent of male deities. While the idea of energy in the consort of Indra does exist, it does not come to completion till a latter time. We are, therefore, able to determine the non-Brahmanical origins of the goddess figure from the fact that earlier Brahmanical texts do not mention her. The goddess is named in several Puranas and most notably in the Devi Mahatmya. The multiple goddesses from various cults gradually came to be identified as one main goddess. While Shaktism employs the female principle as a universal divine figure, whether this improved the condition of women is debateable.

Thus, Vedic Brahmanism was replaced by Puranic Hinduism. The resultant change led to the creation of an enlarged pantheon and a new system of belief. This system was made up of elements of various cults that vastly expanded the scope of Puranic Hinduism. Changes also occurred in religious performance as modes of worship, the nature of rituals and the space for performance were altered. Tantric elements also started seeping into Hinduism around this time. The new ideas brought on by Puranic Hinduism were propagated by various mediums but mainly through the Bhakti movement.

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## 17.5 Buddhism

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The seventh century speaks of the continued appeal of Buddhism in an all-India context evident especially from the Chinese accounts of Xuan Zang (travels in India, A.D. 629-45) and Ijing (in India from A.D 675-695). Xuan Zang, however, did not fail to note that many erstwhile great Buddhist centres had already been past their best days, as he commented on the relatively fewer number of monks in several Buddhist establishments. One region where Buddhism continued to have enjoyed prominence was eastern India. This is evident from the accounts of the celebrated monastery at Nalanda made available to us by Xuanzang and Ijing. There is little doubt that in addition to being a major Buddhist centre, Nalanda monastery was also an outstanding centre for learning. Xuan Zang informs us on the pre-eminence of the Yogachara

doctrine in Nalanda, which he studied during his five year stay at Nalanda. The archaeological remains of Nalanda also speak of the lively and multifarious activities at this monastic site. Ijing was aware of the importance of Nalanda and Bodhgaya and Tilodaka monastery which, according to him, accommodated a thousand monks. One of the important Buddhist monasteries was Raktamrittika mahavihara (Lo-to-mo-chi of Xuan Zang) that stood close to Karnasuvarna, the capital of the well known Gauda king Sasanka. The ruins of this monastery have been found at Chiruti, close to Murshidabad in Bengal; the site was excavated by S.R.Das in 1960 s.

What Xuan Zang mentioned as Po-Shi-Po monastery, stands for the Vasavavihara (Yasuvihara) in northern Bengal (Pundravardhana area). That Samatata in the eastern most part of the Bengal delta also had a few monasteries figures in his account. Remains of a monastery of an impressive size have been discovered by Debala Mitra at Ratnagiri in Orissa. Besides eastern India, Buddhism had a notable presence in the lower, Indus region in far western India during the seventh and eighth centuries, as the author of the Chachnama narrates in the context of his account of the Arab invasion of Sindh.

From the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism began to fade out from different regions of the subcontinent, except the eastern part, which was due to the sustained support to Buddhism by the Pala rulers of Bengal and Bihar. In addition to Nalanda, a few more significant Buddhist monasteries were Odantapuri (near Nalanda), Vikramasila (remains at Antichak, Bihar) and Somapuri (remains at Paharpur, in northern part of Bangladesh). These were centres of Mahayana Buddhism.

Recent decades have brought to light the existence of major monastic site of the Pala times at Jagajjivanpur (Malda district, West Bengal) known first from an inscription of the time of Mahendrapala (A.D. 840-855), monks of the Mahayanist Avaiarttika sect had a major presence in this monastery. Interestingly enough, the earliest known presence of this Mahayana sect comes from an early sixth century, inscription from ancient Samatata (now in Bangladesh). Recent excavations at Jagajjivanpur (not yet complete) have already revealed the remains of this large monastery, thus, confirming what is known from the inscription. At Mahabodhi (present Bodhgaya) stood the great temple, commemorating the attainment of enlightenment by the Buddha. Mahabodhi attracted Buddhist visitors from distant lands. Thus, came to Mahabodhi Viradhara, resident of Nagarhara (Jalalabad, Afghanistan) who recorded his visit to the most sacred Buddhist centre in an elaborate Prasasti like inscription in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. At these monasteries it is likely that the worship of the Buddha and Bodhi Sattvas were accompanied by complex rites and rituals.

The Mahayana text, *Bodhi Charayavatara* by Santideva (c.eighth century) lays down the principal rites to be observed during the worship following the Mahayana doctrine; bathing the image with scented water; ritual offering of food, flowers, fragrance, clothes and incense; the accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music during the ritual worship.

The turn of the millenium, ushered in a new element to the existing Mahayana practices, namely complex and esoteric Tantric ideas and practices. One major outcome of this was the growing visibility of female deities (particularly the worship of Tara in diverse forms) in both Tantric Buddhist texts and iconography. The growing influence of Tantric elements paved the way for the incorporation of complex rituals often oriented to sexual practices. The *Hevajratantra*, for instance, upholds that liberation from the illusory wordly existence and the cessation from the seemingly interminable cycle of birth, death and rebirth were possible by using and sublimating sexual energy. The eternal happiness of Nirvana was considered achievable and put on par with bliss experienced during sexual union that ideally was not meant, for the satisfaction of carnal demands not for procreation. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the Buddhist iconography of this phase, a special significance was attached to the image delineating the union between the male and female principles, in the form of a coitus. Miranda Shaw's recent studies on women in Tantric Buddhism suggests that it offered possibilities of liberation of women in the non-exploitative, non-coercive and enlightening relationship propounded in Tantrism.

Two sects emerged as a result of the impact of Tantrism on Buddhist ideas and practices : Vajrayana and Mantrayana. One of the greatest figures of Vajrayana Buddhism was Atisa Dipankara who belonged to the late phase of the Pala rule in eastern India and associated with Vikramasila monastery. He is said to have been initially trained in Suvarnavipa (maritime South-East Asia) from where he eventually returned to Bengal. He continued the rich tradition of proselytization in Buddhist religion and was instrumental in the spread of Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet, where he breathed his last.

During the last phase of its significant presence in Bengal, Buddhism witnessed the emergence of another sect, Sahajayana that denounced the overwhelming role of elaborate rituals and the use of magical mantras. Saraha, one of the salient figures of Sahajayana Buddhism, considered that it was possible to attain liberation and enlightenment by faithfully following the instruction of a true guru, while enjoying a worldly life.



It is true that by the late 12th century, Buddhism was gradually fading out from its last stronghold in eastern India ; only the eastern most part of the Bengal delta (Samatata Harikela region) remained an isolated pocket of Buddhism. Buddhism's gradual disappearance from the land of its origin coincided with the rapid spread of brahmanical bhakti cults, which offered strong challenges to Buddhism. To this should be added the lessening royal support to Buddhism (the Palas of Bengal being an exception to this general trend), which had earlier received sustained patronage from several ruling houses. The Turkish invasion of north India at the end of the 12th century, during which Nalanda and other monasteries were destroyed also contributed to the decline of Buddhism. No less significant was the factor that the vast transformation of Buddhism under the influence of elaborate rituals and Tantric practices eroded the distinctiveness of Buddhism from Brahmanical sects and cults. The Buddha was incorporated as one of the ten incarnations (avatars) of Vishnu.

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## 17.6 Popular Religious Cults

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Six classical philosophical schools have been in existence in India since ancient times. But it was the philosophy of the Vedanta which became the most popular during the early medieval period. It was Sankaracharya (788-820) who systematized the philosophy of Vedanta by stressing upon the principle of monism (Kevala Advaita or Absolute Non-dualism). Sankaracharya gave an entirely new turn to the Hindu revival movement by providing it with a solid philosophical background through the reinterpretation of ancient Indian scriptures, particularly the Upanishads. Sankaracharya advocated the philosophy of Advaita, the monism of the Vedanta, by providing a brilliant exposition of the entire range of vedic religious and spiritual thought.

Sankaracharya started a vigorous campaign for the revival of Hinduism based on the solid foundation of vedic philosophy and ancient Indian cultural tradition. To stem the growing tide of Buddhist and Jain popularity, he re-organised the ascetic order of the Sanyasis on the pattern of the Buddhist Sangha and launched a campaign for the popularization of Hinduism. He composed extensive commentaries on the Brahmasutras and the chief Upanishads and traveled throughout India preaching his doctrines. He founded a number of mathas in different part of India to highlight the cultural unity of India. The mathas also became centres of Vedic advocacy. The mathas were located in Jagannathpuri in the East, Sringeri in the South, Dwarka in the West and Badrinath in the North.

In order to harmonize the many paradoxes of Vedic tradition, Sankaracharya had to take recourse to a philosophy of the 'double standard of truth'. It meant that on the every-day level of truth the world had been spun into existence by Brahma, and

it went through an evolutionary process similar to that taught by the Sankhya school of philosophy. But at the highest level of truth, the entire universe including the existence of God was unreal. It was at best a maya, an illusion and a figment of one's imagination.

Sankaracharya was of the view that the only reality was that of Brahman, the impersonal world Soul of the Upanishads with which the individual soul was identical. Sankaracharya also believed that God had no existence apart from the created world and any opinion held to the contrary was only a matter of ignorance and misperception. According to him the road to salvation lay in the recognition that there was no difference between God and the beings he had created. At the deepest level of mediation, Nirvikalpasamadhi, the complete identity between God and the individual is realised. It is the goal of everyone to know, realise, feel and display in action this identity. When this is accomplished all suffering comes to an end and one is freed from the cycle of birth and death. Sankaracharya calls this Sachidananda Brahman.

Later, Ramanuja combined Sankara's Advaitavada with the Vaishnava Pancharatra which claimed that Vishnu was the centre of the universe. The impact of Ramanuja's writings and his long service as a priest at the famous Vishnu temple at Srirangam made his ideas widely known to Vaishnavities and he is justly regarded as the founder of Srivaishnavism.

The Vedantic philosophy of Sankaracharya was revived by Vivekananda in the second half of the 19th century.

Vaishnavism got a major fillip with the composition of the Harivamsa which was incorporated into the Mahabharata as a supplement or an appendix (khila). It narrates the childhood and youth of Krishna as an incarnation of Vishnu. The immense popularity of the concept of the ten incarnations (avatars) of Vishnu continued unabated during this period. A new feature to the Vaishnava iconography was the regular occurrence of the figures of Laksmi, Bhudevi and Sridevi as consorts of Vishnu. Radha as the devoted beloved of Krishna seems to have first appeared in the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva and the Brahmavaivartta Purana both having a clear association with eastern India.

Saivism was the other principal Brahmanical bhakti cult that had several sects with distinct regional features. Saivism in Kashmir is marked by intense personal devotion to Siva, who is lauded as the supreme god, identified with the universal Being. In Kashmir, one may discern in Saivism the influence of monism and the non-dualist philosophy of Sankara (Advaita).

A major Saiva sect was the lingayat or the Virasaivas, founded in the 12th century by Basavanna in the Deccan. Basavanna was an apostate Jain in Kalyani, the seat of power of the later Chalukya dynasty. The sect he founded was called Lingayats since each member was to carry a miniature lingam. The lingayat / virasaiva sect sharply criticized the hypocrisy of Brahmanism and was consequently opposed by Brahmanas. As a result, the Virasaiva movement attracted a large number of followers from the lower order of society. The lingayats later themselves became a caste. The lingayats preferred burial to cremation as a funerary process, this too was a marker of their protest against orthodox brahmanism. The Lingayats also strongly advocated for the better status of women, yet barred women from becoming priests.

As several powerful ruling houses were ardent Saivas (the Cholas for example), Saivism received sustained patronage from these dynasties, mostly in the construction of massive structural temples of siva or grants of land in favour of Saiva monasteries. The Pala rulers of eastern India who generally addressed themselves in their own official records as devout Buddhists (paramasaugata), made similar donations to Saiva establishments. A very large brahmana settlement (Brahmapura) in Srihatta (present day Sylhet in Bangladesh) figures in an inscription of Srichandra (AD 930) of the Buddhist Chandra dynasty, in that Brahmapura were located shrines of Yogesvara and Mahakala, two well known aspects of Siva. The inscription also records the transfer of extensive landed property to the matha by king Srichandra.

There were also a few extremist sects in Saivism-the Kapalikas, the Kalamukhas, Pasupatas and Maltamayurakas. As David Lorenzen shows, the Kapalikas and Kalamukhas practised unusual rites and rituals, e.g. using the remains of cremated bodies, indulging in ritualized sexual intercourse etc. For the kalamukhas, it was quite usual to eat food from ashes of the cremated corpse, carrying a pot of wine and a club. All these were deliberate and visible exhibitions of the challenge to established social and cultural codes. The spectacles clearly underlined wilful deviations from accepted norms. Here one may find an attempt at registering a protest, which indeed would have attracted those who uphold non-conformity and demonstrated a definite disregard for minimal social and cultural obligations. The Pasupata sect was quite active at the celebrated Saiva sacred centre, Somanatha. Detailed studies of epigraphic texts, especially of AD 1264 and AD 1287, demonstrated that Somanatha continued to be a thriving saiva centre, in spite of suffering huge damages during the raids of Mahmud of Ghazna in AD 1025.

The image of the Pasupata acharya in Somanatha, namely Tripurantaka, clearly

bears out the increasing influence of Tripurantaka in the social and cultural life of Somanatha for at least a quarter of a century.

The other Saiva sect-Mattamayurakas— is particularly known for the long lineages of teachers (acharyas), who bore two typical suffixes, Siva and Sambhu to their respective names. Their principal deity was the Lakulisa form of Siva. Inscriptions show that there were three prominent areas of concentration of the Mattamayurakas viz. northern Bengal under the Palas, the region around Jabalpur (The realm of the Kalachuris) in Madhya Pradesh and eastern Deccan in the Kakatiya Kingdom). A large religious establishment, namely Golakimatha in the Kakatiya realm, had an extremely influential chief, Visvesvara Sambhu, who originally hailed from the Radha region of Bengal and was held in awe and esteem by the royal houses in the Kalachuri and Kakatiya realms as a royal preceptor.

Along with the two premier Matha oriented religions, devotional sects also sprang around the worship of the sun-god, Surya and Ganesha. Sun temples were built in Kashmir, at Osian in Rajasthan and at Konarak in Orissa, the last being the most famous of the monumental temples dedicated to Surya. Royal patronage to Solar Cult is recorded in sources. The elephant-headed deity Ganesha could have originally been a totem, but in the period under review, he was seen as a son of Siva and Parvati. He was, thus connected with both Saivism and Saktism, the latter as the Supreme deity. The popularity of Ganesha worship can easily be judged in the light of numerous images of Ganesha made both of stone and metal. Ganesha was seen and propitiated at once as malevolent and benevolent deity who presided over calamity (vighnesa) and also ensured cessation of hindrances (vighrana saka).

Another unmistakable feature of religious beliefs and practices was the growing presence of Tantrism and Tantric practices. Tantric practices were occasionally observed independently but in many cases, these infiltrated various brahmanical sects and became formalised. The most apparent case in this context is the increasing visibility of the cult of the goddess. The strong connections between Tantric ideas and practices and Devi worship are undeniable. Tantric beliefs and practices are also noted for assigning a prominent place and position of women in rituals. The great goddess (Devi) is held in supreme veneration in texts like Devimahatmyam which is of foundational importance to understand the significance of the Sakta Cult. The Devimahatmyam, in the Narayanistuti section (praise to Narayani), narrates various forms of the great goddess. The Matsya Purana and the Kurma Purana give us 108 and 1000 names of the Devi. It appears that initially the Devi is venerated as an individual and independent deity. It was only in Puranas that she began to be

presented as a consort of an important male god mostly Siva. This process of what has been termed as spousification of the goddess was particularly operational in the Saiva-Sakta cults. The Sakta cult strongly underlines the creative energy of Sakti, which was essential to any action. In this way, the goddess worship can be considered as a marker of a challenge to patriarchy that strongly influenced the Brahmanical Pantheon.

Kunal Chakraborti has made elaborate analysis of the Puranas in Bengal to understand the nature of Devi worship. In this region, according to him, there had been a strong tradition of autonomous goddess worship before the spread of Puranic bhakti cults, which, when these appeared in Bengal, had to encounter these autonomous goddess cults. The result was the gradual accomodation of these local Devi cults into the Brahmanical Pantheon.

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## 17.7 Conclusion

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The spread of bhakti cults and the growing appeal of Brahmanical religions were not, however, free from contestations. There were sectarian contestations ; contemporary sources also indicate similar contestations between different bhakti cults on one hand and Sramanic religions on the other. Krishnamisra's Prabodhachandradaya, an allegorical drama, places before us the competitive attitude among rival sects and cults. A major dispute took place in northern Konkan between a Devi matha and its adjacent Vaishnava shrine, possibly over the possession of a plot of land that lay between the two shrines. The situation became so complex that some of the inmates associated with the Vaishnava shrine took the extreme measure of fasting unto death. The dispute was eventually resolved. The problem and its resolution are the subject matter of a Rashtrakala inscription of early 10th century. Similarly, in AD 930, one encounters a unique scenario in a brahmana settlement (Brahmapura) in Srihatta (modern Sylhet in Bangladesh) where land was granted by the local ruler Srichandra (AD 925-75) for the upkeep of, among other things, two religious establishments (mathas) earmarked respectively for peoele of Vangatdesa (Vangaladesiya) and those hailing from elsewhere (Desantariya).

What is striking here is that in the two separate mathas were propitiated identical divinities-Agnivaisvanara (fire god), Mahakala and Yogesvara (both being two aspects of Siva) and Jamini (the author of the Purvamimansa, who was deified at some point of time). There must have occurred same tensions on disputes or sharp differences between the Vangaladesiyas and the Desantriyas, resulting in the existence of two separate religious complexes housing identical deities. One cannot however, ascertain what actually sparked off such a sharp division among devotees

of identical divinities. Hermann Kulke demonstrates how in some parts of the Deccan, Saiva sects made disparaging comments about the Buddhists, Jainas and the followers of Sankhya philosophy.

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## 17.8 Summary

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Bhakti movement critiqued the oppression of the social order but never the social order itself. The importance of the bhakti movement lies in its providing a powerful ideology and the integration of various social groups. Transgression and transcendence went hand in hand in the bhakti movement. Thus, Bhakti critiqued the social conditions that existed at that time. It established that the importance of people lay in what they did and not what they were born into.

Tantric practices did not discriminate between people on the basis of caste or gender. Women attained a different kind of prominence as it had a large number of female deities. Tantrism allied itself with various religious traditions ultimately continuing down in mainstream practice and belief.

The path of salvation that was once open only to men of the three upper varnas now came to be opened to all through a different path. Ultimately, both traditions attempted to provide for equal opportunities to worship for all. Their popularity prompted change in Brahmanism and other traditions.

From the middle of the 8th century, Buddhism began to fade out from different regions of the subcontinent, except the eastern part, which was due to the sustained support to Buddhism by the Pala rulers of Bengal and Bihar. The other premier Sramanic religion, Jainism, did not spread outside the subcontinent like Buddhism did, but it continued to exist—especially in Western India and Karnataka— while Buddhism became relegated to background.

The most spectacular development in religious life was the spread and proliferation of several Brahmanical sects all over India, especially Vaishnavism and Saivism with their multiple sects. However, the most significant philosophical and intellectual challenges to the Sramanic religions was initiated by Sankaracharya.

But the spread of Bhakti cults and the growing appeal of Brahmanical religions were not, however, free from contestations.

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## 17.9 Model Questions

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- (1) How did tantrism differ from other traditions in its treatment of women ?
- (2) How successful was the Bhakti movement ?
- (3) What were the conditions that gave rise to the Bhakti movement ?

- (4) Discuss the main features of Tantrism.
- (5) How did Bhakti movement differ from Brahmanism ?
- (6) Analyse the new trends in religion that developed during the early medieval period.

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## 17.10 Suggested Readings

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Farooqui, Salma Ahmed, *A Comprehensive History of Medieval India From the twelfth to the Mid-Eighteenth Century*, Pearson (2011).

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## **Unit 18 □ Islamic Intellectual Traditions: Al-Beruni and Al-Hujwiri**

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### **Structure**

- 18.0 Objectives**
- 18.1 Introduction**
- 18.2 Al-Beruni**
- 18.3 Al-Hujwiri**
- 18.4 Conclusion**
- 18.5 Model Questions**
- 18.6 Suggested Readings**

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### **18.0 Objectives**

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In this unit, we will try :

- To understand the concepts and theories of Islamic intellectual traditions.
- To explain the contribution of Al-Beruni in Indian history.
- To understand and discuss the role of Al-Hujwiri for spreading sufism in India and to make aware about Al-Hujwiri's literary works.

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### **18.1 Introduction**

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The Islamic intellectual traditions is first of all a tradition that contains theosophical and gnostic elements in addition to its logical and rational elements. In Central Asia, it became enriched by the intellectual contributions of a multitude of individuals, communities and culture in regions (that eventually the Muslim world). The Islamic world has already become one of the dominant civilizations of the world, characterized by a diversity of literary and intellectual traditions in various field of learning, while Islam as a religion become elaborated in a plurality of expressions and interpretations.

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### **18.2 Al-Beruni**

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Al-beruni (c. 972-1048) was a Persian scholar from the Khwarezm region and spent a large part of his life in Ghazni in modern-day Afganistan, capital of the Ghaznavid dynasty. He was the first prominent Muslim Indologist who was one of



the greatest intellectuals of the 11th century. Alberuni accompanied the invading hordes of Mahmud to the Indo-Gangetic valley as a freelance observer in 11th century.

He was a polymath and was a man of ‘encyclopedic learning’. His knowledge and interest covered many other areas such as astronomy, geography, physics, logic, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, religion and theology. He also distinguished himself as a historian and chronologist.

In religion he was a shi’ite Muslim. His works seek to combine Greek wisdom and Islamic thought. For his keen observations on Indian society and cultural ethos of the, time some scholars have actually written of him as the ‘first anthropologist’.

In 1017, he travelled to the Indian subcontinent. He travelled extensively in various parts of the country, studied the language, religion and philosophy of the Hindus and wrote the classic account of the country and its people in Arabic, entitled *Tarikh-ul-Hind*.

He is considered as the founder of “Indology”. He was an impartial writer on custom and creeds of various nations. Most of the works of Al-Beruni are in Arabic.

#### **Mahmud Ghazni’s policy helped Al-Beruni**

- Mahmud’s policy with regard to science played a role in Al-Beruni’s discovery and knowledge of Indian society.
- Promotion of scholarship was essential for rulers at that time.
- The presence of poets or scholars at the court of the Sultan added to his prestige and reputation.
- In a sense, the writers contributed to create ‘Sultans’ best image at the time.
- To possess within one’s court numerous scholars and artists also constituted a sign of prosperity and power, and ultimately helped to assert one’s authority over its dependent dynasties and a relation to the Caliphate.
- Moreover, Mahmud encouraged scholarship.
- He bought Biruni from Khwarezm to his court at the same time as he attracted the poet Firdawi and the physician and philosopher Ibsina, who however refused to join his court.
- Furthermore, Mahmud needed people fluent in Indian languages in order to help him in his military raids and negotiations in al-Hind.
- In this context, it seems more than probable that Indian pandits and books had been brought to Ghazna or to Kabul where Biruni spent some years which corroborates the preceding remarks concerning the origin of his source of information.

- It also emerges from the kitab-al-Hind that Biruni had familiarized himself with various fields of Sanskrit literature.

### **Kitab ul Hind or Tarikh-ul-Hind**

- Al beruni's Kitab-ul Hind or Tarikh-ul-Hind is the survey of Indian life based on his study and observations in India between 1017 and 1030.
- Kitab-ul-Hind is simple and lucid. It is divided into 80 chapters on subjects such as religion and philosophy, festival, astronomy, alchemy, manners and customs, social life, weights and measures, iconography, laws and metrology.
- Al-beruni extensively quotes from vast corpus of Sanskrit literature like Patanjali, Gita, Puranas, Samkhya Philosophy etc.

### **Distinctive structure**

Al Beruni adopted a distinctive structure in each chapter, beginning with a question, following this up with a description based on Sanskrit traditions and concluding the chapter with a comparison with other cultures.

- It is an authentic primary sources of information about the socio-religious condition of India of Mahmud of Ghazni's times.
- It is one of the most important discussion on Indian sciences, religion and society by an outsider.
- It gives a scholarly analysis of the social and religious institutions of the Hindus and throws light on their rich cultural heritage, including science and literature.
- The book presents a deep sociological study, characterized by a rare spirit of enquiry, modern scientific attitude and sympathetic insight. His approach was scientific and religious prejudices do not mar the quality of his observations.
- Unlike the prevalent Puranic traditions of recording the genealogies or the West Asian tarikh tradition of narrating the political history in a chronological manner, the work is of a very critical nature and covers different aspects like religion, society, science etc.
- Al-Beruni gives a dispassionate account of the weaknesses of the Indian character and the short comings of their socio-political order which led to their defeat and humiliation at the hands of the invaders.
- His critical assessment of Indian customs and ways of life, festivals, ceremonies and rites is particularly interesting.
- He says that the fact that Indians had started depending on tradition heavily was a hindrance to genuine intellectual quest.
- He felt that learning and scientific spirit suffered because they had been subordinated to religion.

- Al-Beruni ascribed the decline of Indian science to the arrogance and growing insularity of the Brahmans.
- Al-Beruni learned Sanskrit so that he could study the sources of Hindu thought and religion and to acquire first hand information. He read the religious texts and met the learned Indians.
- He made extensive use of the Sanskrit literature from which he quotes chapter and verse in support of his contentions.
- He quoted from the Bhagwat Gita, Vishnu Puran, Kapil's Sankhya and the work of Patanjali.
- He also translated or began translations of several Sanskrit texts into Arabic such as the Kitab Sank, the Kitab Patanjali, the Brahmasiddhanta, the Pulisiddhanta, the Brihatsamhita and the Laghujataka.
- His research methodology is innovative, and the data provided is generally accurate.
- He has analysed not only written sources but also oral sources.
- His work has elements of scientific historiography and advises historians to be more careful with their sources and critically examine them.
- Al-Beruni was careful in mentioning the written sources of social and cultural history of India, specifically about the Indian scientific works and their authors.
- The concern to record facts as they are, without any prejudgements, is one of the most significant aspects of Al-Beruni's methodology.
- Al-Beruni did not play a partisan role and condemned Mahmud Ghazni's destructive activities.
- Where Alberuni was not very sure of his own knowledge, he Frankly admitted it.

#### **Motives of writing Kitab Tarikh Al-Hind.**

He expresses his objective with simple eloquence :

“I shall not produce the arguments of our antagonists in order to refute such of them, as I believe to be in the wrong. My book is nothing but a simple historic record of facts. I shall place before the reader the theories of the Hindus exactly as they are, and I shall mention in connection with them similar theories of the Greeks in order to show the relationship between them.”

- He read the major Indian religion and astronomical texts ; in his account he highlights parts of the Gita, the Upanishads, Patanjali, Puranas, the four Vedas, scientific texts (by Nagarjuna, Aryabhata, etc.) relating stories from Indian mythology to make his point.

### Scientific and Intellectual curiosity

He was motivated by scientific and intellectual curiosity and wanted to know what all factors have determined the thought process of Indians.

An example of Al Beruni's analysis is his summary of why many Hindus hate Muslims :

He explains that Hinduism and Islam are totally different from each other.

Moreover Hindus in 11th century India had suffered through waves of destructive attacks on many of the cities, and Islamic armies had taken numerous Hindu slaves to Persia which, claimed Al-Beruni, contributed to Hindus becoming suspicious of all foreigners not just Muslims.

- Hindus considered Muslims violent and impure and did not want to share anything with them.
- India at that time was not an ideal place for a foreigner like Al-Beruni whose intention was to study this new culture with a view to establishing friendly relations between two cultures, Hinduism and Islam.
- Al-Beruni wrote his work on India to provide, in his own words, "the essential facts for any Muslim who wanted to converse with Hindus and to discuss with them questions of religion, science or literature.
- According to Al-beruni, dialogue with Hindus was necessary since there were many subjects that were intricate and obscure, which would be perfectly clear if there were more connection between Muslims and Hindus.

Al Beruni is the first scholar at least in the Muslim world, whose interest in other religious traditions went beyond the then common tendency of treating the Hindus as heretics or polytheists, despite their apparently idolatrous practices.

### Over time, Al Beruni won the welcome of Hindu scholars.

- Al Beruni collected books and studied with these Hindu scholars to become fluent in Sanskrit, discover and translate into Arabic the mathematics, science, medicine, astronomy and other fields of arts as practiced in 11th century India.
- **Comparative studies of religion** : His motive of writing was also to make comparative study of religions like Islam and Hinduism.  
He also compares Indian thought to the Greek thought of Socrates, Pythagorus, Plato, Aristotle and others, and at times with Sufi teaching.
- **To show sympathy with Indians** : Some scholars say that he wrote as he sympathized with Indians, as just like his countrymen they have also suffered at the hands of Mahmud Ghazani, Bhodhatu, Bhedas, Chandala, Doma and Hodi.

- They were also not part of Chatuh-varna.
- They are occupied with dirty work like the cleaning of the villages and other services.
- They are considered like illegitimate children, for according to general opinion they descend from a Sudra father and a Brahman mother, therefore, they are degraded as outcastes.
- **Attaining moksha** : Hindus are said to differ among themselves as to which of these castes is capable to attaining 'moksha'.
- According to some, only Brahmanas and Kshatriyas are capable of attaining moksha as others cannot learn the vedas.
- Alberuni reports that according the Hindu philosophers, moksha is attainable by all the castes and by the human race.
- **Comparison with other societies** : Alberuni tried to explain the caste system by looking for parallels in other societies.
- The Sudra, who were created from feet of Brahma.
- The four castes do not live together at the same place.
- Each of the four castes, when eating together, must form a group for themselves, one group not being allowed to comprise two men of different castes.
- Since it is forbidden to eat the remains of a meal, every single man must have his own food for himself.

### Antyaja

- Alberuni lists eight antyaja castes below the status of the Sudras.
- Antyaja render various kinds of services and are not part of 'Chatuh-varna' but are considered as members of a certain craft or profession.

Their crafts included :

- ◆ Shoemaker
- ◆ Juggler
- ◆ Basket maker
- ◆ Sailor
- ◆ Fisherman
- ◆ Hunter
- ◆ Weaver etc.

They lived near the villages and towns of the four castes, but outside them.

**Untouchables :**

- Some of the names of untouchable castes that are mentioned by him are  
**Unfolding God's divine plan :** He considered history as unfolding of God's divine plan, through prophets.  
**Finding truth :** He considered both sciences and recording of history are aimed at finding out truth.

**Indian Society**

Alberuni's observation of Indian society can be seen as follows :

**Caste-ridden society :**

- The complete caste structure of Indian society did not go unnoticed by Alberuni.
- Alberuni in his *kitab al-Hind* beautifully sums up theories and practices of Indian caste system.
- Chatuh varna system : He discusses the origin of the four varna system (Chatuh-Varna) in the basis of the Purusha-Sukta hymns.
- The highest caste is the Brahmana, who were created from the head of Brahma.
- The next caste is the Kshatriya, who were created from the shoulders and hands of Brahma.
- After them follow the Vaisya, who were created from the thigh of Brahma.

He noted that in ancient Persia, four social categories were recognised (a) knights and princes ; (b) monks, fire priests, (c) lawyers, physicians, astronomers and other scientists and (d) peasants and artisans.

- He attempted to suggest that social divisions were not unique to India.  
At the same time, he pointed out that within Islam all men-were considered equal, differing only in their observance of piety.
- Alberuni disapproved of the notion of untouchability.
- One notable observation of Alberuni was that the Vaishyas were also fast degenerating to the rank of Sudras.
- He notes the absence of any significant difference between the Vaishyas and the Sudras, who lived together in the same town and village and mixed together in the same house.
- By the 11th century it seems that the vaishyas came to be treated as Sudras virtually and legally.

**Alliance between Brahmanas and Kshatriyas :**

- The alliance of convenience between the Brahmanas and the ruling Kshatriyas was a fact that Alberuni refers to Indirectly.

**Closed Society :**

The closed attitude of society lacking dynamism did not go untouched by Alberuni.

He informs us that travelling to far off places was considered undesirable by the Brahmins.

- The area within which a Brahmana could live was fixed and a Hindu was not generally permitted to enter the land of the Turks.
- All this, makes sense in the context of 'feudal localism' which ruled out or other types of connection between one region of the country and another.
- Alberuni further says that the isolationist attitude of Indians was further buttressed by a false sense of superiority.
- In his opening chapter itself Alberuni writes that "the Indians believed that there is no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs.
- The Indian are by nature niggardly in communicating what they know and they do not believe in exchange of ideas. They take the greatest possible care to withhold their knowledge from men of another caste, from among their own people, and even more from any outsider.
- He says that insularity at every level was the characteristic feature of India in the 11th century and the price of this insularity was the disruption of the country by the coming of the turks.

**Stagnant Knowledge :**

- It is indeed unfortunate that Alberuni visited India at a time when knowledge was at a low ebb.
- While the rich heritage of the past knowledge is highlighted by Alberuni when he refers to the various 'Sidhantas' and the progress made in astronomy and mathematics, but he points a very pathetic picture of the 11th century.
- He says "The Indians are in a state of utter confusion, devoid of any logical order and they always mix up with silly notions of the crowd. I can only compare their mathematical and astronomical knowledge to a mixture of pearls and sour dates. Both kind of things are equal in their eyes since they cannot raise themselves to the method of a strictly scientific deduction."

**Social evils :**

Alberuni mentions evil social practices within the Indian society like child-marriage, sati, the low position of women in general and widows in particular.

He mentions that :

- Hindus marry at a very young age.
- If a wife loses her husband due to death she cannot remarry.

A widow has only two options, either to remain a widow as long as she lives, or to burn herself (Sati). The latter option was generally preferred because as a widow she was ill-treated.

**Indian customs and manners :**

- Indian customs manners, festivals are also vividly portrayed by Alberuni.
- According to him, there are many customs which differs from those of his country to such an extent that they simply appears as monstrous.
- Some customs described by Alberuni are the following :
- People divide the moustache into single plait to preserve it. They allow nails to grow long, glorifying their idleness, since they do not use them for any work.
- The Hindus throw away eaten plates if they are earthen.
- They have red teeth due to chewing of arecanuts with betel leaves and chalk.
- They sip the stall of cows, but they do not eat their meat.
- Men use turbans and trousers.
- The man wears article of female dress ; they use cosmetics, wear ear-rings, armrings, golden seal rings on the right finger as well as on the toes of the feet.
- Men take advice of woman in all consultations and emergencies. They do not ask permission to enter house but when they leave it, they ask permission to do so.
- They write title of the books at the end of it, not at the beginning.
- These customs amuse and sometimes horrifies Alberuni.

**Indian festivals :**

Alberuni enlists all the important festivals without much comment on them. He mentions: 2nd chaitra (a kashmiri festival), Guru tritiya, Vasanta etc.

- He takes an important note of the fact that most of the festivals are celebrated by women and children only.



### 18.3 Al-Hujwiri

Ali ibn Uthman al-Hujwiri (c. 14 August 1009–8 August 1072), better known as Ali Hujwiri and reverentially as Data Ganj Bakhsh, was an 11th century Persian Sunni Muslim mystic, theologian, and preacher. He is well known for composing the *Kashf al-Mahjub* (lit., ‘Revelation of the Hidden’) which is considered the earliest formal treatise on Sufism in Persian.

Belonging from Ghazna, Ali Hujwiri travelled throughout the Ghaznavid Empire, and preached across the Middle East. After living in Baghdad, he moved to Lahore and contributed significantly to the spread of Islam through his preaching. He became a renowned Sufi saint in the region, and in his last years, Al Hujwiri compiled the *Kashf al-Mahjub*. In 1072, Hujwiri died in Lahore and was buried in the same city. He might be described as the founder of the Sufi cult in India that gained immense popularity among the Muslim masses and profoundly influenced their entire moral and religious outlook.

Al Hujwiri is venerated as the main wali of Lahore, Pakistan by the traditional Sunni Muslims of the area. He is, moreover, one of the most widely venerated saints in the entire South Asia. Hujwiri’s burial site, known as the Data Darbar, became a significant pilgrimage site for Sufi devotees and is one of the most frequented shrines in South Asia. At present, it is Pakistan’s largest shrine “in numbers of annual visitors and in the size of the shrine complex”, and having been nationalized in 1960, is managed today by the Department of Awqaf and Religious Affairs of the Punjab. The mystic himself remains a “*household name*” in the daily Islam of South Asia. One historian describes him as “One of the most important figures to have spread Islam in the Indian subcontinent.”

Regarding his title— Daata Ganj Baksh some are of the opinion that this title was given to him five centuries after his demise that is in the ninth century. As per the content of his book ‘*Kashf al Asrar*’, the title of Daata Ganj Baksh became popular during his lifetime. With his arrival in Lahore, he was already well known and acquainted with the title of Daata Ganj Baksh and this remains true till this very day centuries after his passing away from this mortal world.

The words of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti (1141 CE – 1230 CE) which is known throughout the world professes to this title—

“Ganjbaksh faiz e aalam mazhare noor e khuda  
Naaqisan ra peer e kamil kamilan rehma.”

(‘The treasure of forgiveness’ whose blessing in all over the world, is a manifestation of the light of Allah. He is the perfect master for the spiritual destitute; the guide of the perfect!).

**Spiritual Lineage**

- [1] Muhammad
- [2] Ali ibn Abi Talib
- [3] Hasan Basri
- [4] Habib Al-Ajami
- [5] Daawud al-Tai
- [6] Maruf Karkhi
- [7] Sirri Saqti
- [8] Junayd al-Baghdadi
- [9] Abu Bakr Shibli
- [10] Ali Husri Husri
- [11] Abul Fazal Khutli
- [12] Ali Hujwiri

**Companions of Muhammad****Abu Bakr**

Ali Hujwiri described the first caliph of Islam Abu Bakr as “The Greatest Truthful”, and deemed him “The leader (imam) of all the folk of his path.” Eulogizing Abu Bakr’s piety Ali Hujwiri praised him for how “he gave away all his wealth and his clients and clad himself in a woolen garment, and came to the Messenger Muhammad” and stated elsewhere that he “is placed by the Sufi sheikh at the head of those who have adopted the contemplative life”. In conclusion, Ali Hujwiri stated : “The whole sect of Sufis has made him their patron in stripping themselves of worldly things, in fixity, in an eager desire for poverty and in longing to renounce authority. He is the leader of the Muslims in general, and of the Sufis in particular.

**Umar**

Ali Hujwiri described the second caliph of Islam Umar (d. 644) as one “specially distinguished by sagacity and resolution”, and said that “the sufis make him their model in wearing a patched garment and rigorously performing the duties of religion. He further praised Umar for his very exalted station” in combining a life of worldly duties with intense and consistent spiritual devotion.

**Uthman**

Regarding the third of the Rightly Guided Caliphs of the early Islamic community, Uthman (d. 656), Ali Hujwiri stated that the “Sufis take uthman as their exemplar in sacrificing life and property in resigning their affairs to God, and in sincere devotion.”

**Ali**

With respect to the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam, Al Hujwiri stated : “His renown and rank in his Path were very high. He explained the principles of Divine Truth with exceeding. Subtlety..... Ali is a model for the Sufis in respect to the truths of outward expressions and the subtleties of inward meanings, the stripping of one’s self of all property either of this world or of the next, and consideration of the Divine Providence. He also approvingly cited Junayed of Baghdad’s saying: “Ali is our Shaykh as regards the principles and as regards the endurance of affliction.

**Family of Muhammad****Hasan**

Regarding the grandson of Muhammad and son of Ali, Hasan ibn Ali, Ali Hujwiri described him as one “profoundly versed in [spiritual truths]” and as one of the true saints and shaykhs” of the Islamic Community.

**Hussain**

With respect to the younger grandson of Muhammad and son of Ali, Hussain ibn Ali, Ali Hujwiri emphatically declared : “He is the martyr of Karbala and all sufis are agreed that he was in the right. So long as the truth was apparent, he followed it, but when it was lost, he drew the sword and never rested until he sacrificed his dear life for God’s sake.”

**Jafar-al-Sadiq**

Ali Hujwiri described Jafar-al-Sadiq, the great grandson of Hussain, as one “celebrated among the Sufi Shaikhs for the subtlety of discourse and his acquaintance with spiritual truths.

**Muhammad Al-Baqir**

Regarding the grandson of Hussain, Muhammad al-Baqir, Ali Hujwiri stated : “He was distinguished for his knowledge of the abstruse science and for his subtle indications as to the meaning of the Quran.

**Zain-al-Abidin**

Ali Hujwiri praised Zain-al-Abidin, the son of Hussain, for being of “the character of those who have attained perfect rectitude.”

**Doctors of Law****Abu Hanifa**

Regarding Abu Hanifa, the traditionally recognized founder of the Hanafi school of orthodox Sunni jurisprudence, Ali Hujwiri stated : “He is the Imam of Imams (lit, ‘Leader of Leaders’) and the exemplar of the Sunnis.

**Ahmad ibn Hanbal**

Regarding Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the traditionally recognized founder of the Hanbali School of orthodox Sunni jurisprudence, Al Hujwiri stated : “He was distinguished by devoutness and piety and was the guardian of the Traditions of the Messenger. Sufis of all sects regard him as blessed. He associated with great Shaykhs ..... his miracles were manifest and his intelligence sound. The doctrines attributed to him today by certain anthropomorphists are inventions and forgeries : he is to be acquitted of all notions of that sort. He had a firm belief in the principles of religion, and his creed was approved by all the theologians ..... He is clear of all that is alleged against him.

**Law of jurisprudence**

As a Sunni Muslim, Al Hujwiri believed it was a spiritual necessity to follow one of the orthodox schools of religious law, being himself a staunch follower of the Hanafi school of orthodox Sunni jurisprudence. As such, Al Hujwiri condemned as ‘heretics’ all those who espoused mystical doctrines without following all the precepts of the religious law. He further denounced all those “who held that ..... when the truth is revealed the law is abolished.” For Al Hujwiri, then, all true and orthodox mystical activities needed to take place within the boundaries of the religious law.

**Dancing :**

According to Ali Hujwiri, purely secular dancing has no foundation either in the religious law of Islam or in the path of Sufism, because all reasonable men agree that it is a diversion when it is in earnest, and an impropriety when it is in jest.” As such, he censured “all the traditions cited in its favour” as “worthless”. As for the legitimate ecstatic experiences of some Sufis, whose bodies convulsed when their “heart (throbbed) with exhilaration and rupture on account of their intense love of God, Ali Hujwiri declared that these movements only outwardly resembled dancing and opined that ‘those who call it ‘dancing’ are utterly wrong. It is a state that cannot be explained in words : without experience no knowledge.”

**Poetry :**

Ali Hujwiri deemed it lawful to listen to virtuous poetry, saying : “It is permissible to hear poetry. The Messenger heard it, and the Companions not only heard it but also spoke it. Due to these reasons, he censured those who “declare that it is unlawful to listen to any poetry whatever, and pass their lives in defaming their brother Muslims. Regarding the hearing of secular poetry, however, Ali Hujwiri’s opinion was far stricter, and he deemed it “unlawful” to hear poetry or love songs that enticed the hearer to carnal desires through detailed descriptions “of the face and hair and mole of the beloved.” In conclusion, he stated that those who regarded the

hearing of such poetry “as absolutely lawful must also regard looking and touching as lawful, which is infidelity and heresy.”

**Saints :**

Al Hujwiri supported the orthodox belief in the existence of saints. As such, he stated : “you must know that the principle and foundation of Sufism and knowledge of God rests on sainthood, the reality of which is unanimously affirmed by all the teachers, though everyone has expressed himself in a different language”. Elsewhere, he said : “God has saints whom He has specially distinguished by His Friendship and whom He has chosen to be the governors of His kingdom and has marked out to manifest by His Actions and has peculiarly favoured with diverse kinds of miracles and has purged of natural corruptions and has delivered from subjection to their lower soul and passion, so that all their thoughts are of Him and their intimacy is with Him alone. Such have been in past ages, and are now, and shall be hereafter until the Day of Resurrection, because God exalted this community above all others and has promised to preserve the religion of Muhammad. The visible proof of Islam is to be found among the saints and the elect fo God.”

**Works :**

Al Hujwiri spent most of his life journeying in pursuit of knowledge and spiritual enhancement. He travelled extensively and his journey is mentioned in his classic ‘Kashf al-Mahjub (unveiling the Veiled) which was the first Persian language treatise on Sufism. This work debates Sufi doctrines of the past. Hujwiri said that individuals should not claim to have attained “marifat” or gnosis because then it meant that one was being prideful. True understanding of God should be a silent understanding.

Hazrat Daata Ganj Baksh was a great writer and poet. Kashful Mahjub is methodical, comprehensive and thorough in its approach to the issues at hand. The list of his famous works includes :

- Kashf al Mahjub
- Diwan-e-She’r
- Kitab Fana wa Baqa
- Israrul Kharq wal-Mauniyat
- Birr’ayat Be-Huqooq-Ullah
- Al-Bayan Lahal-Al-Ayan Behrul Quloob
- Minhaj-al-Din.
- Sharah-e-kalam
- Kashfu al-Asrar

The elders of the Chisti Silsilah in the Indian subcontinent consult and refer to Kashfal Mahjub and Awarif al ma’arif for the teachings and guidance with the former

having more significance and importance. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya gave it the title ‘Murshid barrhaq— meaning, a guide by right. Al Hujwiri is also viewed as an important intercessor for many sufis.

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## 18.4 Conclusion

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Both Al-Biruni and Al-Hujwiri contributed a lot in Islamic intellectual tradition in India. Al Biruni was the first prominent muslim indologist and was one of the greatest intellectual of the 11th century. His book *Kitab ul Hind* in dealing with Indian society, it is fair to say Al biruni deserves recognition as a great Muslim critical thinker, philosopher and historian. His thinking was based upon his bounteous knowledge as well as his religious personality and education.

Al Hujwiri was medieval sufi intellectual and theoretician who wrote a major theoretical work entitled ‘*Kashf al-Mahjub (Revealing the Hidden)*’ which enumerated twelve theoretical schools of Sufism. He sought to establish balance among all dimensions of Islamic thought and practice with Sufism as the animating spirit of the whole. He significantly contributed to the spreading of Islam in South Asia.

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## 18.5 Model Questions

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1. Describe the contribution of Al-Beruni in the Islamic tradition in India.
2. Describe in brief about Al-Biruni’s book **Tarikh-i-Hind**.
3. Give an account of the role of Al-Hujwiri in establishing sufism in India through his literary work.
4. Write a detailed note on Al biruni and Al Hujwiri’s contribution in Islamic intellectual tradition.
5. Comment on Al Hujwiri’s book *Kashf al Mahjub*.

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## 18.6 Suggested Readings

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Ahmad, Qeyamuddin (Ed), *India by Al Biruni*, National Book Trust, India, 2004.

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## **Unit 19 □ Regional Languages and Literature**

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### **Structure**

- 19.0 Objectives**
- 19.1 Introduction**
- 19.2 Sanskrit Language and Literature**
- 19.3 Regional Languages and Literature**
  - 19.3.1 During Chola Period**
  - 19.3.2 During Chalukya Period**
  - 19.3.3 During Sena Period**
  - 19.3.4 During Kakatiyas**
  - 19.3.5 Apabhramsa**
  - 19.3.6 Desibhasas**
- 19.4 Conclusion**
- 19.5 Summary**
- 19.6 Model Questions**
- 19.7 Suggested Readings**

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### **19.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit we will come to know the following points:

- About the growth of regional languages and literature along with Sanskrit language and literature.
- The development of regional languages and literature in early medieval India.

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### **19.1 Introduction**

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Richness of any culture can be seen and appreciated but when it comes to language and literature it is to be read and heard. We have to appreciate and take pride in this particular aspect of our culture. We must make it a point to read as many books written during those times as it will help us to understand so many things that happened in those times.

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## 19.2 Sanskrit Language and Literature

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The period marks the spread of Sanskrit throughout the subcontinent along with the emergence of a number of regional vernaculars. Sanskrit was indeed the language of the court and elites and its currency was confined to a handful of learned people. This was the preferred language for writing matters related to Brahmanical philosophy, religion, especially the Vedanta and the Mimamsa texts (digests), and the normative texts and their commentaries. Significantly enough, Buddhist and Jain centres of learning extensively used Sanskrit. The famous Jain polymath, Hemachandra, composed Sanskrit texts like *Dvayasrayakavya* and *Parisishtaparvan*. Sanskrit was the principal medium, at least in north India, for composing life stories (charitas) of prominent political personalities. The first text of this genre was Banabhatta's *Harshacharita*; the tradition continued unabated in Sandhyakaranandin's *Ramacharitan* and Bilhana's *Vikramarikadevacharitam*.

The *Ramacharitam* is a complex composition as each verse therein offers two meanings one about Ramachandra of Ayodhya and the other regarding the life and achievements of Ramapala of the Pala dynasty, the actual hero of the composition.

Sanskrit was also the chief vehicle of writing north Indian inscriptions and the literary standard of the royal eulogy in epigraphic texts usually followed that in the literary texts. The significant point here is the simultaneous use of both Sanskrit and a regional language in inscriptions. This is especially noticeable in landgrant charters where the royal eulogy and dynastic accounts were composed in Sanskrit, while the actual grant portion, the operative part of the record was written in local vernacular. This may hint at the possibilities of bilinguals; the migrant Brahmins could well have been bilinguals. That Prakrit could also be the vehicle of writing the Kavya style life stories of rulers is borne out by Vakpatiraja's *Gaudavaho* that narrated the event of the killing of the Gauda King by the Kashmirian King.

The best example of the itihasa purana tradition of chronicling the past belongs to this period in the form of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, which attempts at narrating the connected account of the past of Kashmir. It is particularly noted for its remarkable accuracy of recording events in Kashmir for the post AD 700 period. Narrating the past of a royal house often took the shape of vamsavalis, especially related to a local or regional ruling house. A typical case in point is the vamsavali of the mountainous area of Chamba; it coincided with the advent of the monarchical state society in northern parts of the present Himachal Pradesh.

Sanskrit was also the principal vehicle for writing technical treatises. Considerable emphasis was given on the mastery of grammar. The study of grammar and etymology can be considered rational enquiries, which were pursued by both orthodox and heterodox



schools. Most of the Buddhist monasteries were also noted for the study of grammar. Interestingly enough, in the large brahmana settlement in Srihatta there was provision for the maintenance of the teacher of Chandravayakarana, i.e. the study of the treatise on grammar written by the Buddhist grammarian Chandragomin.

If the earliest of the lexicon was the Namalinganusasana by Amarasimha in the 5th-6th century, it became a regular intellectual practice. Two famous instances of lexicons of this period is Halayaud Lasarman's Abhidhana Chintamani and Hemachandra's Desinamamala. The latter text explains and gives Sanskrit synonyms of a selection of western Indian vernacular vocabulary.

Another notable feature of the literary activities is the availability of a number of technical treatises. If there were specific treatises on agriculture and plants, krishiparasara and Vrikshayurveda respectively, there were also major texts on medicine. The best illustrations of this are the Ashtangahridaya Sangraha by Vagbhata (7th/8th century) and the treatise by Chakrapanidatta in the 11th century, both drawing upon and elaborating on the medical treatise by Charaka. It is likely that such technical treatises reflected cooperation and transactions between Sanskritists and professional specialists in their respective fields.

To this genre also belonged the famous treatises on aesthetics and prosody namely the Dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana and Abhinava gupta's Dhvanyaloka-lochana. Abhinavagupta was also the author of the celebrated treatise on dramaturgy, Abhinavabharati. The tradition continued, as will be evident from Sagarandin's Natakalakshanaratnakosa (13th century).

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### 19.3 Regional Language and Literature

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The regionalisation of Indian culture also began with the emergence of various regional Kingdoms. Regional languages had rich repositories of literature which challenged the monopoly of Sanskrit literature. Tamil, Kannada, Telegu, Marathi, Bengali, Assamese and Oriya attained their specific regional identity.

The growth of various sects and religious movements made a great impact on this development of regional languages and literatures. Some of the founders of these sects did not know Sanskrit at all and therefore expressed themselves in their regional languages. However, even the Brahmins amongst them, who knew Sanskrit, were eager to communicate with people in regional languages. Moreover, many of the saintly poets who inspired these movements created great works of literature and thus enriched the regional languages.

### 19.3.1 Chola Period

During the Chola period, education based on the epics and the Puranas, was imparted through temple discourses. There were colleges and other institutions for higher education. The period was marked by the growth of Tamil classics like the Sibakasindamani, Kamban's Ramayana, and others. Not too many books were composed in Sanskrit. Rajaraja I was the subject of two works—Rajarajesvara Natakam, a play and Rajaraja Vijayam, a poem.

### 19.3.2 Chalukya Period :

The Chalukya period witnessed a phenomenal growth in literature, both in Sanskrit and in Kannada. Bilhana, the court poet of Vikramaditya VI, was amongst the most eminent Sanskrit writers of the period. The great jurist Vijramaditya, penned Mitaksara, a commentary on the Yajnavalkya Smriti, Somesvara III was the author of an encyclopedic work entitled, Manasollasa or the Abhilashitarha-Chintamani.

Kannada literature reached its zenith under the Chalukyas. Pampa, Ponna and Ranna were the most noteworthy Kannada writers of the 10th century. Of the three, Ranna was the court poet of Satyasraya, while the other two belonged to earlier decades.

Nagavarma I was another poet of fame. He authored the Chandombudhi a prosodic work, and the earliest of its kind in Kannada. He also wrote the Karnataka Kandamari, which is based on Bana's celebrated romance in Sanskrit.

Another writer of note was Dugasimha, a minister under Jayasimha II and the author of Anchantra. The Virasaiva mystics, especially Basava, contributed to the development of Kannada language and literature, particularly prose literature. They brought into existence the vachana literature to make abstruse philosophical ideas comprehensible to the common man in simple language.

### 19.3.3 The Senas :

Gave a great impetus to the development of Sanskrit literature. Bhaskaracharya, the famous astronomer and mathematician, belonged to this period. Bhaskaracharya's father, Mahesvara (also known as Kavivara), wrote two works on astrology, Sekhara and Laghutika. Siddhanta Siromani a treatise on algebra, composed in Sanskrit in 1150 and Karanakuthunala are among Bhaskaracharya's best known works. His son Lakshmidhara and his grandson Changadeva were the court astrologers of Jaitugi and Simhana respectively. Bhaskaracharya's grand nephew, Anantadeva, a protege of Simhana, was a master of the three branches of astronomy and wrote a commentary on Varahamihira's Brihat Jataka on one chapter of Brahmagupta's Brahmasphuta Siddhana.

#### 19.3.4 During Kakatiyas :

The Kakatiya rulers extended liberal patronage to Sanskrit. Several eminent Sanskrit writers and poets authored inscriptions, which could well be understood as Kavya works. Of these writers, Achintendra was commissioned by Rudradeva to compose the Prasasti embodied in the Anumakonda inscription.

Telegu literature also flourished in the Kakatiya Kingdom. Several inscriptions were composed either partly or wholly in Telegu verse, like the inscriptions at Gudur (Beta II), Karimnagar (Gangadhara), Upparapalle (kata) and konnidenā (Opilisiddhi).

New religious movements like Vaishnavism and Virasaivism gave an added impetus to Telegu literature. Several works on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were produced during this period. The earliest and the most popular Telegu work on the Ramayana is Tikkan's Nirvachanoltatra-Ramayanam. The Andhra Mahabharata, begun by Nannayabhatta in the 11th century A.D. was completed by Tikkana Somayaji, the minister and poet laureate of the Chola king in the 13th century.

#### 19.3.5 Apabhramsa :

The most remarkable linguistic development of the early medieval period was the gradual emergence of several regional languages. In the Indo-Aryan speaking belt, this development was through the intermediate stage of Apabhramsa. Traces of Apabhramsa has been found in very early literary works, but considered to be a dialect till the period of Bharata's Natyashastra, it developed a literary standard only in a later period.

#### 19.3.6 Desibhasas :

Among the north Indian desi bhasas that originated in the early medieval period may be listed— Marathi, Bengali and Gujrati. A similar linguistic burst is visible in South India too.

Between 1000-1300 CE, The Indo-Aryan languages of North, Central and East India attained a specific regional identity. Among them, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Assamese and Oriya particularly attracted attention.

The Aihole Inscription of Pulakesin II (634 CE) written by his court poet, Ravikirti in Sanskrit language and Kannada script is considered an excellent piece of poetry.

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## 19.4 Conclusion

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Thus, the regionalisation of Indian culture began with the emergence of various regional kingdoms and in this way Tamil, Kannada, Telegu, Marathi, Bengali, Assamese and Oriya attained their specific regional identity.

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## 19.5 Summary

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The period marks the spread of Sanskrit throughout the subcontinent along with the emergence of a number of regional vernaculars. Regional languages had rich repositories of literature which challenged the monopoly of Sanskrit literature. Tamil, Kannada, Telegu, Marathi, Bengali, Assamese and Oriya attained their specific regional identity.

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## 19.6 Model Questions

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- (1) Write a note on the Sanskrit literature in the early medieval India.
- (2) Write a note on the growth of regional languages in India during the post Gupta era.

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## 19.7 Suggested Readings

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Singh, Vipul, *Interpreting Medieval India, Vol-1*, Early Medieval, Delhi Sultanate and Regions (circa 750-1550), (Macmillan, 2009).

Das, Sisir Kumar, *A History of Indian Literature, 500-1399*, (Sahitya Academy).

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## **Unit 20 □ Art and Architecture — Evolution of Regional Styles**

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### **Structure**

- 20.0 Objectives**
- 20.1 Introduction**
- 20.2 Feature**
- 20.3 Nagara Temple Style**
  - 20.3.1 Orissa**
    - 20.3.1A Rajarani and Lingaraj Temple**
  - 20.3.2 Khajuraho**
    - 20.3.2A Kandariyo Mahadeo Temple**
- 20.4 Dravida or South Indian Architectural Style**
  - 20.4.1 Rathas**
  - 20.4.2 Shore**
  - 20.4.3 Kailasha**
  - 20.4.4 Brihadisvara or Rajarajeswara**
- 20.5 Early Medieval Structure**
- 20.6 Conclusion**
- 20.7 Summary**
- 20.8 Model Questions**
- 20.9 Suggested Readings**

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### **20.0 Objectives**

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After going through this unit, we will come to know about :

- The features of architecture and the different styles of architecture like the Nagara, Dravida and Verara.
- The commanding feature of temple architecture of that period.

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### **20.1 Introduction**

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This section intends to provide an overview of the visual arts, especially architecture and sculpture. Sculptors usually gave the desired form to images, mostly

divine, following the standardized iconographic norms which in its turn drew largely upon Puranic myths and legends associated with different divinities. A major source of iconographic prescriptions was the Vishnudharmottarapurana. Similarly, technical treatises were written on architecture, e.g. the Samarangasutradhara and the Manasollasa, ascribed respectively to Bhoja and Somesvara III, both well known rulers. Another text on architecture was the Manasdra. For the art of painting, the artist's manual can be seen in the Vishnudharmottarapurana and in the Chitralakshana. It is true that architecture and sculpture were the principal facets of the visual arts; paintings, though definitely not unknown, are far less numerous than sculptures of the early medieval times.

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## 20.2 Feature

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The two most significant aspects of architecture are the structural temples of this time (many of monumental size) and the gradual disappearance of the rock-cut architecture of the previous centuries. No less significant is the emergence and consolidation of distinct regional styles in temple architecture : the Nagara style of temples in North India, the Dravida style of temples in Peninsular India and the Vesara type of temples in Karnataka. The genesis of both the dominant temple architecture styles, the Nagara and the Dravida can be traced to AD 600.

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## 20.3 Nagara Temple Style

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The North Indian Nagara temple styles had at least two major sub regional trends, one in Orissa and the other in Central India (especially Khajuraho). The most important and sacred component of the temple was the sanctum cella (garbhagriha), which was invariably square in shape. This square sanctum cella had been a constant feature of the Nagara temples right from the inception of the style since the fifth-sixth centuries. The exterior walls of the sanctum cella, initially left blank and flat, began to be provided with horizontal projections, which therefore allowed interplay of light and shade and depth and accentuation. This enormously enhanced the visual appeal of the exterior walls, which now accommodated a number of niches that housed numerous sculptures as decorative elements of the exterior walls. Such horizontal divisions in the exterior walls were known as rathas in technical treatises. If the temple wall had three such projections on each side it would be called a triratha temple, while a temple with five such projections on each of the exterior walls would be considered a Pancharatha temple.

### 20.3.1 Orissa :

Temples with three and five projections on each of the exterior walls are regularly seen in Orissa ; usually the triratha temple is earlier than the pancharatha temple, thus suggesting an evolution of the architectural style from relatively simple to more elaborate decorations.

The exterior wall of the sanctum cella had also three or five vertical divisions (usually known as angas in traditional silpa treatises in Orissa), often represented by richly carved mouldings. Thus the artists attempted a symmetrical treatment of both vertical and horizontal divisions on the exterior walls of the temple : if the temple wall had five horizontal divisions (Pancharatha), it would often have (but not uniformly) also five vertical divisions (Panchanaga). The vertical divisions, at least in the Orissan terminology, were called after the lower part of the the human body like the feet (Padabhaga/pabhaga), the thigh (jangha) etc. A further moulding at the top of the wall of the sanctum cella served as the demarcator between the sanctum cella and its superstructure.

The superstructure, known as the Sikhara, is perhaps the most striking part of the temple. It should ideally rise steeply, giving a visual impression of its soaring into the sky, however, not in a straight line, but in a slightly tapering shape. The curvilinear tall tower therefore should, according to the traditional treatises on architecture, closely resemble the beak of a bird (Sukanasa). The emphasis is obviously on the verticality of the tower that ideally should dominate the entire landscape. What is significant is that the square shape of the ground plan of the temple is carried upwards into its elevation ; so, the topmost part of the curvilinear tower (Sikhara) remains square in its section. Similarly, the horizontal divisions on the walls of the sanctum cella are also carried up in the superstructure. If the sanctum cella had five horizontal divisions on its exterior walls, the curvilinear tower too would have five horizontal divisions (usually known in Orissan terminology as Pagas: One central paga, flanked immediately by two subdivisions, called anurahapagas, and along the curvilinear contours of the tower two more divisions, called the konikapagas— thus totalling five horizontal subdivisions.)

Atop the sikhara there should be several more architectural elements which combine to constitute what is called the crowning element or mastaka (literally the head). Thus the metaphor of the human body is applied to the entire sanctum cella, right from the feet (padabhaga/pabhaga) to the head (mastaka), intermediated by the trunk or the curvilinear tower. Where the sikhara ends and the crowning section begins, the architectural member is called the neck or the kantha.

In mature Orissan temples, one notices elegant figures of jumping lions at four corners around the neck portion. Above this member is placed a huge spherical stone,

usually striated, known as the amalakasila. In several temples, two such spherical stones are placed one above the other, with a view to accentuating the height and also the massiveness of the temple. The architectural elements above the spheroid stone (s) is known as the skull (Khapari), above which is placed a pitcher-like (kalasa) component. The final crowning element is the finial. Thus the sanctum cella with its square ground plan and a tall and tapering superstructure are imbued with the aesthetic appeal of accentuating height.

The evolution of the north Indian Nagara temples not only demonstrates elaborations and complexity in the design of the sanctum cella and the superstructure, but also witnessed the addition of a few ancillary structures. These structures were non-existent in the simple but elegant square temples at Sanchi and Tigawa in the 4th/5th/6th centuries. These temples merely had a square sanctum cella in the front of which stood a pillared porch serving as the resting place for pilgrims and worshippers.

In the developed and mature forms of the later Nagara temples, one comes across three separate structures. These three structures, though separate were placed in the same linear alignment with the sanctum cella. Following Orissan terminology of temple architecture, these structures are called the nata-mandapa (pillared pavilion for musical, theatrical performances in the temple precincts), bhogamandapa (pillared pavilion for distributing and partaking the sacred prasada) and jagamohana (a massive hall as a vastly enlarged form of the original pillared porch before the main shrine). A passageway connected the jagamohana with the main shrine. The natamandapa, bhogamandapa and the jagamohana had their exterior walls richly carved with sculptures, designs and moldings ; the exterior walls on each side also had the usual projections to allow interplay of light and shade and accommodate sculptures. All these three structures had a common type of roofing, which was distinctly different from that of sanctum cella. The superstructure here consisted of three or four tiers of massive horizontal platforms, each upper tier an exact replica of the immediately lower tier but on a smaller scale. The use of the three or four receding tiers gave a clear thrust on horizontality in sharp but pleasant contrast to the soaring tower of the sanctum cella with a stress on verticality. The tier in Orissan terminology is called Pidha. Therefore, the three ancillary structures, and especially the jagamohana is termed Pidha, deul ; the main shrine with its curvilinear superstructure is known as rekha deul. Like the rekha deul, the Pidha deul too has in the top most part of the superstructure the usual neck-like section, the spheroid stone, the skull like part and the pitcher with the finial. Each succeeding structure was higher than each preceding structure, while the Pinnacle is the tall and tapering tower above the sanctum cella. The intention of the architect was to give a visual



effect of a range of mountains leading up to its highest peak, which in this case was the Sikhara above the Sanctum cella.

### 20.3.1A Rajarani and Lingaraja Temple

The outstanding example of this kind of temple architecture in Orissa are the Rajarani temple and the Lingaraja temple at Bhuvaneswar, dated respectively to the 10th and 11th century. The inherent structural harmony along the four components in both the temples underlines the superb mastery of the Orissan architects. They represent the most mature and evolved form of the Nagara style temples in Orissa, the beginning of which can be traced in the smaller, simpler, nevertheless elegant temples like Mukteswar and Parasurameswar, also situated in Bhuvaneswar. There are interesting differences in the more minute details in Rajarani and Lingaraja temples.

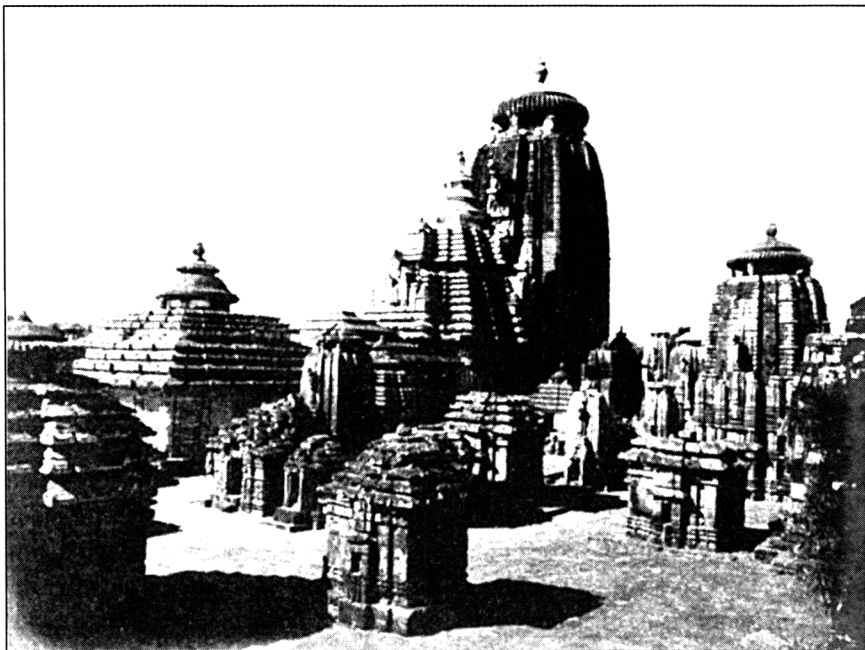


Plate 7.4: Lingrāja Temple, Bhuvneshwar

While Lingaraja is a classic example of the typical pancharatha and panchariga temple. Rajarani has seven horizontal projections and seven vertical divisions— two features more frequently seen in the Nagara temples of Khajuraho. The Rajarani temple is also distinctive by th use of miniature sikhara (arigasikhara) adorning the entire curvilinear superstructure. As a result, the superstructure of Rajarani temple looks heavy and somewhat overburdened with decorations. The use of the

angasikhara as a decorative motif is only minimally used in Lingaraja temple sikhara, giving an impression of its being light in structure and its elongated elegant appearance.



Plate 7.5: Sun Temple, Konark

The best specimen of the jagamohana is of course the famous structure at Konarak, built in the 13th century. Massive in size and composition, the jagamohana, in situ, is the only relic to impress the viewer of the monumentality of the main shrine, which is completely broken. The jagamohana at Konarak, with its five horizontal projections and matching five vertical divisions, is an imposing structure having three receding horizontal pidhas that formed its superstructure. The Konarak Sun temple, designed as the wheeled chariot of the Sun-god, is an architectural marvel in terms of its stupendous size and its structural symmetry and harmony.

### **20.3.2 Khajuraho :**

Many of these architectural features are also present in the group of temples at Khajuraho, built under the patronage of local Chandella rulers. Like the Orissa temples, these are also celebrated samples of Nagara architecture with the main shrine and its three other ancilliary structures. But there are also some individual characteristics of the Khajuraho temples, typically manifested in the 11th century Kandariya Mahadeo temple, the most famous shrine at Khajuraho.

The Khajuraho temples mostly stand on a very large stone platform or podium, which is approached from the ground level by a flight of stairs. The actual temple then rises above a noticeably high plinth. These two structural elements were meant for furthering the height of the temple. Most temples being royal temples, the urge for increasing the elevation of the temple is a statement of the formidability of its royal patron.

Like its Orissan counterparts, the Khajuraho Nagara temple has the four structural components—the sanctum cella and the three other ancillary structures. The main shrine is connected with its immediately adjacent jagamohana type structure with an open vestibule (antarala), which is a new feature. The introduction of this element renders a sense of visual lightness to the huge temple.

### 20.3.2A Kandariya Mahadeo Temple

The most notable among the Khajuraho temples is **Kandariya Mahadeo Temple**, a saiva shrine. A special is its sevenfold vertical and horizontal divisions in the exterior wall in the place of fivefold division, so common in Orissan temples. The soaring sikhara or the curvilinear tower above the sanctum cella has seven horizontal divisions. The sikhara is further embellished with the motif of miniature Sikharas, leaving an impression of excessive decoration that seems to add to the volume of the tapering tower and somehow restricts the visual appeal of the accentuating height of the sikhara. The paga-like vertical bands, which decorate the sikhara are extended beyond the sikhara. The entire temple resembles a range of mountain with the curvilinear tower representing its highest peak. Compared to the Orissan temples, the elegance and aesthetics of the soaring main shrine appears to have been compromised on account of the excessive sculptural embellishments.

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## 20.4 Dravida or South Indian Architectural Style

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The earliest Dravida style architecture is visible in Mahabalipuram where during the Pallava period were constructed five different structures, popularly known as rathas named after the five Pandava brothers and Draupadi. The essential features of a Dravida temple are visible in the **Dharmaraja ratha**.

### 20.4.1 Ratha

The main shrine has a square ground plan, above which rises the superstructure of some height. However, in contrast to the tall curvilinear tower in Nagara style, the superstructure in Dravida temples consists of a series of square horizontal platforms placed one above the other, with each upper tier being a smaller replica of the immediately lower tier. This arrangement of receding square tiers, placed one above

the other, renders the superstructure with a pyramidal shape. This section is called the Vimana, which offers the same function as The Sikhara in north Indian temples. The Vimana is usually topped by a very large circular stone boulder called stupika.

#### 20.4.2 Shore Temple

While the Dharmaraja ratha goes back to the 7th century, the more famous and elegant Shore temple at Mahabalipuram was built during AD 700-728 period. It is so called because of its location to the proximity to the Bay of Bengal. Made of granite, it is the earliest of the important structural temples of Dravida style. The shrine has the usual square garbhagriha over which the superstructure rises in five storeys represented by the five receding tiers. The top most portions of the superstructure are occupied by the large round boulder and above it, a finial, giving the visual effect of a tall pyramidal structure with a conical appearance. Each individual tier is provided with overhanging caves, which provide dark shadow on to the temple walls. This is a Saiva shrine which has also a similar, but smaller shrine in front. The smaller shrine appears to originally served the function of a porch, but subsequently turned into a shrine. One enters the twin shrines through a transverse barrel-vaulted gate which in South India was called the gopuram. Between the two Saiva shrines also stands a small Vaishnava temple, which was possibly built as a balancing act between two competing Brahmanical sects.

#### 20.4.3 Kailasa

An amazing specimen of Dravida temple architecture is the **Kailasa temple at Ellora**. It was built in the eighth century under the patronage of the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna I. The most outstanding feature of this stupendous temple is that unlike the two other Dravida temples mentioned before, it is not a structural temple, but a rock-cut shrine, hewn out, as it was of live rock. Dug out of a basal cliff, it is the pinnacle of rock-cut architecture of India. It is a monolithic temple, since it was carved out of a single rock. The structure was in fact sculpted or scooped out of the rock not from below to the top as is the usual method, but created by working down from the top of the rock to the surface level itself an astounding engineering feat that was achieved by clearing an estimated amount of 200,000 tonnes of rock. One enters this temple through a two-storied gateway, which takes the visitor to an U-shaped courtyard. The courtyard is flanked by a columned arcade three storeys high. The arcade is punctuated by hugely sculpted panels. The shrine, supposed to be the abode of Siva and hence called the Kailasa, has pillars, windows, inner and outer rooms and an enormous stone lingam in the sanctum sanctorum. Above the garbhagriha three receding tiers rise above the Vimana or the superstructure, topped by the customary stupika. Here too the elevation of the superstructure dominates the surrounding. The

temple is adorned with superb sculptures and obelisk like free-standing, independent pillars.

#### **20.4.4 Brihadisvara or Rajarajeswara Temple**

The most celebrated example of Dravida temple style is the **Brihadisvara temple** at Tanjore, built by the formidable Chola King Rajaraja. It is also called Rajarajeswara temple after its royal patron. It is a complete granite temple located at the centre of the town of Thanjavur. Built to underline the glory and majesty of its patron, the temple is noted for its grandeur, axial and symmetrical geometry. The entrance is through the customary gopuram, which is five storey high and impresses the onlooker with a sense of awe crossing the gateway the visitor reaches a huge quadrangle which houses a sanctuary, a Nandi image, symbolizing the mount of Siva, a pillared hall and a mandapa. The inner mandapa has the sanctum sanctorum or the garbhagriha where in is enshrined the stone lingam. The sanctum sanctorum stand on a plinth and it is square in ground plan. This is indeed the most sacred component of the entire temple complex and is believed to be the microcosm of the universe. Above the sanctum cella rises the superstructure in the form of Vimana of breathtaking height that rises to 216 feet (or 66 metre). It consists of the usual receding horizontal tiers, which assume a pyramidal shape. The superstructure is hollow inside and retains the square shape of the ground plan of the garbha-griha right up to the top. Above the superstructure rests the massive stupika or the round stone boulder. Though it was earlier thought that the stupika was monolithic recent scholarship has doubled that. The temple complex has a wall all around it, but it was added later in the 16th century to the main temple area. As usual, the temple is superbly decorated with sculptures, especially the figures of Siva in different forms. The classical form of the Dravida style seen in Brihadiswara temple served as a model for several centuries, though after 1500 the temple gateway (gopuram) became the principal focus of the architect.

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### **20.5 Early Medieval Sculpture**

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One salient feature of early medieval sculpture is the predominant use of the sculpture as a decoration of the temple wall, whether in the Nagara or the Dravida temples. The exterior walls of the sanctum cella and other ancillary structures, with several projections, were ideally suitable for setting up sculptures. The richly carved exterior walls of the temples stood in sharp contrast to the bare interior of the temple.

Another notable stylistic feature of the sculptures of this period is that majority of the images were relief sculptures. On many occasions these were executed in very high relief, giving an impression of the representation of the figure almost in the

round. But sculptures in the round were numerically insignificant. A very large number of sculptures, being inseparable parts of temples, were created by strictly following iconographic prescriptions laid down in technical treatises. The image of the sun-god wearing a pair of boots, riding on a chariot drawn by seven horses and flanked by goddesses Usha and Pratyusha, is a typical instance. There is little doubt that many Brahmanical images drew heavily upon myths and legends in the Puranas. The images of Siva and Parvati, of the Ardhanarisvara (half male, half female) form of Shiva, of Durga as the slayer of the buffalo demon (Mahishasuramardini) and of Vishnu in his eternal sleep (anantasayin) clearly, illustrate this.

The profusion of erotic images, adorning temple walls (e.g. in Khajuraho temples and at Konarak), is another characteristic of early medieval sculptures. Erotic elements could either have gained prominence on account of Tantric prescriptions or, as Devangana Desai argued, because of the influence of feudal culture in early medieval times.

The images of gods and goddesses were invariably depicted in the full bloom of their youthful bodies ; the male figure in general has broad shoulders, graceful limbs, a powerful chest and a slim waist. Female forms invariably highlight a fully rounded face, often with pronounced sensuousness, heavy and fully rounded breasts, an attenuated waist, deep set navel and broad hips.

Images of this period are often shown in multiple flexions (bhārigas) ; two or three flexions (dvibhanga / tribhanga) are quite common ; and even many flexions are not unknown. This clearly speaks of the artists' predilections for imparting rapid movements in the images. The sculptor very much continues the two classical features of the sculptures of 300-600 phase, namely the preference for a plastic form and a flowing linear rhythm. But one cannot also miss that after the 11th century, profuse number of sculptures were produced, but these also betrayed a monotonous and mechanical output according to iconographic norms with few innovations in form. In many specimens of post 1100 AD, the angular treatment of limbs, the broken line of the body contour, an almost triangular face with a sharply pointed chin and overburdening jewellery are plainly visible. Both stone and metal images (especially bronze) were used as media for sculpting and the same iconographic norms were followed in stone, as well bronze sculptures. Though the sculptural traditions were rooted to the classical features of the pre-AD 600 times, there were distinct regional features. Thus the tall, lithe and slim figures with a clear preference for linearism and dramatic movements and tightly packed compositions are typical features of South Indian sculptures. The figures of the Buddha and Vishnu, for example, with a high statura, and shown in remarkably high relief belongs to the eastern Indian tradition. The exuberance of the female form, with many flexions in the body, often looking at

the mirror and/or plucking out a thorn from an unpraised foot is a signature theme and style in north and central Indian style. There are also discernible individualities in the choice of materials. Thus the octo-alloy images are typically associated with eastern India, while the superb free-standing bronze figures bear the stamp of the South Indian artist.

Since it is not possible here to offer an elaborate study of all regional styles, descriptions of some outstanding pieces may be in order at this juncture. One may begin with an account of the celebrated and gigantic stone sculpture at Mahabalipuram. Made out of a single boulder, the scene depicts a fascinating world of flora and fauna, along with the figures of ascetics and the scene of a cascading stream. The scene is identified either with the legend of Bhagiratha's bringing the Ganga down from the matted locks of Siva (Gangavatarana) or Arjuna's penance, which is described in the Mahabharata and also the theme of the drama, Kiratarjuniyam. Composed in high relief, it shows the flowing of the river along the banks in which one sees the unfolding of the world of ascetics, elephants and even monkeys. The vibrant world of rural domestic life is wonderfully captured in a scene that depicts the milking of a cow by a woman with the calf next to its mother.

The robustness of composition, the predilection for larger than life forms and the love for action are all throbbing with life in sculptures at Kailasa temple (Ellora). An excellent example of this shows Ravana shaking the mount Kailasa, the abode of Siva and Parvati. The graceful poses of Siva and Parvati, engrossed in a game of dice, at the same shrine also deserves our attention. The Kailasa temple is renowned for portraying panels on the Ramayana theme. The onlooker's eyes meet the compact panel depicting Jatayu's valiant but unsuccessful resistance to Ravana, who abducts Sita.

Another amazing composition is the scene of Hanuman crossing the scene. A simple, but incomparably elegant composition, it shows Hanuman soaring upwards in flight as he crosses the sea; the limbs and the tail of Hanuman are deliberately elongated and excellently fitted into an elongated rectangular space. The artist demonstrates his mastery over the medium, the form and the composition by leaving the entire panel blank without any decoration, save the figure of Hanuman in flight. The blank space below Hanuman symbolizes the sea.

In eastern India, especially in the Pala-Sena realms, emerged a distinctive sculptural style with a regional idiom. Profuse number of images are known, some with inscribed labels, which help us arrive at a workable chronology of the stylistic evolution of this school of sculpture. A late Tibetan account by Lama Taranath tells us about two master artists in the Pala realm— Dhiman and Vitpalo. Buddhist monasteries, especially Nalanda, Vikramasila, Somapura and Mainamati, were lively

centres of sculptural art and had in them ateliers. Many images, whether of the Buddha or Vishnu, are shown in a straight and erect posture without any flexion (Samapadasthanaka), portrayed in high relief with a stela forming its background. While earlier images have a simple undecorated stela, later ones were placed in a very richly carved stela and the entire composition filled up with ancillary figures including that of the donor of the image. The later icons had more pointed stela top. An interesting feature in eastern Indian sculpture is the preference for the octo-lobed as the medium for sculpting. The eastern most part of the Bengal delta was also familiar with bronze, as will be evident from the bronze figures from Jhewari (Bangladesh). Sculptures from eastern Bihar and Bengal occasionally show the stela in the form of a rekha or Pidha superstructure, giving thereby the visual effect that the image was emerging out of a shrine. The bulk of the stela having been hollowed, it also created an effect of the lightness of the composition. However, late 11th century onwards, images began to have a rather angular treatment with break in the erstwhile flowing linear rhythm of the body contour. Over-ornamentation of both the image and the background stela possibly marks a mechanical outlook of images.

No overview of the visual art of the early medieval times can be complete without referring to the bronze sculptures in South India, belonging largely to the Chola times (9th to 13th century). Royal figures images of Parvati were carved out in Bronze. The outstanding image is, however, of Siva Nataraja, the Lord of the Cosmic Dance. It is likely that many of these images were portable and carried outside the temple precincts during special religious ceremonies for public viewing. These figures, especially the figures of Nataraja are all free-standing images, not executed in the form of relief sculptures. These were manufactured with the lost wax technique which, according to Sarada Srinivasan, could have originated in the Pallava times. Typical of the South Indian sculptural style and appeal, these images are noted for their superb linear rhythm. The limbs of the image are deliberately elongated and the image appears even lengthier because of a tall head-ornament (mukuta) placed on the head. The slender arms and legs, the thin waist, juxtaposed with powerful shoulders and rounded breasts, are elegantly modelled with an emphasis on movements, both languid and dramatic.

### **Nataraja :**

The Chola bronze par excellence is the figure of Nataraja, the stylistic and philosophical aspects of which have been studied in depth by, among others, Coomaraswamy and Sivaramamurti. The Nataraja figure is usually four-armed, but in some images more arms are added. The image portrays the cosmic dance by the lord of Dances and the legend is associated with Chidambaram, a great Saiva centre



in the Chola Kingdom. Siva dances in an aureole of flames ; he performs this dance either in a benign or creative (lasya) spirit. Infact, the tandava form symbolizes the

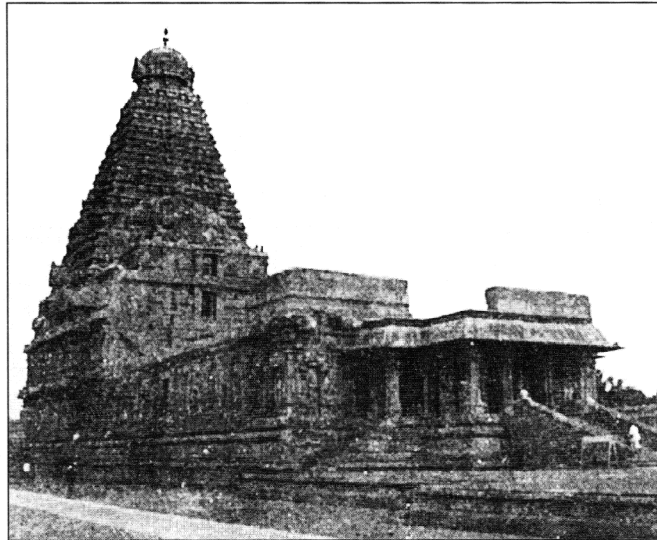


Plate 7.6: Brihadiśvara Temple, Thanjavur



Plate 7.7: Bronze figure of Natarāja of the Chola period, Thanjavur

destruction of a worn-out universe, which is to be created a new by Brahma after the destruction by Siva is over. In this way, the dance of destruction actually paves the

way for a fresh and pristine creation. The dramatic movement of the Lord of Dance is evident in the unmatted locks of Siva, fanning out in wavy horizontal lines on both sides. The rhythm of the dance is captured by one uplifted leg (usually the left leg, though on rare occasions the right leg is shown uplifted instead of the left), the right leg lightly rests on a dwarf figure. This dwarf figure (apasmrapurusha) represents ignorance, which siva tramples during his cosmic dance. A crescent moon adorns his head and he wears a serpent as his neck ornament. His front or lower right arm comes straight down from the shoulder in an elegant diagonal line with fingers pointing downwards at his upraised left ankle. This arm should ideally resemble the trunk of an elephant, and that is why the pose of this arm is called the elephant hand (gajahasta). The rear or the upper left arm holds fire. In the rear or upper right hand is visible a small drum (of the shape of an hour-glass) or damaru (damaru hasta). The fire and the damaru respectively symbolize destruction and the cosmic sound of creation ; in other words, the Lord of Dance simultaneously performs both destruction and new creation. The lower or front right hand is held in the gesture of giving assurance (abhaya-mudra) to the pure and righteous from the evil. In spite of this immense and dramatic movement, the entire composition is a statement on balanced rhythm. This matches the stoic face of the deity who remains detached from his simultaneous acts of destruction and creation. The site of the dance, according to the legends, is Chidambaram, which is not only a great Saiva centre, but also believed to be the very centre of the universe, the very name of the place, Chidambaram, also suggests that the Universe resides in an individual's mind or consciousness (chit).

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## 20.6 Conclusion

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This broad survey of the cultural life for the period from AD 600 to AD 1200, underlines the point that the period under review need not be judged in the light of competing politics intent upon establishing north Indian / peninsular / subcontinental hegemony. The proliferation of regional elements and traits in political, socio-economic and cultural life does not point to the breakdown of a centralized socio-political order and therefore a sign of crises in various facets of life. The very lable of the period, early medieval, earlier conveyed the sense of a phase of relative gloom and problems, which somehow passed away from 1300 A.D. onwards. Our survey would like to strongly highlight that regional features and elements were not at all devoid of creative and generative aspects. Regional diversities and multiplicites also had a few subcontinental commonalities. Many features of socio-economic, political

and cultural life that emerged during this period actually reached their mature form in the ensuing two centuries.

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## 20.7 Summary

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There was a remarkable development of art and architecture during this period, as immense wealth began to be accumulated by rulers and the nobility. Many kings diverted much of their wealth to the construction of temples. Three main styles of temple architecture emerged during this time— nagara, dravida and vasara— which involved a particular ground plan of the temple and the shikhar in a distinct shape as it rose over the garbhagriha. These forms became the commanding features of temple architecture in this era. The period was rich in sculpture, of both stone and metal, each region registering a variant style of its own.

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## 20.8 Model Questions

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- (1) What were the major trends in the temple architecture in India during the early medieval period ?
- (2) Critically analyse the temple art in South India from 10th century to 12th century A.D.

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## 20.9 Suggested Readings

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Chakravarti, Ranabir, *Exploring Early India upto c. AD 1300*, Primus Books (3rd edition, 2016).

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Aher, Catherine B. and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe*, CUP.



