

**Socio- Political and Administrative History  
of  
Ancient India  
(Early time to 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Century C.E)**

**By**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

It is pleasure to be able to complete this compilation work. containing various aspects of Ancient Indian History. This material is prepared with an objective to familiarize the students of M.A History, DDCE Utkal University on the various aspcts of India's ancient past.

This work would not have been possible without the support of the Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education, Utkal University. I would especially like to thank Prof. Susmita Prasad Pani, the Director, DDCE, Utkal University. As my teacher and mentor, he has taught me more than I could ever give him credit for here. He has shown me, by his example, what a good teacher (and person) should be.

The compiler owes many thanks to all the reputed scholars on Ancient Indian History whose work is being used here for the sake of making the students understand the subject. I have copied, collected, and made use of the scholarly works of great scholars whose work has been mentioned in the further reading section of each chapter.

The compiler of the present material claims no authority and originality on any topic of the materials cum textbook. As already been mentioned above the work is a compilation of already existing works of great scholars among whom name of a few have been mentioned at the end of each chapter. Besides the SLM of IGNOU and other Distance Education Institutions have been also consulted and used for preparation of this material for that I duly acknowledge those textbooks.

Would be grateful by receiving suggestions and comments to improve this material cum textbook, from the students, teachers and also the practicing professionals

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

**Structure**

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### **1.1.1. Objectives**

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

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

### **1.1.2. Introduction**

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

### **1.1.3. Emergence of Rajput**

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

#### **1.1.3.1.Descendants of the Kshatriyas:**

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

#### **1.1.3.2.Foreign Origin:**

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

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

#### **1.1.3.3. Agnikula Theory:**

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

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

#### **1.1.4. The Gurjara-Pratihara**

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

#### **1.1.5. Origin of the Pratiharas**

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

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

### **1.1.6. Political History of the Dynasty**

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

#### **1.1.6.1. Nagabhatta I**

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

#### **1.1.6.2. Vatsaraja**

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

#### **1.1.6.3. Nagabhata II**

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

#### **1.1.6.4. Mihirbhoj**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

#### **1.1.6.5. Mahendrapala and his successor**

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

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

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

#### **1.1.7. Decline of Pratihara Dynasty**

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

#### **1.1.8. Administration of the Pratihara**

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

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

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

#### **1.1.9. Social Condition**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.1.10. Economy in Pratihara Empire**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.1.11. Religion in India during the Pratihara Period**

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

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

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

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

#### **1.1.12. Art & Architecture under the Gurjara Pratihara**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 1.1.13. Legacy

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

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

### 1.1.14. Conclusion

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

### 1.1.15. Summary

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

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

#### **1.1.16. Exercise**

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

#### **1.1.17. Further Readings**

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

**Structure**

- 1.2.0. Objectives**
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  - 1.2.4.12. Khottiga**
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- 1.2.7. Religion and Literature**
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### 1.2.0. Objectives

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

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

### 1.2.1. Introduction

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

### 1.2.2. Origin of the Rashtrakuta

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.2.3. Sources of Information**

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

### **1.2.4. Political History of Rashtrakutas**

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

#### **1.2.4.1. Dantidurga.**

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

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

#### **1.2.4.2. Krishnaraja-I.**

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

#### **1.2.4.3. Govindaraja II.**

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

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

#### **1.2.4.4. Dhruvaraja**

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

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

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

#### **1.2.4.5. Govindaraja III**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.2.4.6. Amoghavarsha**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.2.4.7. Krishna-II**

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

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

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

#### **1.2.4.8. Indraraja III**

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

#### **1.2.4.9. Govindaraja IV.**

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

#### **1.2.4.10. Baddiga.**

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

#### **1.2.4.11. Krishnaraja III**

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

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

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

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

#### **1.2.4.12. Khottiga**

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

#### **1.2.4.13. Karakaraja II.**

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



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

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

### **1.2.5. Rashtrakuta Administration**

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.2.6. Socio-Economic Condition**

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

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

### **1.2.7. Religion and Literature**

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

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

### **1.2.8. Rashtrakuta Art and Architecture**

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.2.9. Conclusion**

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

### **1.2.10. Summary**

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

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

#### **1.2.11. Exercise**

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

#### **1.2.12. Further Readings**

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

**Structure**

- 1.3.0. Objectives**
- 1.3.1. Introduction**
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- 1.3.11. Exercise**
- 1.3.12. Further Readings**

### 1.3.0. Objectives

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

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

### 1.3.1. Introduction

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

### 1.3.2. Origin of the Pala Dynasty

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.3.3. Political History of the Palas**

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



### 1.3.3.1. Gopala

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

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

### 1.3.3.2. Dharmapala

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.3.3.3. Devapala**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.3.3.4. Successor of Devapala**

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.3.3.5. Mahipala**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.3.3.6. The Successors of Mahipala**

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

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

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

#### **1.3.3.7. Ramapala**

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

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

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

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

#### **1.3.3.8. Eclipse and Downfall**

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

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

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



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

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

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

Again, the feudatories also took utmost advantage of the weakness of the central power to assume a defiant, if not almost independent, attitude. We know of two such cases in Magadha. Two records from Gaya<sup>1</sup> of the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Nayapala introduce us to one Visvaditya son of Sudraka and grandson of Paritosa. The family seems to have been devoted to religion and constructed temples and installed gods at Gaya. Nothing is known of its political status. Another Gaya inscription of the 5<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Vigrahapala III describes Sudraka in vague terms and records that Visvarupa destroyed his enemies. It is clear that he was a contemporary of Nayapala and Vigrahapala III.

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

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

#### **1.3.4. Administration**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.3.5. Society under the Palas**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.3.6. Art & Architecture Under the Palas**

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.3.7. Economy During Pala Rule**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.3.8. Religion in the Pala Domain**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.3.9. Conclusion**

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

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

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

### 1.3.10. Summary

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

### 1.3.11. Exercise

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



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**Unit.2**  
**Chapter-I**  
**THE SOMAVAMSIS OF ODISHA**

**Structure**

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### 2.1.0. Objective

This chapter deals with the history of the Somavamsi dynasty of Odisha. Here a discussion on the history, polity, and contribution of the Soamavamsi to Odisha in particular and Indian culture in general will be attempted. After learning this lesson the students will be able to

- *explain the origin and history of the Soamavamsi dynasty;*
- *describe the achievements of various rulers of the dynasty;*
- *understand the salient features of the Soamavamsi administration in Odisha; and*
- *discuss the cultural contributions of the Soamavamsi dynasty in the sphere of Art and architecture..*

### 2.1.1. Introduction

The period of Somavamsi rule is a glorious time in the history of Odisha. The Somavamsis also known as Panduvamsis succeeded the sarabhapuriya in south Kosala, towards the close of the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Originally they ruled over the western part of south Kosala, which comprised of the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur of Chhatisgarh and Sambalpur, Bolangir, Sonepur, Kalahandi district of Odisha. Later on, they expanded their kingdom to Utkala and the southern portion of the Kalinga country, which resulted in the integration of Eastern and Western part of Odisha for the first time.. The Somavamsi rulers followed a policy of aggressive imperialism and by the middle of 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E established a Kingdom covering the whole of present Odisha. The kingdom started disintegrating from the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and total decline took place in the second decade of 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E, when the Ganga Monarch Chodaganga conquered and established Ganga hegemony in Odisha. The Somavamsi in Odisha have taken two sobriquets- either Mahabhavagupta or Mahasivagupta alternately along with their personal names Janmejaya, Yayati and Bhimaratha etc. For more than two century the Somavamsi played an important role in the history and culture of Odisha. This chapter will throw some lights on the polity, culture and society of Odisha under the Somavamsi rule.

### 2.1.2. Origin of the Dynasty.

The exact history of the origin of the Somavamsi dynasty is not known but in their records it is mentioned that they belonged to the family of the moon, i.e Somakula. Perhaps they were Kshatriyas, as the Kshatriyas ruling clans of ancient India generally trace their origin either from the Sun (Suryavamsa) or the Moon (Chandravamsa). The mythological origin of the dynasty is given in the Narasinghpur copper plate and the Sripur stone inscription, both of which state that the family of the Moon, came out along with Goddess Lakshmi, from Samudra Manthan (the churning of the ocean).

J F Fleet edited six records of this dynasty in Epigraphia Indica vol III where he points out errors made by the earlier scholars (Babu Rangalala Banerjea, Babu Pratapachandra Ghosha and Dr Rajendralala Mitra) where almost everyone agreed upon the theory that these kings belong to the Kesari dynasty of Odisha (Odisha) who were initially acting as a feudatory under the Guptas. The main reason behind this theory was the distinction made between the informal and formal names mentioned in their grants.

The early scholars mention that the names ending with ‘Gupta’, like Bhavagupta and Shivagupta, suggest that the individual belongs to the Imperial or Later Gupta line and the names like Janamejaya, Yayati and Bhimaratha, mentioned in these grants are the kings of the Kesari dynasty of Odisha (Odisha).

Kesari dynasty is known from Madala-Panji, the historical annals of Jagannatha Temple at Puri, which states that the dynasty was founded by Yayati-kesari. Madala-Panji details about the rulers of Odisha since 3101 BCE (the start of the Kaliyuga) to the advent of the British. Yayati-kesari is supposed to have reigned from 473 to 520 CE. Fleet does not agree with these identifications. He first rejects the acceptance of Madala-Panji as a historical record giving certain instances where the statements contradict each others. Then he suggests that the names like Janamejaya, Yayati etc are just informal

names of the same kings whose formal names, Shivagupta, Bhavagupta etc are mentioned in later lines of the grants. All later scholars agree with Fleet's theory.

Mahashivagupta I is the first known king of this dynasty as evident from the epigraphs. None of his epigraph has been discovered hence he is known from the records of his descendents. There is an earlier king of the same name, Mahashivagupta-Balarjuna, of the Panduvamshis of Kosala dynasty. As the Panduvamshis of Kosala and Somavamshis ruled over adjacent areas hence there is a possibility of some connection between these two dynasties.

Alexander Cunningham suggests that Shivagupta-Balarjuna, then last known ruler of the Panduvamshis of Kosala, could be same as Shivagupta, the father of Mahabhavagupta, of the Somavamshi epigraphs. He assigns 425 CE to Shivagupta-Balarjuna, hence Mahabhavagupta was assigned to 450 CE. However F Keilhorn and J F Fleet did not agree with this identification as they object to the period assigned by Cunningham and the period of the Somavamshi epigraphs based upon paleographic studies does not match.

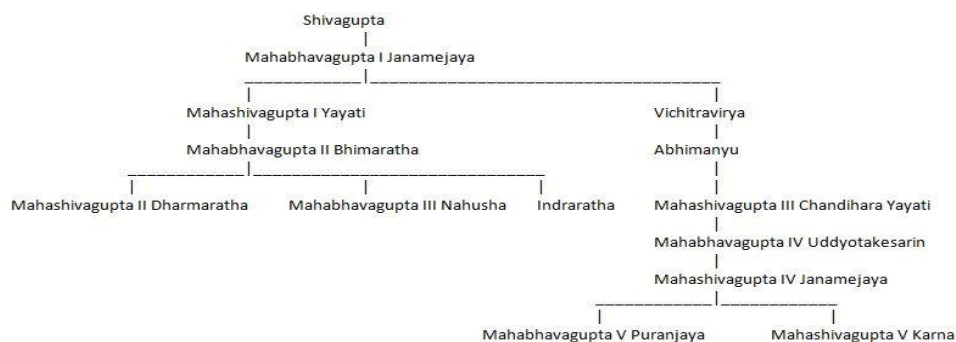
Keilhorn suggest that the epigraphs of the Panduvamshis of Kosala could not be placed earlier than 700 CE. Fleet did a detailed analysis of the Somavamshi records on paleographic grounds and stated that these records cannot be dated prior to 900 CE. In such a situation, there is gap of two centuries in between these two dynasties. D C Sircar also does not agree with the identification of the first Somavamshi king with Shivagupta-Balarjuna.

B C Mazumdar, however, goes with Cunningham for the connection specified by him but does not agree with his period assignment. He tells that the rejection of Cunningham's theory by Fleet is solely based upon paleographic differences. But these differences may be there due to change in location or scribes. The scribes used by the Somavamshi kings were the local Kayasthas of Bengal who would have used different alphabets than those of the Panduvamshi records.

D R Bhandarkar argues that the Panduvamshis of Kosala claim their lineage from the Pandavas however no ruler of the Somavamshi family did the same. A M Shastri, however, points that this Pandava claim is not mentioned in any of the Panduvamshi record after Mahashiva Tivara hence it is very probable that all the later rulers stopped mentioning about this particular statement. Hence Somavamshi, who came after the Panduvamshi of Kosala also did not mention about the Pandava lineage.

Another evidence of this connection between the Panduvamsis and the Somavamshis comes from the usage of prefix 'mahat' with the names of their rulers. Another evidence is the practice of informal names in both the dynasties. Tivara and Balarjuna were the informal names of the Panduvamshi rulers Mahashiva and Mahashivagupta, similarly we find informal names like Janamejaya, Yayati, Bhimaratha etc in the Somavamshi records. Last, but not the least, both the dynasties have strong presence in Kosala region hence there could have been some connection between these two.

### 2.1.3. Genealogy



#### **2.1.4. Early History**

Nothing definite is known about the early history of the Somavamsi kings. The epigraphic records of the dynasty refer to their rule over south Kosala during sixth-Seventh centuries C.E. the copper plate charters of the Somavamsis further provide the genealogy of the dynasty. They refer to three branches of the Soma dynasty, but their relationship to each other is not known. They were originally from the Mekala vountry in Central India but in course of time, they moved away from their original homeland, due to the changing political situations and compulsions, first to Kosala and finally to Utkala or Coastal Odisha.

##### **2.1.4.1. Mahasiva Tivaradeva (cir. C.E. 700-725)**

Mahasiva Tivaradeva, the son of Nannaraja and grandson of Indrabala was the real founder of the greatness of the family in Kosala. He assumed the title Kosaladhipati. He is known from his three charter, the Bonda plates, the Rajan plates and the Baloda plates. These charters describe him as Kosaladhipati (lord of Kosala), whereas the Adhbhar plate of his son Maha-Nannaraja, describe him as the supreme lord of both Kosala and Utkala. Perhaps, Tivaradeva annexed the contry of Ukala later on i.e. after his ninth regnal year. After occupying Utkala, he interfered in the internal affairs of Kongoda. At that time after the death of Madhyamaraja I, there was a war of succession in the Sailodbhava dynasty between his two sons Dharmaraja and Madhavaraja. Tivaradeva supported the younger son Madhava and fought against Dharmaraja, but Sharmaraja defeated the combined army of Tivaradeva and Madhvaraja. Hence, Tivaradeva's plan to bring Kongoda under his political influence, ended in fiasco.

Sometimes later, the Somavamsi kingdom was threaten by the whirlwind campaign of Yasovarman of Kanauj, who marched as far as the Sone valley and visited the temple of Vindhvasini in the Vindhyas. Tivaradeva had to rush to the western frontier of his kingdom from Utkala region. As a result, the Somavamsi lost their hold over Utkala and their kingdom was confined to Mekala and Kosala.

##### **2.1.4.2. The Successor of Mahasiva Tivaradeva**

Tivaradeva was succeeded by his son Mahasiva Nanna II as is known from the Adhabhar plates. Nanna II ruled for a brief period. Probably he had no sons and was succeeded by his uncle Chandragupta, the grandfather of Mahasivagupta Balarjuna. Chandragupta was succeeded by Harshagupta. Harshagupta, has been identified with the King Sri Harsha of Somangada plates, in which the Rastrakuta king Dantidurga claimed to have defeated him as also a number of other southern kingdoms. The Rashtrakuta invasion took place in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Most probably king Hashagupta died in the battlefield while fighting with Dantidurga. He left behind his minor son Balarjuna.

After the death of Harshagupta, his queen Vasata took up the reins of administration, as his son Balarjuna was a minor. She was the daughter of Suryavarman of the Varman family of Magdha. The Sirpur stone inscription describes her as a lady of character and a great administrator. She constructed a number of Vishnu temples of Kosala.

##### **2.1.4.3. Mahasivagupta Balarjuna (Cir. C.E. 750-810)**

Balarjuna, after attaining majority assumed power and ruled for a period of fifty seven years. He issued a number of charters, such as the Lodhia grant issued in the 57<sup>th</sup> regnal year, the Bardula plates of the 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year, the Bonda plates of the 2<sup>nd</sup> regnal year and the Mallar plates, but these plates do not throw much light on the political condition of the time.

It seems that the Somavamsi power was threatened by the Rashtarakuta King Govinda III at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The Sanjan plates record that Govinda III (C.E 793-814), occupied Malava, Kosala, Kalinga, Vanga, Dahala and Odraka, but the Rastrakuta occupation did not last long over Kosala. The death of Govinda III, in C.E. 814, was followed by political chaos in the Rastrakuta kingdom. During this period of political confusion Mahasivagupta Balarjuna asserted his independence.

Balarjuna was a great devotee of siva and also a patron of Buddhism. He assumed the epithet Paramamahesvara. He was liberal to other religion too. During his time the Lakshman temple at Sirpur was built, according to the wishes of his mother Vasata. He also gave patronage to Buddhism by donating grants to the Buddhist Viharas.

### **2.1.5. Somavamsis in Odisha**

#### **2.1.5.1. Mahabhavagupta (Cir. C.E. 810-830)**

There were two rulers in succession after Mahasivagupta Balarjuna. They are only known by their epithets, their real names are not known to us. Mahabhavagupta succeeded them. He issued the Kiserkela charter in his 11<sup>th</sup> regnal year. In this charter, he assumed the imperial title, Maharajadhiraja, Paramesvara, Paramabhattacharaka and Trikalingadhipati. He was the first ruler of the dynasty to assume these titles, which shows that he followed imperialistic policy and extended his kingdom to Trkalinga territory. Trikalinga territory, comprised of the areas of undivided Kalahandi and Koraput district.

#### **2.1.5.2. Mahasivagupta (Cir. C.E. 830-850)**

Mahbhavagupta was succeeded by Mahasivagupta. He is known from the charter of Janmejaya I. So far no charter issued by him has come to light. The Vakratentuli grant of his son Janmejaya I describes him as Paramabhattacharaka, Maharajdhiraja and Paramesvara Sri Sivagupta.

#### **2.1.5.3. Mahabhavagupta Janmejaya I (Cir. C.E. 830-850)**

Mahabhagupta Janmejaya I succeeded Mahasivagupta. He issued the largest number of copper plate grants, in which he assumed a number of imperial titles, such as Trikalingadhipati, Paramabhattacharaka, Maharajadhiraja and Paramesvara. He is described as Somakulatilaka or the ornament of the Somavamsi family, which suggests that he was the real founder of the greatness of the family.

**His Conquest:** Janmejaya I was the great imperialist of the Somavamsa family. His most important military achievement was the annexation of Baud-Sonepur region, known as Khinjali Mandala was under the rule of the Bhanja King, Rana Bhanja, who was a feudatory of Bhaumakara of Tosali. In the regnal year, Janmejaya occupied Subarnapura and issued his Bakratentuli grant. It seems that in the Somavamsi-Bhanja war, the Bhanja could not get any military help from their overlord, the Bhaumakaras. Rana Bhanja resisted the somavamsi invasion and was killed in the battlefield, as is known from the Brahmesvara temple inscription of Kalavati devi. After this defeat the Bhanja migrated to the Ganjam region where they established their new kingdom Khinjali Mandala, with Vanjulvaka as its capital.

Janmejaya also defeated the Kalachuris. His general, Lakshmana, victoriously encountered the Kalachuri lieutenant, Bhattapedi who had carried away a number of women from the Somavamsi kingdom. Lakshmana Raja II of the Kalachuri dynasty was the contemporary of Janmejaya.

**His relation with the Bhaumakaras:** The annexation of the Bhanja territory of Khinjali Mandala, by Janmejaya invited retaliation from the Bhaumakaras, because the Bhanjas were the feudatories of the Bhaumakaras. Janmejaya diplomatically avoided a war with them by making a matrimonial alliance. He was hard pressed by the Kalachuris on the western front and wanted to consolidate his position, in the newly conquered territories of the Bhanjas. Therefore he gave his daughter, Prithivimahadevi, in marriage to the Bhauma king Subhakaradeva IV, and won their goodwill. Subsequently this matrimonial alliance proved disastrous for the Bhaumakaras as the Somavamsis managed to occupy the coastal region, at their cost.

Suvarnapura, the modern town of Sonepur, and headquarters of the same district on the banks of river Mahanadi was the capital of Janmejaya, throughout his reign. Murasim and Arama-Kataka were the fortified cities of the Somavamsis.

**An Estimate:** Janmejaya was great warrior and diplomat by his military strength, he could occupy Khinjali Mandala, whereas diplomatically he won the goodwill of the Bhaumakaras. This enabled him consolidated his position in the newly occupied territories which led to the annexation of

coastal Odisha. In the records, he is mentioned as a noble king, great warrior and a handsome ruler. He was also called Dharmakandarpa and Kosalendra. He gave patronage to learning and literature. Sadharna, a Brahmin scholar well versed in the veda, vedanga and sastra was his prime minister.

#### **2.1.5.4. Mahasivagupta Yayati (Cir. C.E. 885-925)**

Mahabhavagupta Janmejaya was succeeded by his son Mahasivagupta Yayati I towards the 925 C.E. like his illustrious father he also assume number of title, parambhattaraka, paramamahesvara, Maharajadhiraja, Somakulatilaka and Trikalingadhipati. He is known to have issued at least six charters.

**Intervention in the Bhauma Kingdom:** After coming to the throne, Yayati I followed the imperialistic policy of his father. At that time the fortune of the Bhaumakars of Tosali were in a state of instability, which gave Yayati an opportunity to intervene in the internal affairs of their kingdom. Towards C.E. 885, the Bhaumakara king Subhakaradeva IV, brother-in-law of Yayati I died without any issue and was succeeded by his brother Sivakaradeva III. Sivakaradeva III died pre-maturely and Prithivimahadevi, the sister of Yayati I sitting aside the claim of minor sons of Sivakaradeva III, occupied the throne. Perhaps, Yayati I help his sister to come to the Bhauma throne, which resulted in Tosali coming under the sphere of influence of the Somavamsi. This is proved by the grant of land by Yayati I, in his 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year in the Toali kingdom. The Cuttack plate records the grants of a village in the Maranda Visaya, in dakshina Tosali, by Mahasivagupta Yayati I. When Yayati I was busy in Tosali, consolidating his position, the Kalachuri King Sankaragana, invaded the Somavamsi kingdom. Therefore Yayati I had to divert his attention towards the western frontiers in order to defend his kingdom. In the meantime, taking advantage of his absence loyalist officers and minister, deposed Prithivimahadevi and installed Tribhuvanamahadevi III, the widow of Sivakaradeva III, to the Bhauma throne. On hearing this news, Yayati made peace with Kalchuri and rush to the eastern region to help his sister Prithivimahadevi, but it was too late Tribhuvanamahadevi had already consolidated her position in the kingdom. Therefore Yayati did not venture to intervene militarily in the Bhauma kingdom, while the Kalachuri were strengthening their position on the western frontier.

**War with Kalachuri:** As mentioned above, the Kalachuri king Sankaragana, invaded the Somavamsi kingdom, when Yayati was busy in the East helping his sister Prithivimahadevi to consolidate her position in Bhauma kingdom. This is known from the Bilhari stone inscription and Benaras plate. While fighting with the Kalachuris, Yayati I received the news that his sister had been deposed. He hurriedly made peace with Kalachuri by ceding them Pali region to return East to assist his sister.

However, subsequently Yayati took revenge, by defeating the Kalachuris, in his 28<sup>th</sup> regnal year. His Patna plate records, "Having defeated Ajayapala in battle, (Yayati) astonished the heavenly damsel". Further, the plate states that Somavamsi king captured thirty two elephants from the Kalachuris. This is corroborated by the Brahmesvara temple inscription of Kalavati Devi, which states that Yayati deprived the wives of enemies of their pride and treasures. Thus Yayati inflicted a disastrous defeat on the Kalachuris and recovered the Pali region, which he had ceded, to the Kalachuris in the earlier war.

Yayati I shifted his capital from Suvarnapura to Vinitapura. None of his charters were issued from Suvarnapura. His Odisha Museum plates and Cuttack plates were issued from Vinitapura. Vinitapura, has been identified with the modern town of Binika, on the river Mahanadi, in the Sonepur district. After the 15<sup>th</sup> year of his reign Yayati again shifted to a new capital, Yayatinagara. His two Patna plates were issued from Yayatinagara.

#### **2.1.5.5. Mahabhavagupta Bhimaratha (Cir. C.E. 925-960)**

Mahabhavagupta Bhimaratha succeeded to the throne, after his father Yayati I. Nothing is known regarding the king from his inscriptions. In the Brahmesvara inscription, he is described, "who was the Kalpa tree of the Kali Age and the crown jewels of princes modest of boundless spirit and whose steadiness, reaches, gravity, depth of knowledge and who was wise in the producing prosperity

and sorts of power and success, a hero and destroyer of his enemies and who had qualities of a Maharatha.”

His copper plates, which was issued in the 3<sup>rd</sup> regnal year, do not throw any light on the political development of his reign. However, from the Kalachuri records, it is known that the Kalachuri king Lakshmana Raja, had invade Kosala, obtained an effigy of the Kalinga serpent, wrought in golden jewels from the chief of Odradesa, but the Kalachuri records, but do not speak of any territorial loss to the Somavamsi. Hence it was just a passing event without much political and, military significance.

#### **2.1.5.6. Mahasivagupta Dharmaratha (Cir. C.E 960-995)**

Bhimarath was succeeded by his son Dharmaratha. The Khandapada charter described him as a cause of destruction of his enemy. The Brahmesvara inscription styled him as a second Parasurama and compared him to the mid day Sun. the Narasingpur charter described him as the lord of the land between the Himalaya and the Setubandha, because of his military campaign but it is a mere eulogical description.

The Khandapada charter is the only records of the king discovered so far. The charter records the donation of a village in Antarudra Visaya, which is identified with Antarodha Pragana of Puri district. This Antarudra Visaya was also a district of Dakshina Tosali, under the Bhaumakaras as revealed by the Chaurasi plate of Sivakaradeva, dated to Bhauma Era 73 i.e C.E 809. This show that Dakshina Tosali was annexed by Dharmaratha, at the beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.

The Banapur copper plate grant of Indraratha, inform us that, Dharmaratha had conquered Kalinga and Kangoda and appointed his half brother Indraratha as the governor of that territory. The Khandapada charter of the king, credit his in suppressing his enemies, by his valour and by burning many town of Gauda and Andhras. At the time, the political condition of Gauda and Andhra was chaotic and politically disturbed. Hence a raid Dharmarath to Gauda and Andhra was not impossible. However, we do not find any other evidence to corroborate this facts.

King Dharmaratha was a great warrior and conqueror. He probably ruled for a long period of thirty five years. He died issueless and was succeeded by his younger brother Nahusa.

#### **2.1.5.7. Nahusa (Cir. C.E 995-1000)**

Dharmaratha was succeeded by his younger brother Nahusa also known as Naghusa. No copper plate charter of this king has come to light. The Narasinghapur charter of Udyotakesari and the Ratnagiri plate of Karnadeva, described him as the brother and successor of Dharmaratha. Also, he is mentioned as the overlord of the country and the celebrated ornaments of the earth.

The Narasinghapur charter narrates the description given by an old Sabar woman, regarding Naghusa enemy. The enemy has been identified as king Saktivarman of the eastern Chalukyan dynasty. Possibly he tried to wrest the Kalinga territory from the Somavamsi. Indraratha, the younger brother of Nahusa and Governor of Kalinga, probably foiled and check the invasion of Saktivarman.

The record of Indraratha, state that when Dharmarath died, the servant of Vatsaraja oppressed the people. Indraratha, having heard this, came from Kalinga and killed Naghusa and his uncle Abhimanyu. Then he occupied the throne with the approval of the learned Brahmins. The king Vatsaraja has been identified with Nahusa. Nahusa was unpopular for his maladministration and was killed by his step brother Indraratha, who occupied the Somavamsi throne.

#### **2.1.5.8. Indraratha (Cir. C.E 1000-1023)**

Indraratha is known from his Banpur grants in which he claims ruling over Odra, Kalinga and Kosala. Indraratha was a son of Bhimaratha, born from his other queen, Durga. Thus he was a step-brother of Dharmaratha. However their relation seems to be on very good terms as he was appointed as a governor by Dharmaratha. After the death of Nahusha, the political scene at the Somavamsi throne was very much confusing. A certain Abhimanyu, a prince from a collateral branch claiming their descent from Janamejaya, put their claim on the throne. However Indraratha slew Abhimanyu in a battle ending all the conflicts with the throne.



Later, he ascended the throne with the approvals from the Brahmanas. He assumed all regal titles usually employed for other Somavamshi kings. His last years were not very fanciful as he suffered a defeat in the hands of the Chola king Rajendra I when the latter was on his Gangetic expedition. E Hultzsch, while editing Tirumalai inscription, mentions a certain Indraratha of the race of the moon who was defeated by Rajendra I.

K A N Sastri and Hultzsch both agree with F Kielhorn in indentifying this Indraratha with the same as mentioned in the Udaypur inscription of Udayeshvara. However the defeat of Indraratha was said to be at *Adinagara* in the Chola inscriptions, this *Adinagara* is taken as *Yayatinagara* by all scholars. It appears that Indraratha not only faced the wrath of the Cholas and the Paramaras but the Kalchuris also were hostile towards him. Gangeyadeva, with aid from the Kalchuri chief Kamalaraja, is said to have conquered the Utkala region which he would have wrestled from Indraratha only.

Shastri rules out that there were three different invasions but suggests that all the three, the Paramaras, the Cholas and the Kalchuris would have formed an alliance against Indraratha. This is also the opinion of J P Singh Deo. Indraratha was probably kept captive, as evident from the Chola inscriptions, or was killed afterwards. After his death a period of anarchy followed in the Somavamshi kingdom as evident from Balijari grant.

Indraratha came to the throne through a bloody *coup-d-etat*. He enjoyed a peaceful reign till his sixth regnal year, which is the date of his only charter, issued from *Yayatinagara*. Later Indraratha fell into bed days and the Somavamshi kingdom was threatened by the Paramaras and the Cholas, the Udayapur Prasasti and the Tirumalai inscription state that the Paramara king Bhoja and the Chola king Rajendra Chola invaded the Kosala kingdom. The Chola invasion proved disastrous to the Somavamsis. Indraratha was attacked in his own capital and captured along with his family and subsequently killed.

Indraratha was an ambitious ruler. In the beginning, he proved a successful governor in Kalinga but later on he failed miserably as a king. In spite of his failure, he was a great builder of the Somavamshi dynasty. Rajarani temple at Bhubaneswar is assigned to Indraratha as the temple is also known as Indralingeshvar. Few scholars assign Indra-lath, a brick temple at Ranipur-Jharial to Indraratha. However no epigraphical evidences have been found to support these assignments.

#### **2.1.5.9. Mahasivagupta Yayati II, Chandihara (Cir. C.E. 1023-1040)**

The Chola invasion of Kosala was followed by political anarchy and chaos in the kingdom. The Chola, not only killed the king Indraratha, but also destroyed the capital. Taking advantage of this situation, the enemies of the Somavamsis, the Kalachuris, established their sovereignty at Tummana and the Cholas occupied the Somavamshi territory, as far as Suvarnapura. At this juncture, the Somavamsis needed a capable leader, who could raise the fallen glory of the Somavamshi power.

**Accession:** Fortunately, the Somavamshi kingdom got a capable leader and able ruler in Chandihara Yayati. He was the son of Abhimanyu, grandson of Vichitravira and great grandson of Janmejaya I. When his father Abhimanyu was killed by Indraratha, Chandihara Yayati fled from Kosala and did not return till the death of Indraratha. After the death of Indraratha, when the Somavamshi kingdom was about to collapse, the ministers and the officers chose Chandihara Yayati as the king of Kalinga, Kongoda, Utkala and Kosala. His coronation probably took place at Suvarnapura where he was, “sanctified by the pure water of the confluence of the Mahanadi and Tel”.

**Military Career:** After coming to power Yayati II, during the early part of his reign remained busy in consolidating his kingdom and establishing peace and order. Then he started a campaign to drive out the external enemies from the Somavamshi dominion. Yayati II, issued the Maranjumura plates, in his 3<sup>rd</sup> regnal year, where he has compared himself with great kings like Nala, Nahusa, Mandhata, Dilipa, Bharata and Bhagiratha. He also claimed victory over Karnata, Lata, Gurjara, Kanchi, Gauda and Radha, but there is no historical truth in these claims, as these victories seem to be impossibility within such a short period of his accession to the throne. They are mere eulogical descriptions. However, they indicate that Yayati had a military career prior to his accession. He seems to have fought

the Cholas and the Kalachuris and had gained initial success. As the Cholas were in occupation of Suvarnapura and the Kalachuris had established themselves in the north-west of the Somavamsi kingdom during the time of Indraratha and Yayati freed these territories as is known from his coronation at Suvarnapura.

**Kalachuri Invasion:** In the part of his reign, Yayati II faced the Kalachuri invasion, which was a great blow to the Somavamsi kingdom. He suffered reverses at the hands of the Kalachuri king, Gangeyadeva of Tripuri. Gangeyadeva, with his feudatory Kamalaraja of Tummana, led a campaign to Utkala and plundered it. The Amod plates state that Kamalaraja, a feudatory king of Tummana, churned the milk ocean, which was the kingdom of Utkala, like the Mandara Mountain and gave the Lakshmi, his overlord Gangeyadeva, excellent elephants and horses.

**Eastern Ganga Menace:** It was during the Kalachuri invasion Utkala that, taking advantage of the political confusion, the later Eastern Ganga king, Vajrahastadeva III annexed Kalinga and Kongoda regions. Thus, the Gangas once again reasserted their sovereignty over these regions. Vajrahastadeva III, after occupying these territories assumed the title Trikalingadhipati. Yayati II, after losing Kalinga and Kongoda, consolidated his position in Kosala and Utkala regions.

Chandihara Yayati II, was one of the most prominent rulers of the Somavamsi dynasty. In spite of his military reverses, tradition credits him with the performance of a Dasasvamedha or ten-fold horse sacrifice at Jajpur. He invited ten thousand learned Brahmins from Kanyakubja, for this purpose. He is mentioned as having devoted himself to work for peace and dharma. He was also a great builder. The Maranjamura charter speaks about the construction of a number of Mandapas, Viharas, and Udyanana by him. The temple tradition of Odisha, Madalapanji, associates him with the construction of the Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar. The Dasasvamedha ghata, on the Vaitarani at Jajpur is also said to have been built by him. The Brahmesvara temple inscription mentions that Yayati II had married Kolavati, mother of Udyotakesari, who built the Brahmesvara temple at Bhubaneswar. Yayati II was a great devotee of Siva. In the later part of his reign Yayati II, shifted the Somavamsi capital from Suvarnapura to Abhnava Yayatinagara, in coastal Odisha. The shifting of the capital from western Odisha to central Odisha, might have reduced Kosala, to the status of secondary unit of the kingdom. Abhinava Yayatinagara, has been identified with the modern Jajpur town on the Bank of the river Vaitarani, in the present district of the same name.

#### **2.1.5.10. Mahabhavagupta IV, Udyotakesari (Cir. C.E. 1040-1065)**

Yayati II, Chandihara was succeeded by his son Udyotakesari Mahabhavagupta IV. The Brahmesvara inscription, describes him as the rising sun, from the eastern mountains, illuminating the earth and heaven by his luster. He issued his Narasinghpur charter from Yayatinagar, in the fourth year of his reign which reveals that he was the lord of Kosala, Utkala and Odra-desa.

**Military Career:** The Brahmesvara temple inscription refers to the early success of Udyotakesari, as a crown prince. It states that he defeated his enemies the Dahala, Chola and Gauda and forced large number of kings to pay obeisance. Udyotakesari, perhaps has assisted his father, Yayati II in his military campaigns against the Kalachuris, the Chola and the Gauda, when he was a crown prince.

**The Kalachuri Incursion:** The Kalachuris of Tummana, continued their military adventures against the Somavamsi kingdom. Udyotakesari, therefore took some special measures to protect his western frontiers. Rudradatta, the minister of war and peace who served under Yayati II, was retained by Udyotakesari to serve him in the same capacity. He appointed his son, Kumara Somesvara, as the governor of Kosala. The Sonapur charter of Kumara Somesvara reveals that at that time Kosala was known as Paschima-Lanka and its capital was at Suvarnapura. He also created a new province, Bamanda-mandala and placed Sripunja in charge of it. It seems that Udyotakesari gained some initial success against the Kalachuri king Karna, but subsequently he was defeated by Karna and the western territories of Kosla were annexed by the Kalachuris. As a result, the Kalachuris king assumed the title Trikalingadhipati, starting the decline of Somavamsi power from the time of Udyotakesari.

***Udyotakesari: A Patron of Culture:*** Udyotakesari was a great patron of Brahmins and scholars, as is evident from the records. Purusottama Bhatta, a learned scholar, well-versed in Veda, grammar, poetry and logic, flourished during his reign. Though Udyotakesari was a great devotee of Siva, he also showed respect to other sects. The construction of Jagamohana of the Lingaraja temple is ascribed to him. The Lalatendu Kesari cave inscription states that he excavated tanks and constructed temples on the Kumara hill and installed the images of the twenty four Jaina Tirthanakas, showing thereby his respect for Jainism. Kolavatidevi, his mother, constructed the temple of Brahmesvara, at Ekamra or modern Bhubaneswar, in his 18<sup>th</sup> regnal year. He ruled for about twenty five years and was succeeded by his son, Mahasivagupta Janmejaya II.

#### **2.1.5.11. Mahasivagupta Janmejaya II**

Mahasivagupta Janmejaya II succeeded his father Udyotakesari to the Somavamsi throne. The Ratnagiri charter of Karnadeva describes him as a warrior king, commanding a large number of feudatories. During his reign he faced two mighty invasions, from the Nagas and the Gangas which considerably weakened the Somavamsi power.

***The Naga Invasion:*** The Ratnagiri plates of Karnadeva mention that Janmejaya II came into conflict with a Naga king. The Naga King has been identified with king Somesvara I (C.E. 1069-1097) of the Chindaka-Naga dynasty, ruling over Baster-Koraput region, who is credited with having waged war against Udra. In the war, Somesvara became victorious and the Sambalpur-Sonepur region was lost to the Nagas. Yasoraja I, of the Telugu-Choda family, was a lieutenant of Somesvara, who helped him to conquer eastern Kosala. At that time, the Kalachuris of Tummana had already occupied the western Kosala region. Thus as a result of Janmejaya's defeat at the hands of the Naga king, the entire Kosala portion was lost to the Somavamsi.

***The Later Eastern Ganga Invasion:*** Janmejaya II had also to face the growing power of the Later Eastern Gangas. The Dirghasi stone inscription dated C.E 1076. Reveals that Vanapati, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ganga king Rajaraja I Devendravarman defeated the kings of Vengi, Kimidi, Kosala, Gidrisingi and Odra. At that time, Kosala had already been lost by the Somavamsis. Here, the Somavamsi king is referred to as the king of Odra in the inscriptions. It is also likely that the Ganga invasion resulted in the loss of southern territories of the Somavamsi kingdom, comprising parts of Ganjam district.

Thus, during the reign of Janmejaya the disintegration of the Somavamsi kingdom continued apace and shrank from its western and southern borders to be confined to Utakala and Odradesa.

#### **2.1.5.12. Mahabhavagupta Puranjaya (Cir. C.E.1080-1095)**

Janmejaya was succeeded by his elder son Puranjaya, to the Somavamsi throne. So far no records of this king have been found. The Ratnagiri charter describes him as "the best of men, the conqueror of the cities of the enemies, whose lotus feet were worshipped by bowing kings and whose prowess was equal to that of resplendent Sunasira (Indra)". Further, the charter states that he successfully resisted the invasions of the kings of Gauda, Dahala, Kalinga and Vanga. Though, there is no other corroborative evidence to prove this, the Ratnagiri charter suggests that the Somavamsi kingdom was hard-pressed by its external enemies.

#### **2.1.5.13. Mahasivagupta Karnadeva (Cir. C.E 1095-1112)**

Mahasivagupta Karnadeva, the younger brother of Puranjaya, succeeded him to the Somavamsi throne. He was the last known member of the dynasty. He issued the Ratnagiri charter in his 6<sup>th</sup> regnal year from the capital Yayatinagara. At the time of his accession, the kingdom was probably limited in extent to the coastal districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and parts of Ganjam.

The Gandibedha Sun image inscription and the Kamalpur plates, also provide information regarding the reign of Karnadeva. The former inscription was issued in the 13<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Karnadeva and was found in the village Gandibedha, in Balasore district. This indicates that Karnadeva's territory, extended upto Balasore district. The Kamalpur plates were issued by Jayarnava, a

feudatory of Karnadeva, who ruled over Koladamandala. This charter was issued from Koladapata in 7<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Karnadeva and describes Jayarnava as a Mahamandalika, Kahamandalesvara and Ranaka.

During the reign of Karnadeva, the reduced kingdom of the Somavamsi was further threatened by the neighboring kingdom of the Palas, in the north and the Later Eastern Gangas, in the south. While Ramapala, was trying to revive the lost glory of the Pala empire, Chodagangadeva, the most powerful ruler of the Gangas, wanted to expand the Ganga territories, at the expense of the Somavamsi kingdoms. The Ramacharita of Snadhyakaranandi, states that Jayasimha, a subordinate ruler of Midnapur under Ramapala had lifted Karnakesari, the lord of Utkal with his palm. This is also corroborated by the Korni copper plate of Chodagangadeva, dated C.E. 1112, which state that he had reinstated the fallen lord of Utkala. This shows that Ramapala invaded Utkala and defeated its ruler Karnadeva but he was saved by Chodagangadeva. In interfering in the Somavamsi kingdom, both the Palas and the Gangas, were motivated to annex their territories. Chodaganga, saved Karnadeva, in order to find an opportunity to annex the Somavamsi kingdom. Finally, he succeeded in his aim and annexed the kingdom in C.E. 1112. This is proved by the Lingaraj temple inscription of Chodagangadeva, dated C.E.1114, thereby bringing an end to the glorious rule of the Somavamsi.

#### **2.1.6. Disintegration of the Somavamsi-Causes**

The Somavamsis, from a small kingdom in south Kosala, extended their territory to Odra, Utkal and Kalinga. They reached the Zenith of their power during the reign of Udyotakesari. The disintegration of the kingdom started from the time of Janmejaya II, the son and successor of Udyotakesari and finally the kingdom was annexed by Chodagangadeva, the most remarkable king of the latter Eastern Gangadynasty in C.E. 1112. Several factors are contributed to their downfall.

The most important factors for the downfall of the Somavamsi power was the weakness of the later rulers of the dynasty. From the time of Janmejaya II, the Somavamsi power and kingdom gradually declined. The last two rulers, Puranjaya and Karnadeva were weak and could not protect their kingdom from foreign enemies.

Continuous foreign aggressions were other factors for their downfall. From the time of the establishment of their power, they had to face repeated invasions by the Kalachuris, which shattered the military vitality of the kingdom. Further, the invasion of the Paramars, the Cholas, the Gangs, and the Palas also contributed to their downfall.

Economic factors might have also contributed to their downfall. The Somavamsi rulers constructed large number of temples like the Lingaraj temple, the Rajarani temple and other religious establishments, by spending the lion's share of the states treasury. Possibly this drained the state treasury, which seems to have reduced their military power.

The rise of the feudatories was another cause of their downfall. The Somavamsis had a number of feudatories. The power of these feudatories had increased considerably during the declining days of the kingdom. Various inscriptions inform us that they granted land independently, assumed imperial titles and enjoyed various kingly privileges. These signs of increasing power of the feudal chief, shown that during the critical days of the Somavamsis, the feudatories did not co-operate with them and ruled independently.

The Madala panji, temple chronicle of Puri, records another factors for their downfall. It refers to the evidence of trachery and dissensions, among the officials of the Somavamsi kingdom. Vasudeva Ratha, the commander-in-chief of the Somavamsi, invited Chodagangadeva to invade Odisha underlying thereby his treachery as also the inefficiency and inability of Karnadeva's administration. All these factors contributed to the downfall of the Samovamsi. After the occupation of Odisha by Chodagangadeva, the Somavamsi were wiped out from the political scene of Odisha.

#### **2.1.7. Administration**

The epigraphic records of the Somavamsi ad their feudatories; provide us some information regarding their administrative system. At the zenith of their power, hey control almost the entire state of

Odisha along with the adjacent portion of the Raipur district of Chhatisgarh and Midinapur district of West Bengal.

#### **2.1.7.1. Extent of Kingdom**

Mahabhavagupta I Janamejaya is referred as Kosalendra, the lord of Kosala. However all the later rulers were referred as Trikalingadhipati, the lord of Trikalinga. Though the later rulers were not referred as the lord of Kosala, but they had strong influence over that region as many villages mentioned in the various grants were located in Kosaladesa. Kelga grant mentions that Abhimanyu, an ancestor of Someshvara, received the Kosala kingdom as a favor from Uddyotakesari of the Somavamshi dynasty. This proves that though the later rulers were not explicitly mentioned as the lord of Kosala however they exercised a strong rule over that region.

There are two opinions about the territories denoted by Trikalinga. Either it is consisted of a single territory known with the same name or it is constituted of the three regions known as Kalinga. Alexander Cunningham tells that Trikalinga is actually a territory comprising of the three Kalingas, Amravati in Andhra, Warangal in Andhra and Kalinga in Odisha. In this manner he suggests that the name denotes the territorial division of Telingana which may be a corrupt form of Tri-Kalinga. F Keilhorn agrees with this identification of Cunningham.

J F Fleet, while editing the plates of this dynasty in *Epigraphia Indica* vol III, took the word 'vijaya-kataka' as a reference to Katak (modern Cuttack) in Odisha. Hence he identifies Trikalinga region to be comprised of Cuttack and a major part of present Odisha. However his identification of 'vijaya-kataka' with Katak is not correct. G M Laskar suggests that Trikalinga includes Kosala and Kalinga region. B C Mazumdar and Binayak Misra identify Trikalinga with Kalinga, Utkala and Kongoda regions. R G Basak identifies it with Kalinga, Kongodu and Odra (Udra).

R D Banerji divides the ancient Kalinga region, from Godavari to the Ganges delta, into three parts, Kalinga, Tosala and Utkala. R S Rao also does the same however he gives names, Utkala to north Kalinga region, Kalinga to the middle part and Tri-Kalinga to the southern part of the ancient Kalinga region. Thinking on the same lines, D C Ganguly proposes old Godavari, Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh and Ganjam district of Odisha as Trikalinga region.

D C Sircar and V V Mirashi suggest that Trikalinga denotes a separate region different from Kalinga, Kosala, Utkala and Kongodu. However they did not give any territory to identify this region, though D C Sircar proposes that Trikalinga was probably situated in between Dakshina-Kosala and Kalinga regions.

H K Mahatab suggests that the entire western Odisha was probably the ancient Trikalinga region. He explains that the entire region between the Rishikulya river and the Lanhulya river with Zemindary of Jeypore in Koraput and the districts of Bastar, Bolangirpatna, Kalahandi, Sambalpur and Sonepur constitute the Trikalinga country.

A M Shastri tells that Kalinga was never mentioned to have three divisions or comprising of three different regions, all named Kalinga, in the early Indian literature and epigraphs. He further points that Odra (old Odisha) and Utkala had nothing to do with Trikalinga as these regions were mentioned individually in various Somavamshi records. Jatesinga-Dungri grant mentions Kalinga, Kongoda and Utkala side by side thus suggesting that Trikalinga was not comprising of these three regions as suggested by Mazumdar.

Shastri mentions that there are strong evidences that though Kalinga was referred as a single territory before the first century CE however sometime in between the first and the sixth century CE, the region of Kalinga was divided into three parts which collectively came to be known as Trikalinga. Trikalinga found mention in few Ganga records, Chalukyan records and the records of the Kalchuris of Tripuri.

Jirjingi plates of the Ganga king Indravarman, mentions the king as Trikalingadhipati (the lord of Trikalinga). R K Ghoshal, who edited this grant, puts the record in between 475 and 550 CE. As the

early Ganga rulers were ruling from *Kalinganagara* or Mukhalingam hence Mukhalingam in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh was a part of Trikalanga region. Few Chalukyan grants claim that Trikalanga was a part of their dominion as evident from the Masulipatam plates of Amma I, Kolavaram plates of Bhima II.

Shastri tries to identify the three Kalinga regions using rivers and mountains as the natural boundaries. He explains that the Eastern Ghat divides Kalinga into western and eastern parts, Mahanadi forms the northern boundary and Godavari forms the southern boundary, Indravati divides the western Kalinga into north and south Kalinga. With these boundaries he proposes that South Kalinga, Indravati on the west and northwest, Godavari at the south and Eastern Ghat on the east, is comprised of portions of Koraput, Bastar and Srikakulam. North Kalinga, Mahanadi on the north and west, Eastern Ghat on the east and south, is comprised of the portions of northern Koraput and south-eastern Kalahandi. East Kalinga, Eastern Ghat on the west, Mahanadi on the north and Godavari on the south, is comprised of eastern Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and Ganjam.

#### **2.1.7.2. Capital**

Grants of the Somavamshi kings were issued from various towns and victorious camps. However it appears that Suvarnapura, Vinitapura and Yayatinagara were the main towns or capitals at different times during their rule. The earliest grant of the dynasty, issued by Mahabhavagupta I Janamejaya, was issued from Suvarnapura which is identified with present Sonapur in Odisha. It appears that Janamejaya was busy in extending his kingdom as majority of his other grants were issued from various victorious camps however his last grant, Kalibhana plates of 34th regnal year, was again issued from Suvarnapura.

A change in capital is observed during the rule of Mahashivagupta I Yayati I who started issuing his grants from Vinitapura, identified with modern Binika in Odisha. He continued issuing his grants from Vinitapura except his last grant which was issued from Yayatinagara. Identification of Yayatinagara is not satisfactorily done as there are divergent opinions among scholars. The name Yayatinagara is found in the epigraphs of the Somavamshi kings, but there is a mention of Abhinav-Yayatinagara is found in Madala-Panji.

D C Sircar identifies Abhinav-Yayatinagara with modern Jajpur. However J F Fleet does not agree with this identification as the epigraphs mention that Yayatinagara was situated at the bank of Mahanadi and Jajpur is about 70 km from the river. Hira Lal suggests that Yayatinagara is just another name of Vinitapura renamed by Yayati I. Walter Smith and A M Shastri agree with Hira Lal's opinion. Shastri mentions that both the town was defined in the same manner and lines in the Somavamshi grants that it appears that these were two names of the same town. Also both the towns were mentioned to be situated at the bank of Mahanadi. The village Jagti, renamed as Narayan Nagar by Raja Narayan Dev in 1940s, as the ancient Yayatinagara.

All the later rulers keep oscillating between Suvarnapura and Yayatinagara for issuing their grants. Hence it appears that both the cities acted as their capitals. As none of the later ruler issued their grants from both the cities hence it is clear that they probably lost a portion of their kingdom in between which made this frequent shifting of their capitals.

#### **2.1.7.3. Central Administration**

**Monarchy:** Like other dynasties of Odisha, the Somavamsi rule was monarchical in character. Supreme power and authority vested in the king. Kingship was hereditary but there are instances of selection of kings by ministers and feudatories. King Yayati II was elected as a king by the minister and the feudatories of Utkala, Kongoda, Kalinga and Kosala, when country was in chaos after the Chola invasion. Thus in time of need the voice of the ministers and the feudatories were taken into account for the selection of a king. Normally, the eldest son succeeded to the throne, but when there was no male heir the younger brother, assumed power.

The Somavamsi kings had a number of high imperial titles such as Maharajadhiraja, Paramamahesvara, Paramabhattaraka, Paramesvara, Koslanedra, Trikalingadhipati, Koslaidhipati and Somakulatilaka. These titles show that they were sovereign monarch over their dominion.

**Ministers:** Though the Somavamsi records do not refer to the existence of a council of ministers or an advisory council, there is evidence to prove that a body of ministers constituted the main organ of the government. Sadharna, served as a Mantrin during the time of Janmejaya I. Further he is described as mantritolaka and an able administrator, who share the burden of administration as is mentioned in a latter inscription. The mention of the word, mantri in the records proves that ministers were regular features in the Somavamsi administration. Mantitolaka was perhaps the chief minister, which suggests that the Ministry was headed by him.

Mahasandhivigraha was another minister of Somavamsi, known from the inscription. He was the minister of war and peace and was head of the foreign affairs department. Besides this he was also entrusted with the duty of drafting the copper plate charter.

**Official of Central Government:** The Somavamsi records provide the names of a number of officials of the central Administration but the details of their function, or nature of appointment, are known. Kumara or Kumaradhiraja were the princes of royal blood were assigned the administration of certain territorial units. Mahakshapatalika was the chief officer for accounts of records. Rajaguru or the royal priest was another important official also adorned the court of the king. Dutaka was in charge of executing royal charters and conveying the same to the local officials.

#### **2.1.7.4. Provincial Administration**

**Administrative Divisions:** Some parts of the Somavamsi kingdom were under direct rule, while some were under the control of their feudatories, who enjoyed autonomous status. The territories under direct rule were divided into a number of administrative divisions.

Desa, was the largest unit of their administration, which may be equivalent to a modern province. The inscriptions refer to Odra desa, Kosala desa as administrative unit. Mandala was the next unit of administration which is similar to a modern division. The inscriptions refer to eight mandalas in the Somavamsi kingdom. They were Gandhatipati, Sidanda, Gandharavadi, Kongoda, Airavatta, Rongoda, Kolada and Sangama. Mandalas were further divided into a number of visaya or districts. The Somavamsi records provide the names of seventeen visayas. We get names of nine Khandas from their inscriptions. Sometimes the records provide bhukti as another territorial unit which denotes a small district. Grama was the lowest unit of administration under them.

**Provincial Officials:** The land grant charters of Somavamsi, mention a number of officials, in connection with grants of land. They belonged to the administration of the corresponding provinces, where the donation took place or where the donated villages were located. They were Samahatri, same as the position of a collector, in charge of the general supervision and collection of revenue. Sannidhartri was the treasurer who assisted the Samahatri in revenue collection. Niyukta, was another important official, associated with the administration of land. Adhikarika was associated with Niyuktaka in the administration of land. Dandapasika, was the police officer, whose duty was to maintain law and order. Pisuna-Vetrika was another official. He was the cruel cane holder, functioning as a constable.

Besides these officials, we get information of Mandalapati, who was in charge of a mandala. Visayapati was the officer in charge of a district whereas Khandapati was in charge of a sub-division.

**Judiciary:** The records of the Somavamsis do not provide any information regarding a separate judicial department. It seems that some executive officials were vested with judicial powers. The king was the highest judicial authority. Other executive officials vested with judicial power were Mandalika, visayapati and Khandapati. Perhaps, Dandapasika, Pisunavetrika had some role in dispensation of justice.

#### **2.1.7.5. Sources of Revenue**

Land, was the main source of revenue, under the Somavamsi administration. Land was divided into two categories-rent free holdings and revenue paying lands. The copper plate grants mention a

number of taxes imposed by the Government. They were karabhoga and bhogq which are taken as the share of the produce, periodical supply of fruits, firewoods, flowers to the king and rent proper payable in cash or kind respectively. These were regular taxes. Besides this, there was an irregular additional tax on land known as Upatikara,. Hiranya was a levy on cash and wealth. Another source of income for the state was Nidhi (treasure trove) and Upanidhi (deposits).

We also come across a number of other taxes, imposed by the government from the time of Udyotakesari. They were Hastidanda (taxes on the maintenance of elephant), Ahidanda (tax imposed on snake charmers), varavalivardda (taxes on maintenance of bulls), Padatijivya (taxes for maintenance of infantry), (Bandhadanda (imposition for conviction an punishment), Andharuva (levy on the amount lent by money lenders), Vandapana and vijaya vandapana (tribute to the king and tribute after a victory), Marganika (tax levied by king on ceremonial occasions), adatta (interest on fines on arrers), Suvarnadanda (tax on profession of goldsmith), Haladanda (tax for maintenance of ploughs) etc.

Thus the sources of revenue of the Somavamsi consisted mainly of land rent and different types of taxes imposed from time to time.

#### **2.1.7.6. Military Administration**

The military administration of the Somavamsi was strong and efficient. It was due to their military power that they could expand their territory to Utkala, Odra and Kalinga, but their records do not provide the names of military officials. The Somavamsi king were great warriors and headed the army. They were assisted by a samantavigrahika or the minister of war and peace. The Chandas and the Bhattas were the regular and irregular troops of the Somavamsi. The royal army consisted of infantry, cavalry and elephants.

#### **2.1.8. Odisha under Somavamsi- Review**

The economic prosperity of the country promoted the Somavamsi king to build a good number of temples which attained celebrity in the field of art. The Muktesvara temple at Bhubaneswar built by Yayati I, the Rajarani temple built by Indraratha, the Brahmesvara temple built in the memory of Yayati II by her Kolavti, the Lingaraja temple started by Yayati Kesari II and completed by Udyotakesari and several unique sculpture bear ample testimony to it.

Somavamsi king were great patron of Saivism. They took of royal title Paramamahesvara. Further they used Saivite emblem of the bull on their seals. The Siavaguru like Sadasiba Charya and Prathama charya flourished during that period. The Lakulisha Pasupati sect which entered Odisha during the Sailodbhavas marked its ascendancy during the Somavamsi rule. The Somavamsi king also patronized Vaisnavism. The Madala Panji give credit to Yayati I of building the Vimala and Mahalaxmi temple inside the premises of lord Jagannath temple. The images of Ganesha, Kartika, Surya, Indra, Agni, Yama, the Navagrha etc were largely carved out in the temple was during the glorious rule of Somavamsi. Saktism is also prevailed in Odisha during the Somavamsi rule. Saptamatrika temple at Puri, Jajpur, Ranipur-Jharial etc shows that the Somavamsi also patronize Saktism. The family deities of the Somavamsi were known as Bhagavati, Panchambari, Bhadrabika etc, in the Maranjamura charter of Yayati II. Jainism and Buddhist also received royal patronage from the Somavamsi king. Thus the process of synthesis, which had started during the period of Bhaumakaras among Saivism, Vaisnavism, Saktism, Jainism and Buddhism was completed during the period of Somavamsi king.

The Somavamsi rule undoubtedly ushered a new era in the history of medieval Odisha. The ruler of this dynasty were great conqueror who, by their extensive conquest, gave a geographical unity to this land by bringing large chunk of territory comprising the undivided Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Kandhamala and Ganjam district and all the western district of present day of Odisha. Of course, their political achievement became shadowy in the foot prints of time but their cultural activities remained uneffacable for all time to come.



### 2.1.9. Conclusion

The period of Somavamsi rule is a glorious time in the history of Odisha. The Somavamsis also known as Panduvamsis succeeded the Sarabhapuriya in south Kosala, towards the close of the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Originally they ruled over the western part of south Kosala, which comprised of the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur of Chhatisgarh and Sambalpur, Bolangir, Sonepur, Kalahandi district of Odisha. Later on, they expanded their kingdom to Utkala and the southern portion of the Kalinga country, which resulted in the integration of Eastern and Western part of Odisha for the first time. The Somavamsi rulers followed a policy of aggressive imperialism and by the middle of 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E. established a Kingdom covering the whole of present Odisha. The kingdom started disintegrating from the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and total decline took place in the second decade of 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E., when the Ganga Monarch Chodaganga conquered and established Ganga hegemony in Odisha. The Somavamsi rule ushered a new era in the history of medieval Odisha.

### 2.1.10. Summary

- *The period of Somavamsi rule is a glorious time in the history of Odisha. The Somavamsis succeeded the sarabhapuriya in south Kosala, towards the close of the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E.*
- *Originally they ruled over the western part of south Kosala, which comprised of the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur of Chhatisgarh and Sambalpur, Bolangir, Sonepur, Kalahandi district of Odisha. Later on, they expanded their kingdom to Utkala and the southern portion of the Kalinga country, which resulted in the integration of Eastern and Western part of Odisha for the first time.*
- *The Somavamsi rulers followed a policy of aggressive imperialism and by the middle of 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E. established a Kingdom covering the whole of present Odisha.*
- *The Somavamsi king to build a numbers of temples which attend celebrity in the field of art. The Muktesvara, Rajarani, Brahmesvara and the Lingaraja temple and several unique sculpture bear ample testimony to it.*
- *Somavamsi king were great patron of Saivism. The Somavamsi king also patronized Vaisnavism. Saktism is also prevailed in Odisha during the Somavamsi rule.*
- *Jainism and Buddhist also received royal patronage from the Somavamsi king. Thus the process of synthesis, which had started during the period of Bhaumakaras among Saivism, Vaisnavism, Saktism, Jainism and Buddhism was completed during the period of Soamavamsi king.*
- *The kingdom started disintegrating from the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and total decline took place in the second decade of 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E., when the Ganga Monarch Chodaganga conquered and established Ganga hegemony in Odisha.*

### 2.1.11. Exercise

- Give an outline of the political history Somavamsi dynasty from its inception to decline.
- Discuss the administrative system of the Somavamsi during their rule in Odisha.
- Enumerate the career and achievements of Janmejaya I of the Somavamsi dynasty.
- Describe the career and achievements of Yayati II of Somavamsi dynasty.
- Write an essay on the general condition of Odisha under the Somavamsi rule.

### 2.1.12. Further Readings

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**Unit.2**  
**Chapter-II**  
**CHOLA EMPIRE**  
**Local Self Government, Art and Architecture.**

**Structure**

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### 2.2.0. Objective

This chapter deals with the history of the Imperial Chola. Here a discussion on the early history, polity, and contribution of the Chola to Indian history will be attempted. After learning this lesson the students will be able to

- *explain the rise and a brief history of the Imperial Cholas.*
- *describe the military conquests and other achievements of Rajaraja I, Rajendra I and other rulers.*
- *understand the salient features of the Chola administration, with special reference to Village administration of the Cholas and its significance.*
- *discuss the cultural achievements of the Imperial Cholas, Literature, Art and architecture of the Cholas.*

### 2.2.1. Introduction

The Cholas dynasty was one of the earliest dynasties that ruled in South India. During the Sangam period it maintained its power and prestige. But after that for several centuries it lists its positions. However the Cholas revived their glory in the middle of the 9th century C.E and maintained its supremacy for about four centuries. There were 20 rulers of the dynasty. Vijayalaya (850-875 C.E) was the founder of the dynasty. The most important rulers of the Chola dynasty were Rajaraja Chola, Rajendra Chola and Rajadhiraja Chola. The period of the Cholas was not only remarkable for political integration of South India, but for the development in art, architecture, literature, trade and maritime activities. The Chola Empire included almost the whole of Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, parts of Karnataka, Coorg, and northern part of Ceylon etc. This chapter will discuss various aspects of the Imperial Chola in outline.

### 2.2.2. Early History of the Chola

The illustrious Chola dynasty and the kingdom they ruled was known to Panini and acknowledged by Asoka Maurya the Great as an independent entity. Further, the Mayra records confirm that the northern boundary of the Chola holdings was the River Pennar. In fact the limits of Chola Mandalam, the 'Chola Country', in the north and west are determined by tradition and mark the ethnic difference between different peoples rather than political boundaries. During the period of Pallava ascendancy, the Chola kingdom had been weakened and reduced to a much smaller territorial holding, although the dynasty continued to maintain some semblance of independence.

The Chola dynasty is prominently mentioned in the early Tamil literature as well as in Greek and Roman chronicles. During the 1st and 2nd centuries C.E, ports on the Chola coast, transliterated as the 'Coromandal coast', conducted active trade with the West. The main Chola port at that time was Kaveripattinam located at the northern mouth of the River Kaveri. The port is non-existent now. From here the Chola fleet sailed out across the Bay of Bengal to the mouths of the great Rivers Ganga and Irrawaddy, and then ranged across the Malay Archipelago. During its heydays, the Chola kingdom was one of the most predominant maritime powers of the region. The Cholas are celebrated in the Sangam literature although their power seems to have been in decline from the 3rd century C.E onwards.

There is very limited interpretable information available regarding the Cholas from the 4th to 7th centuries C.E. At this stage the Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang once again comes to the rescue of Indian historical narrative. He visited Kanchi around the year C.E 640 and mentions the kingdom of Chu-li-ya (Chola) that was restricted to an area of a 500-mile circumference and being ruled from a small non-descriptive town located about 200 miles south-west of Amaravati. Essentially this territory would be the larger Cudappah district and the country is reported as being rugged and wild with the scanty indigenous population being fierce warriors. It is obvious that the Chola ruler, whose name is not mentioned in the Hieun Tsang chronicles, was subordinate to the Pallava king.

The defeat of the Pallavas by Chalukya Vikramaditya in C.E 740 provided the opportunity for the Chola king to rebel from a position of insignificance and recover the dynastic fortunes. The Chola king, Vijayalaya who claimed descent from the Sun as a Suryavanshi, came to the throne in mid 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E and wrested control of Tanjore from a local chieftain Muttarayer who was a Pandyan subject. Vijayalaya ruled for 34 years and was succeeded by his son Aditya (c. 880-907 C.E) who went on to defeat Aparajita Pallava, conclusively ending the Pallava supremacy in the region. He also conquered the Kongu country and consolidated the annexed territories into a functioning kingdom. Aditya's son Parantaka I who came to the throne in C.E 907 left behind over 40 stone inscriptions dating from the 3rd to the 41<sup>st</sup> year of his rule. Thereafter a great deal of accurate information is available regarding the Chola dynasty.

Parantaka I, who was married to the daughter of the Chera king Sthanuravi was an ambitious and capable king and warrior. He conquered the Pallava kingdom, and invaded and captured the Pandyan capital of Madurai, sending the Pandyan king into exile. He also invaded Ceylon, although this expedition was not very successful other than in collecting a large amount of war booty. The inscriptions made during his rule provide detailed descriptions of the village administration favoured by the Cholas. On the death of Parantaka in 949, his son Rajaditya assumed the throne. However, he was killed in the Battle of Takkolam by the Rashtrakuta king Krishnaraja III and was followed by five obscure and insignificant rulers which created a turmoil for nearly 30 years in the Chola kingdom.

### **2.2.3. Rise of the Imperial Chola**

Parantaka had anticipated trouble for the kingdom from the north-west and accordingly placed his eldest son Rajaditya in that region, giving him charge of a large army, which also contained the elephant corps. Unfortunately Rajaditya was killed in the Battle of Takkolam in the same year that he assumed the throne, and the Cholas were forced to cede the northern part of the kingdom to the victorious Rashtrakutas. The Chola throne then fell into the hands of Gandaraditya, who was more religiously oriented than fit to rule a kingdom already in turmoil. By the end of his seven-year rule, in C.E 957, the once illustrious Chola kingdom had been reduced to a small principality. At this stage Krishnaraja III, the Rashtrakuta king, still occupied Tondai Mandalam.

Gandaraditya was followed by his brother Arinjaya who ruled only for two years. Arinjaya was succeeded by his son Sundara Chola, who was forced to concentrate his military activities to the south because Vira Pandya, the Pandyan king had declared independence with the assistance of Mahinda IV, the king of Ceylon. Sundara Chola defeated Vira Pandya who was killed by the crown prince Aditya Chola II in the course of the second battle of the campaign.

Sundara Chola then invaded Ceylon in C.E 959 although it did not result in any definitive results. Further, the victories over the Pandyas also did not re-establish Chola power. After putting out the rebellion in the south to some satisfaction, Sundara Chola turned his attention to the north. Unfortunately he died while preparing to campaign against the Rashtrakutas. At this stage Uttama Chola, the son of Gandaraditya had conspired and assassinated Aditya Chola II and had forced Sundara to declare him heir apparent, instead of Arumolivarman the younger son and next in line for the throne. Uttama became king in C.E 973 and was defeated by the Chalukya Taila II in C.E 980.

#### **2.2.3.1. Rajaraja Chola 'the Great' (c.985-1014 C.E)**

In 985, Prince Arumolivarman assumed the throne crowning himself as Rajaraja Deva. This marked the beginning of the real greatness of the Chola Empire. A number of historians qualify Rajaraja with the title 'the Great', while some others refute him this status. In any case he put an end to the intrigue that was becoming a hallmark of Chola dynastic succession and turned out to be an extremely capable ruler. He reigned for a busy 28 years and towards the end of his reign he was known as the 'Lord Paramount of Southern India'. At his death the Chola kingdom consisted of the entire Madras region, a large part of Ceylon and a major portion of Mysore.

**Conquests of Rajaraja's:** Early in his reign Rajaraja destroyed the Chera naval fleet and defeated a confederation of the Pandya, Chera and Ceylon kingdoms in two separate campaigns. He devastated the Pandya kingdom and then went on to conquer the haughty Chera (Kerala) king, attacking and laying waste the towns of Kandalur and Villinum.

Between C.E 995 and 1000, Vengi the erstwhile Eastern Chalukya kingdom was annexed from the Pallavas; Coorg was taken from the Pandyas; and extensive portions of the Deccan tableland brought under direct Chola control.

Rajaraja then turned his attention to the trading posts in the West Coast, where Arab traders had been incorporated into the Malabar society and were proving to be competitors to Chola trade in South-East Asia. In a quest to strike at the root of the competition, he invaded and captured the port of Kollam in C.E 1003 from the Cheras. He next conquered Kalinga in the north-east and added it to his domain. Around C.E 1005, he embarked on a protracted campaign against Ceylon, annexing the northern part of the island to the Chola holdings. This was his last campaign.

By these conquests, the extent of the Chola empire under Rajaraja I included the Pandya, Chera and the Tondaimandalam regions of Tamil Nadu and the Gangavadi, Nolambapadi and the Telugu Choda territories in the Deccan and the northern part of Ceylon and the Maldive Islands beyond India.

The last eight years of his reign was peaceful and according to Chola custom his son, the crown prince Rajendra, ruled as equal ruler during this period. Rajendra Chola co-ruled with his father from C.E 1011, although there are minor discrepancies in the actual date in different accounts. Since the Cholas had 'inherited' the Pallava lands by this time, the ancient Chalukya-Pallava enmity also came as part of the inheritance taking on the guise of minor internecine wars for almost four years till the final defeat of the Chalukyas, who were by then already subjugated by the Rashtrakutas. Rajaraja maintained a powerful navy, which he used extensively to project Chola power. The last military exploit of Rajaraja was his navy's conquest of Maldives and the Lakadive islands.

Rajaraja assumed a number of titles like Mummidi Chola, Jayankonda and Sivapadasekara. He was a devout follower of Saivism. He completed the construction of the famous Rajarajeswara temple or Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjore in C.E 1010 C.E. Although the king was a confirmed Shiva worshipper, he was also an enlightened liberal and practised religious tolerance. He had the famous and magnificent Tanjavur (Tanjore) temple built, with its walls engraved with details of his military victories.

Religious tolerance is one of the hallmarks of medieval Southern rulers and Rajaraja was not an exception. He endowed a Burmese Buddhist temple, which had originally been constructed by Sri Mara Vijayottungavarman the Sailendra ruler of Sri Vijaya, at the port of Nagapatam.

### **2.2.3.2. Rajendra Chola I (c.1014-1044 C.E)**

Rajendra Chola continued to further his father's ambitious moves and in comparison was more vigorous and successful. He raised the Chola Empire territorially to its most extensive and in status to the most respected Hindu kingdom of the time.

**Expedition to Kadaram or Sri Vijaya:** Around C.E 1025 the Chola navy crossed the Bay of Bengal and captured Kadaram or Kedah which was initially Thai, then Malay, and now a Malaysian state north of Penang, which was also called Tharekhetra. The Cholas then went on to capture the ancient capital of Prome or Pegu modern day Burma.

The invading maritime forces then took on the might of the Sri Vijaya Empire ruled by the powerful Sailendra kings. The Sri Vijaya kingdom controlled important trade routes and regularly interfered in the smooth flow of shipping since they had a stranglehold over the Straits of Malacca and Sunda. These activities constrained the smooth flow of Chola trade. The Chola emperor decided to settle this issue through military might, defeating and capturing the Sailendra king while also temporarily annexing the entire Sri Vijaya kingdom. The king was subsequently restored to the throne although Rajendra Chola did not relinquish control over the important sea ports of Takkolam and Matama

(Martabian). Two granite pillars were erected to commemorate these victories and they can still be seen in the town of Pegu in Myanmar. The Chola navy next annexed the islands of Nakkavaram (Nicobar), the Andamans, and some parts of Sumatra and Malaya.

***The Conquest of Ceylon:*** After annexing the Andaman and Nicobar islands, Rajendra invaded Ceylon and completed the conquest of the southern part that his father had left unconquered. The Ceylonese king Mahinda V was captured and transported to Chola country where he died in captivity.

Manhinda's son Kassappa then became the focal point of Sinhala resistance, waging a war of attrition for nearly a year before successfully recapturing the southern part of the island, which he ruled as Vikramabahu I for 12 years.

***Gangetic Expedition:*** After the maritime triumphs, Rajendra turned his attention to North India. He waged a number of inconclusive wars with the smaller northern powers and then collided with Mahipala, king of Bengal and Bihar. Again the encounter was inconclusive, although the Chola army managed to reach the banks of the Ganges. He brought back Ganga water from this campaign and assumed the title Ganagi-Konda (the Victor of Ganga). However, Rajendra did not hold any territory in the north and his invasion of the north can be equated to the southern campaign of Samudragupta.

The assumption of the title of Ganga-Konda was a marked departure from the earlier traditions of the Cholas when the kings had always assumed only unobtrusive titles. Rajendra then titled himself Chakravartigal. More importantly he introduced and encouraged the concept of divinity of the king and a cult of the perception of a God-King by creating and worshiping the images of his forefathers. Temples were built to his deceased predecessors and their worship actively encouraged thereby ensuring the incumbent king was also worshipped almost as god incarnate. The Raja-guru, became the adviser of the king on all matters, both temporal and religious. Rajendra Chola also reduced the Pandyas to a feudatory status and the Pandyan kingdom was ruled by Rajendra's son as viceroy with the title Chola-Pandyan.

***Founding of New Capital:*** Rajendra Chola built a new capital in Trichinapoly district and called it Gangaikonda Cholapuram to proclaim his 'conquest' of North India, although in reality the invasion was nothing more than a successful raid. He also constructed a large artificial lake with a 16-mile long embankment and an embedded irrigation system. The capital also had a magnificent palace and a gigantic temple with a 30 feet high black granite Shiva lingam. The ruins of both the palace and the temple are still visible and from what remains it can be confirmed that the sculptures that beautified the buildings were singularly excellent. It is in the ruins of the once magnificent Cholapuram that one can see not only the ravages of time but also the callousness with which modern India treats its resplendent historical background, its cultural artefacts, and its architectural monuments.

He reasserted the Chola authority over the Chera and Pandya countries. He defeated Jayasimha II, the Western Chalukya king and the river Tungabadhra was recognised as the boundary between the Cholas and Chalukyas.

At the death of Rajendra I the extent of the Chola Empire was at its peak. The river Tungabadhra was the northern boundary. The Pandya, Kerala and Mysore regions and also Sri Lanka formed part of the empire. He gave his daughter Ammangadevi to the Vengi Chalukya prince and further continued the matrimonial alliance initiated by his father. Rajendra I assumed a number of titles, the most famous being Mudikondan, Gangaikondan, Kadaram Kondan and Pandita Cholan. Like his father he was also a devout Saiva and built a temple for that god at the new capital Gangaikondacholapuram. He made liberal endowments to this temple and to the Lord Nataraja temple at Chidambaram. He was also tolerant towards the Vaishnava and Buddhist sects.

### **2.2.3.3. Cholas after Rajendra I**

The eldest son of Rajendra, Rajadhiraja, co-ruled the empire with his father for more than fifteen years, continuing an established Chola tradition. The period of the combined rule of the father and son is considered the most decisive in Chola supremacy over the Tamil country. Their control over the

Peninsula was almost absolute and never as strong or certain before or after this golden period. Rajadhiraja became king in 1035 and continued the constant and never-ending conflicts with the neighbours. In 1052, he was killed in the fierce Battle of Koppam with the Chalukyas. Although the king died in the battle, the Cholas were not defeated. His brother Rajendra Parakesarivarman was crowned on the battlefield and managed to retrieve the day. He led his forces in an advance to Kollpura and erected a Jayastambha 'victory pillar' there. In the aftermath of this conflict, the Tungabhadra River was recognised to be the geographical border between the Cholas and the Chalukyas.

The regular conflicts, skirmishes, and small-scale wars between the neighbours continued during the reign of the next three kings. From the perspective of the Cholas, no event of any significance took place during this time. In 1062-3, Virarajendra Chola, then ruling the kingdom got involved in the succession struggle of the Chalukyas that was plunging their kingdom into a Civil War. In the Battle of Kudal Sangamam at the junction of the Rivers Tunga and Bhadra, Virarajendra resoundingly defeated Somesvara II who was one of the contenders of the throne. The Chola then placed Vikramaditya, who he had supported in the succession struggle, on the throne and also gave his own daughter in marriage to the new Chalukya king.

Virarajendra died in C.E 1070 and there followed a disputed succession that culminated in a Civil War. By this time Vikramaditya Chalukya was well established in the Deccan and in his turn interfered in the Chola succession, making his brother-in-law Adhirajendra king in 1072. However, Adhirajendra proved to be ineffective and unpopular, being murdered in 1074. He was the last of the direct line of the great medieval Cholas.

#### **2.2.4. The Later Cholas**

Adhirajendra was followed on the throne by a relative, Rajendra, who later assumed the name Kulottunga I. His father was the Eastern Chalukya Prince of Vengi who died in 1062 and his mother was the daughter of the illustrious Gangai-Konda Chola (Rajendra Deva Chola I). The younger Rajendra had opted to stay in the Chola court, letting his uncle rule Vengi on his behalf, but returned to be crowned king of Vengi in C.E 1070. In C.E 1074, on the assassination of Adhirajendra, he assumed governorship of the entire Chola kingdom and founded a new Chalukya-Chola dynasty, with the title Kulottunga Chola. Kulottunga I (Chola) ruled for 49 years, proving to be a worthy king of an extensive empire. The only major battle that he fought was the re-conquest of Kalinga that had once again broken free from Chola subjugation. This was achieved by the defeat of the Anantavarman Choda of the Ganga dynasty, then ruling Kalinga. The regular and routine conflicts with the neighbours continued unabated, although at this stage the power of the Cholas was such that these minor wars could be considered mere pin-pricks in a broader overview.

The Chola Empire now covered the entire country south of the Rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra and at least to the Godavari River in the north-east. It maintained cordial diplomatic relations with the kingdom of Kanauj in North India and had a thriving trade with Kambhoja in Indo-China. Kulottunga's bureaucracy completed a survey in 1086 based on which his internal administration carried out an elaborate revision of revenue. This was a distinguished and important reformation. The peace that prevailed is demonstrated by the fact that although the kings were overtly Shiva worshippers, the venerated Vaishnava teacher and philosopher Ramanuja resided in Srirangam near Trichinapoly for an extensive period of time during this reign. Kulottunga's son Vikrama Chola continued to fight minor conflicts periodically, but presided over a period of relative peace and tranquillity and took great initiatives in temple renovation activities at Chidambaram. He successfully maintained Chola supremacy and predominance in the region.

Kulottunga II followed Vikrama Chola and although religious to a fault in his worship of Shiva, managed to shoulder the kingly responsibilities well, ensuring a peaceful reign. His son Rajaraja II died without any issues and had appointed Rajadhiraja II, the grandson of Vikrama Chola through a daughter as the successor. These three kings were of limited ability and in the long list of impressive Chola



warrior-kings is of almost no import. During this time the Chola administration also started to show signs of fatigue and weakness at the Centre. The control over the outlying areas started to unravel and the traditional feudatory chieftains became more assertive regarding their independence. Further, the Cholas also became unnecessarily involved in the Civil War in the Pandya kingdom with the Ceylonese opposing them, leading to the Chola power gradually being drained by misuse and degradation.

The last Chola of any importance was Kulottunga Chola III who ruled for 38 years (C.E 1178-1216). He fought wars against the kingdom of Ceylon, the Hoyasalas and defeated the Chera king at Karuvur, managing to hold the Chola kingdom together by sheer force of personality and personal abilities as an administrator and warrior. After his death there was a dispute for succession that led to the dissipation of Chola power till it descended to insignificance with no power to influence even minor events in the Peninsula.

#### **2.2.5. Administration**

The Cholas as a ruling power rose to eminence in the 9th Century C.E after dethroning the Pallavas. Thereafter the Cholas established control over Pallava territories and subdued the Pandya power. The Chola state stood on a firm footing deriving sustenance from the resource-pocket located in the fertile and rich area of the Kaveri valley. In the period of Rajaraja I and subsequent period various feudatory chiefs were subjugated and the earlier category of Nadu was regrouped into Valanadu and was placed under the subdued chiefs. The landed magnates were also incorporated into the state system and were provided prestigious titles and were assigned administrative and military duties, which included collection and assessment of land revenue.

##### **2.2.5.1. Chola Kingship**

The Cholas traced their origin to the Suryavamsa. Mythical traditions are mentioned in the inscriptions especially in the prasastis containing the genealogies and these are interspersed with information about historical personages. It appears that these served the purpose of legitimization of the rule of the Cholas. The genealogies of the Cholas attribute eminent and prestigious lineage to the king to legitimise his position as king. The Cholas ascribe Kshatriya origin to themselves as is attested by the title Kshatriyasikhamani of the king Rajaraja. The Varman suffix added to the names of the kings was also a part of the process of claiming kshatriya status e.g. Adityavarman (C.E 871-906) and Parantaka Varman (C.E 707-755). The practice of assuming names during coronation also existed under the Cholas e.g.: Prakesarivarman and Rajakesarivarman and Arumolivarman. The charters of the Cholas consist of the prasastis and genealogies in Sanskrit and the details regarding the grant in Tamil. Hiranyagarbha and Tulabhara ceremonies were conducted by the Chola kings. The anointment ceremony was also a means to claim Kshatriya position. A grant of Vira Chola points out that the king was advised by a Brahman moral preacher that bestowment of land to Brahmins would lead his forefathers to heaven. However actual motive for making the grants was redistribution of resources in the form of land, gold, cattle etc. The gifts were bestowed for meritorious service provided by the Brahmins and also to seek legitimacy for them in political sphere. Through the land grants the kings tried to convert unsettled areas into agrarian settlements. These grants did not simply serve a charitable purpose.

Thus, the king was the most important person in the Chola administration. All authority rested in his hands, but he had a council of ministers to advise him. The king often went on tours in order to oversee the administration.

##### **2.2.5.2. Central Government**

The Cholas had an excellent system of administration. The emperor or king was at the top of the administration. The extent and resources of the Chola Empire increased the power and prestige of monarchy. The big capital cities like Tanjore and Gangaikondacholapuram, the large royal courts and extensive grants to the temples reveal the authority of the king. They undertook royal tours to increase

the efficiency of the administration. There was elaborate administrative machinery comprising various officials called *perundanam* and *sirudanam*.

#### **2.2.5.3. Revenue Administration**

The land revenue department was well organized. It was called *aspuravuvarithinaikkalam*. All lands were carefully surveyed and classified for assessment of revenue. The residential portion of the village was called *urnattam*. These and other lands such as the lands belonging to temples were exempted from tax. Besides land revenue, there were tolls and customs on goods taken from one place to another, various kinds of professional taxes, dues levied on ceremonial occasions like marriages and judicial fines. During the hard times, there were remission of taxes and Kulottunga I became famous by abolishing tolls and earned the title-Sungam Tavirtta Cholan. The main items of government expenditure were the king and his court, army and navy, roads, irrigation tanks and canals. One sixth of the entire gross produce was due to the State and the king also levied a number of other taxes that varied with the nature of the land, its production capacity and the ability of the owner to pay. Fertile fields were taxed by as much as one-third of the produce. The collection of taxes was entrusted to officers designated by the king and there are indications that these officers were often harsh and demanding.

The Cholas had mastered the art of building great dams across the rivers and irrigation canals were constructed on a vast scale, greatly improving the farming output. The popular currency was the gold 'kasu' which was about 28 grains troy in weight with the silver coins that were preponderant in North India becoming common in the Deep South only at a much later date.

#### **2.2.5.4. Military Administration**

The Cholas maintained a regular standing army consisting of elephants, cavalry, infantry and navy. About seventy regiments were mentioned in the inscriptions. The royal troops were called *Kaikkolaperumpadai*. Within this there was a personal troop to defend the king known as *Velaikkarar*. Attention was given to the training of the army and military cantonments called *kadagams* existed. The Cholas paid special attention to their navy. The naval achievements of the Tamils reached its climax under the Cholas. They controlled the Malabar and Coromandal coasts. In fact, the Bay of Bengal became a Chola lake for sometime.

#### **2.2.5.5. Provincial Administration**

The Chola Empire was divided into mandalams and each mandalam into *valanadus* and *nadus*. In each *nadu* there were a number of autonomous villages. The royal princes or officers were in charge of mandalams. The *valanadu* was under *perianattar* and *nadu* under *nernattar*. The town was known as *snagaram* and it was under the administration of a council called *nagarattar*.

#### **2.2.5.6. Local Administration: Ur and Nadu**

The system of village autonomy with *sabhas* and their committees developed through the ages and reached its culmination during the Chola rule. Village assemblies were crucial to Chola administration. Those living in the usual peasant villages met in an assembly called the *ur*, whereas those from the *brahmadeya* villages used the superior title of *sabha*. Royal officials were present at the meetings of the *sabha* but do not appear to have played a commanding role. Their participation in village affairs was more as observers and advisers. This permitted continuity in local growth and development without too much interference from political changes at the upper level, and the degree of apparent autonomy at village level deserves to be underlined. Large villages could be divided into wards, each with a smaller assembly representing its households. Given the layout of the village and the tendency for people in similar occupations to be located in the same wards, the latter came to represent professional groups, such as carpenters, potters, smiths and so on.

The assemblies controlled production through consultation with the heads of the peasant families, the *velalas*, who were their members. This necessitated discussion on a range of matters, including those of crucial importance, such as the setting up of irrigation facilities. Rights in land were insisted upon and among these were the *kani*, or hereditary rights. Villages were grouped together

within a nadu, a defined territory. Agrarian organizations of the brahmadeyas, temples, and the commercial associations linked to centres of exchange, such as the *nagaram*, functioned within the nadu, although some had connections traversing the nadu.

Members of the associations of the velala handling agricultural products, such as the Chitrameli Periyannadu who were referred to from the twelfth century onwards, traversed the area more widely. The nadu was not an autonomous peripheral area but was under central control. This enabled the centre to regroup the nadus into units called the valanadu and the mandalam, especially as the nadus were not of a uniform size. Such a rearrangement was an indicator of control over the territories. Agricultural expansion in the valanadu became associated with brahman settlers receiving grants of land, as in the Tamraparni Valley of the far south. Where the land was already under cultivation there had to be agreements between the cultivators and the grantees, obviously to the advantage of the latter.

Other units such as mandalams could also be re-aligned to determine revenue demands, administrative controls and the needs of cities in the region. The population of the mandalam consisted of peasants, as well as the settlements of forest and hill peoples in their proximity. If the brahmadeya and the temple were important players in the restructuring of the economy during the Chola period, it was not merely because of their ritual authority, but was also a result of their administrative and functional control over productivity. Ritual is important but does not exist in a social void and, more often than not, is also tied to social and economic realities and ambitions. The grantees themselves were beholden to the king for the grant, and the king's officers were required to allocate temple resources and audit temple accounts. As was the case with Buddhist monasteries, the temple complex could only survive where it had some control over resources from agriculture, or from revenue generated by the regular fairs and festivals which became surrogate markets. This necessitated temple control over agriculture and irrigation, together with some participation in commercial exchange.

The working of these assemblies differed according to local conditions. The *ur* was open to male adults of the village, but in effect the older members such as heads of households took a more prominent part, some of them forming a small executive body for routine matters. The *sabha* had the same system and, in addition, could constitute smaller committees of any size from among its members for specialized work. Election to the *sabha* sometimes appears to have been by lot from among those who were eligible, though amendments to the working of the *sabha* could be made whenever necessary.

Two inscriptions belonging to the period of Parantaka I found at Uttaramerur provide details of the formation and functions of village councils. The first one an inscription from the temple wall at Uttaramerur (a brahmadeya village) gives details of how the local *sabha* functioned. It dates to the C.E tenth century and reads:

*There shall be thirty wards. In these thirty wards those that live in each ward shall assemble and shall select each person possessing the following qualifications for inclusion for selection by lot: He must own more than one quarter of the tax-paying land. He must live in a house built on his own site. His age must be below seventy and above thirty-five. He must know the mantras and Brahmanas.*

*Even if he owns only one-eighth of the land, his name shall be included provided he has learnt one Veda and one of the four Bhashyas. Among those possessing these qualifications only such as are well conversant with business and are virtuous shall be taken, and one who possesses honest earnings whose mind is pure and who has not been on any of the committees for the last three years shall also be chosen. One who has been on any of the committees but has not submitted his accounts, and his relations specified below, cannot have their names written on the tickets:*

*The sons of the younger and elder sisters of his mother. The sons of his paternal aunt and maternal uncle. The uterine brother of his mother. The uterine brother of his father. His uterine brother. His father-in-law. The uterine brother of his wife. The husband of his uterine sister. The sons of his uterine sister. His son-in-law. His father. His son.*

*One against whom incest or the first four of the five great sins are recorded. The five great sins being killing a brahman, drinking alcohol, theft, adultery, and associating with criminals. All his relations specified above shall not be eligible to be chosen by lot. One who has been outcaste for association with low people shall not have his name chosen until he performs the expiatory ceremonies. One who is foolhardy, One who has stolen the property of others, One who has taken forbidden dishes, One who has committed sins and has had to perform expiatory ceremonies of purification.*

*Excluding all these, names shall be written on tickets for thirty wards and each of the wards in these twelve streets shall prepare a separate covering ticket for thirty wards bundled separately. These packets shall be put into a pot. When the tickets have to be drawn a full meeting of the great assembly including the young and old members shall be convened. All the temple priests who happen to be in the village on that day, shall, without any exception whatever, be caused to be seated in the inner hall where the great assembly meets. In the midst of the temple priests, one of them who happens to be the eldest shall stand up and lift that pot, looking upwards so as to be seen by all people. One ward shall be taken out by any young boy standing close who does not know what is inside and shall be transferred to another empty pot and shaken loose. From this pot one ticket shall be drawn and made the arbitrator. While taking charge of the ticket thus given to him, the arbitrator shall receive it on the palm of his hand with the five fingers open. He shall read out the ticket thus received. The ticket shall be read by all the priests present in the inner hall. The name thus read shall be put down and accepted. Similarly one man shall be chosen for each of the thirty wards.*

*Of the thirty men thus chosen those who had previously been on the Garden Committee, and on the Tank Committee, those who are advanced in learning and those who are advanced in age shall be chosen for the Annual Committee. Of the rest, twelve shall be taken for the Garden Committee and the remaining six shall form the Tank Committee. The great men of these three committees shall hold office for full 360 days and then retire. Anyone on a Committee found guilty of an offence shall be removed at once. For appointing the committees after these have retired, the members of the Committee for Supervision of Justice in the twelve streets shall convene an assembly with the help of the arbitrator. The Committees shall be appointed by drawing pot-tickets ... For the Five-fold Committee and the Gold Committee, names shall be written for pot-tickets in the thirty wards (and the same procedure followed). One who has ridden an ass (i.e., been punished) or who has committed a forgery shall not be included.*

*Any arbitrator who possesses honest earnings shall write the accounts of the village. No accountant shall be appointed to that office again before he submits his accounts to the great men of the chief committee and is declared to have been honest. The accounts which he has been writing he shall submit himself, and no other accountant shall be chosen to close his accounts. Thus, from this year onwards as long as the moon and the sun endure, committees shall always be appointed by lot . . . We, the assembly of Uttaramerur chatur-vedi-mangalam made this settlement for the prosperity of our village in order that wicked men may perish and the rest may prosper. At the order of the great men sitting in the assembly, I, the arbitrator Kadadipottan Shivakkuri Raja-malla-mangalapriyan, thus wrote the settlement.*

Other inscriptions refer to similar general procedures, though there are variations in qualifications and requirements and in the sanction of expenditure. The making of rules through amendments from time to time, and the attempts to ensure that factions were kept at a minimum, are striking features of this inscription. The assembly was summoned by the beat of a drum and generally met in the precincts of the temple. Interchange and co-operation among village assemblies was not unknown.

The village assembly was responsible for collecting the assessment for the government and, where stipulated, the taxes on land and produce. In some cases it was collected as a joint assessment on the entire village. In addition, the assembly could make a levy for a particular purpose: for example, the construction of a water tank. Such local funds were kept separate from the taxes collected for the state.

The activities of the assembly included the keeping of records, particularly those pertaining to charities and taxes, and the settling of agrarian disputes such as conflicts over tenure arrangements or irrigation rights. The larger assemblies kept a small staff of paid officers, but in the smaller assemblies most of the work was done on a voluntary basis. Professionals were appointed for special purposes at the nadu level as well. The higher officials were often drawn from among the better-off velalas, thus creating a link between state and local administration that enlarged the possibilities of upward mobility, incidentally providing a base for those with political ambitions. The latter part of the Chola period saw greater activity among revenue officials, with an increase in the number of taxes. The degree of autonomy at village level prevented shifting relations in the upper levels of the administrative and political structure from interfering to any large extent with the routine life of the village.

#### **2.2.5.7. Officials in Chola Realm**

A number of officers were responsible for administration in the Chola kingdom although there is no clear evidence of a council of minister but Uddan-kottam seems to have served this purpose. Upward and downward mobility is noticed in the administrative hierarchy. Perundanan and Sirutaram were higher and lower category officials respectively. Senapatis (commander of troops) had the middle position referred to as Sirudnnattup Perundaram. Nyayattar (judges) were of both category. Officials were paid by allotting land rights. Tax on land was levied in cash and kind both. Officials were referred to as holders of lands. They could further sub-assign land or even sell it. Communal ownership was prevalent and customary rights of villagers were recognised. The lowest unit of administration was the village. They combined to form a Nadu. A Valanadu comprised of a few Nadus. Taniyur was a separate village or settlement site. Above Valanadu there was Mandalam which was equivalent to a province. Karumigal and Panimkkal meant officers and servants. Anbil plates refer to a Brahman Manya Saciva. He was granted land by the king. The king conveyed his orders orally especially with regard to gift to temples. The directive was conveyed through a letter issued by Anatti (executive officer) appointed by the king. The local bodies were apprised and when the process was completed a record was prepared in the presence of the local magnates called Nattukkon, Nndukilavan, Urudaiyan.

Officers associated with the process of bestowment and registration of land grants were many and some are also referred to as Uttaramantri. Puravu-varitinnikkalam was the department of land revenue. Varipottagam was the record of land rights and Vari-pottagak-kanakku was the register of revenue department. Officers associated with the task of maintaining records and registers of land rights 2<sup>nd</sup> land revenue department were Varipottagam and Variyiledu. Kankanis or supervisors were the audit officers. Entry in a record was called Variyilidu. Mugavetti (wrote royal letters) and Pattolai were junior functionaries of land revenue department. Officers of Nadu (of the status of adhikari) were Nadu kuru (revenue assessment and settlement officer), Nadu vagai (revenue official). Mandira olai was the officer who wrote the firumugam (letter containing the royal order). The term Naduvirukkai was used for vijnapti (vaykkelvi) or petitioner and Anatti (executive officer) who served as a link between monarch and the persons who wished to approach the king. The king made oral orders regarding the issues brought to him by the officers. These requests transformed into orders were sent to local administration and central administration for implementation. The Olai nayagam were the officers who verified the letter written by Mandira-olai. The oral order of the king was put to writing (eluttu) and compared (oppu) and then entered (pugunda). The document was called Tittu and the charity deed (aravolai).

Justice was carried out by the village assemblies through the committees comprising of Nyayattar. The central court of justice was the Dharmasana which conducted its affairs through Dharmasana bhattas (Brahmans proficient in law). It appears that civil and criminal offences were not dealt separately. The penalty for crime committed by a person affecting the king or ruling dynasty was decided by the king himself. Several methods of punishment prevailed viz. imposition of fines, capital punishment etc.

Adhikaris were the king's officers. They possessed the titles Udaiyan, Velan, Muvendavelan, Brahma, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan and other chiefly nomenclature. Sometimes more than one nomenclature was adopted. Naduvirukkai were mostly Brahman (held titles like Bhatta, Barhmadhirajan) officers and acted as a link between the royal authority and the bureaucracy and they are always referred to in connection with the adhikaris.

Personnel in charge of temples were Srikaryam but they did not look after the ritual related aspects like worship etc. In some cases we have the evidence of Adhikaris holding the Srikaryam office. Generally they had a distinctive position in the administrative system. The titles held by them were velan, Muvendavelan, Brahma, Bhatta, Kon, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan, Nadu title, King title.

Senapati was in charge of military affairs. They bear the king's title, name, and other titles such as Udaiyan, Brahma, Araiyan, Kilans. The office of Dandanayakam was probably akin to the Senapati (military office). The title mentioned for this office is Pallavaaraiyans. The titles held by Senapatis were: udaiyan, brahma, araiyan etc. The office of tiru-mandira olai nayakam was an important office associated with preparation of land grant documents. The titles of these officers were Muvendavelan, Brahma etc.

Officers deputed at Nadu who discharged their duties at the behest of the king were Nadu Vagai who were revenue assessment officers. Kottam-vagai were deputed in Tondaimandalam area and performed the same function as Nadu vagai. Nadukankuninayakam had control over more than one Nadu and had a higher position than Nadu vagai.

The land revenue department was called Puravuvuri tinaikkalam. This department was an administrative division of the king's government and had the following personnel: Puravu vari, Vari pottagan, Mugavetti, Vari pottaga, Kanakku, Variyil idu and Pattolai etc.

The titles held by the king's personnel such as Udaiyan, Kilan and Kilavan refer to possession. Other titles were Velan and Muvendavelan. The latter is a typical Chola title and occurs from the time of Parantaka. These titles suggest that those who bore them were land holders or associated with land.

The cattle herders (manradi) supervised the grants for lighting lamps in the temples. Merchants held the titles of Cetti, Mayilatti and Palan. They even occupied the important offices like Senapati and accountant.

We do not get clear evidence of a council of ministers but there existed officers like: Purohita (dharmopadesta), Rajagurus, Tirumandira olai, Adhikari, Vayilketpar etc. There are references to the court in literature. The king's court comprised of: Brahman advisors, Priests, Rajaguru, Adhikaris, Tirumandira olai nayagams, Vayilketpar, head of the king's bodyguards and Samantas (feudatory chiefs). The various levies of this period were produce-rent, labour-rent and cash payment. Most of the imposts were exacted in kind viz. paddy.

The chiefs held an important position in the state system. The chiefs of the Chola period were: Paluvettaraiyar, Vels, Malavas, Gangas, Banas, etc. It appears that the chiefs were assigned land and collected dues from it in return for protection of territory.

Thus, in the above discussion we noticed that from the earliest times the Chola administration was highly systematised and well organised, run by an elaborate and complex bureaucracy. The Royal officials formed a separate class in society and there was no distinction between civil and military officers. Moreover, the class distinction between the bureaucracy and the common people was underlined by the official positions being made hereditary. One of the cardinal achievements of the Cholas was the effortless manner in which they managed to decentralise governance, a feat never achieved before and not emulated afterwards for a number of centuries. The Chola administration is therefore a subject of a great deal of study, research and analysis. Details of the Chola administrative principles and their antiquity are available for study from the various inscriptions. Overall the administration was efficient and the general population was treated in an unbiased manner.

### **2.2.6. Socio-economic Life**

Caste system was widely prevalent during the Chola period. Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed special privileges. The inscriptions of the later period of the Chola rule mention about two major divisions among the castes-Valangai and Idangai castes. However, there was cooperation among various castes and sub-castes in social and religious life. The position of women did not improve. The practice of 'sati' was prevalent among the royal families. The devadasi system or dancing girls attached to temples emerged during this period.

Both Saivism and Vaishnavism continued to flourish during the Chola period. A number of temples were built with the patronage of Chola kings and queens. The temples remained centres of economic activity during this period. The mathas had great influence during this period. Both agriculture and industry flourished. Reclamation of forest lands and the construction and maintenance of irrigation tanks led to agricultural prosperity. The weaving industry, particularly the silk-weaving at Kanchi flourished. The metal works developed owing to great demand of images for temples and utensils. Commerce and trade were brisk with trunk roads and merchant guilds. Gold, silver and copper coins were issued in plenty at various denominations. Commercial contacts between the Chola Empire and China, Sumatra, Java and Arabia were extensively prevalent. Arabian horses were imported in large numbers to strengthen the cavalry.

### **2.2.7. Education and Literature**

Education was also given importance. Besides the temples and mathas as educational centres, several educational institutions also flourished. The inscription at Ennayiram, Thirumukkudal and Thirubhuvanai provide details of the colleges existed in these places. Apart from the Vedas and Epics, subjects like mathematics and medicine were taught in these institutions. Endowment of lands was made to run these institutions. The development of Tamil literature reached its peak during the Chola period. Jivaka Cintamani written by Thiruthakkadevar and Kundalakesi belonged to 10th century. The Ramayana composed by Kamban and the Periyapurana or Tiruttondarapurana by Sekkilar are the two master-pieces of this age. Jayankondar's Kalingattupparani describes the Kalinga war fought by Kulotunga I. The Moovarula written by Ottakuthar depicts the life of three Chola kings. The Nalavenba was written by Pugalendi. The works on Tamil grammar like Kalladam by Kalladanar, Yapperungalam by Amirthasagarar, a Jain, Nannul by Pavanandhi and Virasoliyam by Buddhaitra were the products of the Chola age. Sanskrit writing was predominated by Vaishnava literature and a succession of Vaishnava teachers, philosophers and saints who wrote numerous devotional poems and philosophical works adorned the Chola court. The prominent amongst them were Ramanuja, Yadavaprakasha, and Yamunacharya.

### **2.2.8. Art and Architecture**

Art tradition in south India was carried to its epitome by the Chola during their rule. The Chola inherited the temple building tradition from the Pallavas and vigorously practiced this tradition. Besides temple architecture, the Cholas also patronized beautiful sculptural tradition both in stone and bronze. Especially the Chola bronze is world famous for their beauty. The Chola were also great patron of paintings tradition.

#### **2.2.8.1. Temple Architecture**

Temple architecture in South India reached its pinnacles under the rule of imperial Cholas (C.E 850-1250). Early Chola temples however, are not as large as the ambitiously planned Pallava Kailashnatha or the Vaikunthaperumal temples at Kanchipuram. Development in early Chola architecture consists, instead, in perfecting the unique elements of the Dravidian style and combining them harmoniously with new forms in astonishingly diverse ways.

A typical new Chola feature, that is different from the Pallava, is the famed ornamentation of temple walls. This consists in the use of real deep niches with entablatures. These niches, the Devakusthas (niches to house deities), flanked by demi pilasters, appear on wall surfaces of Chola

temples. The decoration, in most finished examples, alternates between the various niche devices of koshtapanjaras and Kumbhapanjaras. Space is narrow in these forms but the decoration is more rounded. The pilasters of these niches are crowned by a curved roof moulding adorned by two kudus with crowning lion heads. The bases of these decorative devices have makara (motif based on the mythical sea monster) and warrior heads.

Other Chola distinction is seen in the abandonment of the Pallava yali or the lion at the bases of pillars and pilasters. The pillars too, are more enriched and defined. As earlier noted, the final element in the Dravidian pillar of the notch in the shaft before it flares, with a slight swelling above it, gets transformed now under the Cholas to become the most delicate of vases (kalash). Another elegant feature of the pillar is the decorative device of the kudu, put as a rollmoulding on top of the pillars.

The gateways, which are dwarfed in the Pallava, are in late Chola prominent. The dwarfpalas (gatekeepers) in Chola temples are fierce men with tridents, bearing tusks protruding from mouths, rolled eyes and hands always in threatening gestures. These contrast with the benign natural looking single paired arm dwarfpalas of the past. All these features climax in two temples, the Brihadisvara (Rajarajesvara) at Thanjavur, the capital of the Cholas and the Gangaikondacholapuram, near Kumbakonam. These come at a time of greatest extent of Chola power.

The Cholas continued and developed the art-tradition of the Pallavas. But in comparison with the productions of the last days of the Pallavas, those of the early Chola phase display a certain freshness of spirit which appears to herald a new movement. In fact under the Cholas, the Dravida style of temple architecture enters a brilliant and distinctive phase. The early Chola rulers appear to be great patrons of temple architecture. Among the innumerable Chola temples may be mentioned the Vijayalaya Cholisvara at Melamalai, Balasubramanya at Kannanur, Sundaresvara at Tirukkattala, Muvar Kovil at Kodumbalur, Nagesvarasvami at Kumbakonam, Brahmapapurisvara at Pullamangai, Kuranganatha at Srinivasanallur, the twin temples of Agastyisvara and Cholisvara at Kiliyanur and the Shiva temple at Tiruvalisvaram.

The Vijayalaya Cholisvara temple at Melamalai, at a distance of ten miles from Pudukottai, is undoubtedly one of the finest examples of early Chola temples. Round the main temple in an open yard are seven small sub-shrines, all facing inwards and resembling the main temple in essential feature. By combining a superb sense of restraint and a discerning choice for embellishments noted in its superstructure, it clearly testifies to the aesthetic vision of its builders. In comparison with the Vijayalaya Cholisvara, the temples of Balasubramanya and Sundaresvara appear to be less refined. The most remarkable feature of Nagesvarasvami temple at Kumbakonam is the remarkable life-size figure sculptures, found on its outer walls. The early phase of Dravida temple is best illustrated in the Kuranganatha temple at Srinivasanallur (Trichinopoly district), built in the reign of Parantaka I. The entire temple is remarkable for proportionate distribution of parts and an overall restraint in embellishment. The twin temples of Agastyisvara and Cholisvara at Kiliyanur (south Arcot), the triple shrine of Muvar Kovil at Kodumbalur (Pudukottai district), are also remarkable for their individual treatment. The Shiva temple at Tiruvalisvaram (Tinnevely district) is almost unique for its fine workmanship and its wealth of iconographic sculpture.

The early architectural works of the Cholas have perished because of the use of impermanent material, although their structure and design formed the basis for subsequent development. It is also clear that South Indian sculpture and architecture developed independent of any outside influence through a gradual evolutionary process that was completely native. In an overarching manner, Chola art can be considered to be an indistinguishable continuation of Pallava art, which in itself was highly evolved through generations of practice and application. The few noticeable differences between the two can be attributed to being the result of spontaneous developments that take place regularly in the evolution of art.



The two great temples of Tanjore and Gangaikonda-cholapuram built respectively during the reigns of Rajaraja I and Rajendra I, constitute a landmark in the history of Indian architecture.

***The Brihadisvara at Thanjavur:*** Rajaraja I, crowned in 985, carved out an overseas empire by establishing a second capital at Pollonaruva in Sri Lanka. The Brihadisvara (995-1010), built by him at his capital Thanjavur, though he did not live to see it completed is a product of this success. The temple inscriptions make clear the triumphal nature of the edifice. Donations to the shrine came from far and wide. The numbers of architects, accountants, guards, functionaries, temple dancers, revenue records of landgrants etc are engraved on the temple walls, thus establishing the importance of the temple as an institution of prime importance in Chola times.

The Brihadisvara is some 210 feet High, the largest and the tallest in India. It is laid out as a Dravida padmagarbhamandala of 16 into 16 squares. It was consecrated in 1009-10. The site is not associated with any Puranic story or any ancient legend, the Rajarajesvara appears to have been an entirely new foundation, a royal monument of power. Within the large enclosure wall are shrines of the parivardevatas (family deities) and the dikpalas (deities of cardinal directions). The eight dikpalas are housed separately against the wall. The two large gopuras in line are first introduced here in Dravidian architecture. The vimana is dvitala (double storied). The vertical base (a square of 82 feet with a height of 50 feet) forms the first storey and the 13 slightly receding tiers form the upper portion. The diminishing tiers taper till the last at the apex to become one third of the base. On top of this rests the crowning dome, which comprises a massive granite block of 25 and a half feet square and estimated to weigh eighty tons. The cupola with its inward curve of its neck is a pleasing break from the outward rigid lines of the composition that has a soaring character.

An internal circumambulatory passage, two stories high, consisting of a series of chambers with sills but no doors, runs inside the precinct. On its walls, in C.E 1930, Nayaka period paintings were discovered to overlay the Chola murals that included Rajaraja I with three of his queens worshipping Nataraja (dancing Shiva), the patron deity of Cholas. The temple is entered by side doorways approached by large ornamental stairs leading to an antechamber (ardhmandapa), with a platform for bathing the deities. To it is attached a huge mandapa of 36 pillars (mahamandapa), entered by a front mandapa with a central entrance (mukhamandapa). In all there are 18 door guardians flanking the various entrances and sills.

In the decorative treatment, the lower vertical base is of two stories divided by a massive overhanging cornice, reminiscent of the Pallava rock-cut. Except for this powerful horizontal member in the structure, the emphasis is on verticality, the two ranges of vertical pilasters above and below adding to the verticality. Combined with these pilasters are deep niches with motifs of 'tree of knowledge' and other decorative devices. Occupying the middle of each compartment, are ingeniously carved figures. The kumbhapanjara decorative device is introduced here. The surfaces of the tapering part of the vimana are patterned by the horizontal lines of the diminishing tiers intersecting the vertical disposition of the ornamental shrines, thus producing a very rich architectural texture. Finally, there is the contrast of the cupola at the summit, its winged niches on all four sides relieving the severity of the outline, just where it is most required.

Every section and every decoration at the Brihadisvara is designed for maximum effect. It is the finest example of Dravidian architecture with all its elements reaching their zenith.

***Brihadisvara Temple at Gangaikonda-cholapuram:*** The great temple at Gangaikonda-cholapuram, built in C.E. 1025 by Rajendra Chola is a replica of the Tanjore temple, but possessing a rich and voluptuous beauty of its own. This great temple has suffered much from modern predatory engineering. The temple itself forms a rectangle 114 metre long and 34 metre wide, composed of a mandapa measuring 58 metre by 32 metre, and the massive Vimana, 34 metre square, with a connecting vestibule. The pyramidal Vimana rises to a height of 54 metre, and has only eight tiers as against

thirteen in Tanjore. 'This is perhaps the more beautiful edifice in its palatial architectural formation, and in its sculptural design, but it has not the magnitude of conceptualization found in his father's (Rajaraja) Temple'. Comparing the two architectural productions, Percy Brown observes: "Stately and formal as an epic may epitomize the Tanjore Vimana while the later example has all the sensuous passion of an eastern lyric, but it seems to govern even deeper than that. Each is the final and absolute vision of its creator made manifest through the medium of structural form, the one symbolizing conscious might, the other subconscious grace, both dictated by that 'divinity which has seized the soul'".

During the period of the later Cholas, Dravida style loses much of its force and tends to become more and more ornate and florid. This is reflected in two temples, the Airavatesvara at Darasuram and Tribhuvanesvara at Tribhuvanam, both in the Tanjore district. During this phase, emphasis is laid on the temple precincts than to the main temple and the gopuram comes to occupy a more prominent position in the temple scheme until with its soaring height it dwarfs the Vimana standing in the midst of the enclosure.

#### **2.2.8.2. Chola Sculpture**

The Chola period is also remarkable for its sculptures, many of which are masterpieces. The three main classes of Chola sculpture are portraits, icons and decorative sculpture. There is a singular paucity of portraits in Chola sculpture. There are three well-preserved and nearly life-size portraits- two women and a man on the walls of the Kuranganatha temple at Srinivasanallur and several others in the Nagesvara temple at Kumbhakonam. The Shiva temple at Tiruvalisvaram (Tinnevely district) is a veritable museum of superb early Chola iconography. The walls of the Brihadisvara temples of Tanjore and Gangaikonda-cholapuram contain numerous icons of large size and forceful execution.

Though the Cholas art is identified with the magnificent bronzes. These bronzes are cast in the lost wax process. The image is first made in wax; it is then given several coats of fine clay and then dried in the shade. Then two holes are made on the top and the bottom, and next the whole is heated so that the wax melt away leaving a hollow mould into which molten metal is poured. The clay mould is broken off after the metals solidified. Final dressing is done by hand with a chisel and abrasive material. The rule of the Cholas between the saw the high watermark of bronze sculpture.

The Pallava bronze tradition, marks the transitional toward the Chola type of bronzes in the latter half of the ninth century. In terms of the bronzes itself the early bold forms gradually change to slender rounded ones that are delicate and more refined with the contours of the figures being softer. The *Kalaysundrammurti* (depicting the wedding of Shiva and Parvati) from Vadakalattur being a fine example of Chola bronze art. During the Chola period a large number of temples of stone were transformed into grand and complex buildings as can be seen from the temples at Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram and the large stately Gopurams of Chidambaram. The Chola period saw elaborate festivals with music dance and processions. The bronze images are intended as manifestations of the main deity enshrined in the garbha-griha when taken out in procession were worshipped with adoration. Chola bronzes can be divided into four distinct phases: 1st Phase (Phase upto the first half of the 10th Century C.E) named after Aditya Chola, 2nd Phase (last quarter of 10th century C.E) named after Sembiyan Mahadevi, 3rd Phase (11<sup>th</sup> century C.E) named after Rajaraja I 4th Phase (12<sup>th</sup> century) called Later Chola.

It was during the 10th and 11th centuries C.E that the epitome of artistic excellence was reached by the bronzes where great emphasis placed on graceful depiction, bhavas, flowing lines and supple contours. It may be noted that dance forms and poses, karnas, influenced the form of the images. The Agamic and Vastu literature were also sources of inspiration for the creation of these images. Some of the more popular icons created by the sculptors are Kalayanasundarmurti of Shiva and Parvati who are also seen in the Somaskanda depiction. Shiva as Ardhanarishvara, Nataraja and Vrishabhavanamurti as well in Sukahasana were popular subjects. Some portrait sculpture of saints such as Manikavachakar

and the royal patrons such Rajendra Chola and Sembiyan Mahadevi also exist. Besides Hindu icons, Buddhist and Jaina images were also cast in bronze during the period.

### **2.2.8.3. Chola Painting**

In the Chola temples there are many fresco paintings seen at Vijayala Cholesvara temple at Narttamalai, Brihadesvara temple at Tanjavur, Sangita-Mandapa at Tiruparuttikunram in Kanchipuram and Vcayapa Matha at Angundi (about the same date). The Chola frescoes were first discovered in C.E. 1931 within the circumambulatory passage of Brihadeshvara temple. In Chola frescoes, large paintings were painted in natural organic pigments. The Chola frescoes have ardent spirit of Saivism expressed in them. In all paintings, Chola physiognomical and stylistic forms are apparent. The Classical values of full roundedness of volume, subtle plasticity are also retained. But at the same time, there is also strongly perceptible lessening of the consistency of colour modelling and hence a flattening of surface is there, despite ample curves and colour.

### **2.2.9. Conclusion**

The Cholas were the most successful dynasty in south Indian polity. They were also the first South Indian dynasty to reverse the trend of conquest set by the Mauryas and the Guptas, intervening in the events of North India and successfully reaching the banks of the River Ganga. The numerous inscriptions that the Cholas have left behind for posterity provide comprehensive and accurate information regarding the dynamics of dynastic expansion and the principles of law and order that the Cholas imposed on their Empire. They also created a distinguished tradition in the development of literature, architecture, sculpture and painting—a hallmark of all great dynasties. Only when peace and tranquility brings prosperity can the populace at large turn to the more aesthetic pursuits that in a broad manner can be termed cultural development. A major period of the Chola rule provided these preconditions to the people of the State.

The Cholas were responsible for elevating the temples into central institutions of governance. Temples were made into the distribution centres for the wealth that the king gave to the people and created a metropolitan community around it that in turn performed an integrating function for the kingdom. Another way by which the king kept a track of local attitudes was the system of land grants to Brahmans called 'Brahmadeya', spread across the country in every village and kept directly under royal protection. The later Cholas were less capable kings with uncertain and vague aspirations and of limited vision. Their weaknesses led to the Empire falling into pieces.

### **2.2.10. Summary**

- *The Cholas became prominent in the ninth century and established an empire comprising the major portion of South India. Their capital was Tanjore.*
- *Thousands of inscriptions found in the temples provide detailed information regarding the administration, society, economy and culture of the Chola period.*
- *The founder of the Imperial Chola line was Vijayalaya. He captured Tanjore from Muttaraiyars in 815 C.E. and built a temple for Durga.*
- *It was under Rajaraja I and his son Rajendra I that the Chola power reached its highest point of glory.*
- *The Chola empire under Rajaraja I included the Pandya, Chera and the Tondaimandalam regions of Tamil Nadu and the Gangavadi, Nolambapadi and the Telugu Choda territories in the Deccan and the northern part of Ceylon and the Maldiv Islands beyond India.*
- *Rajendra had demonstrated his military ability by participating in his father's campaigns. He continued his father's policy of aggressive conquests and expansion. Like his father he was also a devout Saiva and built a temple for that god at the new capital Gangaikondacholapuram.*

- *After Rajendra I, the greatness of the Chola power was preserved by rulers like Kulottunga I and Kulottunga III. Rajendra III was the last Chola king who was defeated by Jatavarman Sundarapandya II. The Chola country was absorbed into the Pandya Empire.*
- *The Cholas had an excellent system of administration. The emperor or king was at the top of the administration. The extent and resources of the Chola Empire increased the power and prestige of monarchy.*
- *The system of village autonomy with sabhas and their committees developed through the ages and reached its culmination during the Chola rule.*
- *Caste system was widely prevalent during the Chola period. Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed special privileges. However, there was cooperation among various castes and sub-castes in social and religious life.*
- *Both Saivism and Vaishnavism continued to flourish during the Chola period. A number of temples were built with the patronage of Chola kings and queens.*
- *Education was also given importance. The development of Tamil literature reached its peak during the Chola period.*
- *The Dravidian style of art and architecture reached its perfection under the Cholas. They built enormous temples. The chief feature of the Chola temple is the vimana. Big Temple at Tanjore built by Rajaraja I is a master-piece of South Indian art and architecture.*
- *The Cholas also made rich contributions to the art of sculpture. Besides temple sculptures, the bronzes of the Chola period are world-famous. The bronze statues of Nataraja or dancing Siva are master pieces.*

#### **2.2.11. Exercises**

- Describe the society and economy under the Imperial Cholas.
- Write the development of Tamil literature under the Cholas.
- Examine the achievements of Rajaraja I.
- Assess the military conquests of Rajendra I.
- Describe the salient features of the Chola's administration with special reference to local self government.

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**Unit.2**  
**Chapter-III**

**SOUTH INDIA IN EARLY MEDIEVAL PHASE**

**Features of Indian Village System, Society, Economy, Learning and Literature**

**Structure**

**2.3.0. Objective**

**2.3.1. Introduction**

**2.3.2. Village System in South India**

**2.3.2.1. Structure of the rural society**

**2.3.2.2. Rural society in Deccan**

**2.3.2.3. Village Society in Tamil Territory**

**2.3.3. Economy of South India**

**2.3.3.1. Market centres, trade networks and itinerant trade**

**2.3.3.2. Coastal Trade**

**2.3.3.3. Trading communities and organisation**

**2.3.3.4. Guild System**

**2.3.4. Learning and Literature**

**2.3.5. Conclusion**

**2.3.6. Summary**

**2.3.7. Exercises**

**2.3.8. Further Readings**

### 2.3.0. Objective

The chapter deals with the socio-economic and cultural development of early medieval south India. Particularly the condition of rural society in south India is important. Agrarian expansion and coastal trade and its influence in the growth of south Indian culture will be dealt here in this chapter. The objectives of this chapter are to.

- *examine the various facets of village society in early medieval south India;*
- *understand the various aspects of inland trade and commerce in south India;*
- *explain various aspects of overseas trade of early medieval south India; and*
- *describe a brief history of learning and literature in medieval south Indian culture.*

### 2.3.1. Introduction

During the post Gupta Era many ruling dynasty established them in the southern part of Indian subcontinent. Southern India in this study means the entire tract of Indian peninsula south of Vindhyanchal including both Deccan and Far South. Dynasty such as the Pallava, Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, Pandya, Chera and Chola ruled and left their imperishable mark in the form of art, architecture and literature. All the ruling dynasty mentioned above patronized learned brahman, granted them land and through them they strengthen their rule in their respective kingdoms. In the core areas of their authority, temples were built and provision was made for large contingents of the priests and retainers whose role was to conduct the appropriate worship of the high gods Shiva and Vishnu. Colonies of learned brahman, were founded by kings. The large number of brahman residents of the new villages enjoyed political autonomy from the surrounding villages of cultivators, pastoralists, traders and artisans. Their privileges and immunities were specified. On the other hand, schools under Brahman teachers were opened to shudras who might receive tuition in rhetoric, logic and warfare, among other subjects. Thus in the south under the ruling dynasties, local unit such as village played important role. The southern kingdoms also played important role in economic and cultural field. This chapter will in brief discuss various aspects of south India between 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.

### 2.3.2. Village System in South India

The rural society was not uniform in nature. It differed from region to region in the specific structure of caste, organization of work and distribution of land. There were different types of habitations and settlements that influenced the nature of the rural society. There were peasant villages and non-peasant villages (brahman dominated village). There was single caste and multi-caste villages. In the Tamil region, brahmadeyas were Brahman dominated villages and vellan-vagaiurar or agrarian settlements were predominantly non-brahmanical villages. Both influenced the respective characters of the rural society.

In early medieval period, new villages were constantly formed. People were migrating from one place to another. Forest lands were constantly cleared and brought under cultivation and new groups were made to settle down and tribes were transformed into settled peasant groups. All these changes influenced the structure of the rural society. Even the boundaries of the villages differed ranging from natural boundaries like rivers, fields and mountains to artificial or imagined ones, based on caste or community privileges. Several villages with growing population and economic prosperity developed into towns and urban centres. For instance, in the Tamil region several temple towns like Chidambaram and Kanchipuram were originally large agrarian settlements. All the factors, viz., social organization, size, population and occupation contributed towards the multiple natures of the rural societies. However, despite differences in the rural societies of each village, a common pattern emerges, where the rural elites were mostly priests and landed classes. Social privileges varied according to the social rank and this was related to the rights and control over land.

### **2.3.2.1. Structure of the rural society**

The rural society had a stratified and complex structure. The social relations based on caste comprised of relations between brahmanas, non-brahmanas and other menial castes. Generally the landed classes belonged to the upper castes. However, there were several landed classes who did not have a high caste status but were powerful in the village. The peasants belonged to the lower castes and the rural labourers, who were landless, belonged to the menial castes. Caste relations stratified the rural society on ritual basis. Even within the peasants, there were numerous castes and sub-castes. High peasant castes rarely tilled the land themselves and hired wage labourers and sharecroppers. Within the same peasant caste also there was differentiation. One of the most significant ways in which caste influenced the rural society was evident in the settlement patterns. There were separate settlements of brahmanas, non-brahmanas and menial castes. Although these relations were governed by norms and values of the rural society, the state also played a significant role in shaping these relations. For instance, in the relation between the landholders and the tenant, the state evolved a complex revenue extracting mechanism that altered and influenced the agrarian relations.

In villages also lived other important rural classes who were poor artisans, service castes and other occupational groups. They belonged to the lower end of the rural hierarchy. Despite kinship relations within the caste that contributed to caste solidarities, one should not assume that castes were self-sufficient units. They were economically or otherwise also interdependent. It was not always that the traditional structure of caste had stranglehold over the rural society. The economic relations often freed itself from the caste system. The jajmani system involved a network of economic relationship and reciprocity between various castes in a hierarchical manner, between the landlords and occupational specialists breaking the myth of caste as self-sufficient unit within the village. Political and economic changes further influenced the caste equations within the rural society, when one group replaced another as the powerful landed elites. Socio-religious movements with their respective ideologies based primarily on bhakti undermined the caste status and threw open various avenues for social mobility within the rural society and influenced the changes within the caste structure.

The rural society had always been a part of the wider economy. Many landlords lived outside the village. Since revenue was usually collected in cash, the agricultural surplus was sold outside the village in the markets. In fact, markets provided a space for not only economic, but social interactions between various individuals of different villages. Occupational castes within the villages provided service to the village, but other occupational castes came from outside on occasions like fairs, festivals, marriages and temple worship and rendered services.

While kinship ties strengthened the caste groups within the village, they also cut across the village boundaries fostering social relations between villagers, linking members of every caste to people in other villages. In north India, marriages took place outside the village. This is called exogamy, through which 'extensive' ties were created. But in south India, marriages took place within the same village or nearby villages, with certain near relatives, like cross cousins (father's sister's daughter or son) and cross niece (sister's daughter). This is called endogamy and the ties were 'intensive', operating within a limited social space.

Since the state considered village as a revenue unit and assigned administrative duties primarily, of collecting taxes to various officers and village elites, hence a political network was constantly evolving linking the individual members of the rural society to people occupying various administrative positions within and outside the village. The role of the village community was also seen to be important in this respect. A village at times had a ritual space like a temple or a Sufi shrine that not only attracted people of that village but also attracted devotees from other villages too. In such a common religious arena, the caste distinctions of the rural society were often blurred.

Thus the rural society of a village was not isolated and self-sufficient. The outside world of cities and politics influenced the rural life in many ways. In fact, it is difficult to separate the internal activities

of the village from the external. The rural society becomes the context for meeting and interaction between various larger political, economic and social forces.

### **2.3.2.2. Rural society in Deccan**

The term used for village in early medieval Deccan was *ganva*, *mauje* or *deh*. A bigger village that included a market place was called *kasbe*. The cultivable area comprising of black soil was known as *kali*. *Kali* was divided into blocks called *thal* (derived from Sanskrit word, *sthal*) or land and each *thal* was named after its original proprietor. *Thal* consisted of fields called *shet* or *set* (Sanskrit is *kshetra*) or *zamin*. The inhabited area called *pandhari* comprised of white soil that was unfit for cultivation. The *pandhari* was divided into house-sites, *gharthana* or *gharthikana*, each of which was owned by the *patil* (village headman) and his family, other village officers, peasants and village servants and artisans. When a family left the village and migrated, its land was called *gatkul* (*gat* means gone and *kul* means a lineage or a family) and the house site and the house left behind was called *gatkul gharthana* and *gatkulvada* respectively. Around the cultivable area were the meadows (*kuran*). It was meant for common village use and was called people's meadow (*lokacha kuran*).

The rural society in Deccan was not a homogeneous unit. Agrarian hierarchy and stratification can be seen in the caste structures as well as in the various classes whose status was based on the land and landed rights. The upper sections always attempted to exploit the peasant groups and were often successful. Tensions were inbuilt within the rural society. The rural society was never stagnant and had avenues for social mobility. However, there was a scope for co-operative interaction. For instance, in Western Deccan region, the village documents record the attestation of the villagers in landed transactions. In Eastern Deccan, the inscriptions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries refer to village groups called *ashtadash-praja* making endowments of land to the temples. Literally meaning eighteen people; *ashtadash-praja* also implied eighteen castes that represented the entire village. Brahmanas, land controllers (*bhumi-prabhu*) and peasants (*kampu*) are mentioned separately as making donations. Probably they did not belong to the group of eighteen castes. Since this body of the 'village collectives' was gifting lands to the temples, it also implies that they were an important part of the temple culture and the *Kakatiya* state. Neither was the village a close-knit, self-sufficient unit. Interactions with the neighbouring and distant villages took place. Land was sold to the outsiders. There was inter-village mobility. In case an outsider bought a land in the village, he need not live there and could visit his land in the village periodically. Similarly, though the village artisans served the village, they were not compelled to remain within the same village. Often they sold their rights to the members of their own caste and migrated elsewhere. They also worked in nearby markets, villages and urban centres to supplement their income.

The interaction of the village with urban classes also took place. Merchants invested in the land and made donations to the temples. For instance, a fourteenth century inscription in Chittapur, Metpalli taluk of Andhra region records an endowment of land to the temple for construction of a tank. The State also interacted with the members of the rural society. Numerous peasants were recruited as soldiers. As stated before, there were state lands in the villages, the state invited cultivators, and incorporated the powerful landed aristocracy within the political administration.

**The Village Council:** The village council was called *panchayat* at the village level and *gotsabha* at the *pargana* level. The *panchayat* not only settled disputes within the village, it was also a representative body of the village community set up by the community itself to manage its affairs. There were *jatigota*, *Dharma Sabha* and *Kula-Sabha* to deal with the matters of a particular caste, religion or a group of families. The rules of the caste were quite strict. The numbers of the members of the village council was not fixed. At the village level, the *panchayat* comprised of all *watandars*, *mirasdars* and *balutedars*. *Balutedars* also played an important part in the village council which will be discussed in the next section. At the *pargana* level, the *pargana* and village hereditary officers, state officials and the



leaders of the village community concerned with a particular dispute were invited. The king did not interfere with the decisions of the village council, unless he received a complaint.

**The village servants of Deccan:** The village servants were primarily artisans and formed an important section of the rural society in Deccan. They were called *balutedars* and their income, which was a share in the agricultural produce, was known as *balutas*. They were the counterparts of the *Kamins* of North India. However, compared to the *kamins*, their status was better off in the Deccan rural society. Several village documents, for instance, the *talebands* (village budgets), *thalzadas* (roll of land holdings), *jamabandis* (village rent roll), *watanpatras* (watan grants), *gaonkharcha* (village expenses) and so on record the participation of the *balutedars* in the decision making process of the village, especially where the disputes were concerned. In addition to *balutedars* or *alutedars* there were a few other village servants in the rural society of Deccan.

Two most common were the priests and the forced labourers. Referred to as the *upadhyaya* or the *gramaupadhyaya* in the documents, the village priest served specific families by officiating in various family rituals. The service of priesthood was hereditary. Therefore, the principle which marked out their service sphere was not the village as a whole, but certain families with specific caste status. Usually the priests were *brahmanas*. Some of the *brahmana* priests served the *brahmana* families, while some served the families with specific caste status of 'peasant and other caste', collectively called *clean shudras*. However, for the non-*brahmana* low caste families, there were non-*brahmana* priests. It is not clear whether their hereditary servicesphere was confined to certain castes or to certain families belonging to such castes.

*Vethbega* or forced labour is the other common part of Deccani rural society. This was prevalent in the rural society of Deccan and no payment was made in lieu of services rendered. Only free food was provided while the labour was being rendered. Also some cash or food grain was given, but not as wages at the market rate. Other services also constituted *vethbegari*, viz., portorage, fodder cutting, miscellaneous jobs at the government offices, and stables and watchmanship.

### **2.3.2.3. Village Society in Tamil Territory**

In this section we will discuss the rural society primarily in the Tamil region. Presently the Tamil region comprises of Tamil Nadu, southern part of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The rural society in the medieval period comprised of the corporate institutions of the *brahmandeya*, i.e. *brahmana* dominated village, *ur*, i.e. a non *brahmana* villages, temples and guilds. An interaction between these institutions formed the basis of the rural life. They also became the mechanisms through which various political groups strengthened their economic base and extended their control in various localities of the Tamil region. Hence, the *brahmadeyas*, *urs*, temples and guilds—all institutions of the rural society—were the basis of state formation in the medieval period.

Large territories in the Tamil macro-region were called *mandalams*. Three of these *mandalams* corresponded to three major kingdoms of the Tamil macro-region, viz., Tondaimandalam of Pallavas, Chola-mandalam of the Cholas and Pandiamandalam of Pandyas. Both Tondaimandalam and Chola-mandalam were in the northern part of the Tamil region with Kaveri river valley as its core. The Pandiamandalam comprised the southern part of the Tamil region, drained by river Vaigai and Tamraparani. Each of these river valleys were the focus of dense rural settlements especially before the thirteenth century. Between Tondaimandalam and Chola-mandalam was the region called Naduvil Nadu that was drained by Pennar and Vellar rivers. Between the Chola-mandalam and Pandiamandalam lay the semi-arid region of Pudukkottai. The western boundary of the plain is marked by the plateau and the ranges of Eastern Ghats, parts of which lie in the upper reaches of Kaveri. This area was called Kongu Nadu or mandalam of the Tamil macro-region. The epigraphs and literary sources mention three types of agricultural land, viz., wet, dry and mixed. Each of them had their respective social milieu. The development of irrigation technology in the forms of tanks and canals transformed these regions into

paddy growing rural settlements that were ordered according to the Brahmanical ideology and around deity worship in the temples.

***Rural Society and Institutions:*** In the early medieval period the Tamil macro-regions were integrated and organized through institutional means of the brahmadeyas and the temple. Located in the rural surroundings they had an impact in the rural society. The expansion and integration of various peasant settlements in the river valleys and the transformation of the tribal population into settled peasant communities provided a base for the emergence of new state systems. Beginning with the Pallavas of Kanci in the northern part, the Pandyas of Madurai in the south and the Cheras in the southwest, the political processes culminated with the Cholas in the Kaveri valley by the ninth century C.E. The consolidation of these states depended on the integration of various local and supra-local institutions, mainly the nadus, brahmadeyas and the temples.

As a 'peasant micro-region' and an eco-type, the nadu had already emerged before the seventh century. From seventh century onwards, these nadus increased in number, representing a process of agrarian expansion based on the irrigation projects sponsored by the Pandyas and Pallavas in the wet and dry areas. Often such an expansion took place at the expense of the erstwhile tribal population, who eventually were sedentized as peasants. Palar-Cheyyar valley in the north and Vaigai-Tambraparani in the south exhibited such agrarian developments. Thus, nadu as a territory was a grouping of vellanvagai villages, i.e. the agrarian settlements. The nattar was the spokesman of the nadu locality, primarily of the vellanvagai villages. These villages included habitation sites, cremation ground, irrigation channels, cultivated area, and pasture lands and so on. They had residential quarters of the landholders, cultivators called ur-nattam, residences of artisans or kammanas called kammanacceri and that of the agricultural labourers or paraiyas called paraicceri. There was therefore, stratification in these villages, with landholders at the top of the rural hierarchy, artisans in the middle and agricultural labourers at the bottom. The landholders seem to have enjoyed parity in an economic sense with the brahmanas where the control over land was concerned. These owner-cultivators, i.e. the kaniyudaiyar got their lands cultivated by tenant cultivators, i.e. ulukudi. Both were known as vellalas. The assembly of the nadu was known as ur, dominated by the nattars, the powerful landed class of the rural society.

These river valleys also witnessed a proliferation of the brahmadeyas and the temples that restructured and integrated the rural economy and society. The brahmadeyas were land grants given to the brahmanas and thus were the centres of the landowning groups of brahmanas. The temples were the 'nerve centres' of these brahmanical villages. Since the brahmadeyas and the temples dominated by these brahmanas were the repositories of better irrigation technology and farming methods, the land granted to them became a mechanism for the extension of agriculture into unsettled areas and extraction of the surplus from various peasant groups. The assembly of the brahmadeyas was called the sabha or the mahasabha, which also controlled the large irrigation systems. Such irrigation systems created favourable conditions for dense population in these areas. Paddy cultivation was dependant on irrigation and was labour intensive. There was network of relations between big and small brahmadeyas and brahmadeya and non-brahmadeya villages, indicating the fact that the rural society was not isolated.

The conversion of the brahmadeyas into tan-kurus or taniyurs from the tenth century AD led to the emergence of independent revenue units (separated from the nadus) that had significant economic and political ramifications. Taniyurs acquired several villages (pidagais and purams) and craft centers. A new type of nadu called the perimalai nadu evolved around taniyurs, comprising of velalas and cultivators. The taniyurs had distinct socio-political characteristics and introduced a hierarchy amongst the brahmadeyas.

The significance of the brahmadeyas and the temples stemmed from their brahmanical ideology that provided the social rationale for integrating diverse peasant and tribal groups through the institution of caste. For instance, the temples controlled by the brahmanas and situated in the brahmadeyas and the vellan-vagai provided a space for ritual integration to the new entrants within the varna-jati paradigm.

The tribal divinities were made an integral part of the brahmanical temples. The hierarchical structure of the varnasramadharma, i.e. the caste system was relevant in these villages, where the distribution and circulation of resources took place within the authority structure of landed rights. Besides peasants, various categories of chiefs, artisans and craftsmen were incorporated through ritual ranking within the temples. Thus, commanding an allegiance of various local groups, this institution of the brahmadeya generated economic activities of diverse nature that eventually became the basis of urbanization. Therefore linking peasants, local chiefs and other groups to the royalty, both brahmadeya and the temple were also utilized as the institutional channels of transmission and dissemination of the royal ideology in the village settlements. Naturally, then the location of the royal centres coincided with the location of the temple and brahmadeya centres spread over numerous rural settlements. The semantics of koyil acquired a new dimension with the royal patronage to the temples. Earlier used for palace, it now implied the temple as well. Hence, temple and palace became interchangeable with both representing the temporal and the sacred sphere, where obedience to the authority, i.e. the king and the god was mandatory.

The process of agrarian expansion that provided the crucial resource base to the Cholas and Pandyas brought forth the wet zone areas of the Tamil sub-regions, particularly in the Kaveri and Tamraparani valleys. The villages of these wet zone areas became the centre of king's and chiefs' authority and financial claim. By thirteenth century, five hundred and fifty nadus had come into existence indicating large number of agricultural settlements, majority being in the Kaveri valley of Chola mandalam. The proliferation of brahmadeyas and temples located in the nadus of these river valleys were also instrumental in extending agriculture. They implemented the royal irrigation projects and this gave them the crucial right to organize and manage the production and water resources, often with the velala community, i.e. the powerful non-brahmana landowners. These landowners also partook in the administration of the temples along with the brahmanas. Therefore, created at the royal initiatives, the brahmadeyas, and temples were often strategically situated in the non-brahmana villages to ensure their loyalty and provided the much-needed manpower for the vast irrigation projects.

One of the direct consequences of the agrarian expansion was the escalation of commercial activities that led to the growth of market centres, *nagarams* and a network between them that linked towns and villages. The spread of guild activities and trading associations, namely the Ayyayole and Anjuvannam brought forth the mercantile community with its diverse groups of traders, merchants, artisans, craftsmen, and itinerant traders. Often the mercantile communities invested in agriculture, gifted to the temples, further strengthening the ties of integration, and inter dependence within the rural society and with the urban centres and the village. By ninth century, clusters of brahmadeyas and temples had developed into centres of urban growth, thus connecting villages, rural society, urban centres and royal capital, diverse population and religion within the same complex. Thus, the nadus, brahmadeyas, temples and *nagarams* with their respective assemblies, viz., *ur*, *sabha* and *nagarams* linked the villages, various peasant communities and locality chiefs to the political network of the Cholas and Pandyas.

***Landed Elites in the Tamil Region:*** In the Tamil region there were agrarian elites of diverse social background whose status in the agrarian hierarchy as well as in the political structure of the various states kept on changing. The river valleys from the sixth century onwards, witnessed a proliferation of the brahmadeyas and the temples at the royal initiative that recognized the potential of these two institutions for restructuring and integrating the economy and society. Therefore, a class of brahmana landed elites emerged. Since they were the repositories of better irrigation technology and farming methods, the land granted to them became a mechanism for the extension of agriculture into unsettled areas and extraction of the surplus from various peasant groups. The significance of the brahmanas in the brahmadeyas stemmed from their Vedic-Puranic-Sastraic discourse that provided the social rationale for integrating diverse peasant and tribal groups through the institution of caste.

Therefore linking peasants, local chiefs and other groups to the royalty, both the brahmana and the brahmadeya also utilized as the institutional channels of transmission and dissemination of the royal ideology. The proliferation of brahmadeyas in the river valleys was also instrumental in extending agriculture.

Political and economic changes further influenced the caste equations within the rural society, when the brahmana landed elites in the brahmadeyas were replaced by several non-brahmana groups as the powerful landed elites. During the Chola period, there was an influential non-brahmana landed group called the nattavars or nattars meaning the people of the territory of the nadus. But inscriptions refer to only the influential representatives of the nadus implying that the nattavars were the landed elites and the representatives of the big landholders. They collected dues, imposed forced labour and have been portrayed as an exploitative class. They were actual controllers of local production, having under them small landholders, cultivators and perhaps artisans and merchants. Nattavars controlled funds for worship in the temples and conducting repair works. Their power was rooted deeply in the locality. The Chola period nattavars were mainly the Vellalas tied to each other by kinship network. Some of the locally entrenched Vellala landed communities emerged as big landowners with titles like nadudaiyan or nadalvan. Some of them also had titles like arayan, used by the big landholders in the later Chola period. The nattavars included the Pillais, Mudalis, Reddis, and Vanniyas.

**Valangai-idangai:** The expansion of agriculture led to an increase in landed transactions, private and temple holdings, particularly in the non-brahmana villages. This created a hierarchical structure of the landed rights with the increasing prominence of the Vellalas as the dominant agricultural community vis-à-vis the lower agricultural groups. The agrarian hierarchy escalated the tensions within the agrarian community. Simultaneously, the growth of urban centers and intensification of mercantile activities led to the rising importance of the *nagarams*, merchants, craftsmen and weavers, especially the kaikkolas. Hence, the rising social importance of the various non-brahmana groups led to a movement towards a higher caste status, especially the claims of the artisans to a twice-born caste status with a respectable ritual space in the temples. This bid for social mobility in the twelfth century culminated into a “societal crisis”. The conflicts that escalated this social crisis were usually between the artisans and agriculturists, sub-castes of the artisans like the kaikkolas and saliyas, hill and forest people and the different merchant groups. The existing social structure weakened and led to the crystallization of the non-brahmana communities into a dual vertical division of the Valangai and Idangai, within the traditional structure of the caste society. However, the Vellalas and the brahmanas remained outside this dual division.

**Traders and Artisans:** One of the direct consequences of the agrarian expansion was the escalation of commercial activities in the ninth century that led to the growth of market centers, *nagarams* and a network between them that linked towns and villages, to the *managaram*, usually a royal centre and a port. Due to commercial activities, new trade routes and urban centres came up linking the remote and newly conquered regions with the nuclear areas and the coast. The spread of guild activities and trading associations, namely the Ayyayole, Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurruvar and Anjuvannam brought forth the mercantile community with its diverse groups of traders, merchants, artisans, craftsmen, and itinerant traders.

By ninth century, clusters of brahmadeyas and temples had developed into centers of urban growth, thus connecting villages, urban centers and royal capital, diverse population and religion within the same complex. The multi -temple complex of Kancipuram and Tanjavur emerged as important politico-urban centers.

From the eighth and ninth century onwards, due to trading interaction with the Arab merchants, numerous towns along the Coromandel coast developed. Pulicat, Karaikal, Nagore, Nagapattinam were some of the well known trading settlements along the coast. Since most of these port towns had trading relations with the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Ocean, they came to be identified as centres of formal Islam in South India. By thirteenth century a significant number of Tamil speaking Muslims

could be recognized. Muslim traders were involved in the trade of gem stones, pearls, cotton goods and most important horses that were supplied to the Pandyas, Cholas and the Vijayanagar states. These traders had well developed international links in south-east and West Asia.

**Religious groups:** There were several religious groups during the medieval period who were attached to the temples, mathas, khanqahs and dargahs. A large number of them had a popular social base and some of them were exclusive in their following. Amongst the religious groups two were significant, the Sufis and the matha and sectarian leaders attached to the temples. A discussion on the rise of Sufis as a social class and their increasing power is provided in the next section.

In the Deccan, the complex network between the court and the different Sufi silsilahs, Sufis and the ulemas and Sufis and the larger society, broadened the sphere for the Sufis from mere pious saints engaged in religious contemplation. Some Sufis emerged as orthodox groups whose aim was to purify Islam of its folk elements. There were some Sufis, who were important writers. They wrote numerous mystic and popular literatures, which became an important vehicle of integrating the non-elites, especially the non-Muslims. Another kind of Sufis were those who accepted land grants from the state and emerged as the landed elites or inamdars. These landed Sufis were called the pirzadas, literally meaning born to a saint. For these Sufis, the court politics, royal attitudes and patronage were important. Such conservatism and preference for court patronage produced a reaction from some of the Sufis. These Sufis were known as dervishes and ranged from spiritual heretics to non-conformists. Along with the temples, the institution of the mathas assumed further importance in this period. As a powerful institution within the larger structure of the temple, the mathas were either a competitive unit vis-à-vis the temple authorities or participated along with them in various transactions. The religious leaders or the acharyas and the mathadhipatis were the vital link between the local population and the new class of rulers, thereby enabling the establishment of political authority over the newly conquered areas. The gifts were made to the deities and the sectarian leaders or the acharyas and the head of the mathas were the instruments through which the gift was made. In return, they were the recipients of privileges from the ruling class and also gained greater control over temple organization and administration. Thus, these sectarian leaders established religious, political and economic control over the society and legitimized themselves as central figures of the community.

### **2.3.3. Economy of South India**

The early medieval economy of south India was predominantly agrarian, with an initial phase of agrarian expansion (6th- 9th centuries C.E) It has been suggested that this was brought about by the practice of land grants, in which the Brahmadeya and the temple as the two major forces of integration, were the foci of rural organization. At the same time, the need for exchange points and increase in commercial activities led to some of the Brahmadeyas and temple centres to expand their economic role thereby incorporating trade, craft and commercial activities and creating urban space for all such newly emerging economic groups. Political and/or administrative centres were also the foci of urban activities and attracted heterogeneous population, both as consumers of commercial goods and as users of money, i.e. coins which were royal issues and also possibly the currency of the merchant guilds, although the latter is not clearly or directly attested to in inscriptional records. This was the second urbanisation for the south Indian regions.

The phase of urbanisation with which we are concerned here was of a different nature, and was sui generis, consequent upon the development of an agrarian order developing between the 6th to the 9th centuries C.E, i.e. the first phase of the early medieval period. This process, which was spread over the whole peninsula, was, however, not uniform in all the south Indian regions. The Deccan i.e. Karnataka and the Andhra regions differed considerably in the nature of agrarian organisation, although the land grant system was a widespread institutional means for the extension of agriculture and agrarian organisation. These regions do not have continuous plains except in the delta regions of the Krishna and Godavari and in some pockets of the interior river valleys. Agricultural activities were more intensive in

the delta regions, while large parts of the plateau and hilly areas remained predominantly pastoral and/or agro-pastoral and dependent on hunting activities.

The early medieval urbanisation in the Tamil region was a re-urbanisation brought about by agrarian expansion and organisation of peasant micro-regions like the *nadu*, with the emergence of the *nagaram* or market for the peasant region. It manifested itself in a new set of urban centres between the 8th and 12th centuries C.E, representing an intelligible sequence of change, first by providing an agrarian base and large surpluses to be channelled into trade. The proliferation of such market centres together with the movement of larger trade organisations like the Ayyavole led to the emergence of urban centres and inter regional trade networks and communication.

#### **2.3.3.1. Market centres, trade networks and itinerant trade**

Early medieval urbanisation shows a phenomenal increase and proliferation of urban centres of relatively modest dimensions. These are the market centres, trade centres which were primarily nodal points of the exchange network. The range of interaction of such centres varied from small agrarian hinterlands to regional commercial hinterlands and to inter-regional contexts and contexts beyond the borders of India. However, by and large the early medieval urban centres were far more rooted in their regional contexts than the early historical urban centres. The need for marketing facilities and development of local exchange brought into existence market centres, which were points of exchange for a specific region or small agrarian hinterlands. This is best illustrated by the *nagaram* of South India, substantial evidence of which comes from Tamil Nadu and to a limited extent from Karnataka (*nakhara*) and Andhra region (*nagaramu*). It served as the market for the *nadu* or *kurram*, a peasant region of Tamil Nadu. 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 with royal sanction, as for example under the Cholas. They were named after the rulers, a feature common to all regions in south India, with the suffix *pura* or *pattana*.

However not all such *nagarams* were commercially of equal significance. *Nagarams* located on important trade routes and at the points of intersection by itinerant traders developed into large towns, both in terms of their size and volume of trade and commerce. 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 through royal ports and royal interests in and policy of fostering long distance trade. Such a development occurred more or less uniformly throughout peninsular India from the 10th century C.E when South India was drawn into the wider South Asian trade, which was revived in the 10th century and in which all the countries of South Asia, China and the Arab countries came to be involved. Between the 10th and 12th centuries C.E South Asian trade provided the impetus for the development of commodity production and exchange, growth of towns, both interior and coastal. The *nagarams* of the Tamil region linked the ports with political and administrative centres, which were consumer points and with the craft centres in the interior. The movement of the itinerant traders played a major role in this network. Major craft centres which developed in response to inter-regional trade were textile and weaving centres in all the three culture regions of south India—Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu. Some of the craft and commercial centres of the early historic period survived till the early medieval period and were brought into the processes of re-urbanisation which linked them with the new socio-economic institutions of the period.

#### **2.3.3.2. Coastal Trade**

Trans-oceanic contacts were on the increase and ports like Bhatkal, Basrur, Barakur, Karwar, Honavar, Kasargod, Kumbala, Mangalore, Sirur, Sadasivagad, Malpe, Ankola, Mirjan developed on the Konkan and Kanara coasts. There was regular coastal traffic and periodical long distance traffic for the unloading and collection of goods at the coastal towns brought into bigger ports like Honavar. Kasargod was of greater importance for Muslim merchants. Mangalore was the biggest town for Arab travellers. Arab writers refer to articles of export such as rice, pepper, silk, coconut, bananas, teak, aloe, amber,

bamboo, camphor, cardamom, cloves, mango, sulphur and myrobalan. Marco Polo lists the imports such as copper, brocades of gold, silk, and drugs. Horses, elephants, pearls, cloth, musk, and sandal from Gandhara, Turushka, Simhala, Chola, Magadha, and Maleyala were other important items of trade, if one were to take the inscriptions of the itinerant traders into consideration. Commodities like teak, coconut, spices (pepper and ginger) and textiles are found in one of the most impressive lists in an inscription of C.E 1204 from Belgaum, which witnessed a major convergence of many types of merchants in north Karnataka. Items of trade also included regular consumer goods like paddy, rice, black pepper, asafoetida, green ginger, turmeric, betel leaves, areca nuts, coconuts, palm leaves, grass, sugarcane, coarse sugar, plantains and myrobalan. It is not clear which of them were transported by coastal crafts. The coastal network for trade in both agrarian products and manufactured ones apart from luxuries was brisk and impressive.

The term Konkana becomes more prominent only in the early medieval period. Kamkam in the Arabian texts is invariably equated with the kingdom of Balhara i.e., the Rashtrakutas. The distinction between north Konkan and Tulwan (Dabhole to Goa–Juwah Sindapur) was not known in the 4th and 5th centuries C.E. From the Badami Chalukya period (6th-8th centuries C.E) interest in controlling certain parts of this coast increased especially after the conquest of Lata (south coastal Gujrat) by the Chalukyas. Henceforth coastal linkages between the northern Konkan coast and the Gujarat-Kathiawad coasts developed and coastal voyages became regular. The early medieval period witnessed the emergence of more and newer ports in the Konkan littorals than in the early historical period. A great number of ports on the Konkan coast appear from the 9th century C.E which are mentioned in the Arabic and Persian sources. Kolhapur is known from the Jewish letters of merchants as an important business centre. A number of harbours from north to south are mentioned such as Samyana/Sindan, Srasthanaka, Cemuliya/ Saimur, Nagapura, Balipattana Gopakapattana/ Gove (Goa), Chandrapura/Sindapur. Sindapur is prominently referred to in the Arab sources. Gove of the Kadambas was an important port and capital.

Arab accounts such as those of Sulaiman and Ibn Khurdadbeh (9th century C.E) give interesting facts about the trading network connecting Konkan and Malabar and with Cambay (Kanbaya), corroborated by the Persian geographical text *Hudud al Alam* (C.E 982). Surparaka i.e. Sopara near Mumbai was also known to foreign accounts. The long coastal voyages from Konkan through Malabar to Srilanka established links with the interior trading and craft centres. Hence the Silaharas, the most formidable power on the Maharashtra coast, tried to establish close control over the whole Konkan coast. Till the 11th century C.E the ports of north Konkan were more important, but from the 11th century C.E the situation changed with the southern Konkan ports also becoming prominent, particularly Balipattana mentioned in the epigraphic records of the Silaharas (present Kharepatan in the Ratnagiri district). The development of coastal trade in the northern sector of the Konkan, appears to have resulted because of the gradual spread of agrarian settlements, diversification of crops, proliferation of crafts and growth of commerce in Karnataka during early medieval times.

Under local Kadamba rulers Gopakapattana, Gopapura and Gove (Goa) emerged as the most important port. References to pilgrimages from Goa (by Kadamba rulers) to Kolhapur, Somanatha, on the Kathiawad coast (C.E 1038 and 1125) i.e. from south Konkan to the Kathiawad coast (Saurashtra) via Thana in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, to Arab Muslim merchants rescuing a Kadamba ruler from shipwreck and becoming even administrative heads in Goa point to its importance. The term *Nauvittaka* interchangeable with the Arab *nakhuda* (master of the ship) evidently refers to a ship owning merchant. A *mijigiti* (masjid) built by him was maintained by tolls at Goa from vessels from Gurjjara, Saurashtra, Lata, Konkan, etc.

Linkages between Manjrur, a leading port in the northern part of Malabar and Kathiawad and voyages through Konkan coast to Gujarat, are attested by the Cairo Geniza records of Jewish merchants, which prove the role of Jewish traders in the trade with Aden. Tinbu a ship owner (*nakhuda*) is known

from a Jewish letter of C.E 1145. Ships plying between Aden and India had to encounter piracy on the Konkan coast. Reference also to Mulaybaar and to Kollam indicates that the voyages from Somanath in Kathiawad assumed considerable regularity from 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E onwards.

The early medieval sources are silent about the types of vessels used in maritime trade. Trapyaka and Kottimba were coastal crafts, which must have plied from Cemuliya and Chandrapura to Balipattana. The picture about the coastal crafts is hazy, textual and epigraphic references being meagre. Visual representations on Viragals or hero stones in the context of battles and in the caves in Borivli, near Bombay, show some varieties of crafts made of planks sewn together. They may also have been used in the battles between the Silaharas and Kadambas of the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Smaller boats carrying soldiers and large ones carrying passengers and cargo are referred to in the Jewish letter. Epigraphic data is available on a community of ship owning merchants in early medieval Konkan. The Mahamatya was a high ranking officer, and under the Silaharas an officer called Vasaida was also a *nauvittaka*. They combined commercial and administrative roles.

The monetary scenario does not seem to correspond to the information on brisk trade due to the relative lack of metal pieces from mid-8<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E. While the Rashtrakutas had no definite dynastic coinage, the Arabic *drammas* must have been in use. The Silaharas issued the *gadhiya paisa* type i.e., silver coins. Gold coins appear from the 11<sup>th</sup> century (under the Kalachuris, Kadambas and Western Chalukyas). There seems to have been unhindered movement of merchants and merchandise along the coast despite risks and uncertainties. Unlike the spirit of adventure involved in long distance trade, the journeys along the coast were relatively more sedate and safer. Linkages between the Malabar littorals, Konkan and Saurashtra were unbroken from the early historic to the early medieval and well into the early modern times.

#### **2.3.3.3. Trading communities and organisation**

The traders form a significant link flanked by producers and consumers and mostly they are part of urban economy. They collect agricultural surplus and products of artisans and craftsmen from dissimilar regions and distribute them in excess of a wide region. Throughout the early medieval centuries, the procedure of collection and sharing of goods involved a big number of merchants, big as well as small, local as well as inter-local. There were hawkers, retailers and other petty traders on the one hand and big merchants and caravan traders on the other.

In the immediate post Gupta period between c. C.E. 700-900 the relative decline of trade resulted in eroded the role of merchants in the society. As a result, this period of early medieval India was marked through the thinning absent, if not disappearance, of the wealthy and free merchant class. It was during c.C.E.900-1300 of early medieval India that the mercantile society back into prominence, and we notice big number of merchants carrying luxury and essential goods from one lay to another. They accumulated fabulous wealth through commercial exchanges and acquired fame in society through creation gifts to temples and priests. Several of them took active part at several stages of management, and even occupied the ministerial positions in royal courts.

The literature and inscriptions of the era refer to the big number of merchants who were recognized through the specialized trade they followed. Therefore, we come crossways dealers in gold, perfumes, wine, granules, horses, textiles, curds, betels, etc. Some of the merchants employed retailers or assistants to help them in trading behaviors. As inter-local trade urbanized a group of merchants specialized in examining and changing coins for traders Money lending also became one of the major behaviors of merchants. Though people deposited money in temple treasury for the religious purpose of endowing flowers, oil, lamps, there are very few references to guilds accepting deposits and paying interest thereon. There appeared a separate group of merchants, described *nikshepa-vanika* in western India, who specialized in banking or money lending. This era also witnessed the emergence of several local merchant groups, i.e. the merchants who were recognized after the region they belonged to. They were mostly from Western India. As this region had a wide network of significant land routes



connecting coastal ports with the cities and markets of northern India, the merchants of sure specific spaces in this region establish it more profitable to specialize in inter-local trade. Therefore, the merchant groups described Oswal derive their name from a lay described Osia, Palivalas from Patli, Shrimali from Shrimala, Modha from Modhera and so on. Mainly of them are now a days collectively recognized as Marwaris, i.e. the merchants from Marwar.

It resulted in the emergence of a full time trading society looking after the local swap. This society also participated in wider inter-local and inter-oceanic trade. As in the North, South Indian merchants too specialized in the trade of specific commodities such as textiles, oil or ghee, betel leaves, horses, etc. At the local stage, local markets described *nagaram* were the centres of swap. They were situated in a cluster of agrarian settlements, and they integrated not only collection from hinterland but also commercial traffic from other regions. The numbers of these *nagarams* increased considerably throughout the Cola era in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the term *nagarattar*, i.e. member of the *nagaram* assembly, became a generic term for all Tamil merchants.

#### **2.3.3.4. Guild System**

Guilds were voluntary associations of merchants dealing in the similar kind of commodity such as granules, textiles, betel leaves, horses, perfumes, etc. They were shaped through both local as well as itinerant merchants. The association of local merchants having permanent residence in city was more permanent in nature than the association of itinerant merchants which was shaped only for a specific journey and was terminated at the end of each venture.

The guilds framed their own rules and regulations concerning the membership and the code of conduct. They fixed the prices of their goods and could even decide that specific commodity was not to be sold on a scrupulous day through its members. They could refuse to trade on a scrupulous day through its members. They could refuse to trade in a scrupulous region if they establish the local authorities hostile or uncooperative. The guild merchants also acted as the custodians of religious interests. The inscriptions refer to numerous instances when they collectively agreed to pay an additional tax on the sale and purchase of their goods for the maintenance of temples or temple functions.

The guild normally worked under the leadership of a chief who was elected through its members. He performed the functions of a magistrate in deciding the economic affairs of the guild. He could punish, condemn or even expel those members who violated the guild rules. One of his main duties was to deal directly with the King, and settle the market tolls and taxes on behalf of his fellow merchants. The growth of corporate action enabled guild-chiefs to consolidate their power and location in society, and several of them acted as the representative of their members on the local administrative councils. A member of the guild worked under a strict code of discipline and was also robbed of some initiative or action but still he enjoyed numerous benefits. He received full backing of the guild in all his economic behaviors and was, therefore, saved from the harassment of local officials. Unlike a hawker or vendor, he had greater credibility in the market on explanation of his membership of the guild. Therefore, inspire of the information that guildchiefs tended to be rude and authoritative at times, the merchants establish guilds a significant means of seeking physical and economic protections. The digests and commentaries of the era refer to the corporate body of merchants through several conditions, such as naigama, shreni, samuha, sartha, samgha, etc. The naigama is described as an association of caravan merchants of dissimilar castes who travel jointly for the purpose of carrying on trade with other countries. Shreni, according to Medhatithi, was a group of people following the similar profession such as that of traders, moneylenders, artisans, etc. though some authors measured it to be a group of artisans alone. The Lekhapaddhati designates that a special department described the Shrenikarana was constituted through the kings of western India to look after the behaviors of the guilds of merchants and artisans in their region. Another text Manasollasa reveals that several merchant guilds maintained their own troops (shrenibala) for personal safety. Inscriptions too refer to the corporate action of merchants.

An inscription from western India refers to vanika-mandala which was almost certainly a guild of local merchants.

The expansion of agriculture and the growth of trade from the tenth century led to the emergence of several merchant guilds or organisations in South India too. The inscriptions refer to these organisations often as samaya, i.e. an organisation born out of an agreement or contract in the middle of its members to follow a set of rules and regulations. The two mainly significant merchant guilds of South India were recognized as the Ayyavole and the Manigraman. Geographically, the region of their operation corresponded to the present day state of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and South Andhra Pradesh. The Cola kings from the tenth century onwards made a concerted effort to trade and commerce through trade missions, maritime expeditions, abolition of tolls, etc. It greatly increased the behaviors of these guilds which were involved in not only interlocal but also inter-oceanic trade crossways the Bay of Bengal. The merchant guild described Ayyavole was also recognized as the guild of “the 500 Swami of Aihole” nanadeshi. While some have argued that such organisations were primarily traders in several kinds of merchandise and not a single unified corporation of merchants. The vast trading network in South India was controlled through a number of merchant organisations which worked in secure cooperation and harmony with one another. The guild-chiefs, on explanation of their manage on trade and trading organisations, recognized secure links with the royal houses and enjoyed great name and fame in the society.

#### **2.3.4. Learning and Literature**

The post-Gupta centuries saw the concentration of the centres of education in religious establishments, such as the Viharas and temples. Colleges also lived in some royal capitals such as Dhara, Ajmer, Anahillapura, etc. Kashi (Varanasi) with its Shaiva monasteries was also a flourishing seat of brahmanical learning. Numerous agraharas in the south were developing as educational centres. Amongst notable universities, one can mention Nalanda, Vikramashila and Odantapuri (all in Bihar), Valabhi (Gujarat), Jagadalla and Somapuri (in Bengal) and Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. The concept of temple libraries was evolved from the eighth century. The real foundation in this sphere was laid through the Jains. The extensive list of their preceptors- bhattacharyas and shripujyas, and the lay of honour given to them is symptomatic of this development. Their espousal of the cause of Shastradana (gift of religious texts/manuscripts) explains the great bhandaras (store houses) such as patan, Khambhat, Jaisalmer, etc., which became integral parts of Jain establishments in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka in scrupulous. The trend was picked up through brahmanical mathas as well and we get a phenomenal proliferation of the manuscript custom approximately all in excess of India. That tantra and mantra became a favourite subject in those days, which be inferred from the information that a full-fledged department of Tantra was run in the University of Vikramashila. The growth and popularity of occult sciences also constitute an important characteristic of the post-eighth centuries.

Temple played an important role in imparting education, maintaining students and teachers and promoting arts. The temples received munificent gifts from all people, from the king to the common man. In Karnataka the main centre of education were the *brahmapuri*, *agrahara*, *ghatikasthan* and *math*. Education based on the epics and the Puranas was imparted during this time through discourses in temples. Education was also given importance under the Chola rule. Besides the temples and mathas as educational centres, several educational institutions also flourished. The inscription at Ennayiram, Thirumukkudal and Thirubhuvanai provide details of the colleges existed in these places. Apart from the Vedas and Epics, subjects like mathematics and medicine were taught in these institutions. Endowment of lands was made to run these institutions. The development of Tamil literature reached its peak during the Chola period. Jivaka Cintamani written by Thiruthakkadevar and Kundalakesi belonged to 10th century. The Ramayana composed by Kambar and the Periyapurana or Tiruttondarapurana by Sekkilar are the two master-pieces of this age. Jayankondar's Kalingattupparani describes the Kalinga war fought by Kulotunga I. The Moovarula written by Ottakuthar depicts the life of three Chola kings.

The Nalavenba was written by Pugalendi. The works on Tamil grammar like Kalladam by Kalladanar, Yapperungalam by Amirthasagarar, a Jain, Nannul by Pavanandhi and Virasoliyam by Buddhimitra were the products of the Chola age. Sanskrit writing was predominated by Vaishnava literature and a succession of Vaishanava teachers, philosophers and saints who wrote numerous devotional poems and philosophical works adorned the Chola court. The prominent amongst them were Ramanuja, Yadavaprakasha, and Yamunacharya.

The post-Gupta centuries are epoch-creation in the history of language and literature. Although the big-level dispersal of Sanskrit knowing brahmanas was resulting in the spread of that language in distant regions due to the land-grant phenomenon. The scope of Sanskrit was slowly getting confined. It was being used through the ruling class at the higher administrative stages. In the Naishadhiyacharita we discover the dignitaries present in the svayamvara of Damyanti having the fear of not being understood and, as such, taking recourse to Sanskrit.

Vernacular literature which was used by the general people was neglected through the upper and educated class. Though, a development of undeniable significance is the differentiation of Apabhramsha into proto-Hindi, proto-Bengali, proto-Rajasthani, proto-Gujrati, proto-Marathi, proto-Maithili, etc. The Apabhramsha, which shaped a link in our era flanked by the Old-classical languages such as Sanskrit and Prakrit on the one hand and modern vernaculars on the other, originated much before our era. The Kuvalayamala, an eighth century work enumerates as several as 18 Apabhramshas spoken in several regions of India, which turned into modern Indian languages later. The pace of linguistic variations quickened in the country in the post-Gupta centuries mainly on explanation of lack of inter-regional communication and mobility. The migrating brahmanas enriched the vocabulary of regional languages. They also helped to develop and systematize regional dialects into languages through the introduction of writing. The emergence of regional scripts runs parallel to the growth of regional languages.

As there are numerous languages, so also there are quite a big number of scripts used to express these languages. From Maurya to Gupta times the writing changed mainly as a result of the passage of time and anyone knowing the Brahmi writing of the Gupta era could read inscriptions from any part of the country. This was not possible after the seventh century. From this era the regional variations become so pronounced that one has to be well-versed in many scripts to be able to read. Obviously, the regional writing was produced through regional insulation and the availability of the in the vicinity educated scripts to meet the needs of regional education and management. Manuscripts, inscriptions and other written material use Devanagari, Assamese, Bengali, Odia, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Sharada (in Kashmir) scripts. That the proliferation of scripts went beyond linguistic confines, is clear from the case of Tamil. A review of several inscriptions leads one to an inescapable conclusion that though the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas adopted Tamil as their language, each appears to have adopted a dissimilar writing, perhaps to indicate their regional identity. The Cheras used a cursive diversity of Tamil Brahmi described Vatteluttu (rounded writing). The Pandyas appear to have popularized the Kuleluttu (writing of straight rows) and the Cholas combined the two. This is not all. For philosophic and religious discourses, in the three kingdoms put jointly, the scholars gave rise to the Tamil Grantha writing. Hundreds of manuscripts in this writing are said to have reached as distant north as Tibet, where Buddhist monasteries became great repositories.

The post-eighth centuries saw prolific literary output in realms of philosophy, logic, legal texts, devotional poetry of the Alvars and the Shaiva Agamas, Kavyas, narratives, lyrics, historical biographies, scientific writings, shilpashastras, etc. Nonetheless, in keeping with the rising paraphernalia and personal vanity of the new landed classes, the language of mainly of these literary compositions became very verbose and ornate. This ornate approach marked through pompous adjectives, adverbs and similes became the hallmark of literature as well as inscriptions. Although the prose approach of Bana, which is recognized for highly intricate and elaborate sentence constructions, was not exactly initiated, it did continue to serve as a model for the post-seventh century writings.

In the realm of poetry too, dvayashraya or Shlesha Kavyas were being produced consciously. These works contain verses conveying two dissimilar senses when read in dissimilar directions. The Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandi presents both the story of Rama and the life of King Ramapala of Bengal. The marriages of Shiva and Parvati and Krishna and Rukmani are described in a twelfth century work (Parvati Rukminiya) produced in the Chaulukya court. Hemachandra is credited with the composition of Saptasanbhana having seven alternative interpretations. The tendency of working out the intricate pattern of double, triple or even more meanings reflects the artificiality of life.

### **2.3.5. Conclusion**

From the above discussion it appears that early medieval period of south India was a period of cultural and social creativity as well as economic prosperity. Due to land grants, the process of aryanisation was accelerated during this period. Establishments of Brahmin village also change the social milieu of the rural society. Further stratification of society took place due to proliferation of caste. In the economic sphere of economy the role of guilds and brisk trading both inland and maritime resulted in growth of urban centers. Aryanisation, economic prosperity and powerful dynasty directly help in the development of art, architecture, centres of learning and literature as well as religion. Great temple cities emerged during this period which helps in the spread of education in the peninsular India during early medieval period.

### **2.3.6. Summary**

- *This chapter highlights various themes that have been researched on the society of peninsular India.*
- *The rural society in Deccan comprised of hierarchical land rights that influenced the nature of agrarian stratification. This can be seen in the documents that refer to their participation in the deliberations of the village council.*
- *The rural society of South India was a complex network of corporate institutions like the brahmadeya (with their assembly sabha), nadu (with their assembly ur), and the temples that integrated various social groups within the village as well as the localities and larger political kingdoms.*
- *This process of integration was influenced by several factors of ecology, migration and control of the corporate institutions by powerful political group.*
- *Agrarian expansion and general reliance on agrarian sector was the chief feature of the economy. These were instrumental in giving rise to a new phase of urbanization in south India.*
- *Tamil Nadu particularly experienced 're-urbanization' through the growth of nadus, nagarams and organization with wide networks such as Ayyavole. As compared to early historical urban centres, during this phase, urban centres developed deeper roots within the regions.*
- *Presence of increased number of guilds suggests the 'diversification of production activities'.*
- *Among various crafts textiles occupied the foremost place, though in the Andhra region mining was also a major craft industry.*
- *There was regular coastal traffic along the entire littoral, particularly the Konkan and Malaya region emerged into prominence during this period.*
- *Merchants involved in brisk trading activities throughout the period. They used to move in trading groups (caravans).*
- *Prosperous agrarian and urban economy, growth of temples and royal patronization during this period also resulted in development in language and literature of peninsular India.*

### **2.3.7. Exercises**

- To what extent second urbanization was the result of agrarian expansion in south India? Examine.
- Discuss the role of merchant guilds in the growth of craft, trade, and urbanization.

- Critically examine the features of village society in early medieval south India.
- Analyse briefly the structure of rural society in South India during 7-12th centuries.
- Analyse the role of the corporate institutions in the integration of various social groups of the rural society in South India.

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**Unit.3**  
**Chapter-I**  
**SOCIAL STRATIFICATION**  
**Proliferation of Castes, Status of Women, Matrilineal System and Aryanisation of Hinterland Region**

**Structure**

- 3.1.0. Objectives**
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  - 3.1.12.2. Royal Patronisation of Brahminism**
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- 3.1.13. Conclusion**
- 3.1.14. Summary**
- 3.1.15. Exercises**
- 3.1.16. Further Readings**

### 3.1.0. Objectives

Early medieval Indian society was marked with several changes. Changes such as proliferation of caste, changing condition of women, Process of Sanskritisation in the remote region were took place. This chapter will discuss social changes occurred during 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century C.E of Indian history. After reading this chapter you will be able to familiarize yourself with the:

- *sources of information for the study of early medieval Indian society.*
- *varying perspectives on the social set-up ranging flanked by a call for creation it more rigid and an all-out cry to question its fundamental bases.*
- *role of the changing material base in social transformation.*
- *status of women in early medieval society; and*
- *process of aryanisation and spread of Aryan culture across Indian sub-continent and beyond during early medieval period.*

### 3.1.1. Introduction

The early medieval period was also marked by many social changes. An important phenomenon of this period was the proliferation or increase in the number of castes. How did it happen? One of the reason for it was the inclusion of newer groups into brahmanical society. It is suggested that as the number of land grants increased, new areas were brought under cultivation. It made local tribal people leave hunting as their main profession and take up agriculture. They were then transformed into peasants, and assimilated in society as sudras. The land grants in fact resulted in movement and migration of Brahmanas to different internal areas where they were able to introduce and enforce their brahmanical social values. The land grants also led to the increase in the number of Kayastha class. The Kayasthas were basically scribes and they specialized in drafting and writing land grant documents. Naturally, with increase in the number of land grants their importance also increased. Changing caste hierarchy also influence the position of women. The advent of Islam also resulted in downgrading of women in Indian society. This period also witnessed the process of Aryanisation of hinterland region of India. This chapter in brief will discuss the various aspects of early medieval society.

### 3.1.2. Sources for the Reconstruction of Society

There is a very wide ranging source material for the reconstruction of social organization throughout half a millennium (circa eighth to the thirteenth centuries). These sources comprise both literary and epigraphic notices. Practically all major powers of India are recognized to us through copious inscriptional data. Though no quantification has been attempted at an all India stage, the number of the post-Gupta inscriptions necessity run in thousands even on a rough impressionistic assessment. These inscriptions are accessible in a diversity of languages and scripts. These records help us in identifying regional and regional peculiarities without sacrificing a macro view of the subcontinental scene. The literary sources are also very varied. It is not merely the writings on dharmashastras in the form of commentaries and other dharma-nibandhas which tell us in relation to the ups and downs in the social organization. Even works belonging to the realms of kavyas (poetic works), drama, technological and scientific works as well as treatises and architecture throw enormous light on the post-Gupta growths in the sphere of society. Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Naishadhiyacharita of Shriharsha, Prabandha Chintamani of Merutunga, Soddhala's Udaya-Sundari-Katha, Adipurana of Jinasena, the dohas of the Siddhas, Medhatithi's and Vigyaneshwar's commentaries on the Manusmriti and Yajnavalkyasmriti respectively, and works such as Manasollasa, Mayamata and Aparajitapriccha are useful aids for reconstructing the social fabric of India throughout the era under survey.

### 3.1.3. Changing Material Base and the New Social Order

The early medieval society witnessed that the social organisation was in a flux and distant from being harmonious. Indeed, it could not have been so, particularly in view of the momentous changes taking lay in the economic structure of the sub-continent. The mechanics of the social organization is

hard to comprehend if the improving economic circumstances of a sizeable number of lower classes are ignored. One single factor which appears to have set the tone of the post-Gupta society, especially from the eighth-century, was the ever rising phenomenon of land grants. Its impact on the agrarian expansion changed the whole social outlook. This was coupled with a fillip to tendencies of regionalization, its bearing on fluctuations in the urban setting, its nexus with the monetary organization, its role in rising social and economic immobility and subjection of peasantry and non-agricultural toiling workers, and the resultant hierarchy of ruling landed aristocracy.

A new social ethos was in the creation. It was shown that the new trends in Indian economy were conducive to feudal formation. In the realm of political organization too, a great majority of power centres were marked through feudal tendencies based on graded land rights. No wonder, the social landscape could not escape the domineering impact of the fast pace of economic changes. The resultant social changes demolish the myth of an unchanging and static social organization of India which was propagated through colonialist and imperialist historians. Regrettably, even nationalist historians too did not question such assumptions. More recent writings, especially of the last three decades, have rightly focused on the dynamism and vibrancy of the Indian social fabric through highlighting its interlinks with changing economic patterns.

#### **3.1.4. The New Social Ethos**

The post-eighth century social organisation which appears to have prevailed till at least the establishment of the Turkish political power in the thirteenth century, was marked through modifications in the varna organization such as the transformation of shudras into cultivators thereby bringing them closer to the vaishyas. Newly founded brahmanical order in Bengal and south India wherein the intermediary varnas were absent, and finally, rise of the new literate class struggling for a lay in the varna order, Phenomenal augment in the rise of new mixed castes. Unequal sharing of land and military power, which in turn, accounts for the emergence of feudal ranks cutting crossways varna distinctions, and rising proof of social tensions.

#### **3.1.5. Emergence of Shudras as Cultivators**

The expansion of the rural legroom and agricultural behaviors had been responsible for changes in notions in relation to the persons entitled to undertake these. The law books of the post-Gupta centuries contain agriculture in the samanya-dharma (general job) of all the varnas. The smriti of Parashar further emphasizes that in addition to their traditional sixfold duties (learning, teaching, sacrificing, officiating as sacrifice to help others, acceptance of gifts from a worthy person of three higher varnas as and creation of gifts), the brahmanas could also be associated with agricultural behaviors, preferably through labour of shudras. It was also enjoined upon brahmanas that in order to avoid any type of sin, they should illustrate proper treatment to oxen and offer sure fixed quantities of com to King, Gods and fellow brahmanas.

Surely, such formalities indicate that very important dent was being made in the brahmanical social order and the varna norms were being sought to be redefined. A major indicator of this effort was the bridging of the gap flanked by the vaishyas and the shudras. While this trend creates its beginnings in the early centuries of the Christian era, it is important that in the post-Gupta centuries the vaishyas practically lose their identity as a peasant caste. The well-known Chinese traveller of the early seventh century, Hsuan-Tsang, mentions shudras as agriculturists. Al-biruni, who came to India beside with Mahmud Ghaznavi in the first quarter of the eleventh century, also notes the absence of any variation flanked by the vaishyas and shudras. The Skanda Purana talks in relation to the pitiable circumstances of the vaishyas. Through the eleventh century they came to be treated with the shudras, both ritually and legally. Al-biruni, for instance, says that both vaishyas and shudras were punished with amputation of the tongue for reciting the Vedic texts. There were sure shudras who were described bhojyanna, i.e. food prepared through whom could be taken even through brahmanas. Several Tantric and Siddha teachers were shudras performing works of fishermen, leather workers, washermen, blacksmiths, etc. A text of



the eighth century states that thousands of mixed castes were produced as a result of marriages flanked by vaishya women and men of lower castes. There is also a mention of anashrita shudras (shudras who were not dependent) who were well-to-do and sometimes became members of the regional administrative committees and even made their method into the ruling aristocracy.

Such achievements of shudras were, of course, rather rare. Dependent peasants, ploughmen and artisans were greatly needed to strengthen the early medieval economic and political set-up characterized through a relatively selfsufficing regional economy and the emergence of a dominant class of rural aristocracy. Such a need was being fulfilled through the approximation of the vaishyas and shudras. This happened despite persistence of brahmana orthodoxy reflected in the attitude of Parashar who threatened the shudras abandoning their duty of serving the dvijas with the dire consequence of hell. Even some orthodox parts of the jainas had urbanized the notion that the shudras were not eligible for religious initiation.

### **3.1.6. Rise of a New Literate Class**

Though the first kayastha is mentioned in Gupta inscriptions from Bengal, the post-Gupta inscriptions are full of references to a great diversity of people involved in record keeping behaviors. Separately from kayasthas, these incorporated karanas, karanikas, pustapala, lekhaka, divira, aksharachanchu, dharmalekhin, akshapatalika, etc. Though these scribes were being recruited from dissimilar varnas, later they got crystallized into separate castes with attendant marriage restrictions. From the ninth century we hear of a big number of kayastha families such as Valabha, Ganda, Mathur, Kataria, Shrivastavya, Negam, etc. The use of Kula and Vamsha with kayastha from the eleventh century and conditions such as jati and gyati with kayastha from 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century illustrate that the emergence of the kayastha caste was apparent. Individual kayasthas began to play leading role in learning and literature. Tathagatarakshita of Odisha who belonged to a family of physicians through profession and kayastha through caste, was a reputed professor of Tantras in the Vikramashilla University (in Bihar) in the twelfth century.

### **3.1.7. Proliferation of Caste**

This is one of the mainly distinctive characteristics of social changes throughout the centuries under reference. The Brahmapurana dictum deshabheda (variation based on regions/territories) leads to differences in castes. A village named Brihat-Chhattivanna (inhabited through 36 varnas) is mentioned in a tenth century inscription from Bengal. No varna seemed to have remained homogeneous and got fragmented on explanation of territorial affiliations, purity of gotras and pursuance of specific crafts, professions and vocations:

#### **3.1.7.1. Amongst Brahmanas**

The multiplication of castes as a phenomenon appears to be mainly pronounced in the middle of brahmanas. They were no longer confined to their traditional sixfold duties. Separately from occupying high governmental positions such as those of ministers, purohitas, judges, etc. they had also started performing military functions. For instance, the senapati of Prithviraj Chauhan was a brahmana named Skanda and another brahmana named Rak was leading the army of a ruler of Sapadalalaksha (in Rajasthan). Inscriptions from Pehoa and Siyadoni and dated in ninth-tenth century mention brahmanas as horse dealers and betel sellers. The eleventh century Kashmiri writer Kshemendra mentions brahmanas performing functions of artisans, dancers and indulging in the sale of wine, buttermilk, salt, etc. Functional distinction of brahmanas is reflected in such titles as: Shrotriya, pandita, maharajapandita, dikshit, yajnik, pathaka, upadhyaya, thakkura, agnihotri, etc. Mitakshara, the well-known commentary on the Smriti of Yagyavalkya speaks of the ten-fold gradation of! brahmanas ranging flanked by Deva (who is a professor, and devoted to religion and shastras) and Chandala, who does not perform sandhya three times a day. In flanked by were the shudrabrahmanas who existed through profession of arms and temple priests. Divisions within the brahmana varna were also caused through territorial affiliations. In North India we hear of Sarasvat, Kanyakubja, Maithi, Ganda and Utkal

brahmanas. In Gujarat and Rajasthan they were recognized in conditions of their mula (original lay of environment) and divided into Modha, Udichya, *Nagara*, etc. Through the late medieval times, the brahmanas were split into in relation to the 180 mulas. There were also the feelings of superiority. While there was a phenomenal migration of brahmanas, sure regions were measured to be papadeshas (impious regions). These incorporated Saurashtra, Sindh and Dakshinapath.

#### **3.1.7.2. Amongst Kshatriyas**

The ranks of kshatriyas also swelled in the post eighth century. Numerous works provide varying lists of 36 clans of Rajputs in northern India alone. They arose out of dissimilar strata of population-kshatriyas, brahmanas, some other tribes including even the original ones and also out of the ranks of foreign invaders who settled here and got assimilated into the Indian social organization. While the traditional notion invested the kshatriya varna as a whole with functions of rulership, the ideologues were never opposed to recognising in several cases the non-kshatriya rulers as kshatriyas. It is said that from in the middle of the captured “respectable men were enrolled in the middle of the Shekhavnt and the Wadhela tribes of Rajputs whilst the lower types were allotted to castes of Kolis, Khantas and Mers”. Some of the new kshatriyas were described Samskara-Varjita, i.e. they were deprived of ritualistic rites. This may be taken as a cover-up for their admission to the brahmanical social order through inferior rites.

#### **3.1.7.3. Amongst Vaishyas and Shudras**

The procedure of caste proliferation did not leave the vaishyas and shudras untouched. While these two broad varnas, there is an equally unmistakable proof of jatis (castes). Like the brahmanas, the vaishyas too were being recognized with regional affiliations. Therefore, we explanation for vaishyas described Shrimals, Palliwals, Nagar, Disawats, etc. No less striking is the heterogeneity of the Shudras who had been performing multifarious functions. They were agricultural laborers, petty peasants, artisans, craftsman, servants and attendants. The Brahma Vaivarta Purana lists as several as one hundred castes of shudras. In their case too, these sub-divisions were based on regional and territorial affiliations.

In addition, shudra castes were also emerging which were related to a specific procedure of industrial working, e.g. Padukakrit, Charmakara (makers of shoes, leather workers), etc. Crystallization of crafts into castes was a complementary phenomenon. It appears that napita, modaka, tambulika, suvarnakara, sutrakara, malakara, etc. appeared as castes out of several crafts. These castes increased with the growth of ruling aristocracy and their dependence is reflected in their characterization as ashrita. Their subjection and immobility is indicated in the transfer of trading guilds (described shrenis or prakritis) to brahmana donees. An inscription of 1000 C.E, belonging to Yadava mahasamanta Bhillama-II defines the donated village as comprising eighteen guilds. Incidentally, these guilds also functioned as castes.

#### **3.1.8. Land Sharing, Feudal Ranks and Varna Distinctions**

The studies of the post-Gupta economic and political structures have taken due note of newly appeared graded land rights. The hierarchy of officials and vassals also shows the impact of unequal sharing of land. The multifarious functions of vassals and officials, illustrate in the middle of other characteristics a strong predilection of military obligations. The nature of power dispersal and its links with the structure of land sharing were bound to power the social set-up as well. One very important dimension of this impact was the emergence of feudal ranks cutting crossways varna distinctions.

Constituting the ruling aristocracy was no longer the monopoly of kshatriyas. That the feudal ranks were open to all varnas is clear in the Mansara (a text on architecture) when it lays down that everybody irrespective of his varna could get the two lower military ranks in the feudal hierarchy: praharka and astragrahin. Although lowest in rank, the astragrahin was entitled to have 500 horses, 5000 elephants, 50,000 soldiers, 5000 women attendants and one queen. We do not have to take these figures literally but surely, the text is an significant indicator of varna distinctions getting a rude shock through new sharing of land and power. The titles such as thakur, raut, nayaka, etc. were not confined to

kshatriyas or Rajputs. These were also conferred on kayasthas and other castes who were granted land and who served in army. Kulluka's commentary on the Smriti of Manu mentions the tendency of better merchants joining the ranks of the ruling landed aristocracy. In Kashmir, rajanaka, a little of high honour literally meaning "almost a king", got closely associated with the brahmanas and later; on it became a family name in the form of razdan. Feudal titles were also bestowed upon artisans. For instance, the Deopara inscription of Vijayasena tells us; that Shulapani; who was the head of artisans of Varendra (in West Bengal), held the title ranaka. The symbols and insignia of social identity amongst feudal rank holders were also related, to landed possessions. Badges of honour, fly whisk, umbrella, horses, elephants, palanquins, acquisition of pancha-mahashabda, etc. depended on the specific lay in the feudal hierarchy. To illustrate, chakravartis and mahasamantas were permitted to erect the chief gate (sinhadvar) which could not be done through lesser vassals. The provision of varying sizes of houses for dissimilar grades of vassals and officials was also the product of the impact of unequal holdings.

### **3.1.9. Rising Social Tensions**

Though several modifications were taking lay and growths were happening which cut crossways varna distinctions, nevertheless, the pace of social changes in the post-eighth centuries was distant from being an agent of harmonious and egalitarian set-up. The manifestations of social tensions were too several.

A society which was based on an unequal sharing of bases of economic power was bound to be iniquitous. Though the shudras were rising in their status but untouchability was very much part of the social fabric. A fairly big number of shudras appear to have been the actual workers, whether on land or in industry, working for their feudal overlords, notwithstanding the few and unusual examples of anashrita shudras. Pursuit of the so-described impure occupations, being guilty of prohibited acts, adherence to heretical acts and physical impurities were major factors for the growth of untouchability. The Brihad Naradiya Purana reveals the beginnings of the exclusion of the shudras from spaces of worship. The chandalas and dombas were to carry sticks through striking which they made themselves recognized so that people could avoid touching them. When Vastupala was the governor of Cambay, he constructed platforms and therefore stopped the promiscuous mingling of all castes in shops where curd was sold. Though the brahmanical lawgivers were showing their concern for the proprietary rights of women, especially on stridhan, it was also an age when the barbarous practice of sati appears to have made a real beginning.

### **3.1.10. Position of Women**

The position of women in the Indian society had been gradually deteriorating over the years since ancient times. Women were generally considered mentally inferior. The women were regarded as objects of enjoyment by men and a means to procure children. They were required to be subservient to their husbands. The women were denied education. They were to be given away in marriage by their parents between the ages of six and eight or between their eighth year and attaining puberty. In general remarriage of the widows was not permitted. As women were distrusted they were kept in seclusion and their life was regulated by the male relations such as father, brother, husband and son. However, within the family, the women occupied an honourable position. Polygamy was practiced in the society. The practice of Sati among women of higher castes was becoming quite widespread. It was made obligatory by some writers, but condemned by others. Following paragraphs will throw lights on the status of women in early medieval society.

#### **3.1.10.1. Inferior Status of Women**

As in earlier period, women were, women were generally considered to be mentally inferior. There was duty was to obey their husband blindly. As writer illustrate the wife's duty of personal service towards her husband by saying that she shall shampoo his feet and rendered such other services as befit a servant. But he adds the condition that the husband should follow to righteous path and should be free from hatred as well as jealousy towards a wife.

### **3.1.10.2. Education and Women**

Women continued to be denied the right to study the Vedas. Furthermore, the marriageable age for the girls was lower, thereby destroying their opportunities for higher education. The omission of reference to women teachers in the dictionaries written during the period shows the poor state of higher education among women. However, from some of the dramatic work of the period, we find that the court ladies and even the queens maids in waiting were capable of composing excellent Sanskrit and Prakrit verses. Various stories point to the skill of princess in fine arts, especially in painting and music. Daughters of high officials, courtesans and concubines were also supposed to be highly skilled in various arts, including poetry.

### **3.1.10.3. Marriage & women**

As far marriage, the *smṛiti* writers say that the girls were to be given away by their parents, between the age of six and eight, or between their eighth years and attaining puberty. Remarriage was allowed under the certain conditions when husband has deserted or died, or adopted life of a recluse or was impotent or had become an outcaste.

### **3.1.10.4. Seclusion of Women**

In general women were distrusted. They are to be kept in seclusion and their life was to be regulated by the male relations-father, brother, husband or son. However, within the home they were honored. If a husband abandoned even a wife guilty of offensive behavior, she was to be given maintenance. Upper class women lived in seclusion and generally were kept away from public gaze. There was, however, the system of *purdah* or veiling of women. Abu Zaid, a 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab traveler noted that most Indian princes while holding court, allowed their women to be seen unveiled by all the men present, not excluding even foreigners. In Odisha and Kashmir, many women ruled as queen in their own right. Among these may be mentioned Prabhavati Gupta of the Vakataka dynasty, who ruled for at least thirteen years as the mother of *yuvaraja*. The queen Didda ruled Kashmir for fifty years and withstood all intrigues against her. In Bhaumakara realm of Odisha, at least six queens ruled with all sovereignty. We have little information on the life of ordinary women. They must have worked hard side by side with their men, in addition to looking after their household and tending children.

### **3.1.10.5. Property inheritance right**

With the growth of property right in land, the property rights of women also increased. In order to preserve the property of a family, women were given the right to inherit the property of their male relations. With some reservation, a widow was entitled to the entire estate of her husband if he died sonless. Daughter also had the rights to succeed to the property of a widow. Thus, the growth of a feudal society strengthens the concept of private property.

### **3.1.10.6. Practice of Sati**

The practice of *sati* was made obligatory by some writers, but condemned by others. According to Arab writer, Suleiman, wives of the kings sometimes burnt themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands, but it was for them to exercise their options in the matter. It appears that with the growth of the practice of large numbers of women being maintained by the leading chiefs, and with the resultant disputes about property, there was a tendency for the rite of *Sati* to spread.

Thus, it would not be correct to say that the caste system was the only baneful feature of Hindu society. There was a progressive deterioration in the position of women in the society since Manu's times, which reached the lowest point during this period. The practical recommendations given in the *Manu-samhita* were those of a bigot. Though not exactly regarded as a piece of property, the woman's secondary status is highlighted in this manner. "In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead, to her son. A woman must never be independent." Naturally, this was sweet music to the ears of neo-brahmans of the period and women were subjected to all such restrictions almost religiously.

Ladies of the ruling elite, however, enjoyed some freedom, but no such relaxation was applicable to common womenfolk. Confined mostly to the four walls of the house, they depended entirely on their male earning members. Child marriage and female infanticide were prevalent. Polygamy was there, the upper castes indulged in it generally, due to their economic well-being. Widow marriage was not encouraged and that added to the burden of the society in general. According to J.L. Mehta, Rajput women enjoyed freedom in society and were known for their chastity and devotion to their husbands. Swayamvar was in vogue among princesses for the purpose of selecting their husbands. The custom of sati, though prevalent, was not insisted upon. Some enjoyed education and the freedom to participate actively in public life. There are instances of Rajput women participating in warfare, many of whom did not lag behind their menfolk in bravery or heroism. The rite of jauhar was prevalent in Rajput society: upon the defeat or death in battle of the menfolk, the women committed suicide en-mass by burning themselves alive. This was done to safeguard their honour and self-respect.

### **3.1.11. Matrilineal System**

Aryan society in India as a whole is a patriarchal society. With the passage of time the Aryan culture spread to south India and rest of India and subsequently brought the indigenous tribes under its fold. Although many Aryan traits were followed by these Aryanised indigenous people, they did not altogether abandon their earlier practices. Among the earlier practices the system of matrilineal succession is important. But there are many regions where families are matrilineal in which the headship descends in the female line such as in Kerala and the northeastern region of Nagaland and Meghalaya.

Matrilineal form of society is considered to be one of the significant features of Kerala. It is also known as Marumakkathayam. Matrilineal succession forms a part of the society of Kerala. The medieval Kerala society was shaped not only by caste, but by a parallel system of matrilineal and patrilineal form of inheritance. Marumakkathayam or matrilineal system was likely the most widespread; it was followed by Kshatriya, Nayars (Nairs), and Ambalavasis and to some extent by the Ezhavas and the outcaste groups. Patriarchal society refers to a particular form of society, where women play the leading role especially the mothers. Patriarchal society in Kerala is said to have emerged during the period of crisis when the second Chera Dynasty went down in the conflict with the Cholas around C.E 985. Before that, there is also no evidence of patriarchy during this phase. Marumakkathayam centred on the tarwad, the Nayar family unit which consisted of all the descendants of a common ancestress in the female line; a man's children had no rights within his tarwad, since they belonged to his wife's family. The family property was administered by the eldest male member of the tarwad, who was called the Karnavan; he had absolute powers of decision so far as management of the estate was concerned, but he could alienate no portion of the family property without the unanimous consent of the junior members. The system was ideally suited for a warrior people; the junior male members of the tarwad were provided for and they had nothing to do but to fight or prepare for fighting. From early youth they trained in the kalaris. The younger generations inherit property only through their mother's side.

Because of the tarwad system, the Nayars did not suffer from two of the great scourges of ordinary Indian marriages - the financially crippling dowry system and the socially induced tragedy of widowhood. Since the Nayar bride always retained her rights in the tarwad and her title to a share as a member equal to all others, and since in any case she continued to live at home, a dowry was not necessary. If her husband died, she merely lived on in her family home, a full member of the tarwad, instead of having to endure the humiliating treatment meted out by the husband's family to most Indian widows belonging to different society. The very structure of the matrilineal joint family made it difficult for the younger Nayars to occupy themselves meaningfully once their military trade had gone. The most significant effect of the matrilineal system is that it has left Malayali women with an influence and an independence of outlook which one will not find anywhere else in India. It had provided woman a

suitable position within her own family, it has prevented widowhood from becoming the sordid tragedy which it was - and to a great extent still is - in the Indian Hindu societies.

### **3.1.12. Aryanisation of Hinterland**

The period during 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries C.E in the regions south of the Vindhyas exhibits some new characteristics in socio-religious sphere. It continued some of the processes that had begun in the earlier period phase of the peninsula. It was with the Satavahana that the Aryan culture penetrates to the Indian peninsula. In the subsequent period the process of aryanisation of hinterland region was accelerated. Following are the factors which are responsible for this phenomenon;

#### **3.1.12.1. Land grants & establishments of Brahmin colonies**

Eventually, by the beginning of the seventh 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 numerous 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.

#### **3.1.12.2. Royal Patronisation of Brahminism**

We also notice the march of triumphant Brahmanism. The peninsula as a whole shows numerous instances of the performance of Vedic sacrifices by the kings during this period. This phase also marked the beginning of the construction of stone temples for Shiva and Vishnu in Tamil Nadu under the Pallavas, and in Karnataka under the Chalukyas of Badami. Culturally, the Dravidian element seems to have dominated the scene in the first phase, but during the second phase Aryanization and brahmanization 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. The Ashokan inscriptions found in Andhra and Karnataka show that the people knew Prakrit in the third century BC. Also, epigraphs between the second century BC and the third century C.E were largely written in Prakrit. The Brahmi inscriptions that have been found in Tamil Nadu also contain Prakrit words, but from about C.E 400 onwards Sanskrit became the official language in the peninsula and most charters were composed in it.

In northern Maharashtra 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. Their political history is more linked to north India than to south India. We may recall how Chandragupta II married his daughter Prabhavati Gupta into the Vakataka royal family and with its support conquered Malwa and Gujarat from the Shaka Kshatrapas in the last quarter of the fourth century C.E. Culturally however the Vakataka kingdom served as a channel for the transmission of brahmanical ideas and social institutions to the south.

The Vakataka power was followed by that of the Chalukyas of Badami who played an important role in the history of the Deccan and south India for about two centuries until C.E 757, when they were overthrown by their feudatories, the Rashtrakutas. The Chalukyas claimed their descent from Brahma or Manu or the Moon. They boasted that their ancestors ruled at Ayodhya, but all this was done to acquire

legitimacy and respectability. In actuality they seem to have been a local Kanarese people who were accommodated in the ruling varna with brahmanical blessings.

The Chalukyas set up their kingdom towards the beginning of the sixth century in the western Deccan. They established their capital at Vatapi, modern Badami, in the district of Bijapur, which forms a part of Karnataka. They later branched off into several independent ruling houses, but the main branch continued to rule at Vatapi for two centuries. During this period, no other power in the Deccan was as important as the Chalukyas of Badami until we come to Vijayanagar in later medieval times.

On the ruins of the Satavahana power in the eastern part of the peninsula, there arose the Ikshvakus in the Krishna-Guntur region. They seem to have been a local tribe who adopted the exalted name of the Ikshvakus in order to demonstrate the antiquity of their lineage, and also claimed to be brahmanas. They have left behind many monuments at Nagarjunakonda and Dharanikota. They began the practise of land grants in the Krishna-Guntur region, where several of their copperplate inscriptions have been discovered.

The Ikshvakus were supplanted by the Pallavas. The term pallava means creeper, and is a Sanskrit version of the Tamil word tondai, which also carries the same meaning. The Pallavas were possibly a local tribe who established their authority in the Tondainadu or the land of creepers. It however took them some time to become completely civilized and acceptable because in Tamil, the word pallava is also a synonym of robber. The authority of the Pallavas extended over both southern Andhra and northern Tamil Nadu. They set up their capital at Kanchi, identical with modern Kanchipuram, which under them became a town of temples and Vedic learning.

The early Pallavas came into conflict with the Kadambas, who had established their control over northern Karnataka and Konkan in the fourth century. They claimed to be brahmanas, and generously rewarded their fellow caste men.

The Kadamba kingdom was founded by Mayurasharman. It is said that he came to receive education at Kanchi but was unceremoniously driven out. Smarting under this insult, the Kadamba chief set up his camp in a forest, and defeated the Pallavas, possibly with the help of the forest tribes. Eventually, the Pallavas avenged the defeat but recognized the Kadamba authority by formally investing Mayurasharman with the royal insignia. Mayurasharman is said to have performed eighteen ashvamedhas or horse sacrifices and granted numerous villages to brahmanas. The Kadambas established their capital at Vijayanti or Banavasi in north Kanara district of Karnataka.

The Gangas were another important contemporary dynasty of the Pallavas. They established their kingdom in southern Karnataka around the fourth century. The kingdom was situated between that of the Pallavas in the east and of the Kadambas in the west. They are called the Western Gangas or Gangas of Mysore in order to differentiate them from the Eastern Gangas who ruled in Kalinga from the fifth century onwards. For most of their reign, the Western Gangas were feudatories of the Pallavas. Their earliest capital was located at Kolar which, given its gold mines, may have helped the rise of this dynasty.

The Western Gangas made land grants mostly to the Jainas; the Kadambas also made grants to the Jainas, though they favoured the brahmanas more. The Pallavas for their part granted numerous villages free of taxes largely to the brahmanas. We have as many as sixteen land charters of the early Pallavas. A few, which seem to be earlier, are written on stone in Prakrit, but most of them were recorded on copperplates in Sanskrit. The villages granted to the brahmanas were exempted from payment of all taxes and forced labour to the state. This implied that these were collected from the cultivators by the brahmanas for their personal use and profit. As many as eighteen types of immunities were granted to the brahmanas in a Pallava grant of the fourth century. They were empowered to enjoy the fruits of the land so granted and exempted from payment of land tax, from supply of forced labour, from supply of provisions to royal officers living in the town, and free from the interference of royal agents and constabulary.

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 proportion of the taxes collected by the king 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. From the seventh century onwards, the Alvar saints, who were great devotees of Vishnu, popularized the worship of this god. The Nayanars rendered a similar service to the cult of Shiva. From the seventh century onwards, the cult of bhakti began to dominate the religious life of south Indians, and the Alvars and Nayanars played a great part in propagating it.

#### **3.1.12.3. Construction of temple and Growth of Temple cities:**

The Pallava kings constructed a number of stone temples in the seventh and eighth centuries for housing these gods. The most famous of them are the seven ratha temples at Mahabalipuram, at a distance of 65 km from Chennai. These were built in the seventh century by Narasimhavarman, who founded the port city of Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram. This city is also famous for the Shore Temple, which was a structural construction erected independently and not hewn out of rock. In addition, the Pallavas constructed several such structural temples at their capital Kanchi. A very good example was the Kailashanath temple built in the eighth century. The Chalukyas of Badami erected numerous temples at Aihole, which has as many as seventy, from about C.E 610. The work was continued in the adjacent towns of Badami and Pattadakal. Pattadakal has ten temples built in the seventh and eighth centuries, the most celebrated of which are the Papanatha temple (c. C.E 680) and the Virupaksha temple (c. C.E 740). The first of these, although 30 m long, has a low and stunted tower in the northern style; the second was constructed in purely southern style. The latter is about 40 m in length and has a very high square and storeyed tower (*shikhara*). The temple walls are adorned with beautiful pieces of sculpture, representing scenes from the Ramayana. During the Chola rule Dravidian temple reached its zenith. After the eighth century, land grants to temples became a common practice in south India, and usually they were recorded on the walls of the temples. Most temples were managed by the brahmanas. By early medieval times, such temples came to own three-fifths of the arable land, and became centres of religious rituals and caste-based ideology in south India. However, the earlier temples seem to have been constructed and maintained out of the taxes directly collected by the king from the common people. Some temples in Karnataka under the Chalukyas were erected by Jaina traders. The common people worshipped their village gods by offering them paddy and toddy, but those who could afford it might have made rich offerings to acquire status and satisfy their religious cravings.

#### **3.1.12.4. Aryanisation and society in hinterland**

These numerous demands made by the king on the agrarian population presuppose a capacity to pay on the part of the peasantry. Collection could not have been possible without an increase in agricultural production. In this period we witness the formation of new states in the trans-Vindhyan regions. Each state had a number of feudatory chiefdoms, which were small states within a large state. Each of them, large or small, paramount or feudatory, needed its own administrative machinery, and a substantial number of priestly and other functionaries. Every state, therefore, required resources that could be obtained from its rural base. Therefore, the states could not multiply without the proliferation of rural communities or an increase in the agricultural production of the existing villages. It seems that in tribal areas, the brahmanas were granted land, and the tribal peasantry learnt the value of preserving cattle and better methods of cultivation from them. The peasants also learnt from the brahmanas the new calendar that helped agriculture. Certain areas suffered from a dearth of labour power. In order to sustain



the economy of such areas, it was also found necessary to make over some sharecroppers and weavers to the brahmanas, as is known from an early Pallava grant. Therefore, the large number of grants made to the brahmanas played an important role in spreading new methods of cultivation and increasing the size of the rural communities.

This period saw three types of villages in south India: *ur*, *sabha*, and *nagaram*. The *ur* was the usual type of village inhabited by peasant castes, who perhaps held their land in common; it was the responsibility of the village headman to collect and pay taxes on their behalf. These villages were mainly found in southern Tamil Nadu. The *sabha* type of village consisted of brahmadeya villages or those granted to the brahmanas, and of *agrahara* villages. The brahmana owners enjoyed individual rights in the land but carried on their activities collectively. The *nagaram* type of village consisted of a village settled and dominated by combinations of traders and merchants. This possibly happened because trade declined and merchants moved to villages. In the Chalukya areas, rural affairs were managed by village elders called *mahajana*. On the whole, the period c. C.E 300-750 provides good evidence of agricultural expansion, rural organization, and more productive use of land.

We can present a rough outline of the social structure that developed in this period. Society was dominated by princes and priests. The princes claimed the status of brahmanas or kshatriyas, though many of them were local clan chiefs promoted to the second varna through benefactions made to the priests. The priests invented respectable family trees for these chiefs and traced their descent from age-old solar and lunar dynasties. This process enabled the new rulers to acquire acceptability in the eyes of the people. The priests were mainly brahmanas, though the Jaina and Buddhist monks may also be placed in this category. In this phase, priests through land grants gained in influence and authority. Many south Indian rulers claimed to be brahmanas, which shows that the kshatriyas were not as important in the south as in the north. The same seems to have been the case with the vaishyas. Though the varna system was introduced in south India, in practice its operation was different from that in Aryavarta or the main part of north India. However, like the north, below the princes and priests came the peasantry, which was divided into numerous peasant castes. Possibly most of them were called shudras in the brahmanical system. If the peasant and artisan castes failed to produce and render services and payments, it was considered a departure from the established dharma or norm. Such a situation was described as the age of Kali. It was the duty of the king to put an end to such a state of affairs and restore peace and order which worked in favour of chiefs and priests. The title *dharma-maharaja* was, therefore, adopted by the Vakataka, Pallava, Kadamba, and Western Ganga kings. The real founder of the Pallava power, Simhavarman, is credited with coming to the rescue of dharma when it was beset with the evils typical of the Kaliyuga. This apparently refers to his suppression of the Kalabhra, peasants who upset the existing social order.

### **3.1.13. Conclusion**

The above discussion reveals that the early medieval period was also marked by many social changes. Proliferation of castes was an important phenomenon of this period. Changing caste hierarchy also influence the position of women. The advent of Islam and other socio-economic factors resulted in downgrading of women in Indian society. This period also witnessed the process of Aryanisation of hinterland region of India.

### **3.1.14. Summary**

- *The Early medieval Indian witnessed several changes in the society. The prominent being the proliferation of caste, Aryanisation of hinterland and the deteriorating status of women.*
- *The process of consolidation and proliferation of the caste and jati was initiated in the early historical phase as the urbanisation spread in the sub-continent 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.*
- *During this period the condition of Indian women degraded in several sphere because of several cause. However during this period also there were some society in India where women were held in high esteem.*
- *Due to growth of new regional dynasties, patronization to Brahmins and Brahmanism by newly established kingdoms resulted in spread of Hindu culture to hinterland India.*

### **3.1.15. Exercises**

- Analyse the concept of proliferation of castes system in early medieval India.
- Was the proliferation of castes and jatis limited to a particular region and the upper castes alone? Discuss.
- Write an essay on the caste hierarchy and feudal setup in the early medieval Indian society.
- Give an account on the condition of women in early medieval India.
- Discuss the process of Aryanisation in Early Medieval India.

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**Unit.3**  
**Chapter-II**  
**RELIGION**

**Bhakti Movements, Saivism, Vaishnavism, Tantricism, Saktism, Buddhism, Jainism & Islam**

**Structure**

- 3.2.0. Objectives**
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- 3.2.4. Coming of Islam to India**
- 3.2.5. Conclusion**
- 3.2.6. Summary**
- 3.2.7. Exercise**
- 3.2.8. Further Readings**

### 3.2.0. Objectives

This chapter deals with the religious condition of early medieval period i.e 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. Here a discussion on the development of new religious cult in the post Gupta India will be attempted. After learning this lesson the students will be able to

- *explain the growth of Bhakti cult in Hinduism;*
- *describe the regional development in Bhakti cult and its socio-cultural effects;*
- *understand the salient features Saktism and Tantrism; and*
- *discuss the advents and impact of Islam in Indian culture.*

### 3.2.1. Introduction

In this chapter we would be looking at the overall perspective on the religion in the context of early medieval society. The medieval cultural milieu included divinity and humanity; drew no sharp line between them; and contained various kinds of beings that moved back and forth between them and lived ambiguously at their conjuncture. Royal genealogies trace their ancestry to either the sun or moon. The spirit world was everywhere in everyday life. Celestial beings brought victory in war and commanded human fates. Spirits of nature caused disease, drought, flood, and fertility for animals, crops, and humans. Visible and invisible powers mingled capriciously. Priests, rulers, mystics, and saints evoked divinity and gods lived in society. A diverse Hindu cultural complex spread across medieval domains, endowing many local traditions with common features but also being defined distinctly in each place as local people continued to embrace local traditions. Learned Brahmins received gifts of support from rulers and local elites to organize temples and to conduct ceremonies that incorporated local deities, sentiments, and practices. At the same time, Brahmins rationalized and ritualised the local status hierarchy; they defined local identities in the ritual vocabulary of *varna* and *jati*. Brahmanical cultural forms spread in much the same way- and at the same time- as others were spreading Jainism, Buddhist, Islam, and Christianity. Competing royal patrons backed competing religious specialists, often at the same time. In this lively world of cultural politics, Brahmins defined Hindu orthodoxy in local terms. Brahman rituals and Sanskrit texts became widely influential in medieval dynasties. The prominence of Sanskrit prose, Puranic deities, and divine genealogy in the inscriptions' prasastis indicates a sweeping royal agreement across South Asia and in parts of Southeast Asia that Brahmins brought to medieval governance a powerful symbolic technology. Many early medieval Sanskrit prasastis report the royal conduct of Vedic rituals, while vernacular texts in many inscriptions record a rulers' financial support for Agrahara settlements, temple building, and temple rituals. There were many ways to sponsor brahmanical influence and they all centred on temple precincts where most inscriptions appear and most identities were initially formed. The spiritual powers of Brahmins mingled with those of the gods that became central figures in medieval life. This chapter will throw some lights on the condition of Brahmanism and other religious during early medieval period of India.

### 3.2.2. Hindusim

It was in the classical Gupta period that Brahmanism or Hindusim again revived in the northern part of the subcontinent, and especially in the Gangetic basin. During this period in the form of Saivism and Vaishnavism, dominated the field and they vied with each other for supremacy. There was a spirit of toleration in the religious field. Temples grew in numbers and massive grandeur. Image were multiplied without any limit. The spirit of religious toleration overrode narrow sectarian views. The members of the same royal family were known to be votaries of the different religious cult. The founder of Pratihara dynasty was a devotee of Vishnu but his three descendants were worshipper of Siva, Bhagavati and Sun god. Although the Pala rulers staunch Buddhist they employed orthodox Brahmins as their hereditary Chief Ministers and attended their religious ceremonies. The idea of Hari-Hara or the personification of the two gods, Siva and Vishnu, in one image, was an illustration of the same spirit.

The emergence of Tantric cult profoundly influenced Buddhism and completely changed it so also influenced Hinduism.

### **3.2.2.1. Saivism**

Saivism attained a dominant position in India during this period. This is proved by the fact that a large number of royal families adhered to this faith and built richly endowed temple across the sub continent. The Pratihara kings, Vatsaraja and Mahendrapala, were worshippers of Siva. Nayaranapala of Bengal was a Buddhist but he made a grant in favor of Siva Bhattaraka. Many Chahamanas rulers were worshippers of Siva. Dhang Chandela was an ardent devotee of Siva. At Khajuraho, there are many Siva temples. The Khandariya Mahadeo Temple was constructed in 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Many Siva shrine in Kashmir belonged to this period are mentioned in the *Rajatarangini*. In Odisha, under the Somavamsi ruler large numbers of temple were constructed. The Somavamsi rulers also adopted the title of Paramamahesvara. Yayati II of Somavamsi dynasty built the famous Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar. In the far south large numbers of Siva temple were constructed by the Pallavas and the Chola in their respective dominion.

Siva was worshipped in phallic form as well as in the human form. The image of Siva in the Ardhanarisvara form was also a common object of worship. There are many sects of Saivism flourished during this period. Pasupata Lakulisa was the founder of the Pasupata sect of Saivism. His images are found in a numbers of Siva of temple of this period. The Pasupata regarded the acquisition of qualities of Siva as *dakshina* or *mokshya*. The followers of second sects of Saivism believed in Pati (Lord Siva), Pasu (Individual Soul) and Pasa (Fetters of worldly bondage). The *Kapalika* wore a garland of human bone they lived in cemeteries and took their food from a skull. They believed in non duality. Another form of Saivism was popular in Kashmir known as *Trika* because it dealt with three principles Siva, Sakti and Anu. According to them individual soul suffers on accounts of ignorance. The Soul get released when it realized it unit with Siva. It is the removal of ignorance which leads to salvation. However, it is mere human efforts which led to supreme freedoms but it is God's grace which ultimately brings about the union of Siva and Jiva. When ignorance is removed, the individual soul is merged in the universal soul (*Brahman*).

Sankaracharya did much to popularize devotion to Siva among the teeming millions of India. He was one of the greatest Hindu philosophers and teachers of Post Gupta period. He established famous monasteries at Sringeri in south, Dwaraka in Gujarat, Puri in Odisha and Badrinath in the Himalaya to popularize Saivism. We will discuss the philosophy of Sanakarachaya in separate section.

### **3.2.2.2. Vaisnavism**

In the Post Gupta period, the influence of Vaisnavism can be traced throughout India. Some of the notable kings of various dynasties flourishing in different parts of India are known to have patroned Vaisnavism. The worshipper of Vishnu was very popular. In his book entitled "*Dasavatara-charita*" Kshemendra mentioned ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu and those are Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Trivikrama, Parsurama, Rama, Krishna, Budhha and Kalki. Out of these, Krishan was extremey popular. The Bhagabata purana popularize the worship of Krishna. The Hindu temples constructed at Osian in Rajasthan have numbers of Vaishnava temples. A good description of the shrine of Vishnu constructed in Kashmir during this periods is preserved in *Rajataranagini*. The Chaturbhuj temple of Vishnu at Gwalior was built in 875 A.D.

There were two important school of Vaisnvism and those were the Bhagavatas and the Panchratras. The Pancharatra sholl derived its name from its central dogma of the five fold manifestation of Vasudeva namely *Para*, *Vyuha*, *Bivava*, *Antaryamin* and *Archa* form. The views of the Bhagavata is that the nature of Vasudeva is pure knowledge. Letter on, he divided himself into four form as Vasudeva, Samkarsana, Pradyumna and Anirudha representing the higher self, the individual soul, the mind and egoism respectively. Another sect of Vaisnvism was that of the Vaikhanas, who lived

in forest. Their food consisted of wild rice, grain. They worshipped Vishnu and had four companions Achyuta, Satya, Purusha and Anirudha.

It is worthy of notice that the Hindu divinities during this period came to be arranged according to their grades in the hierarchy. Just as societies were divided into unequal classes based on ritual, landed property, military power etc the divinities were also divided into unequal ranks. Vishnu, Shiva and Durga appeared as supreme deities, presiding over many gods and goddesses who were placed in the lower position as retainers or attendants. The Supreme mother goddess was represented in a dominating posture in relation to several minor deities. From 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Bhakti cult spread throughout the country. The people made all kinds of offerings to the God and got the return of the Prasada or favour of the God. The devotees completely surrendered themselves to their gods.

### **3.2.2.3. North India**

During this period northern part of the subcontinent witnessed important developments after the decline of the Gupta dynasty. The reign of Harsha in the Gangetic basin during the seventh century was perhaps the last relatively stable period in the north for some centuries. A Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang, reported that Buddhist institutions continued to flourish under Harsha, not least important Nalanda “university,” which had been founded in the Gupta period and had come to attract scholars from other parts of Asia. With the decline of Harsha’s line, however, the north reverted to the rise of regional satrapies, vying for hegemony and expansion. The eighth through the twelfth centuries were marked by intermittent warfare and relative instability. Three clans, in particular, waxed and waned in importance: the Pratiharas, the Palas, and Rashtrakutas. Moreover, by the tenth century at least, hill kingdoms and small city-states had developed in Assam, Nepal, and Kashmir. Regionalism had taken precedence over empire, though in many instances local languages had not yet crystallized. One of the “new” players on the scene of Northwest India were the Rajputs.

The Hindu chieftains and kings of the north practiced a strategy for retaining hegemony not unlike that of the Colas in the south. Most particularly, Brahmins were given land grants and invited to be the court advisers and public relations agents. This would assure that Vedic culture was preserved and provide a “religious umbrella” for all the peoples in the domain. In some instances, large temples were built to institutionalize the royal cult and serve as a centralizing monument for the monarch. Local deities, and especially goddesses, were incorporated into the royal cult. These acts of patronage served to give royal sanction to important pilgrimage sites and incorporate into the kingdom those folk and village communities for whom these goddesses were important. Not only Aryans but also indigenous tribes and their gods took place but also during this period Vaishnavism and Saivism in north India reached attained a new height. In Vaishnavism, the cult of Bhakti, Jagannath cult and in Saivism Pasupata and Lakulisa cult rose into prominence. Large numbers of texts with Bhakti orientation were written such as the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva. In the Rajput community the Krishna cult was famous.

A major product of this changing religious scenario was the construction of myriad temples across the Indian subcontinent. In Hinduism temples were constructed for all the sects. The Indian Silpasastras recognize three main types of temples known as the *Nagara* or ‘northern’ style, the *Dravidian* or ‘southern’ style, and the *Vesara* or hybrid style. *Nagara* temple belongs to the country from the Himalays to the Vindhya, *Vesara* from the Vindhya to the Krishna and the *Dravida* from the Krishna to the Cape Comorin. There are also other distinct styles in peripheral areas such as Bengal, Kerala and the Himalayan valleys. The Hindu temple construction during the medieval period (6th-13th centuries C.E.) took place on a magnificent scale comparable to the building of churches and cathedrals in the medieval Europe. A detailed account of the temple architecture will be discussed in a separate chapter.

### **3.2.2.4. Bhakti Movement in South**

The deep South became, arguably, the major center of “Hindu” civilization from the eighth through the fifteenth centuries C.E. The “Hinduism or Brahmanism” we see emerging in the deep South

remains very similar in many ways to the “Hinduism” one finds in the southern part of the subcontinent even today and is a significant source for later developments in India. It was in the seventh century that an explicitly “Hindu” culture developed in the south. One of the purveyors of this culture was the Pallava dynasty, a royal family who established a capital at Kancipuram and a seaport at Mahabalipuram. The Pallavas brought architectural styles and other influences from the Gupta era by way of the Calukyas. The Pallavas formed an alliance with local landowners and imported brahmins to whom they donated land for villages, known as brahmadeyas, centers from which brahmanic culture radiated outward. Brahmins became the “kingmakers” and together with local landowners legitimated kingship and participated in the construction and conduct of temples.

Two distinct but related phenomena demonstrated the “Hinduization” that occurred from the sixth to the ninth centuries CE. The first was the explosion of devotional (bhakti) literature in the Tamil vernacular; the other was the construction of temples and incorporation of an elaborate symbolic and ritual life therein. In the south

There were two sets of bhakti saints the Alvars and the Nayanmars. Alvars, literally “those who drown” (in the grace of the god), were those who extolled the virtues of Visnu. Over a period of several generations, the alvars composed thousands of stanzas singing of the bliss of surrender (prapatti) to god and exploits of their beloved deity. Among these poets were two known as Periyalvar (big alvar) and Nammalvar (our alvar). Another, Antal, was perhaps the first woman poet in India, certainly the first devotional singer, who likened the relationship with god to that of husband and wife and lover to lover. On the Saivite side, the Nayanmars extolled the virtues of Siva, both his terror and his grace. While there were said to be sixty-three Nayanmars, perhaps in response to the notion of sixty-three Jain teachers, there were, in fact, some six to nine historical figures, some of whom were poets, including those known as Cundarar, Appar, and Nanacampantan. The songs of those poets, Vaisnava and Saiva, were fluid and retained orally; but, both sets of materials were collected and edited in the eleventh century, the Vaisnava corpus into the *Nalayira-Divyaprabandham* and the Saiva corpus into the *Tevaram*.

Manikkavacakar, a Saiva poet, only later accepted as one of the classical Nayanmar poets and variously dated between the sixth and ninth centuries C.E, co-opted imageries of love and sexuality to describe the relationship with the divine. The natural landscape was sensually described but was thought to fade into insignificance in the presence of the divine. To be “possessed” by the god was like a form of madness-it transcended all other experiences. Relationships with women similarly faded in comparison with the relationship to Siva. Indeed, the poet was like the beloved who was offered love by the god and united with God as if in sexual union. The bhakti experience as articulated by these singers reflected several patterns at once:

- First, they used the images of early Tamil poetry to localize the deities. The foliage and landscape of Tamil land was the god’s- the god was “here,” he had made his home here, learned the language, and established pilgrimage sites here. Similarly, imageries of love mirrored those used by the sangam poets. “Possession” and “intoxication” reflected the images by which the god made himself known in the “pre-Hindu” context. The poetry and the devotional experience were quintessentially Tamil.
- Second, the poets selectively appropriated myths from the northern epic setting thereby giving the local variations of the deities “sanskritic” or vaidika sanction. Siva’s destruction of the three cities was localized; Visnu was grafted onto Mayon, god of the pastoral tract. Skanda was grafted onto Murukan.
- Third, the songs were responding to a Jain and Buddhist context, at first with some virulence (especially in the Saiva case) then by selectively appropriating elements of Jain and Buddhist ethics and ideology.

There was evidence in the early generations of poets (especially in the writings of the Saiva Nanacampantan) of attacks on Jain or Buddhist attitudes, reflecting the attacks of certain Saivite kings on Buddhist or Jain establishments (such as that at Nagarjunakonda). Yet, in time, one finds the co-opting of Buddhist or Jain themes-hospitality, a sense of community, etc. At least one deity, Sasta, emerged in this period as an apparent alternative to the figure of Buddha- Sasta was teacher; his poses emulated those in earlier Buddhist and Jain iconography; but Sasta was also a son of Siva and accessible to help the devotee. Pilgrimage centers made the deities accessible, unlike the reclusive Jain mendicants. Not least important, Buddhist sacred places (pallis) became sites for “Hindu” temples.

The bhakti poets, in short, expressed a form of Tamil identity that claimed Tamil country for “Hinduism” and placed itself in contradistinction to its religious rivals. These patterns recurred wherever bhakti was popular; the vernacular language became the medium of religious expression, albeit enhanced by forms of Sanskritic culture and there was selective appropriation of and distancing from the ideology of “others.”

### **3.2.2.5. The Virashaiva tradition**

The term *Virashaivas*, literally, 'militant Shaivas'. The Virashaiva movement that suggest continuities with the bhakti of the Nayanars and Alvars. Basavanna is regarded as the founder of the Virashaiva movement. He was born in C.E. 1106 in a Kannada Shaiva brahmana family. As he grew up, he increasingly found the ritualistic Shiva-bhakti of his home pointless and shackling. It is said that he discarded his sacred thread at the age of sixteen, left home and travelled to Kudalasangama, a pilgrim centre with a major temple to Shiva Kudalasangameshvara, 'lord of the meeting rivers'. This 'lord of the meeting rivers' became Basavanna's chosen deity; every vachana (literally, 'saying') Basavanna composed has that god's name in it.

It is believed that Basavanna worshipped the linga in the temple at Kudalasangama till Shiva himself appeared to him - first in his dreams, and then, in the form of a tiny linga that found its way into Basavanna's hand. Basavanna was now free of sacred places, temples and lingas housed in shrines; he had his own personal linga. The Virashaivas are also known as the Lingayatras, 'those who wear the linga'. Orthodox Lingayatras wear a small stone linga in a silver casket around their necks. It is this, rather than a linga in a temple, that is their main object of worship. Its constant wearing symbolizes their chosen god's near presence, and the worship of one's personal linga suggests that no intermediary is required between Shiva and his devotees.

To continue Basavanna's story: after having been initiated by Shiva himself, Basavanna left Kudalasangama and took up service at the court of King Bijjala in Kalyana. As he rose in the administrative hierarchy, his devotion to the 'lord of the meeting rivers' also matured. Apparently he made use of his influential position at Bijjala's court to win converts for his brand of Shaivism. A community of Shiva-bhaktas grew around Basavanna. They opposed image and temple worship, upheld the equality of the sexes and rejected caste distinctions. Not surprisingly, there was fierce opposition to this group. The Virashaivas' opponents also managed to win Bijjala over to their side.

It is said that events took a violent turn when a marriage took place between two of Basavanna's followers from two extremes of the social hierarchy. The bride was a former brahmana (former, because caste distinctions were disregarded in the Virashaiva community) and the groom was an ex-outcaste. This marriage was, in no uncertain terms, a challenge to caste-based society with its detailed rules on who could and could not marry whom, a society in which a marriage between a brahmana woman and an outcaste man was not to be thought of. The king, as the upholder of order, sentenced the arrangers of the marriage -the fathers of the couple -to death. Armed rebellion by at least some of Basavanna's followers ensued. Basavanna himself died during the turmoil in C.E. 1167/1168. The Virashaivas were persecuted for some time but survived to become a dominant community in some parts of Karnataka in recent times.



This outline of Basavanna's life suggests some similarities with the bhakti of the Tamil saints who predated him, as also some differences. It is this theme that we will now explore briefly by citing a few examples. Like the Nayanars, Basavanna was a Shaiva, so were his followers; and the Virashaiva saints named the sixty-three Nayanars among their forebears. Like the Nayanars and alvars the Virashaiva saints composed their poems in the language of their region, not in pan-Indian Sanskrit.

Like the Nayanars and Alvars, the Virashaiva saints expressed their bhakti in terms of personal relationships -those of mother and child, lover and beloved, etc. Basavanna's poem 'As a mother runs ... and looks after me', illustrates this. The mother-child relationship is one that everybody - brahmana or outcaste, man or woman - is familiar with and can speak about.

In fact, the poems of the Virashaiva saints are even more personal than those of the Alvars and Nayanars. Indeed, in their vachanas, Virashaiva protested against different kinds of intermediaries. They rejected the established social hierarchy which excludes so many from direct access to things considered sacred - the Vedas or the image of god in a temple.

All this said, what began as a critique of the status quo was absorbed, in great measure: bit by bit, into the sponge-like body of Puranic religion. In fact, Basavanna himself inaugurated what is in effect a priesthood, the jangamas ('lingas in motion' or wandering mendicants). Each Lingayata has his/her hereditary guru from among the jangamas who are organized around a number of mathas (teaching institutions). Ceremonies such as those performed at the birth of a child, its naming, marriage and death require the presence of a jangama. And most Lingayata life-cycle rituals include worship of the officiating jangama's feet. But we can conclude by emphasizing that Basavanna and his followers did leave a legacy of questioning established convention. They left behind verses of ' great beauty, intensity and depth, poetry that is both mystical and radical.

### **3.2.2.6. Philosophical developments**

South India was the arena in which significant philosophical and theological reflection occurred. These speculations often took the form of discourses, even arguments, between various communities, including Buddhists, Vaisnavas, and Saivas. The "primal insight" (mulamantra) was usually given by a particular guru on the basis of experience. This insight would result in aphorisms and cryptic couplets (sutras) often in poetic language. Then, on the basis of discussion and dialectic, elaborations and explanations would occur (sastras). Finally, arguments and/or polemics (tika) would develop in which one viewpoint was defended over against another. The reflection of two schools of thought rooted in the south will illustrate these "philosophical" developments. One tradition is associated with Saivism and the other with Sri Vaisnavism, the primarily brahmanical sect in which Visnu and his consort Sri are worshipped. First, the S'aiva alternative.

**Saiva Siddhanta:** Around the eleventh century CE one Meykantar Tevar, a Tamil velala (a landowning community), articulated a theological system that came to be known as Saiva Siddhanta. His thought was rooted in the belief system of the earlier S'aiva bhaktas but was expressed in terse Tamil couplets, known as the Sivajñanapotam. The devotional experience formed the basis for the intellectual system which then gave further legitimation to devotionism. Here, as in many Indian schools, it was experience that constituted the most effective way into comprehending what the universe was about.

In Saiva Siddhanta-there were three fundamental concepts. The first concept was the divine (pati). The divine could take an abstract, aniconic, or non-anthropomorphic form (civam) such as may be expressed in the lingam (the creative principle embodied in a pillar). The divine could also take concrete form (civan) such as in a particular manifestation of the deity as in Natarajan (the dancing Siva). This form of the deity was considered active and expressed itself in five ways: creation, preservation, destruction, concealment, revelation or discernment.

The second basic concept was *pacu* (“soul,” but literally, “cow”). The “soul” took on the character or form of that to which it was attached. The “souls” of all human beings were “attached” to the bonds of existence, hence unable by nature to relate to and become like the deity.

The third concept was *paca* (the bonds of existence). These bonds constituted the fundamental problem of human being. These bonds were three in number: egocentricity (*anava*)-this was the orientation of one’s life by selfishness and the will to have one’s own way; *mayā*-this was the tendency to overvalue the “tangible world”; and *karman*-the principle of causation which, because it was ill-trained, tended to keep one attached to the bonds.

The goal of existence was to become attached to the lord (*pati*) through the grace (*arul*.) of god. The *summum bonum* of the religious experience was for the soul and the lord to become inseparable as in a new compound. Several analogies were used for this experience: it was like iron filings on the magnet; or like the fragrance of the flower- different from it but inseparable from it. One could attain this experience in a variety of ways, but most commonly, it occurred through *darsan* (viewing the deity) after the temple ritual sequences. The experience was illustrated in the context of worship in a temple when the foot of the deity (in the form of a crown) was placed on the head of the devotee.

**Vedānta:** The other major school rooted in the south is known as Vedānta (that is, the “end” or culmination of the Vedas) or Advaita (non-dualism) and its variants. This school was rooted in the Upanis.ads and was associated with the Brahmins of the Sri Vaisnava sect. It was influenced by several sources, including the Visnu Purana, the Bhagavadgita, and, not least important, the songs of the Tamil Alvars. While the term *advaita* literally means monism or nondualism, there are, in fact, several variations within the tradition.

The start of this school is ascribed to one Badarayana (apparently not a South Indian), who is said to have compiled the Vedānta Sūtras around the second century CE as a form of commentary on selected Upanis.ads. The tradition was maintained and refined in the south primarily by a succession of *acaryas*, that is, priests who were also preceptors or tutors affiliated with Srīvaisnava temples. One of the early *Acaryas* was Yamuna, who was followed in succession by others, including the famed theologian Ramanuja, who was associated with the temple at Srirangam, and Madhva, a dualist who became especially popular in Karnataka. An important figure in this intellectual climate was Sankara (or Samkara), an eighth-century brahman from Kerala, who eschewed the life of a householder and of a priest-preceptor in order to become a *śamnyasin*, a celibate-seeker cum teacher. Eventually, Sankara is claimed by Saivites and especially by *smṛta* brahmins as the teacher par excellence and an “incarnation” of Siva.

Most of the *advaitin* thinkers shared certain common principles. The universe had as its fundamental essence brahman. Brahman, once the formless, nameless reality of the early Upanis.ads, is now understood to be either aniconic and formless or iconic-that is, manifested in specific forms. Hence, most agreed that specific deities were manifestations of brahman. Similarly, there was the individualized form of brahman, that is, *atman*, which in its natural state was one with brahman, but for most human beings existed in “bondage” within organisms. The *atman* was involved in the world because of *avidyā*, the inability to discern the reality about existence. The world was an expression of brahman, it was derived from brahman, and/or was pervaded by brahman. However, for some, such as Sankara, the world was less “pure,” even only relatively “real” insofar as it was considerably removed from its source.

How does one know the truth? In two ways- through “experience,” that is, through intuitive wisdom or enlightenment, but also through the sacred texts especially those that are *śruti* (heard or revealed). More specifically, the Upanis.ads were revealed and were thus self-validating but also were validated by experience. Other *smṛti* literature was cited by some as authoritative (e.g., the Bhagavadgita or the Alvars).

The ultimate destiny to which one should aspire was moksha (union with brahman). Bhaskaran insisted only brahmins could attain moksha, but Ramanuja maintained any and all could approach the deity. Most of the proponents of the school, however, tended to exclude sudras from those eligible for moksha.

Most believed there was logic to the cycle of life. Samsara, the continual cycle of life, death, and rebirth could be sorrowful inasmuch as it could lead to a “second death.” The logic of karma could affect one’s birth and rebirth, a matter that critics point out becomes self-serving for brahmins to maintain. Most of them accepted the Puranic imagery of massive cosmic cycles of evolution and devolution known as yugas; replicated in smaller cycles of time, down to moments within the day. There is a desirability of breaking through to moksha at moments which serve as the junctions of these cycles.

There was also a hierarchy of space-there was a center to the world, that is, “Mt. Meru”-where the gods reside. There were then mythical concentric circles of the universe the further one was from the center the further into chaos and away from the sacred center. The implication of the cosmology was that cities and temples were to reflect this pattern: temples were at the center of a city; brahmins lived near that center; while outcasts were to live on the fringes.

Enlightenment was generally thought to occur in stages. As one gained insight one saw the earlier stages as less helpful; hence one’s perceptions of the world and social reality change as one neared fuller consciousness. These stages of consciousness were likened to stages of wakefulness (when one is caught up in the affairs of the world); to that of sleep when one dreams and hence retains perceptions and memories of the world; to deep sleep wherein such perceptions have been left behind. The ultimate state of consciousness or bliss was known as turiya.

Individual members of the Vedanta school obviously made their own contributions and diverged to varying degrees from the above consensus. It is worth looking briefly at two of the most creative of South India’s thinkers Sankara and Ramanuja.

Sankara was born a Nambudiri brahmin around 788 CE in Kerala. Clearly a prodigy, tradition claims he was initiated into Vedic learning at the age of seven and within two years had mastered much of the tradition. Early in his youth, the tradition continues, he persuaded his mother to let him become a samnyasi without having to become a householder first. He is said to have had teachers who were influenced by a Buddhist heritage. Gaudapada, for example, one of his gurus, had been influenced by Bhavaviveka, a Buddhist philosopher.

In short, Sankara may have been indirectly influenced by a line of such Buddhist thinkers as Asvaghosa, Vasubandhu, and especially Nagarjuna. Indeed, his contemporary and rival, Bhaskaran, called him a crypto-Buddhist. In fact, Sankara wrote commentaries on certain of the Upanishads and sought to base his reflections on those texts while appropriating some quasi-Buddhist ideas. The end result of his lifetime was his ability to outthink the alternative discussants of his day, including Buddhist ones and thereby, in effect, pulling the intellectual rug out from under Buddhist speculation and linking brahmanic speculation more persuasively to the Upanisadic sages. It could be argued that Sankara was the brightest mind of his century in the world.

It is impossible to do justice to Sankara’s system in a brief space. Among other things, he argued that the world, and the self as well, were derived from brahman. The world was created at the act of brahman, but the result was less nearly “real” or “pure” than the source just as curds, though derived from milk, are less “pure” than the source. Hence, there were two forms of reality: vyavahara the manifold or phenomenal world; the many (a concept stressed by Ramanuja); and paramatman-the one supreme atman -that “reality” stressed by Sankara. Maya described our misunderstanding of the world, our propensity to think a rope is a snake, to assume what we see is ultimate. Avidya(ignorance) caused one to think the world was ultimate, when, in fact, as one’s consciousness was raised, one saw the world as having been derived from brahman. Sankara’s sense of the ultimate was nirguna- that which was

without attributes. His followers, however, especially smarta brahmins insisted he believed that several specific deities (saguna), representing the various sectarian options of the time, were personifications of the absolute (nirguna), and that these deities were thought to reside within one.

For Sankara, perceptions (pratyaksha) were of different kinds: sabda, for example, was perception through inner understanding (i.e., jnana or buddhi). Anusandhana was “reflective consciousness,” while anumana was inference. Anubhava was to know the oneness of all things, an awareness that came at the highest stage of consciousness (turiya). Sankara was a strict monist- everything was of one nature, though that which was derived was inferior to its source.

Sankara is said to have traveled throughout India and to have established at least four monasteries (matham) including in Kasi (Banaras), Sringeri in Southwestern India, and at Kancipuram near what is now Chennai (Madras). He is said to have died by the age of thirty-two but left behind a legacy still being interpreted by commentators and scholars alike.

Ramanuja was of very different background. He was an acarya (priest preceptor) in the famed Vaisnava temple in Srirangam, son of an acarya and a disciple of Yamuna. Ramanuja sought to give the worship of a personal god a “philosophical” basis. That is, he was perhaps India’s greatest “theologian.” He based his ideas on the songs of Alvars, on the later theistic Upanishads, and especially the Isa and Svetasvatara Upanishads, on the Bhagavadgita and those Puranas relating to the exploits and worship of Visnu.

For Ramanuja, brahman was both formless (purusa) and accessible in various forms (prakrti). The world was the form, the extension of god, like a paintbrush in the hand of an artist and the painting once completed. Hence, creation was the rhythm and energy of god and the phenomenal world was relatively good because it was a manifestation of the divine. The divine had its own forms (svarupa) and those forms were many. Moreover, the divine had at least six functions in relation to the world: providence- that is, god was constantly interacting with the world; heroism (virya); majesty or prestige (tejas); power (bala); creativity (sakti); and omniscience (jnana).

Ramanuja is famed for his articulation of the two forms of grace operative in bhakti. Using analogies already known, he suggested, on the one hand, there was “cat grace”- the grace of “faith.” The kitten surrenders itself to its mother, who picks it up by the scruff of its neck. So too was the grace of god- it is freely given, the divine does the work while the devotee surrenders in an act known as prapatti. He suggested this is most appropriate for followers of Visnu.

The other kind of grace was “monkey grace”-the grace of “works.” In this case the young monkey clings to its mother’s fur. So too does the devotee work to experience divine grace. By doing certain deeds one could attain the deity’s grace. Prasada was a way of mediating grace- it is exemplified in the priest’s sharing of the offerings with gathered devotees after the completion of a temple ritual.

Ramanuja was responsible for the spread of Vaisnavism in the south. Several temples were converted. It was also after Ramanuja’s time that virtually all deities, represented iconographically in the south, were given two consorts: one, according to the tradition, representing the devotee who merited the deity’s favor, that is, the “grace of works”; the other representing the devotee whose faith was such that the deity bestows his grace freely. Further, while many others of the Srivaishnava acaryas believed that spiritual knowledge was available only to brahmins, Ramanuja is said to have shared his ideas even with dalits, some of whom to this day claim Ramanuja influenced their ancestors.

### **3.2.2.7. Tantrism**

In its present widely accepted sense, Tantra means a literature which spreads knowledge and particularly knowledge of profound things with the help of mystic diagrams (yantra) and words possessing esoteric meanings (matra) (and helps the attainment of salvation. The tantra as a special religious or philosophical concept gradually came into use from about 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. We can have a fair idea of the general principles of Tantrism from the Mahanirvana Tantra which is one of the most popular and well known Tantric texts.

The origins of tantrism are probably beyond reconstruction. It appeared to combine “folk” and vaidika features and that it was undoubtedly practiced for centuries by groups who were outside the orthoprax mainstream. Its “folk” roots may be linked in an agricultural respect for soil and furrow but manifest themselves in veneration of the female genitalia. The famed “squatting goddess,” Lajja Gauri, for example, apparently represented this early relation between furrow and vagina. She was the goddess seated on her haunches, naked, her genitalia clearly visible- the earliest forms of this figure found to date in the upper Deccan plateau are first century CE. Also part of this “folk” background was the belief that one could be “possessed” by the deity, or, more accurately perhaps, become one with the goddess. Tantrics further affirmed the senses and celebrated all of matter, including things the orthoprax thought defiled, such as meat and liquor. Tantrics assumed the divine was present in all such things and hence they could be used ritually.

Mixed with these “folk” elements are aspects which have their roots in vaidika practice. This included the ritual use of sounds. Sound had cosmogonic power; hence, chants or mantras were thought to link one to the cosmos at large. Vidya (“magical speech”) was used in tantric ritual. This included meditation on a cryptic sentence and directing chants to the deity, almost always a goddess. Further, the body could be used symbolically in ways that resonate with the yogic tradition- winds were thought able to move from various cakras (centers on the body) through mythical veins. Gestures (mudras) were used ritually as were postures (asanas) of various kinds. Pranayama (breath control) was similarly borrowed from hatha yoga. The body, in short, was congruent to the universe and to the alphabet of sounds and to the deities.

In tantra, a man usually worked with a guru, often female, who was believed to be able to lead the devotee to liberation and the use of occult powers. The culmination of the tantric experience was the re-attainment of primordial androgyny, the collapsing of distinctions between separate selves, between males and females, and between deity and devotee. This was ritually expressed by sexual union in which no bodily fluids were ejected. Rather the couple became one.

Hindu tantrics understood their discipline to have seven steps. The first three were common to most Hindu devotees and included basic devotion to Visnu and meditation on Siva. The fourth stage, sometimes referred to as right handed worship (daksinacara) entailed worship of the supreme goddess in ways consistent with orthoprax patterns. It is in the next stage, “left handed” worship (vamacara) when ritual use of the five “m’s” assumed a significant role: *mamsa* (meat); *matsya* (fish); *mudra* (fried rice); *mada* (intoxicants); *maithuna* (intercourse). These practices were developed with the careful guidance of a guru and were accompanied by a complex system of symbols, including the use of geometric designs (yantra) and special points on the body (cakra). While these practices were mastered in secrecy, at the next stage one would “go public” inasmuch as the initiate had come to understand there was no distinction between the pure and the impure. Finally, one could reach the final stage (kulacara) when all distinctions were believed to have been transcended.

Tantrism became a part of Jain and Buddhist practice as well. In Buddhism, in fact, a new school emerged around the sixth century CE known as Vajrayana. It is the school that made its way into Tibet where it was grafted onto the indigenous religion known as Bon. Like “Hindu” forms of tantrism, Buddhist tantra used body imagery and sounds and understood all of matter, including alleged defilements, to be sacred. The rationale in Buddhism, however, differed. It was rooted in the doctrine of sunyata wherein matter (samsara) and nirvana were rendered homologous since neither had its own existence (svabhava). Further, the female principle was not perceived to be a goddess (except later in Tibetan forms of Vajrayana). Rather, feminine forms were used to personify certain Buddhist perfections, such as wisdom or compassion. One did not worship these feminine forms so much as seek to emulate them or subsume their attributes. Further, the feminine forms were sometimes juxtaposed with masculine ones as in prajna/purusa (wisdom/spirit). Hence, in ritual coitus, the distinctions between

male and female and of all opposites were collapsed. One became the other; one assumed the attributes of those perfections rendered in male or female form.

It seems likely that tantrism flourished especially in border regions-such as Assam, Northern Bengal, and Northwest India-which were not systematically Hinduized prior to the tenth century. By the ninth and tenth centuries, as such areas were brahmanized, there was assimilation of foreign and/or “offbeat” expressions; families and clans who were previously obscure and outside the circles of power were now being given land grants or in other ways being incorporated into the body politic. Now increasingly, tantric imageries made their way into temple sculptures and architectural symbolism; for example, the icon, at least in Saiva temples, was the *linga* or male principle; the pedestal in which it was set was the *yoni* or female principle. Tantrism had to some extent been “domesticated” and made part of the brahmanic synthesis.

#### **3.2.2.8. The New Status of Mother Goddess Cult**

One of the significant developments in the religious life of the subcontinent during the period under discussion was the emergence of goddesses to the status of “high deity.” Up until about the sixth century CE, goddesses had appeared in classical contexts but in relatively subsidiary roles- for example, as consorts, wives, adoptive mothers, and attendants in urban complexes of the Gangetic basin. There was, of course, evidence of goddess worship in agricultural settings from early times-from the Atharvavedic hymn of praise to Prthvi, and terra-cotta representations of fertility goddesses in the first two millennia BCE to the iconography of the naked “squatting goddess” in the Deccan by the first century CE. Now these disparate streams were merging to propel the goddess into a place of supremacy she had not theretofore achieved. There appear to be several reasons for this development:

- The increased visibility of “folk” and tribal communities in areas that had thereto not been fully integrated. Many of these communities were worshiping goddesses of particular places, of natural powers (e.g., diseases) or of particular families.
- The propensity of kings and other would-be patrons to incorporate such people into their domain by “co-opting” their deities into the official cultus. Such was the case, for example, in Odisha and in the Cola courts of South India, where the royal cult of Siva was given a bride derived from the rural landscape.
- The employment of Brahmins in the courts and in public contexts who were prepared to make “connections” (*bandhu*)-that is, to link the “new” deities to the legitimating older ones.
- The likelihood that goddesses became one strategy by which Hinduism came to replace Buddhism in several settings. There is evidence, for example, that shrines to the goddess were established occasionally on the site of Buddhist pallis (sacred places)- Bhagavati shrines in Kerala are a case in point. These “replacements” were not necessarily arbitrary. Goddesses could personify those attributes (prosperity, creativity, etc.) deemed auspicious to *vaidika* adherents just as female icons had come to embody perfections and attributes within Buddhism. Further, the Buddhist understanding of the world with its ambiguities and disease could be personified in the person of a goddess who represented the forces of nature and the ambiguous, even hostile, powers of the world. Such may have been the case with Durga, emerging by the tenth century in Bengal, possibly representing a Hindu personification of *duhkha*, the Buddhist term for the unsatisfactoriness of the world.
- The increased visibility of tantrism, especially in such places as Bengal, with its worship of the female form, almost certainly lent impetus to the classicalization of a powerful goddess figure.
- Finally, one can identify a dialect of “self” and “other,” when communities or kingdoms sought to differentiate or identify themselves over against other communities or kingdoms. In such dialectics, a mythology of militancy was often evoked- the “asuras” were the representations of the “other guys”; in the mythological rhetoric of warfare, “our deity” was more powerful than

theirs. The great goddess was presented mythologically as more powerful than those deities who preceded her. Among the “others” being addressed may have been Buddhist, and eventually, Islamic communities.

Whatever the factors, there appeared during this period a Sanskrit text known as the *Devimahatmya*. The “text” was a series of myths, first recited, no doubt, in oral form, but reduced to writing somewhat later. The first two cycles of myths, at least- the “birth” of the goddess from the navel of the sleeping Visnu and her battles with troublesome *asuras* such as the buffalo Mahisa-were probably datable between the sixth and tenth centuries and represented many of the factors mentioned above:

- The patronage of a royal house-perhaps the Calukyas of the Southwestern Deccan where one finds the oldest extant Durga temple in Aihole and images of Durga slaying the buffalo and of the squatting goddess (Lajja Gauri) by the seventh century (though Bengal is another possible venue for such patronage).
- Mythmakers who used the repertoire of legitimating strategies to announce the exploits of a powerful deity (that is, she was “born” of an authenticating deity, given the weapons of older deities, etc.).
- Evidence of folk elements being incorporated into the myth. For example, the slaying of the buffalo demon Mahisa had a long history in folk culture and was also seen earlier as the protagonist in battles with Skanda.
- There are even hints of a Buddhist presence in the way the goddess personified such attributes as wealth and prosperity (*laksmi*) etc. In any case the *Devimahatmya* announced the arrival of the goddess as the most powerful deity on the landscape, and once in place, her persona could be applied to any and all goddesses. Part three of the *Devimahatmya*, in fact, does precisely that, indicating how the goddess was indeed an expression of Durga and Kali, goddesses which were perceived to have destroyed “demons” associated with Northern India, more than likely Bengal where the third myth of the *Devimahatmya* may have been composed.

After the tenth century, temples to goddesses proliferated as did their worship in classical contexts. Local goddesses were linked to those already known in the Sanskrit traditions and assumed a role not theirs hitherto. Such goddesses as Durga and Kali had by now entered the “national stage,” while another figure-that of Radha- had become part of classical culture by the twelfth century. In fact, the story of Radha can illustrate something of the way goddesses became increasingly important. For the first six centuries CE she was mentioned only in certain Prakrit sources and in Jain writings, so she may have been a part of lower class Saivism and folk culture. She “entered” textualized classical religion in Jayadeva’s *Gitagovinda* (twelfth century CE) where she is transfigured from a human cowgirl into a deity.

Radha’s assumption of supreme status was not unique to her. Each emergent goddess had her own origins, but once adapted into the classical tradition, she came to embody the power (*sakti*) of the divine, as well as the character of the world’s force. Both Kali and Durga tend to embody this power in ways that are often seen as potentially malevolent. Kali, for example, was portrayed as black, tongue extended as in combat, a necklace of skulls. She was the fierce destroyer of her enemies and powerful protector of those who worshiped her. At the same time, for those on good terms with her, she was mother and sustainer of life.

### **3.2.3. Buddhism and Jainism**

During this period, Buddhism was gradually confined to eastern India. The Pala rulers were patrons of Buddhism. The decline of the Pala power after 10<sup>th</sup> Century C.E was a blow to Buddhism in the area. But even more serious was a blow Buddhism in the area. But even more serious were the internal developments in Buddhism. Buddha had preached a practical philosophy, with a minimum of priesthood and speculation about God. This worship now became more elaborate. The belief grew that a

worshipper could attain what he desired by uttering magical words (*mantra*), and making various kinds of mystic gestures. They also believed that by these practices, and by various kinds of austerities and secret rites, they could attain supernatural powers, such as the power to fly in the air, to become invisible, to see things at a distance, etc. This path is called *vajrayana* or *kalachakratantrayana* or tantric mode of worship.

During this period Odisha, under the Bhaumakaras and Somavamsi was a famous destination of Vajrayana tantrism. Large numbers of ruined Buddhist establishments found in the Cuttack-Jajpur district of Odisha testify the fact. Thus Buddhism did not so much decline, as it assumed forms which made it indistinguishable from Hinduism.

Jainism continued to be popular, particularly among the trading communities. The Chalukyan rulers of Gujarat patronized Jainism. The Rashtrakutas also patronized Jainism. It was during this time that some of the most magnificent Jain temples, such as the Dilwara temple at Mt. Abu, were built. And also some caves at Ellora were excavated. The Paramara rulers of Malwa also built many huge images of Jain saints and of Mahavira who began to be worshipped as a god. The magnificent Jain shrines which were built in various parts also acted as resting places for travelers. In south India, Jainism attained its high water mark during the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Ganga rulers of Karnataka were great patrons of Jainism. During this period, many Jain *basadis* (temples) and *Mahastambhas* (pillars) were set up in different parts. The colossal image at Sravana Belgola was set up during this time. The Jain doctrine of four gifts (learning, food, medicine and shelter) helped to make Jainism popular among the people.

#### **3.2.4. Coming of Islam to India**

Islam is an Arabic word, derived from 'salm' meaning peace and 'slm' meaning submission. Islam speaks for 'a commitment to surrender one's will to the Will of God'. Islam has its roots in the Middle East Asia. The rapid expansion of Islam and Arab culture following the death of Muhammad brought the Muslim empire to the borders of India as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Islam came to the Indian subcontinent within decades of its birth. Arab merchants had been trading along the west coast of India even before the advent of Islam. Now, the Arab traders were Muslims. Increasingly, some of them settled along the southern and western coast, married locally, and formed pockets of Islamic culture interacting peacefully with their neighbors. These settlements were entirely pacific and interactions with neighbors remained virtually without conflict even into the recent past. There were also constant interactions with Muslim traders and craftsmen from Turkey and Central Asia in such areas as Northeast Punjab, Kashmir, and Eastern Bengal from the eighth century on. Many of these "foreign" artisans had settled permanently by the thirteenth century. There was also at least one military incursion, however—that in the area of Sind: Muhammed Ibn Qasim, pursuing pirates who had plundered an Arab ship, led an army of 6,000 against Qahar, king of Sind in C.E. 711. Within three years he had established hegemony in the Indus Valley region. Small advances were made from Sind into neighbouring Gujarat and the Kathiawar peninsula, where minor sultanates were established. These soon cut themselves off from Baghdad, and the sultans lived in peace with other rulers of Sind and western Punjab. For the time being, Islamic penetration of the subcontinent was concluded; the restless energies of certain Muslim leaders turned northward into Central Asia and began the conversion of the Turkic pastoralists in a process that joined another in changing the centre of Eurasia and ultimately the subcontinent. It was one such military incursions of Mahmud of Ghazni in the eleventh century that brought Islam to northern plain of India.

#### **3.2.5. Conclusion**

A major characteristic of the early medieval period was the development of regional societies. Religion was at the heart of this regionalizing process: gods, temples, inspired poets and philosophers. Buddhism and Jainism were displaced from their towering positions. In far south Bhakti cult became a new aspect in Hinduism. A major formulator of that Hindu theology was a Brahmin named Shankara, in addition to incorporating Buddhist and Jain models for faith and organization, he also incorporated



popular worship of lord Shiva, particularly songs of praise. These hymns of devotion-of overwhelming love for Shiva or Visnu-became the foundation for the new and popular cult of Hinduism that has endured until the present throughout India. Called bhakti, this form of religious devotionism began in Tamil country during the sixth century. Further developments of bhakti religion among Tamils were the work of poet devotees and other theologians. Between the sixth and tenth century 63 Shiva and 12 Vishnu worshipping poets created a large corpus of Tamil devotional songs and all are revered as saints by Tamils. Theological works of doctrines for worship of both Siva and Vishnu followed shortly as Brahmins took advantage of the intellectual base which Shankara had provided. This work protected Brahminical leadership role in religious affairs. In Hinduism Saktism and Tantrism also took new shape during this period. Another major religious trend of this period was advent of Islam in Indian subcontinent initially with the traders later with the invaders. Later Islam influenced Indian society in a major way.

### 3.2.6. Summary

- *The medieval cultural milieu included divinity and humanity; drew no sharp line between them; and contained various kinds of beings that moved back and forth between them and lived ambiguously at their conjuncture.*
- *In the post classical period south India played an important role in religious field. The Bhakti cult in the form of Siavcharya and Vaisnava saint started in south India.*
- *In Tamil south, the Virashaiva tradition also suggest the similarities and dissimilarities between different types of bhakti.*
- *In this period with religion new philosophy also developed in the form of Saiva siddhanta and Vedanta. Sankara and Ramanuja were two exponent of Vedanta philosophy.*
- *Tantrism was also a major sect with in Hinduism. In Tantrism guru and the yantra played crucial role.*
- *Shaktism during this period visualized as the manifestation of energy or power and the worship of Shakti in the form of Durga or Kali became very popular during the medieval period. The Shakta Puranas popularized the legends of Pithas or centres of Shakti temples all over India and this tradition is very much alive even today.*
- *During early medieval period Buddhism and Jainism started declining due to growth of Hinduism and arrival of Islam.*
- *Islam was originated in Arabia and it reached India by 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Islam influence Indian society in the form of Sufi tradition, new architecture and social change.*

### 3.2.7. Exercise

- How was the bhakti of the Nayanars different from that of the Virashaivas? What did their movements have in common?
- Write a brief note belief and practices of Tantrism.
- Discuss the salient features of Shaktism.
- Give an account on the condition of Buddhism and Jainism in early medieval India.
- Write a note on the advent of Islam in India.

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**Unit.3**  
**Chapter-III**

**DEVELOPMENT OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

**Evolution of Temple Architecture- Major Regional Schools, Sculpture, Bronzes and Paintings**

**Structure**

- 3.3.0. Objectives**
- 3.3.1. Introduction**
- 3.3.2. Temple Architecture**
  - 3.3.2.1. Elements of Hindu temple**
  - 3.3.2.2. The Northern Style-*Nagara***
  - 3.3.2.3. Dravida or south Indian temple style**
  - 3.3.2.4. *Vesara* or Architecture in the Deccan**
  - 3.3.2.5. Temples and Indian Cultural Ethos**
- 3.3.3. Sculptural Tradition**
- 3.3.4. Painting Tradition**
- 3.3.5. Summary**
- 3.3.6. Exercise**
- 3.3.7. Further Readings**

### 3.3.0. Objectives

This chapter deals with the Indian Art and Architecture flourished during early medieval period i.e 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. Here a discussion on the temple building tradition, sculptural tradition and painting tradition will be attempted. After learning this lesson the students will be able to

- *explain the history and other aspects associated with temple building tradition in Indian subcontinent;*
- *describe the various regional varieties found in the Indian temple architecture;*
- *understand the salient features sculptural art flourished in India during early medieval phase; and*
- *discuss the growth of Painting tradition in India in the post classical era of Indian history.*

### 3.3.1. Introduction

The period between C.E 700 and 1200 is referred to as an early medieval period of Indian History. During this time the whole country was politically divided into numerous regional states which were busy fighting with each other. Though politically divided, India witnessed a growth of new and rich cultural activities in the fields of art, literature and language. The new regional kingdoms led to the emergence of new regional cultural zones such as Bengal and Odisha in the North, Gujarat and Maharashtra in Central India as well as Andhra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu in the South. The various art forms, languages, literature, etc. that form an important part of our regional cultures today, took their shape around this period. During this period large scale royal patronage was received by the tradition of temple building, sculptural art and paintings. As the temples served as representative of the might and glory of the kings who had them built, due to excessive royal patronization three distinct types of temple architecture evolved during the period are known as the *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara* styles. There was also great improvement in the art of making sculptures and fresco paintings in temple premises in this period. An important contribution of Chola artists in this respect was the bronze images of Nataraja. These images represent Siva in his cosmic dance and are unmatched in their rhythm and balance. This chapter will throw light on the tradition of art and architecture flourished during the early medieval period of Indian history.

### 3.3.2. Temple Architecture

Etymologically the term temple is derived from the Latin word 'Tempulum' which in its original sense means a square or a rectangular place marked out by the augur for the purpose of worship. In its primitive sense this word corresponds to a place marked off as sacred to a God, in which the house of God may be erected. The shrine or the abode of the God has different nomenclatures. In ancient Sastras or literature the temple is referred as *Devagriha*, *Devalaya*, *Devakula* etc. In the Vastusastra the North Indian temples are known as *Prasada* while as the Southern Indian temples are known as *Vimana*, *Harmya* and occasionally as *Prasada*. The term *mandira* for the first time occurs in Banabhatta's *Kadambari*, a text of 7th century C.E. The temple architecture in India had its humble beginning right from the Mauryan period i.e 3rd century BC as evident from the archaeological excavation at Sanchi (Madhy Pradesh) and Bairat (Rajasthan). However, it gained momentum in the Gupta period. The temple no.17 at Sanchi and temple no.1 at Udayagiri near Vidisa were the earliest examples of temple architecture, which blossomed during the Gupta period. The Indian Silpasastras recognize three main types of temples known as the *Nagara* or 'northern' style, the *Dravidian* or 'southern' style, and the *Vesara* or hybrid style. *Nagara* temple belongs to the country from the Himalays to the Vindhys, *Vesara* from the Vindhys to the Krishna and the *Dravida* from the Krishna to the Cape Camorin. There are also other distinct styles in peripheral areas such as Bengal, Kerala and the Himalayan valleys. The Hindu temple construction during the 6th-13th centuries took place on a magnificent scale comparable to the building of churches and cathedrals in the medieval Europe. A large variety of Hindu temples was constructed throughout India with distinction in scale, techniques of building and particularly the deities

that were worshipped, which were the result of the differences in political, cultural, climatic, geographical and prosperity between the towns and villages. For the sake of proper understanding of Indian Hindu temple building tradition here we will discuss the three distinct traditions separately with their evolutionary trend, technical detail and example.

### **3.3.2.1. Elements of Hindu temple**

The architecture of temples varies across India; the basic elements of the temple are the same, but the form and scale varied. The following section describes the elements of the temple. During the late half of the 7th century C.E, the Hindu temple structures of India began to acquire a definite form. The sanctuary as whole is known as the Vimana and consists of two parts. The upper part of the Vimana is called as the Sikhara and the lower portion inside the Vimana is called as the *Garbhagriha* (cella or inner chamber).

*Sikhara* meaning the tower or the spire. It is the pyramidal or tapering portion of the temple which represents the mythological 'Meru' or the highest mountain peak. The shape and the size of the tower vary from region to region. '*Garbhagriha*' meaning the womb chamber. It is nucleus and the innermost chamber of the temple where the image or idol of the deity is placed. The chamber is mostly square in plan and is entered by a doorway on its eastern side. The visitors are not allowed inside the *garbhagriha* in most of the temples, only the priests perform the rituals and worship. '*Pradakshina patha*' meaning the ambulatory passageway for circumambulation. It consists of enclosed corridor carried around the outside of *garbhagriha*. The devotees walk around the deity in clockwise direction as a worship ritual and symbol of respect to the temple god or goddess. *Mandapa* is the pillared hall in front of the *garbhagriha*, for the assembly of the devotees. It is used by the devotees to sit, pray, chant, meditate and watch the priests performing the rituals. It is also known as 'Natamandira' meaning temple hall of dancing, where in olden days ritual of music and dance was performed. In some of the earlier temples the mandapa was an isolated and separate structure from the sanctuary. *Antarala* meaning the vestibule or the intermediate chamber. It unites the main sanctuary and the pillared hall of the temple. '*Ardhamandapa*' meaning the front porch or the main entrance of the temple leading to the mandapa. Some other essential elements found in the Hindu temples are: (vii) 'Gopurams' meaning the monumental and ornate tower at the entrance of the temple complex, specially found in south India. (viii) 'Pitha', the plinth or the platform of the temple. (ix) 'Toranas' the typical gateway of the temple mostly found in north Indian temple and (x) '*Amalaka*' the fluted disc like stone placed at the apex of the sikhara.

Hindu temples are also famous for their decorative elements. The temple is covered with elaborate sculpture and ornament that form a fundamental part of its conception. The decorative elements are grouped in to religious, secular and architectural. The placement of an image in a temple is carefully planned: for instance, river goddesses (Ganga and Yamuna) are usually found at the entrance of a *garbhagriha* in a *Nagara* temple, dvarapalas (doorkeepers) are usually found on the gateways or gopurams of Dravida temples, similarly, *mithunas* (erotic images), *navagrahas* (the nine auspicious planets) and yakshas are also placed at entrances to guard them. Various forms or aspects of the main divinity are to be found on the outer walls of the sanctum. The deities of directions, i.e., the *ashtadikpalas* face the eight key directions on the outer walls of the sanctum and/or on the outer walls of a temple. Subsidiary shrines around the main temple are dedicated to the family or incarnations of the main deity. Finally, various elements of ornamentation such as *gavaksha*, *vyala/yali*, *kalpa-lata*, *amalaka*, *kalasha*, etc. are used in distinct ways and places in a temple.

### **3.3.2.2. The Northern Style-Nagara**

The style of temple architecture that became popular in northern India is known as *nagara*. In North India it is common for an entire temple to be built on a stone platform with steps leading up to it. Further, unlike in South India it does not usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways. While the earliest temples had just one tower, or *shikhara*, later temples had several. The *garbhagriha* is always

located directly under the tallest tower. There are many subdivisions of *nagara* temples depending on the shape of the *shikhara*. There are different names for the various parts of the temple in different parts of India; however, the most common name for the simple *shikhara* which is square at the base and whose walls curve or slope inward to a point on top is called the '*latina*' or the *rekha-prasada* type of *shikhara*.

The second major type of architectural form in the *nagara* order is the phamsana. Phamsana buildings tend to be broader and shorter than *latina* ones. Their roofs are composed of several slabs that gently rise to a single point over the centre of the building, unlike the *latina* ones which look like sharply rising tall towers. Phamsana roofs do not curve inward, instead they slope upwards on a straight incline. In many North Indian temples you will notice that the phamsana design is used for the mandapas while the main *garbhagriha* is housed in a *latina* building. Later on, the *latina* buildings grew complex, and instead of appearing like a single tall tower, the temple began to support many smaller towers, which were clustered together like rising mountain-peaks with the tallest one being in the centre, and this was the one which was always above the *garbhagriha*.

The third main sub-type of the *nagara* building is what is generally called the valabhi type. These are rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber. The edge of this vaulted chamber is rounded, like the bamboo or wooden wagons that would have been drawn by bullocks in ancient times. They are usually called 'wagonvaulted buildings'. As mentioned above, the form of the temple is influenced by ancient building forms that were already in existence before the fifth century CE. The valabhi type of building was one of them. For instance, if you study the ground-plan of many of the Buddhist rock-cut chaitya caves, you will notice that they are shaped as long halls which end in a curved back. From the inside, the roof of this portion also looks like a wagon-vaulted roof.

**Central India:** Ancient temples of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan share many traits. The most visible is that they are made of sandstone. Some of the oldest surviving structural temples from the Gupta Period are in Madhya Pradesh. These are relatively modest-looking shrines each having four pillars that support a small mandapa which looks like a simple square porch-like extension before an equally small room that served as the *garbhagriha*. Importantly, of the two such temples that survive, one is at Udaigiri, which is on the outskirts of Vidisha and is part of a larger Hindu complex of cave shrines, while the other one is at Sanchi, which was a Buddhist site. This means that similar developments were being incorporated in the architecture of temples of both the religions. The patrons and donors of the temple at Deogarh (in Lalitpur District, Uttar Pradesh) are unknown; however on the basis of both architecture and imagery, it is established that this temple was built in the early sixth century CE. That is, about a hundred years or so after the small temples we just learnt about in Sanchi and Udaigiri.

This makes it a classic example of a late Gupta Period type of temple. This temple is in the *panchayatana* style of architecture where the main shrine is built on a rectangular plinth with four smaller subsidiary shrines at the four corners. The tall and curvilinear *shikhara* also corroborates this date. The presence of this curving *latina* or *rekha-prasada* type of *shikhara* also makes it clear that this is an early example of a classic *nagara* style of temple.

This west-facing temple has a grand doorway with standing sculptures of female figures representing the Ganga on the left side and the Yamuna on the right side. The temple depicts Vishnu in various forms, due to which it was assumed that the four subsidiary shrines must also have housed Vishnu's avatars and the temple was mistaken for a dasavatara temple. In fact, it is not actually known to whom the four subsidiary shrines were originally dedicated. There are three main reliefs of Vishnu on the temple walls: Sheshashayana on the south, Nara-Narayan on the east and Gajendramoksha on the west. The temple is west-facing, which is less common, as most temples are east- or north-facing.

Numerous temples of smaller dimensions have been constructed over a period of time. By contrast, if we study the temples of Khajuraho made in the tenth century, i.e., about four hundred years

after the temple at Deogarh, we can see how dramatically the shape and style of the *nagara* temple architecture had developed.

The Lakshmana temple dedicated to Vishnu is the grandest temple of Khajuraho, built in C.E. 954 by the Chandela king, Dhanga. A *nagara* temple, it is placed on a high platform accessed by stairs. There are four smaller temples in the corners, and all the towers or *shikharas* rise high, upward in a curved pyramidal fashion, emphasising the temple's vertical thrust ending in a horizontal fluted disc called an *amalaka* topped with a kalash or vase. The crowning elements: *amalaka* and *kalash*, are to be found on all *nagara* temples of this period. The temple also has projecting balconies and verandahs, thus very different from Deogarh.

Khajuraho's temples are also known for their extensive erotic sculptures; the erotic expression is given equal importance in human experience as spiritual pursuit, and it is seen as part of a larger cosmic whole. Many Hindu temples therefore feature *mithuna* (embracing couple) sculptures, considered auspicious. Usually, they are placed at the entrance of the temple or on an exterior wall or they may also be placed on the walls between the *mandapa* and the main shrine. Khajuraho's sculptures are highly stylised with typical features: they are in almost full relief, cut away from the surrounding stone, with sharp noses, prominent chins, long slanting eyes and eyebrows. The other notable example at Khajuraho is Kandariya Mahadeo temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. There are many temples at Khajuraho, most of them devoted to Hindu gods. There are some Jain temples as well.

**West India:** The temples in the north-western parts of India including Gujarat and Rajasthan, and stylistically extendable, at times, to western Madhya Pradesh are too numerous to include here in any comprehensive way. The stone used to build the temples ranges in colour and type. While sandstone is the commonest, a grey to black basalt can be seen in some of the tenth to twelfth century temple sculptures. The most exuberant and famed is the manipulatable soft white marble which is also seen in some of the tenth to twelfth century Jain temples in Mount Abu and the fifteenth century temple at Ranakpur. Among the most important art-historical sites in the region is Samlaji in Gujarat which shows how earlier artistic traditions of the region mixed with a post-Gupta style and gave rise to a distinct style of sculpture. A large number of sculptures made of grey schist have been found in this region which can be dated between the sixth and eighth centuries CE. While the patronage of these is debated, the date is established on the basis of the style.

The Sun temple at Modhera dates back to early eleventh century and was built by Raja Bhimdev I of the Solanki Dynasty in 1026. The Solankis were a branch of the later Chalukyas. There is a massive rectangular stepped tank called the *surya kund* in front of it. Proximity of sacred architecture to a water body such as a tank, a river or a pond has been noticed right from the earliest times. By the early eleventh century they had become a part of many temples. This hundred-square-metre rectangular pond is perhaps the grandest temple tank in India. A hundred and eight miniature shrines are carved in between the steps inside the tank. A huge ornamental arch-torana leads one to the *sabha mandapa* (the assembly hall) which is open on all sides, as was the fashion of the times in western and central Indian temples. The influence of the woodcarving tradition of Gujarat is evident in the lavish carving and sculpture work. However, the walls of the central small shrine are devoid of carving and are left plain as the temple faces the east and, every year, at the time of the equinoxes, the sun shines directly into this central shrine.

**East India:** Eastern Indian temples include those found in the North-East, Bengal and Odisha. Each of these three areas produced distinct types of temples. The history of architecture in the North-East and Bengal is hard to study because a number of ancient buildings in those regions were renovated, and what survives now are later brick or concrete temples at those sites. It appears that terracotta was the main medium of construction, and also for moulding plaques which depicted Buddhist and Hindu deities in Bengal until the seventh century. A large number of sculptures have been found in Assam and Bengal which shows the development of important regional schools in those regions.



**Assam:** An old sixth-century sculpted door frame from Daparvatia near Tezpur and another few stray sculptures from Rangagora Tea Estate near Tinsukia in Assam bear witness to the import of the Gupta idiom in that region. This post-Gupta style continued in the region well into the tenth century C.E. However, by the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, a distinct regional style developed in Assam. The style that came with the migration of the Tais from Upper Burma mixed with the dominant Pala style of Bengal and led to the creation of what was later known as the Ahom style in and around Guwahati. Kamakhya temple, a Shakti Peeth, is dedicated to Goddess Kamakhya and was built in the seventeenth century.

**Bengal:** The style of the sculptures during the period between the ninth and eleventh centuries in Bengal (including Bangladesh) and Bihar is known as the Pala style, named after the ruling dynasty at the time, while the style of those of the mid-eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries is named after the Sena kings. While the Palas are celebrated as patrons of many Buddhist monastic sites, the temples from that region are known to express the local Vanga style. The ninth century Siddheshvara Mahadeva temple in Barakar in Burdwan District, for example, shows a tall curving *shikhara* crowned by a large *amalaka* and is an example of the early Pala style. It is similar to contemporaneous temples of Odisha. This basic form grows loftier with the passing of centuries. Many of the temples from the ninth to the twelfth century were located at Telkupi in Purulia District. They were submerged when dams were built in the region. These were amongst the important examples of architectural styles prevalent in the region which showed an awareness of all the known *nagara* sub-types that were prevalent in the rest of North India. However, several temples still survive in Purulia District which can be dated to this period. The black to grey basalt and chlorite stone pillars and arched niches of these temples heavily influenced the earliest Bengal sultanate buildings at Gaur and Pandua. Many local vernacular building traditions of Bengal also influenced the style of temples in that region. Most prominent of these was the shape of the curving or sloping side of the bamboo roof of a Bengali hut. In the later period, scores of terracotta brick temples were built across Bengal and Bangladesh in a unique style that had elements of local building techniques seen in bamboo huts which were combined with older forms reminiscent of the Pala period and with the forms of arches and domes that were taken from Islamic architecture. These can be widely found in and around Vishnupur, Bankura, Burdwan and Birbhum and are dated mostly to the seventeenth century.

**Odisha:** Most of the main temple sites are located Bhubaneswar or ancient Tribhuvaneshvara, Puri and Konark. An inscription of 1235 C.E in the mukhamandapa of the Amriteshvara temple at Holal in Bellary district of Karnatak speaks of a fourth style i.e Kalinga in addition to the above three. Pratistha Lakshyanasara Samuchaya by Vaivochana a *silpa* text of 11th-12th century AD mentions Kalinga temples as of rekha order. Indigenous texts like Bhubana Pradip, Silpa Prakasa, Silpa Ratnakosha etc. deals exclusively with the Kalingan style of architecture. These silpa text of Odisha mentions three types of temples, *rekhadeul*, *pidhadeul* and *khakaradeul*. The rekha and pidha form two component parts of one architectural scheme, the former is represented by a sanctum with its curvilinear spire and the latter by the frontal porch having pyramidal roof of receding tiers known as pidhas. In the earlier phase, there was no *pidha deul* and the *Jagamohan* or the frontal hall had a by a flat roof. In course of time to meet the growing need of the rituals two more structures were added namely *natamandapa* (dancing hall) and *bhogamandapa* (offering hall) during the Ganga period (12th century C.E). All the four components are arranged in one axial alignment and often the temple complex is enclosed by *prakara* (boundary) wall. The *khakara* order is noted by a semi-cylindrical vaulted that looks like a inverted boat (*boita*) or a pumpkin gourd roof. The temples of this order are usually meant for sakti worship.

Odishan temples constituted a sub-style of the *Nagara* style of north Indian temples. The building activity of this sub-regional style continued for nearly one thousand years from the 6th- 7<sup>th</sup> century to the 15th-16th century C.E in unbroken continuity. Bhubaneswar, the ancient Ekamra Khetra



served as the experimental ground of these temple building activities without being distracted by the change of ruling dynasties or their cult affiliation. As a result the temples are identified with the land Kalinga rather than the royal families such as Pallava art, Rastrakuta art, Chandella art, Chalukyan art etc.

The Odishan temple is remarkable for its plan and elevation. The interior ground plan of the temple is square as a rule. Rarely, however the temple has star shaped layout (as noticed at Boudh) or circular plan (Ranipur-Jharial & Hirapur) to conform to the nature of rituals. Generally speaking the Odishan temples are distinguished by vertical offset projections called *rathas* (on plan) or *pagas* (on elevation). Depending on the number *pagas*, the temples are classified into *triratha*, *pancharatha*, *saptaratha* and *navaratha*. The earlier temples are characterized by *triratha* plan. On elevation, the temples show interesting features. Both sanctum and the porch can be divided into three parts along the vertical plane viz. *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. From bottom to top or final, each part of the temple has a special name corresponding to that of limbs of human body standing on a *pista* or the platform on which the temple stands (which is not a compulsory element in early temples and is generally found in later temples). The *bada* or the vertical wall portion of the temple is divisible into *pabhaga*, *jangha* and *baranda*. This type of three fold division of *Triangabada* is found in early temples and in later temples, *bada* has five elements namely *pabhaga* (or the foot portion is composed of five mouldings called *khura*, *kumbha*, *patta*, *kani* and *basanta*), *tala jangha* (lower thigh), *bandhana* (mouldings joining the two thigh), *upara jangha* (upper thigh) and *baranda* (the waist portion). The *baranda*, forming the top most part of the *bada* has a set of mouldings, starting with one moulding in the early phase progressing into seven and ten mouldings in the later and last phases of the classical tradition.

The *gandi* (or the torso) of *deul* has a curvilinear super structure; in the temples of early phase *gandi* is devoid of any sculptural embellishment. Fully developed temples have ornamental *bhumis*, *chaity* motifs and *angasikharas* (miniature shrines). The *gandi* of jagamohana is of pyramidal shape (designed with receding tiers in a sequence so as to reduce the top most tier to the half of the lower tier). The *mastaka* (the head) consisted of the *beki* (neck) or recessed cylindrical portion above *gandi*, *amalaka* (ribbed circular stone, resembling the *amla* fruit), *khapuri* (skull), *kalasa* (auspicious pot) and the *ayudha* (weapon of the enshrined deity) in succession. The *mastaka* of the *pidha deul* has the same features except for the addition of *ghanta* (bell). The horizontal cross- section of the *bada* and *gandi* in both the *rekha* and the *pidha deul* are square, while the *mastaka* is circular. The ground plan of *khakhara deul* is oblong. The temples are remarkable for abundance of sculptures. Stella Kramarisch has aptly remarked, "Architecture in Odisha is but sculpture on a gigantic scale". The sculptural repertory consists of human figures, *kanyas*, erotic motifs, cult icons, animal figures including mythical and composite figures, decorative designs like variety of scrolls and architectural motifs like *pidha mudi*, *khakhara mudi*, *vajra mudi* etc.

The temple style was in full vigour in the wake of vast religious and cultural resurgence that took place when the Sailodbhavas ruled from the middle of 6th century C.E till the first quarter of 8th century C.E. The temple building activities gained momentum under the Bhaumakaras (736-950 C.E) and the Somavamsis (950-1112 C.E) and reached the climax during the Ganga period (1112-1435 C.E). The activities however continued even under the Suryavamsi-Gajapatis (1435-1542 C.E) though on a very small and impoverished scale.

The temples of Odisha portray a picture of organic evolution from Parasuramesvara to Lingaraja through Muktesvara and Vaital, which ultimately culminated in Puri and the gigantic Konark. The evolution can be seen through four distinctive phases of temple building; viz. i) Formative phase, ii) Transitional phase, iii) Mature phase, iv) Phase of decadence. Whatever it may be till recent Odisha has possessed the rich Temple heritage, which are the imprints of our ancestor, still existing with the ravage of time. These are the pride of Odishan people in particular and that of Indian in general. These are most compact and Homogenous architectural group in India.

**The Hills:** A unique form of architecture developed in the hills of Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal and Kashmir. Kashmir's proximity to prominent Gandhara sites (such as Taxila, Peshawar and the northwest frontier) lent the region a strong Gandhara influence by the fifth century CE. This began to mix with the Gupta and post-Gupta traditions that were brought to it from Sarnath, Mathura and even centres in Gujarat and Bengal. Brahmin pundits and Buddhist monks frequently travelled between Kashmir, Garhwal, Kumaon and religious centres in the plains like Banaras, Nalanda and even as far south as Kanchipuram. As a result both Buddhist and Hindu traditions began to intermingle and spread in the hills. The hills also had their own tradition of wooden buildings with pitched roofs. At several places in the hills, therefore, you will find that while the main *garbhagriha* and *shikhara* are made in a *rekha-prasada* or *latina* style, the *mandapa* is of an older form of wooden architecture. Sometimes, the temple itself takes on a pagoda shape.

The Karkota period of Kashmir is the most significant in terms of architecture. One of the most important temples is Pandrethan, built during the eighth and ninth centuries. In keeping with the tradition of a water tank attached to the shrine, this temple is built on a plinth built in the middle of a tank. Although there are evidences of both Hindu and Buddhist followings in Kashmir, this temple is a Hindu one, possibly dedicated to Shiva. The architecture of this temple is in keeping with the age-old Kashmiri tradition of wooden buildings. Due to the snowy conditions in Kashmir, the roof is peaked and slants slowly outward. The temple is moderately ornamented, moving away from the post-Gupta aesthetics of heavy carving. A row of elephants at the base and a decorated doorway are the only embellishments on the shrine. Like the findings at Samlaji, the sculptures at Chamba also show an amalgamation of local traditions with a post-Gupta style. The images of Mahishasuramardini and Narasimha at the Laksna-Devi Mandir are evidences of the influence of the post-Gupta tradition. Both the images show the influence of the metal sculpture tradition of Kashmir.

The yellow colour of the images is possibly due to an alloy of zinc and copper which were popularly used to make images in Kashmir. This temple bears an inscription that states that it was built during the reign of Meruvarman who lived in the seventh century. Of the temples in Kumaon, the ones at Jageshwar near Almora, and Champavat near Pithoragarh, are classic examples of *nagara* architecture in the region.

**Historical Development of North Indian Temple:** From the point of view of the development of temple forms as such, the Imperial Guptas commenced the vogue from modest ones as temple No. 17 of Sanchi, those of Tigova, Udayagiri, those etc which had floor through a brick medium at Bhidargoan (Kanpur District), Nagari (Rajasthan) into the pancayatana models at Nachna, Bhumara, Deogrh, etc. and later developed into interesting circular sectioned temples of the Rekha class also, as at Chandrehi, in the 9th-10th century C.E. They were followed by the Pratiharas of Kannauj, the Gurjara Pratiharas of Gujarat (as at Lakroda) and Rajasthan (as at Osian, Buchkala, etc.) ruling from several regional capitals like Mandavyapuri (Mandore near Jodhpur), Nandipuri, etc. and the activity was continued by the Maitrakas, (as at Gop Pindara, Sutrapada Kadyar, etc. forming also a folk-idiom of the Phamsana category), Saindhavas and Chapotkatas of Saurashtra at Wadwan, Tametar and then later the Solankis of Anhilvadpatah in countless temples. In Rajasthan, the trend was further taken up by the Guhilas, Chahamanas, again of various clans ruling from Nagda, Chitogarh, Sakambari, Nodal, Jalor, etc. In Central India, the Paramaras who succeeded the Pratiharas and illustrious kings including Bhoja (the author of Samarangana Sutradhara, Sringara prakasa, Manasollasa, etc.) created a new trend in the Rekha style, formulating the Bhoomija school which spread as far with West as to Menal and Bijholia and whose type site is Udayasvara at Udayapur (M.P.) of the Bhumija Paramara school which spread as far West into Rajasthan under the Kalachuris of Dahal and South into Aparanta (Konkana) under the Silaharas and under Yadava Senas of Devagiri up to the 13th century C.E. This Bhumija style decorated the sikharas with a sringara or garland-like string of miniature sikharas between each two cardinal lata (rib) of the manjari and elaborated the facets of the bhitti into two main categories, the orthogonal and

the Stellate (*parivartana*) or star shaped ones. One may note that the Hoysalas of Dvarasamudra (Halebid) in Karnataka had effectively created this stellate plan with only the koshthas in bhadra face and these had their impact on the Chalukyas (Solankis) of Gujarat also as at Satnal on the Mahi River near Dakor.

The Kalachuris of Dahala specialised in this order in innumerable temples in Raipur, Bilaspur and other regions and were particularly excelling in slender and lofty sikharas over seven bhoomis, side by side-With the orthogonal type or pure *Nagara* forms, up to Amarkantak, the source of the Narmada. The Chandellas or Jajakabhukti further innovated the pure *Nagara* form into the urati-sringa mode by which the superstructural tower was had several applique half-tower miniatures, progressively becoming smaller in size and clustering like petals, around the moolamanjari which is indeed seen only in the top-most part of these lofty temples rising from its easing like the pistil of a flower. Their centres were again well spread, apart from the classic Khajuraho nucleus, in Banda and Hamirpur districts of Uttar Pradesh as at Mahoba, Rahilya, etc. and as far south in Maharashtra as in the temples at Markandi on the, Wain ganga river.

The Kalinga class of *Rekha prasadas* again was starting from the elongated gable roof front mandapa, as at Parasuramesvor, through Vaital deul and Torana-decorated Mukkesvar, into the grand Lingaraja complex, climaxing into the magnificent sun-temple at Konarak. The hall-mark of the Kalinga temple was the astylar corbelled main tower, with horizontal digited courses, division of the Bhitti into Rahapaga, pabhaga and konakapaga and having mostly closed front mandapas and rising vertical profile, with festoones carved on the facets and mildly curving only towards the gandi and the beki. Its plinth was characterised by the bold ghata-shaped moulding and by a general absence of a separate and closely circumscribing Jagati terrace. Its ambit of influence was well into the northernmost parts of coastal Andhra Pradesh, as at Mukhalingam (Somesvara temple) and into the easternmost districts of Madhya Pradesh like Sambalpur and Bastar. The temples are mostly nirandhara.

The Rekha prasada, by and large, carries a sandhara circuit around the sanctum, with porched bhavra valokana, followed by successive mandapas with ornate pillars and hemispherical ceilings of cusped, kshipta and gajatal decorative motifs and also of simpler nabhicchanda annular ringed courses, with all its mandapas invariably having cardinal porched openings and forming often a latin-cross layout, with the mukhamandapa porch, approached by a flight of steps and the entire temple set on a square spacious jagati terrace. The super structural towers of the subsidiary shrines have ghanthasamvarana type of roofing course and a lofty sukanasa opening on the antarala roof applied to the main sikhara face and with a sardoola in rampart posture located on the edges of the sukanasa and successive roofs at progressively lowered heights. The doorframe of the cella is of multiple sakha overdoor form with jamb-base carrying Ganga and Yamuna on either side, besides Pratihara (attendants). The beam of the cella door has a lalata-bimba (signature mascot) often either of Gajalakshmi or Ganesha or Lakuleesa (or Mahaveera in Jain temples). The uttaranga above this beam shows small miniature shrines with their appropriate towered tops. These zones are occasionally decorated by navagraha panels. The outer walls carry Dikpalas, in the respective cardinal and oblique angles in a fixed position, with Agni (south-east), Yama (south), Nairuti (south-west), Varuna (west), Vayu (north-west), Kubera (north), Isana (north-east) and Indra (east). They are sometimes provided with Torana entrances beyond the outermost mandapa and a Sringara-chauri mandapa further and also a tank sometimes, even where they are located on the banks of a stream or river. Prakaras and gopura entrances are conspicuous by their absence, in 'Northern' temples, as also parivara shrines including even separate Devi temples. It was customary invariably to build separate temples for all divinities, as of Svayampradhana category, besides Siva and Vishnu, as for Karthikeya, Ganesha, Durga or Amba, the Saptamata's, Bhairava and Surya. This pantheism in substance, which was the hallmark of the approach to Hindu temple-building in the north is in somewhat striking comparability with the generic character of southern temple cults, which already in their earlier stages, lived through a pantheistic stage and went on from there to a dichotomised format

wherein the cults nexus and polarisation had been developed amidst the divinities and two dominant divisions into Siva-based and Vishnu-based worship developed, with the consorts also classified for each though in the same stages, a Durga-Kali mass-based cult was also administrated as a part of socioreligious and part-ethnic foot-note to the nexus between Saivism and Vaishnavism on the one hand and between Puranic Hinduism and an underlying indigenous cultmatrix of a pan-Indian character, on the other. This, however, is a fit ground for the socio-cultural art historian to tread upon and has no structural or formally identifiable over-tones in architecture as such. It does, none the less, tend to predicate upon one of the basic distinctions between the aims and objective of the 'Northern' temple organism and its 'southern' counterpart.

### 3.3.2.3. Dravida or south Indian temple style

Unlike the *nagara* temple, the *dravida* temple is enclosed within a compound wall. The front wall has an entrance gateway in its centre, which is known as a *gopuram*. The shape of the main temple tower known as *vimana* in Tamil Nadu is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving *shikhara* of North India. In the South Indian temple, the word '*shikhara*' is used only for the crowning element at the top of the temple which is usually shaped like a small *stupika* or an octagonal cupola-this is equivalent to the *amlak* and *kalasha* of North Indian temples. Whereas at the entrance to the North Indian temple's *garbhagriha*, it would be usual to find images such as *mithunas* and the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, in the south you will generally find sculptures of fierce *dvarapalas* or the door-keepers guarding the temple. It is common to find a large water reservoir, or a temple tank, enclosed within the complex. Subsidiary shrines are either incorporated within the main temple tower, or located as distinct, separate small shrines beside the main temple.

The North Indian idea of multiple *shikharas* rising together as a cluster was not popular in South India. At some of the most sacred temples in South India, the main temple in which the *garbhagriha* is situated has, in fact, one of the smallest towers. This is because it is usually the oldest part of the temple. With the passage of time, the population and size of the town associated with that temple would have increased, and it would have become necessary to make a new boundary wall around the temple. This would have been taller than the last one, and its *gopurams* would have been even loftier. So, for instance, the Srirangam temple in Tiruchirapally has as many as seven 'concentric' rectangular enclosure walls, each with *gopurams*. The outermost is the newest, while the tower right in the centre housing the *garbhagriha* is the oldest.

Temples thus started becoming the focus of urban architecture. Kanchipuram, Thanjavur or Tanjore, Madurai and Kumbakonam are the most famous temple towns of Tamil Nadu, where, during the eighth to twelfth centuries, the role of the temple was not limited to religious matters alone. Temples became rich administrative centres, controlling vast areas of land. Just as there are many subdivisions of the main types of *nagara* temples, there are subdivisions also of *dravida* temples. These are basically of five different shapes: square, usually called *kuta*, and also *aturasra*; rectangular or *shala* or *ayatasra*; elliptical, called *gaja-prishta* or elephant backed, or also called *vrittayata*, deriving from wagon-vaulted shapes of apsidal *chaityas* with a horse-shoe shaped entrance facade usually called a *nasi*; circular or *vritta*; and octagonal or *ashtasra*.

Generally speaking, the plan of the temple and the shape of the *vimana* were conditioned by the iconographic nature of the consecrated deity, so it was appropriate to build specific types of temples for specific types of icons. It must, however, be remembered that this is a simplistic differentiation of the subdivisions. Several different shapes may be combined in specific periods and places to create their own unique style.

The Pallavas were one of the ancient South Indian dynasties that were active in the Andhra region from the second century CE onwards and moved south to settle in Tamil Nadu. Their history is better documented from the sixth to the eighth century, when they left many inscriptions in stone and several monuments. Their powerful kings spread their empire to various parts of the subcontinent, at

times reaching the borders of Odisha, and their links with South-East Asia were also strong. Although they were mostly Shaivite, several Vaishnava shrines also survived from their reign, and there is no doubt that they were influenced by the long Buddhist history of the Deccan. Their early buildings, it is generally assumed, were rockcut, while the later ones were structural. However, there is reason to believe that structural buildings were well known even when rock-cut ones were being excavated. The early buildings are generally attributed to the reign of Mahendravarman I, a contemporary of the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II of Karnataka. Narasimhavarman I, also known as Mamalla, who acceded the Pallava throne around 640 CE, is celebrated for the expansion of the empire, avenging the defeat his father had suffered at the hands of Pulakesin II, and inaugurating most of the building works at Mahabalipuram which is known after him as Mamallapuram.

The shore temple at Mahabalipuram was built later, probably in the reign of Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha who reigned from 700 to 728 CE. Now it is oriented to the east facing the ocean, but if you study it closely, you will find that it actually houses three shrines, two to Shiva, one facing east and the other west, and a middle one to Vishnu who is shown as Anantashayana. This is unusual, because temples generally have a single main shrine and not three areas of worship. This shows that it was probably not originally conceived like this and different shrines may have been added at different times, modified perhaps with the change of patrons. In the compound there is evidence of a water tank, an early example of a gopuram, and several other images. Sculptures of the bull, Nandi, Shiva's mount, line the temple walls, and these, along with the carvings on the temple's lower walls have suffered severe disfiguration due to erosion by salt-water laden air over the centuries.

The magnificent Shiva temple of Thanjavur, called the Rajarajeswara or Brihadiswara temple, was completed around 1009 by Rajaraja Chola, and is the largest and tallest of all Indian temples. Temple building was prolific at this time, and over a hundred important temples of the Chola period are in a good state of preservation, and many more are still active shrines. Bigger in scale than anything built by their predecessors, the Pallavas, Chalukyas or Pandyas, this Chola temple's pyramidal multi-storeyed vimana rises a massive seventy metres (approximately two hundred feet), topped by a monolithic *shikhara* which is an octagonal dome-shaped stupika. It is in this temple that one notices for the first time two large gopuras (gateway towers) with an elaborate sculptural programme which was conceived along with the temple. Huge Nandi-figures dot the corners of the *shikhara*, and the kalasha on top by itself is about three metres and eight centimetres in height. Hundreds of stucco figures decorate the vimana, although it is possible that some of these may have been added on during the Maratha Period and did not always belong to the Chola Period. The main deity of the temple is Shiva, who is shown as a huge lingam set in a two storeyed sanctum. The walls surrounding the sanctum have extended mythological narratives which are depicted through painted murals and sculptures.

#### **3.3.2.4. Vesara or Architecture in the Deccan**

Many different styles of temple architecture influenced by both North and South Indian temples were used in regions like Karnataka. While some scholars consider the buildings in this region as being distinctly either *nagara* or *dravida*, a hybridised style that seems to have become popular after the mid-seventh century, is known in some ancient texts as *Vesara*. By the late seventh or the early eighth century, the ambitious projects at Ellora became even grander. By about 750 CE, the early western Chalukya control of the Deccan was taken by the Rashtrakutas. Their greatest achievement in architecture is the Kailashnath temple at Ellora, a culmination of at least a millennium-long tradition in rock-cut architecture in India. It is a complete *dravida* building with a Nandi shrine-since the temple is dedicated to Shiva-a gopuram-like gateway, surrounding cloisters, subsidiary shrines, staircases and an imposing tower or vimana rising to thirty metres. Importantly, all of this is carved out of living rock. One portion of the monolithic hill was carved patiently to build the Kailashnath temple.

The sculpture of the Rashtrakuta phase at Ellora is dynamic, the figures often larger than life-size, infused with unparalleled grandeur and the most overwhelming energy. In the southern part of the



Deccan, i.e., in the region of Karnataka is where some of the most experimental hybrid styles of *vesara* architecture are to be found. Pulakesin I established the early western Chalukya kingdom when he secured the land around Badami in 543. The early western Chalukyas ruled most of the Deccan till the mid-eighth century when they were superseded by the Rashtrakutas. Early Chalukyan activity also takes the form of rock-cut caves while later activity is of structural temples. The earliest is probably the Ravana Phadi cave at Aihole which is known for its distinctive sculptural style. One of the most important sculptures at the site is of Nataraja, surrounded by larger-than-life-size depictions of the *saptamatikas*: three to Shiva's left and four to his right. The figures are characterised by graceful, slim bodies, long, oval faces topped with extremely tall cylindrical crowns and shown to wear short dhotis marked by fine incised striations indicating pleating. They are distinctly different from contemporary western Deccan or Vakataka styles seen at places such as Paunar and Ramtek. The hybridisation and incorporation of several styles was the hallmark of Chalukyan buildings.

The most elaborate of all Chalukyan temples at Pattadakal made in the reign of Vikramaditya II (733-44) by his chief queen Loka Mahadevi, for instance, shows complete knowledge of Pallava buildings at Kanchipuram and as a corollary, Mahabalipuram. The temple is one of the best early examples of the *dravida* tradition. By contrast other eastern Chalukyan temples, like the Mahakuta, five kilometers from Badami, and the Swarga Brahma temple at Alampur show a greater assimilation of northern styles from Odisha and Rajasthan. At the same time the Durga temple at Aihole is unique having an even earlier style of an apsidal shrine which is reminiscent of Buddhist *chaitya* halls and is surrounded by a veranda of a later kind, with a *shikhara* that is stylistically like a *nagara* one. Finally, mention must be made of the Lad Khan temple at Aihole. This seems to be inspired by the wooden-roofed temples of the hills, except that it is constructed out of stone. Undoubtedly, they are dynamic expressions of a creative set of architects who were competing with their peers in the rest of India.

With the waning of Chola and Pandya power, the Hoysalas of Karnataka grew to prominence in South India and became the most important patrons centred at Mysore. The remains of around hundred temples have been found in southern Deccan, though it is only three of them that are most frequently discussed: the temples at Belur, Halebid and Somnathpuram. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of these temples is that they grow extremely complex with so many projecting angles emerging from the previously straightforward square temple, that the plan of these temples starts looking like a star, and is thus known as a *stellateplan*. Since they are made out of soapstone which is a relatively soft stone, the artists were able to carve their sculptures intricately. This can be seen particularly in the jewellery of the gods that adorn their temple walls.

The Hoysaleswara temple (Lord of the Hoysalas) at Halebid in Karnataka was built in dark schist stone by the Hoysala king in 1150. Hoysala temples are sometimes called hybrid or *vesara* as their unique style seems neither completely *dravida* nor *nagara*, but somewhere in between. They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their highly original star-like ground-plans and a profusion of decorative carvings. Dedicated to Shiva as Nataraja, the Halebid temple is a double building with a large hall for the *mandapa* to facilitate music and dance. A Nandi pavilion precedes each building. The tower of the temple here and at nearby Belur fell long ago, and an idea of the temples' appearance can now only be gleaned from their detailed miniature versions flanking the entrances. From the central square plan cutout angular projections create the star effect decorated with the most profuse carvings of animals and deities. So intricate is the carving that it is said, for instance, in the bottom-most frieze featuring a continuous procession of hundreds of elephants with their mahouts, no two elephants are in the same pose.

Founded in 1336, Vijayanagara, literally 'city of victory', attracted a number of international travellers such as the Italian, Niccolo di Conti, the Portuguese Domingo Paes, Fernao Nuniz and Duarte Barbosa and the Afghan Abd, al-Razzaq, who have left vivid accounts of the city. In addition, various Sanskrit and Telugu works document the vibrant literary tradition of this kingdom. Architecturally,

Vijayanagara synthesises the centuries-old dravida temple architecture with Islamic styles demonstrated by the neighbouring sultanates. Their sculpture too, although fundamentally derived from, and consciously seeking to recreate Chola ideals, occasionally shows the presence of foreigners. Their eclectic ruins from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries preserve a fascinating time in history, an age of wealth, exploration and cultural fusion.

### **3.3.2.5. Temples and Indian Cultural Ethos**

Indian temples symbolised the very mundane urges of humans and were for varied behaviors of the society as a whole. To begin with, common education within the temple was of great importance. Several endowments to temples were specifically made for establishment of colleges which were incorporated into temple complexes. Teaching of such subjects as grammar and astrology as well as recital and teaching of texts such as the Vedas, the Epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Puranas were encouraged. Music and dance usually shaped part of the daily ritual of the temples and throughout special celebrations and annual festivals these played a particularly dominant role. Big temples would uphold their own musicians- both vocal and instrumental, jointly with dancers, actors and teachers of performing arts. The life-size delineations of such musicians in a tenth-century temple at Khajuraho as well as in the Sun temple at Konarka and *natamandir* (dancing hall) forming an absolutely integral element in the Odishan and other temples also give eloquent testimonies to that effect. And, of course, who can forget the performance of the great cosmic-dance of the Mahadeva Shiva himself at the Chidambaram temple. No less significant was the institution of *devadasis*. These temple maidens played a important role in dancing as well as in singing of devotional hymns through which the temple god was entertained. The information that the Chola emperor Rajaraja I (985-1012) constructed two extensive streets for the accommodation of four hundred dancing women attached to the Brihadishvar temple (Thanjavur), provides us and thought of the lavish level

### **3.3.3. Sculptural Tradition**

The regional spirit asserting itself is seen in sculptural arts as well. Stylistically, schools of artistic depictions of the human form urbanized in eastern, western, central and northern India. Distinctive contribution also appeared in the Himalayan regions, the Deccan and the distant South. A great majority of these regions produced works of art that were characterized through what has been described as the “medieval factor” through the great art historian and critic Nihar Ranjan Rai. This “medieval factor” was marked through a sure amount of slenderness and an accent on sharp angles and rows. The roundness of bodily form acquires flatness. The curves lose their convexity and turn into the concave. Western and Central Indian sculptures, Eastern Indian and Himalayan metal images, Gujarati and Rajasthani book and textile illustrations, Bengal terracottas and wood carvings and sure Deccan and Odisha miniatures registered this new conception of form through the posttenth centuries.

The pivot of the early medieval sculpture is the human figure, both male and female, in the form of gods and goddesses and their attendants. Since these cult images rest on the assured foundations of a regulated structure of form, it maintains a more or less uniform average of excellence in all artregions of India. Curiously, the creative climax of each art-region is not reached at one and the similar time all in excess of India. In Bihar and Bengal it is reached in the ninth and tenth centuries; in Odisha in the twelfth and thirteenth; in Central India in the tenth and eleventh; in Rajasthan in the tenth; in Gujarat in the eleventh; and in the distant south in the tenth-eleventh centuries. It is in the Deccan alone that the story is of rising torpor and petrification-indeed, Deccan ceases to be a sculptural province after the eighth century.

It is not only the cult images but non-ironic figure sculptures too which conform to more or less standardised kinds within each art-province and hardly reveal any personal attitude or experience of the artist. The multitude of figures related themselves to a big diversity of motifs and subjects. These contain: narrative reliefs, historical or semi-historical scenes; music and dance scenes, mithuna couples in a diversity of poses and attitudes, arrays of warriors and animals and shalabhanjikas (women and the

tree). Metal images cast in brass and oct-alloy (asthta-dhata), copper and bronze emerge in profusion in eastern India (Bihar, Bengal and Assam), Himalayan kingdoms (especially Nepal and Kashmir) and more particularly in the south. The North Indian images mainly portray brahmanic and Buddhist deities permeated with tantrik powers. The main kinds represented in the extra ordinary galaxy of South Indian metal images are the several shapes of Shiva, especially the Nataraja, Parvati; the Shaiva saints such as Appar, Sambaudar and Saudarar; VaishnaV saints described Alvars and figures of royal donors.

All in excess of the country, the post-Gupta iconography prominently displays a divine hierarchy which reflects the pyramidal ranks in feudal society. Vishnu, Shiva and Durga appear as supreme deities lording in excess of several other divinities of unequal sizes and placed in lower positions as retainers and attendants. The supreme Mother Goddess is clearly recognized as an self-governing divinity in iconography from this time and is represented in a dominating posture in relation to many minor deities. Even hitherto a puritanical religion like Jainism could not resist the pressure of incorporating the Mother Goddess in its fold, which is fully reflected in the well-known Dilwara temples at Mt. Abu in Rajasthan. The pantheons do not so much reflect syncretism as forcible. In the rock-cut sculptures of Ellora one can feel the fighting mood of the divinities occupied in violent struggles against their enemies. The reality of unequal ranks appears in the Shaivite, Jain and Buddhists monastic organisations. The ceremonies recommended for the consecration of the acharya, the highest in rank, are practically the similar as those for the coronation of the prince.

Though the Pallavas and Cholas were prolific builders of temples and generous patrons of arts, their art is identified with the magnificent bronzes. These great pieces of workmanship were made primarily for processions on festive occasions in temples though some were also made for private worship. Derived from earlier clay images, this form while deemed to be folk art incorporates all aspects of classical art. These bronzes are cast in the cire perdue or lost wax process. The image is first made in wax; it is then given several coats of fine clay and then dried in the shade. Then two holes are made on the top and the bottom, and next the whole is heated so that the wax melt away leaving a hollow mould into which molten metal is poured. The clay mould is broken off after the metals solidified. Final dressing is done by hand with a chisel and abrasive material.

The rule of the Pallavas and Cholas between the 7th to the 13th centuries saw the high watermark of bronze sculpture. Pallava art form manifested itself around the 7th century and probably derived inspiration from the Amaravati School. While there was a foreign influence in the form of Yavana or Roman influences and the presence of Roman artifacts, the bronzes are believed to be largely an indigenous art form. The patronage for these art objects too comes from Pallava rulers like Mahendravarman and others. These bronzes have a resemblance to the lithic (stone) sculpture of the period. The development of the Pallava bronzes can be divided into four phases viz. 1st Phase (Phase upto the 7th Century C.E) termed Mahendra Phase named after Mahendravarman. 2nd Phase (1st half of 8th Century) termed Rajsimha Phase named after the builder of Mammalapuram and Kanchi (C.E 700-730). 3rd Phase (Second half of 8th Century 750-800C.E.) named after Nandivarman II. 4th Phase (Ninth Century 795-845) named after Dantivarman.

The later half of the ninth century marks the transitional toward the Chola type of bronzes. (Rajaraja Chola establishing himself around C.E 850). In terms of the bronzes itself the early bold forms gradually change to slender rounded ones that are delicate and more refined with the contours of the figures being softer. The Kalayansundrammurti (depicting the wedding of Shiva and Parvati) from Vadakalattur being a fine example of Chola bronze art. During the Chola period a large number of temples of stone were transformed into grand and complex buildings as can be seen from the temples at Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram and the large stately Gopurams of Chidambaram. The Chola period saw elaborate festivals with music dance and processions. The bronze images are intended as manifestations of the main deity enshrined in the garbha-griha when taken out in procession were worshipped with adoration.



Chola bronzes can be divided into four distinct phases: 1st Phase (Phase upto the first half of the 10th Century C.E) named after Aditya Chola, 2nd Phase (last quarter of 10th century) named after Sembiyan Mahadevi, 3rd Phase (11th century C.E) named after Rajaraja I, 4th Phase (12th century) called Later Chola.

It was during the 10th and 11th centuries that the epitome of artistic excellence was reached by the bronzes where great emphasis was placed on graceful depiction, bhavas, flowing lines and supple contours. It may be noted that dance forms and poses, karnas, influenced the form of the images. The Agamic and Vastu literature were also sources of inspiration for the creation of these images. Some of the more popular icons created by the sculptors are Kalayanasundarmurti of Shiva and Parvati who are also seen in the Somaskanda depiction. Shiva as Ardhanarishvara, Nataraja and Vrishabhavanamurti as well in Sukahasana were popular subjects. Some portrait sculpture of saints such as Manikavachakar and the royal patrons such as Rajendra Chola and Sembiyan Mahadevi also exist. Besides Hindu icons, Buddhist and Jaina images were also cast in bronze during the period. The Chola bronze tradition continued to inspire artists well into the medieval period as is attested by Vijayanagar bronzes.

#### **3.3.4. Painting Tradition**

Of various art forms, painting has always been a very powerful medium of cultural tradition and expression. It is associated with values, beliefs, behaviour of mankind and provides material objects to understand people's way of life, their thought process and creativity. In simple words, painting has become a bridge to our past, reflecting what people think and want to depict. Painting is also a part of tangible material culture, where human creations are termed as artifacts and helps in understanding the cultural values. It is a human way of transforming elements of world into symbol, where each of it has a distinct meaning and can also be manipulated. Compared to sculpture, painting is easier to execute and that is why Stone Age people chose it as an expression of their beliefs and imaginations. In fact, painting marks an entirely new phase in the human history and is regarded as a giant cultural leap. Painting in contemporary Indian literature is also referred as 'Alekhya'. In other words, it is a medium of expression of artist's instinct and emotion reconciled and integrated with his social expression and cultural heritage.

The medieval custom in paintings has the following traits; sharp, jerky and pointed angles, e.g., at the elbow and the shoulders, sensuous facial characteristics-sharp and peaked nose, extensive wide swollen eyes projected sharply and crescent lips, Richness of variegated patterns, motifs etc. Gathered and adapted to the grip of sharp curves, and an intense preference for geometric and abstract patterns of decoration. The manifestations of these traits can be seen in the paintings on the walls of the Kailas temple (eighth century) of Ellora; the Jain shrine at Sittanavasal (ninth century) and the Brihadishvar temple at Thanjavur (eleventh century), both in Tamil Nadu. Though, these traits are still more pronounced in the wellrecognized manuscript-illustrations of Bihar and Bengal, Nepal and Tibet in the post-tenth centuries. Textiles surfaces also offered a very rich field for the development of this custom. At least from the thirteenth century onwards West Indian textile designs, and later, those of the Deccan, South, Odisha and Bengal also register their impact in unmistakable conditions.

During this period in the painting tradition of south India played an important role. South Indian kingdoms of the Cholas, Vijaynagara and Nayakas contributed immensely for the growth of paintings. In the Chola temples there are many fresco paintings seen at Vijayala Colesvara temple at Narttamalai (C.E. 1100), Brihadesvara temple at Tanjavur (C.E. 1100), Sangita – Mandapa at Tiruparuttikunram in Kanchipuram (C.E. 1387-88 ) and Vcayapa Matha at Angundi (about the same date). The Chola frescoes were first discovered in C.E. 1931 within the circumambulatory passage of Brihadesvara temple. Researchers have discovered the technique used in these frescoes. A smooth batter of lime stone mixture was applied on the stone and over it , large paintings were painted in natural organic pigments. The Chola frescoes have ardent spirit of Saivism expressed in them. In all paintings, Chola physiognomical and stylistic forms are apparent. The Classical values of full roundedness of volume, subtle plasticity are also retained. But at the same time, there is also strongly perceptible lessening of the

consistency of colour modelling and hence a flattening of surface is there, despite ample curves and colour. During the Nayaka period, the Chola paintings were painted over. The latter paintings belonging to the Vijaynagara period (the Lepakshi wall painting), show general decline in the art style. Outline became sharper and delicate modelling of earlier period is absent. The human figures appear as phantoms, devoid of expression and there is greater emphasis on the display of iconographic forms and mythological stories.

### **3.3.5. Summary**

- *The period between C.E 750 and 1300 is a period of cultural creativity in India.*
- *During this time the whole country was politically divided into numerous regional states which were busy fighting with each other. Though politically divided, India witnessed a growth of new and rich cultural activities in the fields of art, literature and language.*
- *One of the most significant highlights of Indian architecture has been the evolution of the Hindu temple architecture.*
- *The Hindu temple construction during the medieval period (6th- 13th centuries) took place on a magnificent scale comparable to the building of churches and cathedrals in the medieval Europe.*
- *A large variety of Hindu temples was constructed throughout India with distinction in scale, techniques of building and particularly the deities that were worshipped, which were the result of the differences in political, cultural, climatic, geographical and prosperity between the towns and villages.*
- *Distinctive architectural styles of Hindu temples developed during this period which have been classified into three different orders; the Nagara or 'northern' style, the Dravidian or 'southern' style, and the Vesara or hybrid style which is seen in the Deccan between the other two. There are also other distinct styles in peripheral areas such as Bengal, Kerala and the Himalayan valleys.*
- *The regional spirit asserting itself is seen in sculptural arts as well. Sculptures in stone and bronze were carved during this period.*
- *Stylistically, schools of artistic depictions of the human form urbanized in eastern, western, central and northern India. A great majority of these regions produced works of art.*
- *Sculptural tradition of this period was marked through a sure amount of slenderness and an accent on sharp angles and rows. The roundness of bodily form acquires flatness. The curves lose their convexity and turn into the concave.*
- *Western and Central Indian sculptures, Eastern Indian and Himalayan metal images, Gujarati and Rajasthani book and textile illustrations, Bengal terracottas and wood carvings and sure Deccan and Odisha miniatures registered this new conception of form through the post tenth centuries.*

### **3.3.6. Exercise**

- With special reference to form, meaning and context of Indian temples critically examine the various perspectives on Hindu temple architecture.
- Discuss the evolution of Hindu temple architecture in medieval India.
- Write a note on the Sculptural tradition of early medieval India.
- Give an account on the painting tradition of early medieval India.
- Examine the growth of regional form of Hindu temple architecture.

### **3.3.7. Further Readings**

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**Unit.4**  
**Chapter-I**  
**GENERAL REVIEW OF THE ECONOMIC LIFE**  
**Agrarian and Urban Economy**

**Structure**

- 4.1.0. Objectives**
- 4.1.1. Introduction**
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- 4.1.4. Urban Economy.**
  - 4.1.4.1. Trade & Urban Centre.**
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  - 4.1.4.3. Trading communities and organisation.**
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- 4.1.5. Conclusion**
- 4.1.6. Summary**
- 4.1.7. Exercises**
- 4.1.8. Further Readings**

#### 4.1.0. Objectives

The early medieval period was also marked by many social and economic changes. Both agrarian economy of rural India and the trade activities of urban India witnessed several changes during this period. After reading this chapter, you should be able to explain the:

- *aspects of agrarian economy in early medieval India such as pattern of land grant organization, ideology behind land grants, kinds of agrarian settlements, nature of land rights and technological improvements in the sphere of agriculture;*
- *role of agriculturists in trade and characterization of early medieval agrarian economy;*
- *factors responsible for the rise of urban centers, the importance of trade and commerce in the overall economic history of India throughout the six centuries flanked by C.E. 700 and c.C.E. 1300 and the connection flanked by trade and commerce with i) metallic currency, ii) village economy and iii) cities; and*
- *explain the relative location of traders and merchants in the society throughout the early medieval India, viz. C.E.700 to1300.*

#### 4.1.1. Introduction

The early medieval period was also marked by many economic changes. The period from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century is marked initially with a decline in economic activities as evident from the absence of coins for exchange and the decayed condition of towns in northern India and later we notice a revival of trade activities. Not only do we come across new gold coins, there are also numerous references to trade goods and towns. There seem to be two main reasons for it. One, there was increase in agricultural activities on account of land grants in fresh areas. It led to surplus production of goods for exchange. And second, the Arab traders had emerged on the coastal areas of India as important players in international sea trade. The Arabs had acquired a foothold in Sind in C.E 712 and later, gradually, they set up their settlements all along the sea from Arabia to China. These settlements served as important channels for the sale and purchase of Indian goods, and thus helped in the growth of Indian external trade. In south India, the Chola kings maintained close commercial contact with South-east Asia (Malaya, Indonesia etc) and China. This chapter will discuss the various aspects of economic condition of early medieval India, both from Agrarian and trade point of view.

#### 4.1.2. Sources

The period under discussion was marked with new types of source materials and documents which themselves were witnesses to changing condition. The most important source material for the study of this period is the huge number of inscriptions. Most of the inscriptions of this period are belonged to the category of copper plates or tamrapatta. These copper plates recorded transfer of revenuefree landed property by royal orders to recipients of the grant. The practice of issuing land grants became fully established from the fourth century onwards and assumed an all-India proportion after AD 600. Most of the copper plates record the creation of revenue-free grant of land gifted to a brahmanas or a religious institution. The copper plates are invaluable for understanding of rural economy, especially for understanding the process of transfer of landed property, rural settlement pattern, crops, irrigation projects, peasants and agrarian revenue demands. However, on some occasions the grant may also throw light on important merchants and craftsmen whose presence as important witnesses to the pious act of donation of land was recorded. Merchants also figure in copper plate grants in a group or as an assembly on certain auspicious days when the merchants decided to voluntarily offer some cesses on the commodities they dealt in in favour of a deity or temple. In such grants naturally appear not only merchants but also various types of commodities. These inscriptions also inform us about various types of market places from some of which were collected tolls and customs (sulka), thereby indicating the revenue bearing potential of trade. Also known are inscriptions recording individual donations by merchants, either in favour of a deity or for some works of public benefactions.

Information on trade and urban centres is available from dharmasastras and smritis literature. Commentaries on these texts such as the commentaries on the Manusmriti and Yajñavalkyasmṛiti also offer some data on this subject. Relevant data can be gleaned from technical treatises like the famous lexicon, Amarakosa by Amarasimha (fifth-sixth centuries C.E), the Abhidhanachintamani and the Desinamamala by Hemachandra (eleventh-twelfth century) and the Lekhapaddhati. Some impressions of commercial activities are available in the vast creative literature, e.g. the works of Kalidasa, the Mṛcchakatikam of Sudraka, the Dasakumaracharita of Dandin and various types of Jain texts. It is important to take note of the fact that two well known Jaina texts Jagaducharita and Vastupalamahatmyam were biographies of two premier merchants of early medieval Gujarat.

Non-indigenous textual materials are of particular importance as source materials for the history of trade, especially the external trade of India. The Chinese accounts of Fa-hsien (early fifth century C.E), Hsuan Tsang (first half of the 7th century), Itsing (late seventh century) and Chau ju Kua (C.E 1225) are invaluable sources for the understanding of trade in India. Arabic and Persian texts on geography and travel (those by Sulaiman (C.E 851), ibn Khordadbeh (C.E 882), al Masudi (C.E 915), Buzurg ibn Shahriyar (C.E 995), the anonymous author of Hudud al Alam (C.E 982), al Biruni (C.E 973-1048), and al Idrisi (C.E 1162) are replete with information on Indian commodities and India's trade linkages with West Asia, though these accounts are occasionally stereotyped as many of the Arab authors did not visit India. To this may be added the late sixth century C.E accounts of the Syrian Christian monk Cosmas Indicopleustes and the famous descriptions of India by the Venetian traveller Marco Polo (late thirteenth century). An unusual type of source is the letters of medieval Jewish traders, who regularly traded between the west coast of India and the Red Sea. Though the main point of their contacts was the Karnataka and Malabar coasts, these unique business letters, recording the impressions of the actual participants in long-distance trade, furnish significant data on trade in the Gujarat coast.

Coin is also an important source of this period. The gold coinage of the Gupta Emperors was imitated by a number of smaller powers in the seventh century C.E. It is after C.E 1000 that the issuance of precious coinage once again revived. Numismatic sources thus offer lesser data than that furnished by early historical coins. This itself has been interpreted by some scholars as a prime indication of dwindling commerce, especially foreign trade of India during the 600-1000 period. The evidence of coins found in some parts of India during the early medieval times will be discussed in the relevant section. Unlike the early historical settlements, the early medieval ones have not been systematically explored and excavated and therefore the field archaeological data on trade and urbanization are quite inadequate.

#### **4.1.3. Agrarian Economy**

One of the major features of agrarian economy during medieval period is agrarian expansion. This phenomenon of agricultural expansion began with the establishment of *brahmadeya* and *agrahara* settlements through land grants to Brahmanas from the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E onwards, acquired a uniform and universal form in subsequent periods. The centuries flanked by 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 government of Indian kingdoms. Though, there are significant local variations in this development, both due to geographical as well as ecological factors.

##### **4.1.3.1. Geographical and Chronological Patterns**

Farming was extended not only to the hitherto virgin lands but even through clearing forest regions. This was a continuous procedure and a major characteristic of early medieval agricultural economy. There is a view prevalent in the middle of some scholars that land grants started in outlying, backward, and tribal regions first and later slowly extended to the Ganga valley, which was the hub of the brahmanical culture. In the backward and aboriginal tracts the Brahmanas could spread new methods of farming through regulating agricultural processes through specialized knowledge of the

seasons (astronomy), plough, irrigation, etc., as well as through protecting the cattle wealth. Though, this is not true of all regions in India, for, land grants were also made in regions of settled agriculture as well as in other ecological zones, especially for purposes of integrating them into a new economic order. The chronological appearance of the land grant organization shows the following pattern:

Fourth-fifth centuries: spread in excess of a good part of central India, northern Deccan and Andhra, Fifth-seventh centuries: eastern India (Bengal and Odisha), beginnings in Western India (Gujarat and Rajasthan), Seventh and eighth centuries: Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Ninth century: Kerala, and End of the twelfth century: approximately the whole sub-continent with the possible exception of Punjab. Ideological Background Ideas relating to the gift of land emphasize the importance of Dana or gift. The thought of Dana or gift to Brahmanas was urbanized through Brahmanical texts as the surest means of acquiring merit (punya) and destroying sin (pataka). It appears to be a conscious and systematic effort to give means of survival to the Brahmanas. Grants of cultivable land to them and registration of gifts of land on copper plates are recommended through all the Smritis and Puranas of the post-Gupta centuries.

There were dissimilar things of gifts: Food, granules, paddy, etc. Movable assets like gold, money, etc. And the immovable assets i.e. cultivable land garden and residential plot. In the middle of the gifts are also incorporated the plough, cows, oxen and ploughshare. Though, the gift of land was measured to be the best of all kinds 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. Therefore land grants began to follow a set legal formula systematized through law books (Dharmastras).

While the early land grants were made mainly to Vedic priests (Shrotriya fire priests), from the fifth to 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 C.E. Grants to the temple, either plots of land or whole villages were recognized as devadana in the south Indian context. It needs to be stressed that what began as a mere trickle, became a mighty current. The procedure of acquiring landed property was not confined to brahmanical temples.

#### **4.1.3.2. Agrarian Settlement**

During the period under discussion several type of agricultural settlements were come in to existence. In the following paragraphs a brief note of the character and types is give.

**Brahmadeya:** A brahmadeya symbolizes a grant of land either in individual plots or whole villages given absent to Brahmanas creation them landowners or land controllers. It was meant either to bring virgin land under farming or to integrate existing agricultural (or peasant) settlements into the new economic order dominated through a Brahmana proprietor. These Brahmana donees played a major role in integrating several socio-economic groups into the new order, through service tenures and caste under the Varna organization. For instance, the rising peasantisation of shudras was sought to be rationalized in the existing brahmanical social order. The practice of land grants as brahmadeyas was initiated through the ruling dynasties and subsequently followed through chiefs, feudatories, etc. Brahmadeyas facilitated agrarian expansion because they were: Exempted from several taxes or dues either entirely or at least in the initial stages of resolution (e.g. For 12 years); Also endowed with ever rising privileges (pariharas). The ruling families derived economic advantage in the form of the extension of the resource base; moreover, through creating brahmadeyas they also gained ideological support for their political power. Lands were given as brahmadeya either to a single Brahmana or to many Brahmana families which ranged from a few to many hundreds or even more than a thousand. Brahmadeyas were invariably situated close to major irrigation works such as tanks or lakes. Often new irrigation sources were constructed when brahmadeyas were created, especially in regions dependent on rains and in arid and semi-arid regions. When situated in regions of rigorous agriculture in the river valleys, they served to integrate other settlements of a survival stage manufacture. Sometimes, two or more settlements were

clubbed jointly to form a brahmadeya or an agrahara. The taxes from such villages were assigned to the Brahmana donees, which were also given the right to get the donated land cultivated. Boundaries of the donated land or village were very often cautiously demarcated. The several kinds of land, wet, arid, and garden land 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 instance, in several cases, beside with the revenues and economic possessions of the village, human possessions such as peasants (cultivators), artisans and others were also transferred to donees. There is also rising proof of the encroachment of the rights of villagers in excess of society lands such as lakes and ponds. Therefore, the Brahmanas became managers of agricultural and artisanal manufacture in these settlements for which they organized 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 c. C.E. 200 (the time of Manu) but the practice picks up momentum in the post-Gupta era. Literary works dealing with central India, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal flanked by the tenth and twelfth centuries create frequent references to several types 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 linked with land. The incidence of grants to state officials varies from one region to another. To illustrate, while we hear of in relation to the half a dozen Paramar official ranks, only a few of them are recognized to have received land grants. But very big territories were granted to vassals and high officers under the Chalukyas of Gujarat. The accessible proofs suggest that Odisha had more service grants than Assam, Bengal, and Bihar taken jointly. Further, the right of several officials to enjoy specific and exclusive levies—irrespective of the tenure of these levies—was bound to make intermediaries with interests in the lands of the tenants.

**Devadanas:** Big level gifts to the religious establishments, both brahmanical and nonbrahmanical, discover distinctive spaces in inscriptional proofs. These centers worked as nuclei of agricultural settlements and helped in integrating several peasant and tribal settlements through a procedure of acculturation. They also integrated several 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 supervised either through 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 through the temple executive committees composed of land owning non-Brahmanas. e.g. the Velalas of Tamil Nadu the Okkalu Kampulu etc of Karnataka dissimilar groups were assigned a caste and ritual status. It is in this procedure 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 resolution.

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 through landed elite groups. Therefore the Brahmana, the temple and higher strata of non-Brahmanas as landlords, employers, and holders of superior rights in land became the central characteristic 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, many strata of intermediaries appeared flanked by the King and the actual producer.

#### **4.1.3.3. Rights in Land**

A significant aspect relating to land grants is the nature of rights granted to the assignees. Rights conferred upon the grantees incorporated 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 *pariharas* or exemptions in the copper plate and stone inscriptions



registering such grants indicate that what was theoretically payable to the King was not being totally 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 set up the royal ownership of land and hence justify such grants, creating intermediary rights in land. Although there is some proof of a communal foundation of land rights in early settlements, the development of private ownership or rights is indicated through the information 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 appears to have urbanized out of such grants, both religious and secular.

#### **4.1.3.4. Technological Improvements**

Throughout the early medieval era there was an augment in irrigation sources such as canals, lakes, tanks (tataka, eri) and wells (kupa and kinaru). That the accessibility to water possessions was a significant consideration in the spread of rural settlements is shown through local studies. Keres or tanks in south Karnataka, nadi (river), pushkarini (tank), srota (water channel) etc. in Bengal and araghatta-wells in western Rajasthan used to be natural points of reference whenever sharing and transfer of village lands had to be undertaken. Naturally, the concern for water possessions contributed to the extension of farming and intensification of agricultural behaviors. Water-lifts of dissimilar types operated through man and animal power were also recognized. Epigraphic sources record the construction and maintenance of such irrigation works flanked by eighth and thirteenth centuries. Several of the lakes/ tanks of this era have survived well into the contemporary times. Some of them were repaired, revived, and elaborated under the British management. The step wells (vapis) in Rajasthan and Gujarat became very popular in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries. They were meant for irrigating the meadows as well as for supplying drinking water.

The augment in the number of irrigation works was due to an advance in irrigation technology. There is proof of the use of more scientific and permanent methods of flood manage, damming of river waters, sluice construction (with piston valve and cisterns) both at the heads of canals and of lakes and tanks. Flood manage was achieved slowly through breaching of rivers for canals and mud embankments which ensured the regulated use of water possessions. Lakes or reservoirs were more commonly used in semi arid' and rain fed regions, as well as river basins where the rivers up in summer construction of water reservoirs was initiated through ruling families and maintained through local organizations such as the sabha (Brahmana assembly) and ur (non-Brahmana village assembly) in Tamil Nadu. Maintenance of lakes/tanks etc. i.e. desilting, bund and sluice repair was looked after through 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 measured a part of the privileges enjoyed through the grantees and an act of religious merit. Hence, resourceful private individuals also constructed tanks. No less important were the improvements in agricultural implements. For instance, a tenth century inscription from Ajmer refers to "big" plough. Likewise, separate implements are mentioned for weeding parasitic plants. Vrikshayarveda mentions steps to cure diseases of trees. Water lifting devices such as araghatta and ghatiantra are mentioned in inscriptions and literary works. The former was specially used in the wells of Rajasthan in the ninth-tenth centuries. The Krishisukti of Kashyapa prescribed that the ghatiantra operated through oxen is the best that through men was the worst while the one driven through elephants was of the middling excellence.

Advanced knowledge in relation to the weather circumstances and their use in agricultural operations is noticeable in such texts as the Gurusamhita and Krishinarashwara. More than one hundred kinds of cereals including wheat, barley, lentils, etc. are mentioned in modern writings on agriculture. According to the Shunyapurana more than fifty types of paddy were cultivated in Bengal. The knowledge of fertilizers improved immensely and the use of the compost was recognized. Cash crops

such as areca nuts, betel leaves, cotton, sugarcane, etc. discover frequent mention. Rajashekhara (early tenth century) tells us in relation to the excellent sugarcane of north Bengal which yielded juice even without the use of pressing instrument. Commodity manufacture of coconut and oranges assumed special importance in peninsular India throughout this era.

Marco-Polo hints at increased manufacture of spices when he says that the municipality of Kinsay in 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 recognized widely. Therefore, advanced agricultural technology was being systematized and diffused in several parts of the country causing substantial boom in agricultural manufacture.

#### **4.1.3.5. Rural Tension**

Notwithstanding agrarian expansion, the rural landscape was distant from being a homogeneous 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*. Regrettably, there is hardly any indication of landownership in these conditions, which appear to be referring to several categories of cultivators. The conversion of the *brahmadeyas* into non- *brahmadeyas* and that of the latter into *agraharas* were potential sources of tension in rural regions. The *damara* revolts in Kashmir, rebellion of the *Kaivarthas* in the reign of *Ramapal* in Bengal, acts of self immolation in situations of encroachments on land in Tamil Nadu, appropriation of donated land through *shudras* in the *Pandya* territory, are indices of distrust against the new landed intermediaries. The information that donors often looked for land where farming was not disputed also shows the seeds of turmoil. The possibility of the hero-stones in and approximately *agraharas* also has the potential of throwing light on rumblings beneath the surface in agrarian settlements. Why does the concept of *brahmahatya* (killing of a *Brahmana*) become very pronounced in early medieval times? Answers to this question raise doubts in relation to the validity of “*brahmana-peasant alliance*” and “*peasant state and society*”. This is, though, not to deny other possible regions of tension within rural society flanked by *Brahmanas* and temples and within ranks of secular land holders.

#### **4.1.3.6. Agriculture and the exchange Network**

It is sometimes maintained that in the early medieval economic organisation, which was a predominantly agrarian and self-enough village economy, manufacture was mainly survival 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 important role for traders and middlemen, who only procured and supplied iron apparatus, oil, spices, cloth, etc. to rural folk. In other words the functioning of the market organization was very limited. The aforesaid picture is certainly true for the era 300-800 C.E. Though, the subsequent 500 years witnessed a rapid augment in the number of agrarian settlements and the growth of local markets initially for local swap. Subsequently, the need for regular swap within a region and with other regions led to organized commerce. This in turn led to the emergence of merchant organisations, itinerant trade, and partial monetization from the ninth century.

Though the relative importance of these characteristics varied from one region to another the rising role of agriculture in this new economy is easily seen. Agricultural products came to be exchanged with things of extensive aloofness trade accepted on through itinerant traders. This development also led to a change in the pattern of land ownership towards the secure of the early medieval era. Merchants and economically influential craftsmen, like weavers, invested in land i.e. purchased land described the *Jagati-kottali* (society of weavers) and the society of *Telligas* (oil pressers) was active participants in agriculture. The former are repeatedly mentioned as excavating tanks and laying out gardens.

#### **4.1.3.7. The Characterization of Early Medieval Agrarian Economy**

Dissimilar views have been put forward concerning 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 characteristics of „Indian Feudalism“ are:

Emergence of hierarchical landed intermediaries. Vassals and officers of state and other secular assignee had military obligations and feudal titles. Sub-infeudation (varying in dissimilar regions) through these donees to get their land cultivated led to the growth of dissimilar 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 connection appeared. In other words, Indian feudalism consisted in the gross unequal sharing of land and its produce.

Another significant characteristic was the prevalence of forced labour. The right of extracting forced labour (vishti) is whispered to have been exercised through 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 inscriptions alone, there are more than one hundred references to forced labour. Even the peasants and artisans come within the jurisdiction of vishti. As a result, a type of serfdom appeared, in which agricultural laborers were reduced to the location of semi-serfs. Due to the rising claims of greater rights in excess of land through rulers and intermediaries, peasants also suffered a curtailment of their land rights. Several were reduced to the location of tenants facing ever rising threat of eviction. A number of peasants were only ardhikas (share croppers). The strain on the peasantry was also caused through the burden of taxation, coercion, and augment in their indebtedness. Surplus was extracted through several methods. Extra economic coercion was a conspicuous method. With the rise of new property dealings, new mechanisms of economic subordination also evolved. The rising burden is apparent in the mentioning of more than fifty levies in the inscription of Rajaraja Chola.

It was relatively a closed village economy. The transfer of human possessions beside 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 manages in excess of them through the beneficiaries. In brief, a subject and immobile peasantry, functioning in relatively selfenough villages buttressed through varna restrictions, was the marked characteristic of the agrarian economy throughout the five centuries under survey.

The theory of the subsistence of autonomous peasant communities is put forward in opposition to the theory of Indian feudalism. It is based mainly on the proof from South Indian sources. According to this theory, autonomous peasant regions described the nadus evolved in South India through early medieval times. They were organized on the foundation of clan and kinship ties. Agricultural manufacture in the nadus was organized and controlled through the nattar, i.e., people of the nadu, organizing themselves into assemblies, i.e., nadu. Members of this assembly were velalas or non-Brahmana peasants. Their autonomy is indicated through the information that when land grants were made through 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 organizers of manufacture. The Brahmanas and dominant peasants became allies in the manufacture procedure.

Apparently, the exponents of this hypothesis share the notion of rural self sufficiency, which is a significant component of Indian feudalism. The theories of Indian feudalism and autonomous peasant communities have their adherents and claim to be based on empirical proof. Though, early medieval agrarian economy was a highly intricate one.

#### 4.1.4. Urban Economy

The six centuries and a half, spanning from c. C.E 650 to 1300, brought in regional features in socio-economic, political and cultural life in the whole of India. In political scene regional and local powers emerged not merely in the Ganga valley, but also in hitherto fringe zones like, Kamarupa (upper Assam), Samatata (eastern Bengal), Dahala (Jabalpur area in Madhya Pradesh), Kashmir, Rajasthan, Deccan and Souyh India. In fact the immense spread of agrarian economy during the period from AD 300 to 1300 has led to an impression that the economy was greatly ruralised; the nonagrarian sector of the economy, according to many historians underwent a decline from AD 600-1000. It is after AD1000 that crafts, commerce and urban centres are perceived to have revived again.

##### 4.1.4.1. Trade & Urban Centre

A major obstacle to the study of urban centers of the post-Gupta times is the lack of archaeological materials. Hsuan Tsang's accounts point to the decaying conditions of cities like Vaisali, Pataliputra, Kusinagara, Sravasti and Kausambi. These cities connected by overland routes in the Himalayan foothills and the Nepalese terai probably experienced a decline. But this however does not suggest a general decline of all major urban centers. A few cities of early historical times did continue beyond C.E 600, evident from available archaeological materials. Thus Ahichhatra (Bareilly district Uttar Pradesh), originating in the early historical times, offers an unbroken sequence of occupation right into the early medieval phase. No desertion of the site is noticeable at the Purana Qila site in Delhi which continued uninterrupted between the Kushana and the Turkish rule. Archeological remains of the post-Gupta phase are available from Atranjikheda, a leading urban center of early historical times. Similarly the excavations at Rajghat near Varanasi clearly show the continuity of occupation at this urban centre during C.E 300-700 and 700-1200 phases. Remains of structures at Ahar have been dated to the period between ninth and twelfth centuries, implying thereby the existence of an urban centre.

The regular mention of *pura*, *pattana* and *nagara* in inscriptions of early medieval times also point to the urban tradition. Some new urban centers also came up in north India in the early medieval period. Ten inscriptions, ranging in date between C.E 867 and 904, speak of the burgeoning city of Tattanandapura. Its well laid out character is evident from the references to its small or narrow lanes (*kurathya*), wide roads (*brihadrathya*) and *hattamarga* (roads leading to the market centre). Burnt bricks were also used for the construction of *grihas* or dwelling houses. The impressive size of the urban centre of Tattanandapura (Ahar) is unmistakable as it covers an area of 3800 acres. Others town includes Siyadoni, Gopagiri or Gopadri near Gwalior etc.

At many of these new *pattanas* or *puras* one notes the active role of various craftsmen: oilmillers (*tailikas*), florists (*malakaras*), and distillers (*kallapala*). At these centers existed important shrines where converged merchants, administrators, craftsmen and religious personalities. Thus these centers often combined economic, political and cultural functions which rendered them with considerable complexities as urban areas. Trade seems to have played an important role in the making of urban centre. In eastern India, the early historical city of *Pundranagara*, represented by the remains at Mahasthangarh, does not indicate any discontinuity in its urban traditions in the early middle ages. Moreover, a few new cities also came into existence in early medieval Bengal: for instance, Ramavati-named after Ramapala, identified with the site of Amati; the city of Lakhnauti, mentioned by Minhaj-us Siraj was situated in Gaur and established by and named after Lakshmanasena, the late twelfth century Sena king of Bengal. These data may not portray widespread de-urbanisation in north India, particularly during the C.E 600-1000 phase.

Besides the empirical statements on early medieval urban centers another point requires serious consideration. The principal factor behind the assumed decay of cities appears to have been a slump in long-distance trade after C.E 500. Information also suggests that after C.E 1000 there was an urban revival in north India. It is implicitly indicated that increasing sea borne trade on both the coast of India as well as inland favoured the spurt in urbanism after C.E 1000. If agrarian growth is considered

conducive to city formation then there should be logically no hindrance to it in early medieval times also. There is an overall agreement among scholars that the early Middle Ages witnessed unprecedented agrarian expansion in India. This would facilitate the availability and procurement of the vital agrarian surplus which is a major pre-requisite for city formation in early India. Hemachandra, the famous Jaina author of late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, observed that the villages often resembled cities (gramaschapurasannibha). Either some early medieval villages became large enough in area to have assumed an urban appearance, or agrarian expansion paved the way for greater concentration of population in some villages which consequently underwent a change in their character. It has been rightly observed that many urban centers of early medieval times were strongly integrated to their respective local or regional roots. The urban centres of Early medieval period may be grouped in the following few category.

***Rural Centers Transformed into Urban Centers:*** The brahmadeyas and devadanams which are seen as significant sources of agrarian expansion of the early medieval era also provided the nuclei of urban growth. The Brahmana and temple settlements clustered jointly in some key regions of agricultural manufacture. Examples of such centers of urban growth are datable from the eighth and ninth centuries and are more commonly established in South India. The Cola municipality of Kumbakonam (Kudamukku-Palaiyarai) urbanized out of agrarian groups and became a multi-temple urban centre flanked by the ninth and twelfth centuries. Kanchipuram is a second major instance of such an urban intricate. While Kumbakonam's political importance as a residential capital of the Colas was an additional factor in its growth, Kanchipuram too had the additional importance of being the main craft centre (textile manufacturing) in South India.

***Market Centers, Trade-Network, and Itinerant Trade:*** Early medieval centuries also witnessed the emergence of urban centers of relatively modest dimensions, as market centers, trade centers (fairs, etc.) which were primarily points of the swap network. The range of interaction of such centers varied from small agrarian hinterlands to local commercial hinterlands. Some also functioned beyond their local frontiers. Though, though and big, the early medieval urban centers were rooted in their local contexts. This is best illustrated through the *nagaram* of South India, substantial proof of which comes from Tamil Nadu and also to a limited extent through the subsistence 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 appeared due to the swap needs of the nadu. A fairly big number of such centers were founded through ruling families or were recognized through royal sanction and were named after the rulers, a characteristic general to all regions in South India. Such centers had the suffix pura or pattana. *Nagarams* situated on significant trade routes and at the points of intersection urbanized into more significant trade and commercial centers of the region. They were ultimately brought into a network of intra-local and inter-local trade as well as overseas trade through the itinerant merchant organisations and the royal ports. Such a development occurred consistently throughout peninsular India flanked by the tenth and twelfth centuries. Throughout 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* connected the ports with political and administrative centers and craft centers in the interior.

In Karnataka *nagarams* appeared more as points of swap in trading network than as regular markets for agrarian regions. Though, the uniform characteristics in all such *nagarams* are that they acquired a vital agricultural hinterland for the non-producing urban group's livelihood in such centers. Markets in these centers were controlled through the *nagaram* assembly headed through a chief merchant described pattanavami. A similar development of trade and market centers can be seen in Rajasthan and western parts of Madhya Pradesh. Here, the swap centers were situated in the context of the bases of agrarian manufacture i.e. where groups of rural settlements happen. In Rajasthan these centers were points of intersection for traffic of varying origins, giving rise to a sure measure of

hierarchy. The network was further elaborated with the growth of generations of well-recognized merchant families in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

They are named after their spaces of origin such as Osawala (Osia), Shrimalis (Bhinmal), Pallivalas and Khandelvalas, etc. The resource bases, the main routes for the flow of possessions and the centers of swap were integrated through the expansion of these merchant families. Rajasthan provided the main commercial links flanked by Gujarat, Central India and the Ganga valley. Such links were maintained through cities like Pali, which linked the sea coast cities like Dvaraka and Bhargukachcha (Broach) with Central and North India. Gujarat, with its dominant Jain merchants, sustained to be the major trading region of Western India where early historic ports or emporium like Bhargukachcha (Broach) sustained to flourish as entrepots of trade in early medieval times. Bayana, another notable city in Rajasthan was the junction of dissimilar routes from dissimilar directions. The range of merchandise started almost certainly with agricultural produce (including dairy products) but extended to such high-value things as horses, elephants, horned animals and jewels.

In the trade with the West i.e. Arabia, Persian Gulf and beyond, the West Coast of Peninsular India played a uniformly dominant role from the early historic era. Many ports such as Thana, Goa, Bhatkal, Karwar, Honavar, and Mangalore urbanized throughout the revival of extensive aloofness trade, flanked by the tenth and twelfth centuries, with proof of coastal shipping and ocean navigation. Surprisingly, this commercial action was taking lay only through limited monetization. Incidentally, the Konkan coast (under the Shilaharas) does not even illustrate any signs of rise of markets and their network.

Wider trade networks also lived flanked by Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu, for the attendance of Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu merchants is well attested in many cities such as Belgaun (Karnataka), Peruru in Nalgonda district (Andhra Pradesh), and coastal cities of Visakhapatnam and Ghantasala. The Andhra coast turned to the south eastern trade with Motupalli, Visakhapatnam, and Ghantasala acting as the major outlets. Market centers of inter-local importance are represented through spaces 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 swap points flanked by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu such as Talakkad and Mudikondan. Kerala urbanized contracts with the West and foreign traders such as the Jews, Christians, and Arabs who were given trading cities under special royal charters. Coastal cities such as Kolikkodu, Kollam etc., became entrepots of South Asian trade. The site of such trading groups as the Anjuvannan and Arab horse dealers enhanced the importance of coastal cities in Karnataka and Kerala.

Major craft centers which urbanized in response to inter-local trade were weaving, centers in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. Some of the craft and commercial centers of the early historic urban stage survived till the early medieval era and were brought into the processes of re-urbanization which connected them with the new socio-economic organizations like the temple. Kashi (Varanasi) in the north and Kanchipuram (close to Madras) in the south are two very prominent examples of such processes.

***Sacred/Pilgrimage Centers:*** The thought of pilgrimage to religious centers urbanized in the early medieval era due to the spread of the cult of Bhakti. Its expansion in dissimilar regions through a procedure of acculturation and interaction flanked by the Brahmanical or Sanskritic shapes of worship and folk or popular cults cut crossways narrow sectarian interests. As a result, some local cult centers of great antiquity as well as those with early associations with brahmanical and non-brahmanical religions became pilgrimage centres. The pilgrimage network was sometimes confined to the specific cultural region within which a cult centre assumed a sacred character. Though, those cult centres, which became sacred tirthas attracted worshippers from several regions. Both kinds of pilgrimage centres urbanized urban characteristics due to a mobile pilgrim population, trade, and royal patronage. The role of emerging market in the growth of tirthas is now being recognized through historians in a big method.

Pushkara close to Ajmer in Rajasthan was a sacred tirtha of local 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. urbanized as local pilgrimage centres, while Kanchipuram became a part of an all India pilgrimage network. While Melkote was a local sacred centre in Karnataka, Alampur, Draksharama and Simhachalam illustrate a similar development in Andhra Pradesh. Tirupati was initially a significant sacred centre for the Tamil Vaishnavas but acquired a pan-Indian character later in the Vijayanagara era. Jain centres of pilgrimage appeared 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 illustrate two kinds of urban growth: First, it was organized approximately a single big temple as in Srirangam, Madurai, Tiruvannamalai (Tamil Nadu), Melkote (Karnataka), Draksharama and Simhachalam (Andhra Pradesh). The second kind involves the growth approximately many temples of dissimilar religions such as Shivaism, Vishnuism and Saktism. The early medieval urbanisation is sometimes characterized as “temple urbanisation” particularly in the context of south India. Sacred centres also provided significant links in the commerce of a region as temples and the mathas attached to them were the major consumers of luxury articles and value goods.

**Royal Centres or Capitals:** Royal centres of 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 era, for instance, in the Janapadas of North India or in the traditional polities of South India. Royal families also urbanized their own ports, which were the main ports of entry into their respective territories and which also connected them with international commerce. Therefore, the commercial needs of royal centres created new trade and communication links and built up much closer relationships flanked by the royal centre and their agricultural hinterlands or resource bases. In all the regions south of the Vindhyas, where brahmanical kingdoms came to be recognized through the eighth century C.E. there is substantial proof of the growth of such royal centres. Some representative examples are:

Vatapi and Vengi of the Chalukyas in the northern Karnataka and Andhra. Kanchipuram of the Pallavas with their royal port at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram). Madurai of the Pandyas with Korkai as their port. Tanjavur of the Colas with Nagappattinam as their port. Kalyana of the Western Chalukyas, Dvarasamudra of the Hoysalas, and Warangal of the Kakatiyas with Motupalli at their port. Warangal was an unusual instance of a fortified royal municipality in South India. Examples of royal centres in North India are: The Gurjara Pratihara capital at Kanyakubja (Kanauj). Khajuraho of the Candellas. Ohara of the Paramaras, and Valabhi of the Solankis.

A fairly big number of municipalities appeared under the powerful Gurjara-Pratiharas, Chahamanas and Paramaras in Rajasthan. Mainly of them were fortified centres, hill forts (garhkila and drags). Examples of fort municipalities in Rajasthan are: *Nagara* and Nagda under the Guhilas. Bayana, Hanumangarh and Chitor under the Gurjara-Pratiharas, and Mandor, Ranathambor, Sakambhari and Ajmer under the Chauhans and so on.

On the foundation of several sources, a list of 131 spaces has been compiled for the Chauhan dominions, mainly of which appear to have been cities. Almost two dozen cities are recognized in Malwa under the Paramaras. Gujarat under the Chalukyas was studded with port cities. The number of cities, though, does not appear to be big in Eastern India although all the nine victory camps (jayaskandavars) of the Palas (Pataliputra, Mudgagiri, Ramavati, Vata Parvataka, Vilaspura, Kapilavasaka, Sahasgand, Kanchanapura and Kanau) may have been cities. Sometimes, significant trade and market centres were also conferred on feudatory families. Examples of such minor political centres are numerous in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

#### **4.1.4.2. Crafts and Industry**

The growth of agricultural manufacture was complemented through increased craft manufacture. In the first stage of early medieval era the manufacturing remained mainly confined to local and local needs. In the second stage, though, we notice a trend towards increased craft manufacture which stimulated the procedure of both local and inter-local swap. Textile Industry, which had been well recognized since ancient times, urbanized as a major economic action. Coarse as well as fine cotton goods were now being produced. Marco Polo (C.E. 1293) and Arab writers praise the excellent excellence of cotton fabrics from Bengal and Gujarat. Manasollasa, a text of the twelfth century, also mentions Paithan, Negapatnam, Kalinga and Multan as significant centres of textile industry.

The silk weavers of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu also constituted a very significant and influential part of the society. The oil industry acquired great importance throughout this era. From the tenth century onwards, we get more references to the farming of oilseeds as well as to ghanaka or oil mills. An inscription from Karnataka refers to dissimilar kinds of oil mills operated both through men and bullocks. We also notice the affluence of oilmen public works. This designates that the oil industry offered profits to its members. Likewise, references to sugarcane farming and cane crushers in this era also indicate big level manufacture of jaggery and other shapes of sugar.

Besides the agro- based industry, the craftsmanship in metal and leather goods too reached a high stage of excellence. The literary sources refer to craftsmen linked with dissimilar kinds of metals such as copper, brass, iron, gold, silver, etc. A number of big beams at Puri and Konarka temples in Odisha indicate the proficiency of the iron smiths of India in the twelfth century. Iron was also used to manufacture swords, spearheads and other arms and weapons of high excellence. Magadha, Benaras, Kalinga and Saurashtra were recognized for the manufacture of good excellence swords. Gujarat was recognized for gold and silver embroidery.

In the field of leather industry Gujarat occupied an enviable location. Marco Polo mentions that the people of Gujarat made beautiful leather mats in red and blue which were skilfully embroidered with figures of birds and animals. These were in great demand in the Arab World. Thus it is revealed that now craft production was an inherent part of early medieval urban centres.

#### **4.1.4.3. Trading communities and organisation**

The traders form a significant link flanked by producers and consumers and mostly they are part of urban economy. They collect agricultural surplus and products of artisans and craftsmen from dissimilar regions and distribute them in excess of a wide region. Throughout the early medieval centuries, the procedure of collection and sharing of goods involved a big number of merchants, big as well as small, local as well as inter-local. There were hawkers, retailers and other petty traders on the one hand and big merchants and caravan traders on the other.

In the immediate post gupt period between c. C.E. 700-900 the relative decline of trade resulted in eroded the role of merchants in the society. As a result, this period of early medieval India was marked through the thinning absent, if not disappearance, of the wealthy and free merchant class. It was during c.C.E.900-1300 of early medieval India that the mercantile society back into prominence, and we notice big number of merchants carrying luxury and essential goods from one lay to another. They accumulated fabulous wealth through commercial exchanges and acquired fame in society through creation gifts to temples and priests. Several of them took active part at several stages of management, and even occupied the ministerial posit ions in royal courts.

The literature and inscriptions of the era refer to the big number of merchants who were recognized through the specialized trade they followed. Therefore, we come crossways dealers in gold, perfumes, wine, granules, horses, textiles, curds, betels, etc. Some of the merchants employed retailers or assistants to help them in trading behaviors. As inter-local trade urbanized a group of merchants specialized in examining and changing coins for traders Money lending also became one of the major behaviors of merchants. Though people deposited money in temple treasury for the religious purpose of



endowing flowers, oil, lamps, there are very few references to guilds accepting deposits and paying interest thereon. There appeared a separate group of merchants, described *nikshepa-vanika* in western India, who specialized in banking or money lending. This era also witnessed the emergence of several local merchant groups, i.e. the merchants who were recognized after the region they belonged to. They were mostly from Western India. As this region had a wide network of significant land routes connecting coastal ports with the cities and markets of northern India, the merchants of sure specific spaces in this region establish it more profitable to specialize in inter-local trade. Therefore, the merchant groups described *Oswal* derive their name from a lay described *Osia*, *Palivalas* from *Patlli*, *Shrimali* from *Shrimala*, *Modha* from *Modhera* and so on. Mainly of them are now a days collectively recognized as *Marwaris*, i.e. the merchants from *Marwar*.

It resulted in the emergence of a full time trading society looking after the local swap. This society also participated in wider inter-local and inter-oceanic trade. As in the North, South Indian merchants too specialized in the trade of specific commodities such as textiles, oil or ghee, betel leaves, horses, etc. At the local stage, local markets described *nagaram* were the centres of swap. They were situated in a cluster of agrarian settlements, and they integrated not only collection from hinterland but also commercial traffic from other regions. The numbers of these *nagarams* increased considerably throughout the Cola era in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the term *nagarattar*, i.e. member of the *nagaram* assembly, became a generic term for all Tamil merchants.

#### **4.1.4.4. Guild System**

Guilds were voluntary associations of merchants dealing in the similar kind of commodity such as granules, textiles, betel leaves, horses, perfumes, etc. They were shaped through both local as well as itinerant merchants. The association of local merchants having permanent residence in city was more permanent in nature than the association of itinerant merchants which was shaped only for a specific journey and was terminated at the end of each venture.

The guilds framed their own rules and regulations concerning the membership and the code of conduct. They fixed the prices of their goods and could even decide that specific commodity was not to be sold on a scrupulous day through its members. They could refuse to trade on a scrupulous day through its members. They could refuse to trade in a scrupulous region if they establish the local authorities hostile or uncooperative. The guild merchants also acted as the custodians of religious interests. The inscriptions refer to numerous instances when they collectively agreed to pay an additional tax on the sale and purchase of their goods for the maintenance of temples or temple functions.

The guild normally worked under the leadership of a chief who was elected through its members. He performed the functions of a magistrate in deciding the economic affairs of the guild. He could punish, condemn or even expel those members who violated the guild rules. One of his main duties was to deal directly with the King, and settle the market tolls and taxes on behalf of his fellow merchants. The growth of corporate action enabled guild-chiefs to consolidate their power and location in society, and several of them acted as the representative of their members on the local administrative councils. A member of the guild worked under a strict code of discipline and was also robbed of some initiative or action but still he enjoyed numerous benefits. He received full backing of the guild in all his economic behaviors and was, therefore, saved from the harassment of local officials. Unlike a hawker or vendor, he had greater credibility in the market on explanation of his membership of the guild. Therefore, inspire of the information that guildchiefs tended to be rude and authoritative at times, the merchants establish guilds a significant means of seeking physical and economic protections. The digests and commentaries of the era refer to the corporate body of merchants through several conditions, such as *naigama*, *shreni*, *samuha*, *sartha*, *samgha*, etc. The *naigama* is described as an association of caravan merchants of dissimilar castes who travel jointly for the purpose of carrying on trade with other countries. *Shreni*, according to *Medhatithi*, was a group of people following the similar profession such as that of traders, moneylenders, artisans, etc. though some authors measured it to be a group of artisans

alone. The Lekhapaddhati designates that a special department described the Shrenikarana was constituted through the kings of western India to look after the behaviors of the guilds of merchants and artisans in their region. Another text Manasollasa reveals that several merchant guilds maintained their own troops (shrenibala) for personal safety. Inscriptions too refer to the corporate action of merchants. An inscription from western India refers to vanika-mandala which was almost certainly a guild of local merchants.

The expansion of agriculture and the growth of trade from the tenth century led to the emergence of several merchant guilds or organisations in South India too. The inscriptions refer to these organisations often as samaya, i.e. an organisation born out of an agreement or contract in the middle of its members to follow a set of rules and regulations. The two mainly significant merchant guilds of South India were recognized as the Ayyavole and the Manigraman. Geographically, the region of their operation corresponded to the present day state of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and South Andhra Pradesh. The Cola kings from the tenth century onwards made a concerted effort to trade and commerce through trade missions, maritime expeditions, abolition of tolls, etc. It greatly increased the behaviors of these guilds which were involved in not only interlocal but also inter-oceanic trade crossways the Bay of Bengal. The merchant guild described Ayyavole was also recognized as the guild of “the 500 Swami of Aihole” nanadeshi. While some have argued that such organisations were primarily traders in several kinds of merchandise and not a single unified corporation of merchants. The vast trading network in South India was controlled through a number of merchant organisations which worked in secure cooperation and harmony with one another. The guild-chiefs, on explanation of their manage on trade and trading organisations, recognized secure links with the royal houses and enjoyed great name and fame in the society.

#### **4.1.5. Conclusion**

Thus we noticed that the early medieval period of Indian history was marked by many economic changes. In the initial phase there was a slump in economic activities as evident from the absence of coins for exchange and the decayed condition of towns in northern India and later we notice a revival of trade activities. The revival of economy was possible because of land grants in the agrarian sectors and the role of Arab traders resulting growth in volume of trade which led to emergence of urban centres. In fact the immense spread of agrarian economy during the period from C.E 300 to 1300 has led to an impression that the economy was greatly ruralised; the nonagrarian sector of the economy, according to many historians underwent a decline from C.E 600-1000. It is after AD1000 that crafts, commerce and urban centres are perceived to have revived again.

#### **4.1.6. Summary**

- *The period is marked by the decline in trade and commercial activities resulting in heavy reliance on agrarian sector. Agrarian expansion and general reliance on agrarian sector was the chief feature of the economy.*
- *In the period from the 9th to 13th centuries agriculture continued to be the mainstay of the economy. This led to the widespread expansion of the land grant economy, particularly the agraharas.*
- *Another related feature of the economy of this period, though highly debated, was the emergence of feudal economy. These were instrumental in giving rise to a new phase of urbanization in south India.*
- *Due to land grant, decrease in trading activities gave way to self-sufficient village economy that ultimately created the conditions for the rise of feudalism in India.*
- *The early medieval agrarian structure of North India may be visualised in terms of multi-layered stratification. By multi-layered stratification is meant different groups forming a hierarchical order of several layers.*

- *Likewise, there were peasants of different categories-rich and medium, as well as smallholders. Equally surely, there must have been significant differences in the quantity of land held by the landlords. Peasants differed among themselves, but they differed in a qualitatively different manner from the landlords.*
- *As compared to early historical urban centres, during this phase, urban centres developed deeper roots within the regions. Presence of increased number of guilds suggests the 'diversification of production activities'.*
- *There was regular coastal traffic along the entire littoral, particularly the Konkan and Malaya region emerged into prominence during this period.*
- *Merchants involved in brisk trading activities throughout the period. They used to move in trading groups (caravans).*
- *Rise of the Islam paved the way for brisk commercial activities in the region. Bengal continued to enjoy superiority in trade and commerce.*
- *Decline in the metallic money, however, does not indicate the decline in trading activities for the cowries that were used for trading in large number were brought from as far as Maldives.*
- *Growth of urban centers also continued unabated. There is no doubt that the old centers showed signs of decline but there emerged many new instead. The period also experienced the 'unprecedented agrarian expansion'.*

#### **4.1.7. Exercises**

- Analyse the status of agrarian economy and role of agriculture in the development of trade and commerce of India during AD 700-1300.
- Critically discuss the regional dimensions of our knowledge of early medieval agrarian structure.
- Analyse the implications for the rural economy of the various types of land grants.
- Discuss the debates among the historians over the issue of urban decay. In your opinion which argument stands out more convincing and why?
- Analyse the role of nadu, *nagaram* and *nakhara* in the growth of urbanization in south India.
- To what extent second urbanization was the result of agrarian expansion in early medieval India? Examine.
- Discuss the role of merchant guilds in the growth of craft, trade, and urbanization in early medieval India.

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**Unit.4**  
**Chapter-II**  
**INDIAN FEUDALISM**  
**Characteristic, Nature and Features, Significance**

**Structure**

- 4.3.0. Objectives**
- 4.3.1. Introduction**
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  - 4.3.4.11. Results of Land Grants**
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#### 4.2.0. Objectives

*The chapter throws lights on the changing socio-economic scenario of India on the post-Gupta time. After reading this chapter the learners will be able to*

- *understand the changing political and socio-economic condition of India in post Gupta phase;*
- *examine the notion of land grants and feudalism in India during early medieval time;*
- *describe the status of peasant under the feudal setup in India under the period of discussion;.*
- *assess the impact of land grant and other feudal aspects on trade and trade during Post-Gupta period.*

#### 4.2.1. Introduction

In this chapter we will be discussing one of the most controversial questions in the early medieval context of Indian history, the 'Indian Feudalism'. The aspect of feudalism in Indian context is directly linked with the changing agrarian relation of the post-Gupta period. The debate on 'feudalism' too revolves around the urban decay as the land grant and rising feudal setup help the growth of self sufficient village economy. The question of feudalism and its links with the land grants and the question of intermediaries will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. Thus, in the subsequent discussion the students will be informed about the condition of Indian economy in the Post-Gupta with special reference to agrarian relations, land pattern, trade & commerce, urbanization and the aspect of feudalism as opined by some historians.

#### 4.2.2. Emergence of New agrarian Structure

The most important reason for the emergence of anew agrarian economy in the post-Gupta period was the growing practice of land grants. The practice had its origins in the period, grew in the Gupta age and became quite frequent in the post-Gupta period. Though religious merit was often quoted as the reason for making these land grants in the contemporary records themselves, the real reason behind them was a serious crisis that affected the ancient social order. Contemporary Puranic texts (third-fourth century C.E) complain of a situation in which *varnas* discarded the functions assigned to them. Among the numerous measures adopted to overcome the crisis, the most crucial one was to grant land to priests and officials in lieu of salaries and remuneration. The measure had the advantage of throwing the burden of collecting taxes and maintaining law and order in the granted lands on the recipients. Besides, it could bring new cultivation.

However, the land grantees could neither cultivate the land themselves nor collect revenues. Hence, the actual cultivation was entrusted to peasants or sharecroppers who were attached to the land but did not legally own it. Itsing, the Chinese pilgrim to India in the late seventh century C.E informs us that most of Indian monasteries got their lands cultivated by servants and others. From the sixth century peasants and share-croppers were specifically required to stick to the land granted to the beneficiaries. So they could not move from one village to another, instead they had to live in the same village to cater to all its possible needs.

Consequently a new agrarian economy emerged in the pos-Gupta period. This new agrarian economy, and the new agrarian structure in particulars to be characterised by a number of salient features, such as the grant of barren as well as cultivated land, transfer of peasants to the grantees, imposition of forced labour, restrictions on the movement of the peasants, delegation of fiscal and criminal administrative power to religious beneficiaries, remuneration in land grants to officials, growth of the rights of the grantees, multiplicity of taxes, growth of a complex revenue system and wide regional variations in the agrarian structure.

#### 4.2.3. Origin of Feudalism

The origin and development of feudalism is to be sought in the land grants made to Brahmins from the 1st century C.E onwards. Their number becomes considerable in northern India in the Gupta

period and goes on increasing afterwards. The monastery of Nalanda owned 200 villages in the reign of Harsha. Brahmins and temples were apparently granted land revenues not for rendering civil and military services to their patrons but for spiritual service. In the benefices granted to them they were allowed fiscal rights and such administrative rights as the maintenance of law and order and collection of fines from criminals. Hiuen Tsang states that high officers of the state were paid by land grants, but such grants are wanting because of the perishable nature of the material on which they were recorded.

The process of creating a class of landlords spread unevenly over the country. The practice first appeared in Maharashtra around the beginning of the Christian era. It seems that in the 4th-5th centuries C.E land grants covered a good part of Madhya Pradesh. In the 5th-6th centuries they became prominent in West Bengal and Bangladesh, in the 6th-7th centuries in Odisha, in the 7th century in Assam, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Tamil Nadu and in the 9th-10th in Kerala. In order to find new avenues of wealth for Brahmins and to bring virgin land under cultivation, the process of land grants started in outlying, backward and tribal areas first. When it was found useful by the ruling class, it was gradually extended to central India or Madhyadesa which was the civilised part of the country and the epicenter of Brahmanical culture and society.

What distinguished early Indian feudalism was the provision for fiscal units often, ten or twelve, or sixteen villages and their multiples. The law book of Manu, a work of the 1st-2nd century C.E lays down that collectors in charge often villages or their multiples should be paid by land grants. These units persisted in the Rashtrakuta and to some extent in the Pala dominions.

The socio-economic aspect of feudalism in India was intimately connected with the transformation of the Sudras, who were treated as the common helots of the three higher *varnas*, into peasants from the Gupta period onwards. In the older settled areas Sudra labourers seem to have been provided with land. In the backward areas a large number of tribal peasantry was annexed to the Brahmanical system through land grants, and they were called Sudras. Therefore Hiuen Tsang describes the Sudras as agriculturists, a fact corroborated by al-Beruni about four centuries later.

#### **4.2.3.1. Causes of Subjugation of Peasants**

The subjection of the Indian peasantry in late ancient and early medieval times, especially in older settled regions, was a striking development connected with the socio-economic dimensions of feudalism. It can be explained by several factors, the most important of which was the increase in the burden of taxation on the villagers. The grants mention as many as eleven taxes in the villages; if all these were extracted by the state we doubt whether the peasants were left with even a bare subsistence. In addition to the transfer of these taxes in many cases the donees were given the right to fixed and unfixed, proper and improper taxes. The list of taxes in many grants was not exhaustive, and the grantees were authorised to collect taxes covered by the term '*et cetera*' (adi) and 'all sources of income' (*sarv-aya-sameta or samasta-pratyaya*). All this implies that they could make new impositions. What the peasants paid as revenues to the state was converted as a result of grants into rents to the beneficiaries, many of whom, being priests or religious institutions, did not have to pay any portion of their income as tax to their donors.

A second factor that undermined the position of the peasants was the imposition of the forced labour. In the Maurya period slaves and hired labourers were subjected to such labour. But from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century C.E the practice seems to have been extended to all classes of subjects. Down to the 10<sup>th</sup> century the grants of western and central India indicate the prevalence of *Visti*. Occasionally imposed by the ruling chiefs upon the villagers, impressed labour was bound to prove oppressive when transferred to local beneficiaries who had a direct interest in the exploitation of the rural resources.

A third factor that worsened the condition of the peasants was the right of sub-infeudation. The donees were authorised to cultivate land and get it cultivated. Some late ancient and early medieval lawbooks refer to as many as four stages of landed interests between the king and the actual tiller of the soil; which can be also inferred from the epigraphs. The right to cultivate the land or get it cultivated

also implies the right to eject. A well established practice in Malwa, Gujrat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it tended to reduce the permanent tenets to the position of tenants-at-will.

What adversely affected the peasants in the donated areas was the transfer of communal rights, presumably from the villagers to the donees. The boundaries of many gift-villages were left undefined, and thus could be taken advantage of by the beneficiaries to increase the land in their personal possession. Similarly the right to barren land, jungles, pastures, trees and water reservoirs would enable them to tax the peasants for using these. The transfer of such rights obviously flowed from the theory of royal ownership, which came to be emphasized in Gupta and post-Gupta times.

That there existed certain communal rights can be inferred from the fact that in the Gupta times land could not be sold in Bengal without the consent of the community. Thus the transfer to the beneficiaries of agrarian rights enjoyed by the village tended to erode peasant rights and created new property titles.

These factors may be taken as various modes of extracting surplus from the peasants for the benefit of either the king and or his secular and religious beneficiaries. They gave rise to new property relations and a new mechanism of economic subordination from which there was no escape.

#### **4.2.3.2. Reaction of Peasants**

How did the peasants react to the process of disposition and impoverishment? Land grants provide answer to this questions, nor do most literary texts, which belong mainly to courtly literature. Some texts, however, indicate two possible forms of reaction, however, indicate two possible forms of reaction. One was to leave the country-an old practice preferred to in the *Jatakas*. A passage from the 6<sup>th</sup> century astronomer Varahamihira quoted in *subhashitaratnakosha* presents the pitiable plight of desolate villages which contain only the dilapidated walls of the houses deserted by unwilling peasants on account of the unwarranted oppression of the fief-holder (*bhogapati*), whose atrocities are also mentioned in the *Harshacharita* of Bana. Similarly the *Brihannaradiya Purana* states that on account of families and oppressive taxes peoples in misery migrate to more prosperous lands. Peasants, however, could not leave villages which were granted along with their inhabitants, for the donees had the legal possible authority to restrain them.

The other possible form which the peasants reaction to oppressive conditions might take is the ascertain of their land rights, as can be inferred from the revolt of the Kaivartas in Eastern Bengal, described by Sandhyakaranandi in the *Ramacharita*. The significance of the event can be appreciated better if we bear in mind that the Kaivartas were deprived of their plots of land given as service tenures and were subjected to heavy taxes. It was probably a peasant uprising directed against the Palas, who made a common cause with their vassals against the Kaivartas. But we cannot make too much of this single event, for we have hardly anything else to illustrate this form of reaction on the part of the peasants.

The usual form of reaction therefore may have been migrations. However, these could not be of much avail in the face of the self-sufficient, almost closed, economic systems to which the peasants were tied down in late ancient and early and early medieval times. Economic conditions and political organization being basically the same everywhere, migration did not liberate the peasants from the oppression of the princes and beneficiaries.

#### **4.2.3.3. Self-sufficient Economic Units**

The feudal order was based on more or less self-sufficient economic units functioning in various parts of the country. This is indicated by the rarity of coins, the prevalence of local weights and measures, and the transfer by the kings and chiefs of income in cash and kind from trade and industries to the temples.

The decline of trade and petty commodity production is also indicated by the decay of the urban sites. Archaeological evidence shows that the Kushana layers belonging to the 1st to the 3rd centuries C.E are flourishing. In many urban sites habitation disappeared after the 6th century C.E. This is true of

a number of towns such as Hastinapura, Mathura, Kausambi, Varanasi, Vaisali, Chirand, Rajagriha, and Champa. The same position obtains in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra. It is significant that *nigama* which earlier meant a town came to mean a village in early medieval times.

If we take into account all these factors it would appear that marketisation had reached a low ebb and local needs had to be satisfied on a local scale. Therefore it was in this period that there developed the *jajmani* system. Since artisans did not have much scope for the sale of their products in towns they moved to villages where they catered to the needs of the peasants who paid them at harvest time in kind. The *jajmani* system was reinforced by the charters which insisted on peasants and artisans sticking to their villages. Monasteries and temples formed wide economic units, some of them comprising more than a hundred villages. Apparently some villages supplied grain, others cloth, and still others labour for the repair of buildings; or else every village furnished part of these articles.

#### **4.2.3.4. Role of Early Feudalism**

The historical role of early Indian feudalism was significant for several reasons. First, land grants served as an important means of bringing virgin soil under cultivation in central India, Odisha and eastern Bengal. The same was true of south India. All in all, early feudalism was a phase of great agrarian expansion. Enterprising Brahmins were given useful employment in the backward, aboriginal tracts where they could spread new methods of cultivation. Some beliefs and rituals sponsored by the priests helped material progress among the tribal people. The priests taught the primitive people not only the use of the plough and manure but also fostered agriculture by giving them the knowledge of seasons and planets, especially of the recurrence of the rains. Much of this knowledge was written down in the form of the *Krisi-Parasara*, which seems to have been a product of this period.

Second, land grants provided the administrative mechanism for maintaining law and order in the donated areas, in which all such powers were delegated to the donees. Both in the settled and backward areas the religious donees inculcated among the people a sense of broad loyalty to the established order. On the other hand secular vassals helped their lords by governing their fiefdoms and supplying troops in times of war.

Third, land grants led to the Brahmanisation and acculturation of the tribal peoples, who were given scripts, calendar, art, literature and a new way of higher life. In this sense feudalism worked for the integration of the country. One of the main reasons why the four *varnas* proliferated into numerous castes and the number of the mixed castes shot up to about a hundred according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* was the necessity of finding a place in Brahmanical society for various tribes which were brought into direct contact with the Brahmins through land grants.

Indian feudalism, thus, passed through several distinct stages. The age of the Guptas and the following two centuries saw the beginning of land grants to temples and Brahmins, and the number of such grants increased steadily and their nature changed basically in the kingdoms of the Palas, the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. In the earlier period only usufructuary rights were, generally given but from 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards proprietary rights were transferred to the donees. The process culminated in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E when northern India was parceled into numerous political and economic units largely held by secular and religious donees, who enjoyed the gift villages as little better than fiefs.

#### **4.2.3.5. Samanta System**

**Origin and Meaning:** The institution of the *samanta* was the main innovation which distinguished the post-Gupta period from the other periods of ancient India. The term *samanta* originally meant 'neighbour' and referred to the independent ruler of an adjacent territory in the Maurya period, as is evident from its use in the Arthashastra of Kautilya and the Asokan edicts. In the pre-Gupta period the term was used by law-givers in the sense of a neighbouring proprietor of land. Even the 'border kings' mentioned by Samudragupta in his Allahabad *prasasti* were such *samantas* in the original sense of the term. By the end of Gupta rule and definitely by the 6th century AD, a new meaning of the



term had gained universal currency. *Samanta* had come to mean a subjected but reinstated tributary prince of a realm.

The rise and growth of the samanta was a distinctive structural feature of the growth of feudal regimes. Whereas in the earlier periods of ancient India administrators had been imposed from above by imperial appointment, the feudal realms from the post-Gupta period onwards were controlled by princes who had once been subjected but then reinstated and were then obliged to pay a tribute and to serve the king loyally. In the late Gupta period, this type of administrator was occasionally found in the border provinces but in Harsha's time and later on they became powerful figures even in the core area of the kingdom. They enjoyed a great deal of autonomy within their territory and soon surpassed the old type of provincial governor in wealth and prestige.

In order to integrate these over mighty subjects (*samanta*) into the hierarchy of the realm, they were often high positions at the court of the king. Thus the king of Valabhi in western India who was defeated by Harsha not only gained recognition as a *mahasamanta* (Guardian of the Royal Gateway) *mahadandanayaka* (Royal Field Marshal). Conversely, the high officers of the central court demanded similar recognition as the defeated kings and princes and obtained it in due course. But magnificent title alone would not do, the officers also wanted some territory to go with it. This then was the process of the 'samantisation' of the realm, which we may regard as the Indian variety of feudalism.

This process of 'samantisation' was accelerated by two factors: the lack of money for the payment of salaries and the new ideas that royal prestige depended on the size of a king's *samantachakra* (circle of tributary princes). Old treatises on the art of government, like the *Arthashastra*, provide detailed list of the salaries of officers and Hiuen Tsang reported that certain high officers received their salaries in cash even in the seventh century. But the recession of international trade and the reduced circulation of coins made it necessary for officers to be paid by the assignment of revenue of some villages or of whole districts which they held as *prefend*. Some of the contemporary works tell us that kings were eager to cancel such assignments, particularly if the officer concerned had displeased the ruler. However, the process of samantisation was generally stronger than the will of the central ruler.

**Epigraphic Evidence:** As early as the third quarter of the 5th century C.E the term *samanta* was used to mean vassal in south India for the phrase *samantachudamanayah* (best feudatorie) appears in a Pallava inscription of the time of (C.E 455-470). In the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E also, the term occurs in some grants of southern and western India in the sense of vassal. In north India the earliest use of the term in a similar sense seems to have been in a Bengal inscription, and in the Barabar Hill Cave Inscription of the Maukhari chief Anantavarman (early 6th century C.E), in which his father is described as *samanta-chudamanih* (the best among feudatories) of the imperial Guptas. The next important mention of the term is found in the Mandasor Pillar Inscription of Yasodharman (C.E 525-535), in which he claims to have subjugated the *samantas* (feudatories) in the whole of northern India. During the sixth and seventh centuries C.E the rulers of Valabhi, as mentioned already, bore the title of *mahasamanta* or *samantamaharaja*. Gradually the application of the term was extended from defeated chiefs to royal officials. For example, in the inscriptions dated in the Kalachuri-Chedi era, from C.E 597 onwards *samantas* and *rajas* took the place of *uparikas* and *kumaramatyas*. Later, in the land grants of Harsha the terms *samantamaharaja* and *mahasamanta* appear as titles of great imperial officers.

**Literary Evidence:** Bana in his *Harshacharita* speaks of several types of *samantas*. Of them, the *samanta* was the lowest and ordinary type of vassal. *Mahasamanta* was obviously a step higher than the ordinary *samanta*. *Satru-mahasamanta* was a conquered enemy chief. *Aptasamantas* were probably those who willingly accepted the vassalage of the overlord. *Pradhanasamantas* were the most trusted hands of the emperor, who never disregarded their advice. *Pratisamanta* was probably a vassal opposed to the king or merely a hostile vassal, though it cannot be said with any amount of certainty. *Anuraktamahasamantas* referred to by Bana only once, might be those who were especially attached to their overlord.

**Functioning of the System:** Bana is the first writer to indicate the obligations of the *samantas* to their overlord. It is evident from his *Harshacharita* that the first obligation of the *samantas* is to pay yearly tributes to the emperor. For we learn from it that Harsha had made his *mahasamantas* his tributaries (*karada*). In the areas administered by the *samantas* the emperor realised annual taxes from them and not from the subjects. Though it is not clear whether the vassals were free to increase the taxes or to impose fresh ones, they were certainly held responsible for royal taxes in their areas. According to Bana, the second obligation of the *samantas* is to pay homage to the emperor in person. He informs us that the defeated *mahasamantas* greeted the conqueror by removing their crowns and head-dresses (*sekhara* and *mauli*). It appears that they were subjected to various kinds of humiliation in the court of Harsha. Some served as bearers of fans, others prayed for life by tying a sword to their neck, and still others were always eager to salute the emperor. Bana in his *Kadambari* mentions four modes of saluting the king (*pranam-agamana*) by the vanquished chiefs. These included salute by bowing the head, bowing head and touching the feet of the emperor, bowing the head and taking the dust from the feet of the emperor, and finally placing the head on the earth near the feet of the emperor. Again, in the same work Bana enumerates three modes of service undertaken by the defeated kings (*parichariki-karand*). They held chowries in the court of Harsha, served as door-keepers in the court, and also served as reciters of auspicious words uttering *jaya* (success).

According to Bana, the third obligation of the defeated *samantas* is to furnish their minor princes or sons to the conqueror. These were probably to be trained in the imperial traditions, so that they might grow loyal to their overlord. But, by and large, the obligations of the vassals known from Bana relate to the defeated chiefs called *satrumahasamanta*, who were required to serve the conqueror in various ways in consequence of their defeat.

Generally one of the most important obligations of the *samantas* was to render military aid to their overlord. Bana's description of the march of Harsha in *Harshacharita* shows that the army was made up of the troops supplied by the *rajas* and *samantas*, and their number was so huge that Harsha was amazed at the sight of the concourse. The only probable explanation seems to be that his army was a feudal militia which was mustered only in times of war. This view is supported by Pulakesin's Aihole Inscription, which describes Harsha as equipped with the troops supplied by his vassals.

However, it is not clear either from Bana's works or from the lawbooks whether the *samanta* had the obligation to perform any administrative or judicial functions in peace time. But from the *Harshacharita* we learn that on the advice of the *pradhanasamanta*, whose voice could not be disregarded, Rajyavardhana took food when he was afflicted with grief on the imprisonment of his sister Rajyasri. So, if the counsel of the vassals could not be ignored in personal matters, it could be less so in administrative affairs where not only their advice but also help and cooperation were badly required.

It seems that the *samantas* living in the court of the overlord even had to carry out certain social obligations as well. It is recorded in the *Kadambari* that they took part in the various amusements such as gambling, dice-playing, playing on the flute, drawing portraits of the kings, solving puzzles, and the like. Similarly, it is mentioned in the *Harshacharita* that the wives of the *samanta* had to attend the court on festive occasions. Thus, the vassals were linked with the overlord not only financially and militarily but also administratively and socially.

**Impact of 'Samantisation':** Samantisation gradually eroded the power base of the ruler even in the core area of his realm as the assignment of revenue-bearing lands diminished the area directly controlled by the central administration. This process of the fragmentation of power occurred in other countries too, but in India it became a legitimate feature of kingship. The great emphasis placed on the *samantachakra* made a virtue out of necessity. The contemporary inscriptions and works are full of enthusiastic descriptions of the glitter of the crowns and jewels of the *samanta* who surrounded the king when he held the court. The court emerged in this way as special features of the display of royal glory. The greater the number of *samantas* and *mahasamantas* who attended the court, the greater the

fame of the overlord. Such a *samantachakra* was, of course, inherently unstable. As soon as the power of the central ruler declined, a *mahasamanta* would strive for independence or would even dream of stepping into the centre of the *samantachakra*.

#### **4.2.4. New Agrarian Economy**

##### **4.2.4.1. Land ownership**

The subject of land-ownership in the post-Gupta period is highly controversial matter and the contemporary sources make it more confusing. Medhatithi, a prominent law-giver of the ninth century, for instance records at one place that the king was the lord of the soil, and elsewhere states that the field belonged to him who made it fit for cultivation by clearing it. But land was commonly granted by with rights of varying degrees, to Brahmins and religious institutions for religious and ideological purposes, vassals and princes for military purposes and to officials for administrative purposes. Thus, there developed a great variety of rights over land, claimed by various degree of intermediaries.

With the increasing extent and the changing complexion of the king's right of ownership over issue of the royal ownership over land, the issue of royal ownership of land became very complicated in actual practice owing to increase in the claim of the ruling *samanta* hierarchy and the rural landed aristocracy in this respect. Some post-Gupta inscriptions reveal that the monarchs and overlords gave land grants in the territories and estates of their *samantas*. So, the rights enjoyed over land by the overlords and the *samanta* of different grades depended upon their actual power and prestige.

As a practice of granting lands gained increased currency, the theoretical ownership of land, the grass and including the grass and pasture-land, reservoirs, groves and dry land, also went to the beneficiaries. Such increasing land grant may be interpreted as a general indication of an increasing claim of the king over the land. Under such circumstances, sometimes cultivators of the land were also transferred to the donees.

However, there is also evidence, both literary and epigraphic, of private individual ownership of land by the aristocracy in the post-Gupta period. Some literary sources have stray references suggesting individual ownership, while several inscriptions record cases of land grants and land sales by private individuals. In some inscriptions, lands owned by private individuals are mentioned in connection with the demarcation of the boundaries of the donated land.

Thus the state was deemed to be the owner of all lands as a general proposition, but individuals or groups that cultivated lands in their possession were regarded practically as owners thereof, subject to the liability to pay land tax and the right of the state to self land for non-payment of tax.

##### **4.2.4.2. Types of Land**

Land can be variously classified as cultivated, cultivable, fallow, barren, low, high, hilly, marshy, and the like. The inscriptions from Bengal mention ksetra which probably suggests cultivated land. That the ksetra was certainly better than the other types can be inferred from the fact that the sale price of ksetra was four dinaras per kulyavapa, and the sale price of other types of land varied between two and three dinaras.

Besides ksetra other terms which we come across in the inscriptions from Bengal are khila ksetra, vas-tubhu, aparahata, talabhumi, hajjikakhilabhumer. The term khila also finds place in Amarakosa, which explains khila as land which has not been cultivated. Narada lays down that 'a field that has not been cultivated for one year, is called ardhakhila and that which lies uncultivated for three years is termed khila; khila and khilya appear to have the same meaning. In the Amarakosa the term usara is used to explain barren land, or uncultivable or unploughable land. Therefore, khila land may be taken as a cultivable waste, which was cultivated previously, but is now lying uncultivated for some reason or other.

Another term, which is used along with khila in the inscriptions from Bengal is aparahata. The Amarakosa defines the term khila along with aparahata as land which has not been ploughed. Therefore these two terms may be explained separately. Khila, when used alone in inscriptions may be considered

as land whose cultivation has been stopped for some time, and the term *aprahata* may be considered as land never tilled (or not tilled for a long period).

*Vastubhu* or habitable land is also referred to in the Bengal inscriptions. It may be said that *vastu* land was a dwelling site, and was quite different from cultivated or waste land.

In the Gunaighar grant of Vainyagupta, the term *hajjika-khila-bhumer* occurs. D.C Sircar has explained it as marshy land. So, the term *hajjikakhilabhumer* may be taken to mean a marshy uncultivated land. In the same inscription 'low' land has been described as *talabhumi*. We also find a reference, *panika*, to marshy lands in, the *Amarakosa*.

#### **4.2.4.3. Sources of Revenue**

Treasury has been considered by our ancient lawgivers as one of the main organs of the state. Being so, the treasury or *kosa* naturally presupposes the existence of many sources of revenue. The *Mitaksara*, while commenting on *Yajnavalkya* lists gold, mines and others, as sources of income to the king. *Kamandaka* lays down that 'the quality of the land (fertility and soil resources) is the root of prosperity of the kingdom, and with the progressive prosperity of the kingdom flourishes the strength of the king himself. Hence the king should take necessary steps to develop land resources. Resource rich land includes land (*bhusam-pad* or *janapada sam-pad*) that is fertile (yielding abundant crops), productive of different types of commodities, rich with mines and mineral resources, and, due to the prevalence of irrigation system.' not dependent on rains (*adevomatrika*) for cultivation.

#### **4.2.4.4. Principles of Taxation**

Besides enumerating the importance of *kosa* or treasury for the state and various sources of revenue, the law-givers have also laid down certain principles for the collection of revenue. These principles seem to have considerably restrained the kings in their demand for revenue.

*Yajnavalkya* says that the king takes the sixth part of the virtuous deeds (of his subjects) by protecting them with justice. While commenting upon *Yajnavalkya*, the *Mitaksara* say that by administering justice according to the scripture, and by protecting the subjects, the king takes up a sixth share from the virtuous deeds. *Vishnu* starts with the protection of his subjects and *Kamandaka* regards protection of people and their gainful occupation as a prime importance.

However, *Katyayana* (6th century C.E) for the first time declares the king to be the lord of the land, but never of any other kind of wealth; therefore, he should secure the sixth part of the fruits of land but not otherwise.

This concept of the protection of the subject by the king seems to have survived even in the seventh century. This can be inferred from a verse in the fourth *vuchvasa* of Bana's *Harshacharita*, where, he describes the king as protecting the world so well that not even the meanest had ever to cry for help.

The king was thus entitled to revenue not only because of the protection he provided to the people but also because he was the lord of the land. This dual legality which the king had acquired by the end of the seventh century undoubtedly made him very powerful. However, the situation seems to have been greatly offset by certain admirable principles of taxation embodied in early Indian sources.

The main idea which seems to have guided by the law-givers in enunciating certain principles for the king in levying taxes on his subjects, was avoiding the oppression of the people. These deal with the fixation of the rates of taxation of various commodities, the realization of taxes in smooth manner and the censure of the king for oppressive taxation.

For those rulers, who demanded unlawful taxes in the form of revenue, and fill their treasuries, *Yajnavalkya* foresees ill lucks doom for the kingdom. The *Mitaksara* on this passage says that the sovereign, who increases his own treasure by taking property through illegal means from his kingdom soon being bereft of good luck, goes to destruction, or ruin, along with his kinsman.

The epigraphic records also indicate that these principles were followed in practice to a certain extent and the kings refrained from tyrannizing the people. The *Nalanda Copper Plate Inscription* of

Samudragupta describes him as, 'equal to the (gods) the givers of the many crores of lawful acquired cows and gold'.

Further there are also inscription belonging to Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I, Skandagupta and Buddhagupta, which praise all these rulers for good conduct and ruling according to the law givers.

#### 4.2.4.5. Rate of Land Tax

The law givers of this period have not only enunciated the principle of taxation, but have also recommended the rate at which the land tax may be collected by the king on land. Even Hiuen Tsang, while describing the conditions of the people, mentions that the king's tenants pay one-sixth of the produce as rent. It appears that a sixth part was traditionally as the rate of the share of the king to be taken as land tax. However, the probability that the king could levy different rates for different types of soil cannot be ruled out. Brihaspati lays down the rates of one-tenth and one-sixth on khilla land, on the land exposed to the rain water (*devomatrika*), and on the crops harvested in *vasanta* respectively.

The Epigraphic evidence of the period does not give any clue to the rate of land tax, which was actually taken by the rulers. Only in the inscriptions of Bengal do we find reference to one-sixth share of the merit, which would accrue to the king. The reference to the expression *dharmasadbhaga* in Gupta epigraphs may suggest that the king's normal grain share was one-sixth of the produce. It is, however, curious that we do not find any reference to any revenue terms in Bengal epigraphs belonging to the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, as in the land charter belonging to central and western India.

#### 4.2.4.6. Assessment of Land Revenue

Regarding the mode of assessment, it seems that land revenue was assessed on individual holdings of land. The precision with which the granted fields and villages were marked on all the four sides suggests this. Some of the inscriptions belonging to the Gupta period from Bengal are no doubt sale deeds and refer to fields belonging to individuals. About a dozen inscriptions from the region speak of individual holdings which could have been the basis of revenue assessment.

The land revenue having been assessed on brahmadeya or individual holdings leads us to the problem of whether the area of the individual holding was considered while fixing land revenue. The literary sources do not mention any unit of measurement. It is only in the pre-Gupta sources that we get references to various units of measurement.

Regarding the epigraphic evidence we have reference to the units of measurements, like *kulyavapa*, *dronavapa*, *adhavapa* and *pataka* from Bengal, *nivartana* and *bhumi* from central India, and to *nivartana* and *padavarta* from western India. Besides, we also have reference to fields requiring one *pitaka* full of grain as seeds. The reference to different units of measurement in different parts of northern India, undoubtedly suggests that government officers must have adhered to local standards of measurement.

The assessment of land revenue most probably on property measured individual holdings leads us to another important question of whether the share was taken on the profit of the cultivator or on the gross produce. A passage from Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha* suggests that the tax was most probably not levied on the gross produce but rather on that portion of the produce which remained with the cultivator after he had kept some part of his produce for himself.

#### 4.2.4.7. Different Taxes

The epigraphs do not provide direct evidence of the taxes prevalent during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. But from references to exemptions from various kinds of royal dues, to their transfer to the donees and the retention of some of them by the donor himself, the system of land revenue can broadly be outlined.

In the inscriptions of eastern India belonging to C.E 400-700 we do not find any reference to revenue terms. In central India, however, the charters of the Parivrajakas, the Uccakalpas, the Vakatakas and the Sarabhapuriyas mention several important revenue terms such as *udranga*, *uparikara*, *bhogabhaga*, *kara*, *hiranya*, *dhanya*, *klipta* and *upaklipta*.

The omission of certain revenue terms from the text of inscriptions and reference to many terms seems to suggest that the listing of the exemptions was not taken for granted. Specific and particular taxes were listed as immunities. The king could, according to his wish or as the time and positions may permit, withhold or grant any tax to the donee.

In the Gangetic plains we do not find many inscriptions. It is mainly because land or villages were not granted in the heart of the Gupta empire. The two copper plates of Samudragupta refer to *udranga*, *uparikara* and *bhoga-bhaga*. In the seventh century, only two inscriptions of Harsha, the Madhuban and Banskhedra copper plate inscriptions, have been found, though Bana in Harshacharita refers to a number of land grants having been made by Harsha. The Madhuban Inscription mentions *udranga*, *sarvarajakulabhavya pratyaya sameta*, *samucit tulya maya bhaga-bhoga kara*, *hiranya adi pratyaya*. The most common revenue term in the inscriptions is *bhaga-bhoga*.

The most common revenue term in the inscriptions is *bhaga-bhoga*. Sometimes this expression is recorded in a reverse order as *bhoga-bhaga*. The *bhaga* may be taken to mean the customary share of the produce. The *bhoga* of the inscriptions may be taken as the periodical supplies of fruits, firewood, flowers and the like, which the villagers had to supply to the king, as is specifically stated in the Vakataka grants. Besides, it is also supported by Manu and his commentators Medhatithi and Kulluka.

*Kara* is another revenue term which we get in the inscriptions. It seem to have been of the nature of a periodical tax levied more or less universally from villagers, and it may have been realised over and above the king's normal grain share. The Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman indicates that *kara* was an oppressive tax.

Another fiscal term which we come across in the inscriptions is *hiranya*. This term is found in all the inscriptions of northern India except in those of the Vakatakas. *Hiranya* literally means gold, but in its technical sense, it means king's share of certain crops paid in cash as distinguish from tax in kind (*bhoga*) levied on ordinary crop. Here it may be inferred that most probably ginger, cotton was another commercial crop on which *hiranya* was levied.

Besides these fiscal terms, we also come across *uparikara* and *udranga*. These two terms occur in the inscriptions belonging to C.E 400-700, with the exception of only a few. One view is that *uparikara* is something like the Tamil *melavaram*, that is, crown's share of the produce. However, this view is not tenable as in the Karitalai plate (C.E 493-94) and the Khoh plate (AD 512-13) the terms *udranga* and *uparikara* occur along with *bhoga kara*. Therefore, *uparikara* can neither be equated with *bhaga*, the crown share of produce which is indicated by *melvaram* in Tamil, nor with *bhoga*.

The term *udranga* which appears along with *uparikara*, is also difficult to explain. Two explanations of this term are noteworthy. If it is the same as *dranga* which according to *Rajatarangini* is a watch station; it can be taken as a sort of police tax. It might also be suggested that it is an anomalous derivative of the Sanskrit word *udaka*, and in that case it may be a water tax. However, in view of the fact that it is recorded along with other normal royal dues like *uparikara*, *udranga* also may have been a levy over and above the usual grain share.

There are some other fiscal terms such as *ditya*, *meya* and *dhanya*. The word *ditya* means exempt from all dues, forced labour and making gifts. Accordingly *ditya* did not denote any particular tax, and many taxes may have been included in it.

The term *meya* also appears in some of the inscriptions from eastern and central India. It has been explained as the taxes, including the share of the produce and the cash money paid in lieu of the produce in proper time. The word *meya* may also be taken to be a substitute for the general land tax known as *bhaga*. The term *dhanya* also appears to have denoted the general land tax.

Thus, in the Gupta period several new taxes, such *udranga* and *uparikara* appear along with *bhoga-bhaga*, *dhanya* and *hiranya*. In addition to these there may have been other taxes in the inscriptions as we get the word *adi* (meaning et cetera). These terms continue in the post-Gupta period in almost all parts of northern India, though we find variations in the list of taxes.

#### 4.3.4.8. Religious Grants

From the pre-Gupta period, and especially from the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, certain political and administrative developments tended to feudalise the state apparatus. One of the most striking developments was the practice of making land grants to Brahmins, a custom which was sanctified by the injunctions laid down in the *Dharmasastras*, the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*. Two significant features of such grants, which became more frequent from the fifth century C.E, were the transfer of all sources of revenue and the surrender of administrative and police functions.

The transfer of all sources of revenue by the ruler to the Brahmins is evident from the land grants made by the Vakataka rulers from the time of Pravarasena II (5th century C.E) onwards. In these the ruler gave up his control over almost all sources of revenue, including pasturage, hides and charcoal, mines for the production of salt, forced labour, and hidden treasures and deposits.

Certain land grants of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods provide clear evidence of the surrender of administrative power by the state to the Brahmin beneficiaries. Half a dozen land grants of the Gupta period, made to the Brahmins by the big feudatories in central India, show us that the residents of the gifted villages were asked not only to pay the customary taxes to the recipients but also to obey their commands. Two land grants of the post-Gupta period clearly direct certain government officials (employed as *sarvadyaksha*), regular soldiers and umbrella-bearers not to cause any disturbance to the Brahmins in their gifted villages.

The surrender of police functions by the state to the Brahmins in the gifted villages was particularly done from the post-Gupta period onwards. Henceforth in central India some royal donors began to confer upon the Brahmins not only the right to punish thieves, but also the right to punish all offences against family, property and person. These grants, using the term *abhyantarasiddhi*, armed the donees with such powers that they could easily turn the benefices into practically independent pockets.

Gupta grants normally do not authorize the grantee to alienate or grant his rents or land to others. But the Indore grant (made in C.E 397 by a local merchant to a Brahmin with the consent of one Maharaja Swamidasa, probably a feudatory of the Imperial Guptas) authorises the grantee to enjoy the field, cultivate it and get it cultivated so long as he observes the conditions of the *brahmadeya* grant. This leaves clear scope for creating tenants on the donated land and provides graphic evidence of the subinfeudation of the soil. This process of subinfeudation increased in the western part of central India in the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E and characterised the grants of the Valabhi rulers to their donees in the sixth and seventh centuries.

The priests, in return for land grants, were required in the charters to render religious services, which might secure the spiritual welfare of the donors or their ancestor. But their secular obligations were rarely mentioned in the charters for they were probably taken for granted. However, it is natural that the priestly beneficiaries more than repaid their generous donors by maintaining law and order in the donated lands and impressing upon the people the sacred duty of carving out their *varna* functions and of obeying the intentions of the donors, it would be wrong to think that these grants served only religious purposes.

#### 4.3.4.9. Secular Grants

Another presage of the feudalization of the state apparatus was the practice of making land grants to officers for their administrative and military services. In the Gupta period there is no direct epigraphic evidence of such grants, though such a possibility can not be entirely ruled out. But during the post Gupta period a definite change had taken place in the mode of payment of officers employed by the state. At least during Harsha's reign high officers were not paid in cash for their services to the state as one-fourth of the royal revenues was earmarked for the endowment of great public servants. At one place Hiuen Tsang explicitly states that the governors, ministers, magistrate and officials had each a portion of land assigned to them for their personal support. These high officers, according to Harsha's inscriptions, would include *daussadha-sadhanika*, *pramatara*, *rajssthaniya*, *uparika* and *vishayapati*.

Thus under Harsha revenues were granted not only to priests and scholars but also to the officers of the state. The existence of this practice is supported by the paucity of coins belonging to this period.

Some inscriptions of the post-Gupta period show that lands were granted to secular parties for different services. The two copper plate grants from east Bengal, roughly assignable to 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries, mention quite a few secular assigners. They indicate that plots of land donated to the head of a Buddhist monastery were actually taken from several persons who were enjoying them till then. Though all such persons (from whom lands had been taken away) are named, the position and identity of only a few can be established. In one instance land had been given to the queen for probably maintenance, in another to a woman for some service rendered to the king, and still in another to a *samanta* for services rendered to the overlord. Apparently these and other persons held the plots of land in question as some kind of service grant which were retrieved either at the lapse of the term or on grounds, otherwise these could not have so easily transferred. All this suggests that during post-Gupta period in east Bengal some services were remunerated by means of land which was granted for a limited period.

These problem of payment to officers in grants of revenues can be further examined in the light of the designations of the administrative officers of the post-Gupta period. Bana's *Harshacharita* states that in course of the military march of Harsha, villagers made false complaints against *bhogapati*. Apparently in his anxiety to present the administration of his patron in a favorable light, Bana does not give credence to these complaints. Another feudal functionary in the time of Harsha was the *mahabhogi*, mentioned in some epigraphs from Odisha. In the Kadambari, Bana's description of the *antahpura* in the palace of king Tarapida refers to the presence at the doorway of hundreds of *mahabhogis*. These mahabhogis were probably those people who were granted land revenues in rural areas and who occasionally flocked to the royal palace to pay homage to their overlord. The early Kalachuri inscriptions introduce a new official *bhogikapalaka*, who may have acted as superintendent over the *bhogikas*. All such terms—*bhogika*, *bhogapatika* and *bhogikapalaka*—clearly smack of feudal relations.

Certain terms used for administrative units in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods also indicate land grants to officers. The typical feudal idea that land or territory was meant for the enjoyment of those who held it or governed it first comes into full view in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, though it is mentioned for the first time in Asokan edicts. The terms *ahara* literally meant 'food for its holders', but was actually an administrative unit (equivalent to a modern district or subdivision) from the time of Asoka, and continued to be so in Gujarat and Maharashtra even during Gupta and post-Gupta times as is evident from the early Kalachuri inscriptions. At the same time, several other terms signifying enjoyment came to be used commonly for territorial divisions. They include such terms as *bhukti*, *bhoga*, and *vishaya*.

The feudalisation of state apparatus is also evident from the feudal connotation of administrative titles like *amatya*, *kumaramatya* and others. As far as the *amatyas* are concerned this was certainly the position in the time of Harsha, for at least at two places the *Harshacharita* speaks of those *amatyas* who were anointed as feudatories. The office of *kumaramatya* originally meant a person who was attached to the prince, but later it became an independent position without having anything to do with the prince. By the late Gupta and post-Gupta times it came to denote a feudal rank of honour conferred on high functionaries, including even a *maharaja*. Whether the title carried some fiscal or other privileges is not clear. But towards the end of the reign of the imperial Guptas we find the *kumaramatyamaharaja* Nandana making a land grant without the permission of the overlord, which suggests that by the middle of the sixth century ad the *kumaramatyas* had emerged as de facto lords of villages which they could give away.

#### **4.3.4.10. Position of the Peasantry**

There is no evidence to show that peasants in the donated villages had the same position in relation to Brahmin landlords as peasants to their lords in west European manorial villages. But in certain respects the Indian peasant was completely subservient to the benefactor. In many cases, because



of the right of getting their land cultivated by others, the landlords could replace old peasants by new ones, thus ousting their tenants.

The Gupta grants from central and western India implicitly show that the peasants had to render *visti* or forced labour to their king or land holder while some land grants from the post-Gupta period make the landlord's right to forced labour quite explicit. A grant of the Valabhi ruler Dharasena I (C.E. 575) confers on the recipient of a religious grant the right to impose forced labour if the occasion arose. Exactly the same concession is granted by Siladitya I in his charters of the seventh century, the technical term conveying the recipient's right to forced labour is frequently mentioned in the Valabhi grants and even in grants made by lesser chiefs such as the Sendraka chief Allasakti of Gujarat. It also occurs in the land charters of the Chalukyas of Badami.

Quite a few radical changes took place in the nature of the forced labour in the Gupta and post-Gupta times. The practice was extended to the western part of central India, Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka, as indicated by the Vakataka, Rashtrakuta and Chalukya records. It assumed a wide magnitude in central India, where it came to be known by the term *sarva-visti*. The right to forced labour, formerly confined to the king alone, was now extended to recipients of religious grants and their descendants. Its scope too was widened and the various kinds of work done by means of *visti* are enumerated in the contemporary texts. All upon the peasants.

While the peasants reduced to a servile position, the free peasant lost status because of the imposition of several new taxes and levies. It seems that during the Gupta and post-Gupta times the villagers had to pay forced contributions of money or supplies to royal troops and officials when they halted or passed through the villages. Further they had to furnish cattle in relays for transport. They were also under the obligation of supplying flowers and milk to the royal officers on tour. These forced contribution which were not sent to the state treasury but were consumed locally by royal troops and officers tended to set them up as another class of intermediaries and thus further lower the position of peasantry. The incidence of forced contributions, coupled with forced labour, would not be felt much under the direct jurisdiction of the royal representatives who were mobile and not hereditary, vested interest in the exploitation of the resources of the village. Moreover, the judicial and administrative authority which the landholders enjoyed must have added to their economic power over the inhabitants of the village.

However, what mainly led to the servitude of peasants was their transfer to the beneficiaries. According to the inscriptions, the practice of transferring peasants began in south India. A Pallava grant of the fourth century C.E. informs us that four share cropper remained attached to a plot of land which was given away to the Brahmins, which implies that original cultivators were required to work on the land even when it was made over to the beneficiary. Gradually the practice came to embrace peasants, who seem to have been given away to the beneficiaries in Karnataka. A grant of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. from Bijapur district issued by an early Chalukya king of Badami donate 25 *nivartana* of land along with all its produce, garden-cultivation, water and house (*nivessa*). Here the term *nivesae* is used not merely in the sense of a house but also of peasants living there, as is still done in popular parlance in the countryside. This conclusion is supported by a Ganga grant of the same century from the Ganjam district. It states that six *halas* of land (land that tivated by six ploughs) along with four cottage (*hatur-nivesana-sahita*) were constituted into an *agrahara* and granted free of taxes in perpetuity to god Narayana.

From south India the practice of the transfer of individual peasants probably spread to central India. A Vakataka grant of the fifth century C.E. speaks of the gift of four houses meant for the use of cultivators (*karsaka-anivesanani*), which implies the making over of cultivators to the beneficiary.

In Odisha the practice of transferring all the cultivators of the village to the beneficiary can be traced back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. In western India, particularly Gujarat, the land grants of the post-Gupta period imply the transfer of peasants along with the soil. The earliest instance can be referred to

the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E, when a Vallabhi ruler Dharasena II records the gift of plots of varying sizes held by five persons, all of whom are mentioned by name in the grant. Probably along with the plots their holders also changed hands, otherwise there was no point in mentioning their name.

The above three examples concern the gift of fields and not of villages. The earliest grant which unequivocally transfers the villages to the grantee is that of a feudatory ruler called *maharaja* Samudrasena (7<sup>th</sup> century C.E). According to it, a village in the Kangra area is made over as a grant with its inhabitants (*saprativasijanasameta*).

The earliest epigraphic reference to the transfer of peasants to a monastery belongs to the seventh century C.E. The Ashrafpur grants from East Bengal, as noted already in some other context, mention the persons who were in the enjoyment of a plot and the cultivators who were tilling it. They indicate that while the plot was taken away from the enjoyers and given to the Buddhist monastery, the cultivators were left undisturbed, for the monastery would have to get its land cultivated by peasants.

Serfdom, that is, the practice of transferring peasants along with land to the beneficiaries, seems to have been a feature of the grant of those pieces of land which did not form part of organised villages but were held independently by peasant families having their habitation in isolated houses rather than in a cluster of dwellings. In these cases all the lands cultivated by the peasants lay around their houses. When these lands were donated, the peasants working on them had to be retained. Otherwise the beneficiaries would be put to great difficulties. Some of these peasants were probably ploughmen. It is, therefore, possible to think of two types of serfs- those who possibly served as ploughmen and those who served as tenants living in villages. The former (ploughmen attached to the land), may be equated with the full-fledged serfs, while the latter (tenants specifically transferred along with villages) may be treated as semi-serfs. For the latter did not have to work on the private farms of the beneficiaries, and could normally leave the village to seek means of subsistence elsewhere except under difficult economic situations. On the basis of several epigraphic records, we can make the following observations on serfdom in India which became fairly common by the middle of the eighth century C.E. At first, it began in the peripheral areas and then gradually spread to the heart of the country in northern India. Secondly, it was organised in mountainous or backward regions which did not have too many peasants to run the local economy, but because of the powers it gave to the landholders over the peasants it later spread to developed areas. Thirdly, it began with the share-croppers and then covered peasants in general. Finally it began with plots of land and then came to embrace whole villages.

Rise of Sudra peasants is another important development of the Gupta and post-Gupta times. There is sufficient reason to believe that Sudras were also becoming peasants in good numbers, though the traditional view that Vaishyas were peasants recurs in the contemporary literature. Several law-books show that land was rented out to the Sudra for half the crop. This would suggest that the practice of granting land to Sudra sharecroppers was becoming more common. Narada includes the *kinasa* (peasant) among those who are not fit to be examined as witnesses. A commentator of the seventh century ad explains the term *kinasa* as a Sudra, which shows that peasants were thought of as Sudras. Besides, Brihaspati provides very severe corporal punishment for the Sudra who acts as a leader in boundary disputes relating to fields, which again suggests that such Sudras were owners of fields. Finally, Hiuen Tsang describes the Sudras as a class of agriculturists, a description which is confirmed by the *Narasimha Purana* compiled before the tenth century C.E. Thus, this significant development, which began from the Gupta period, covered all the Sudras by the first half of the seventh century ad. The view that the farmer population was largely composed of Sudras seems to be more true of the Gupta and post-Gupta times than of earlier periods. Thus, from the point of view of the rise of feudalism the transformation of Sudras from the position of slaves and hired labourers into that of agriculturists should be regarded as a factor of great significance.

#### 4.3.4.11. Results of Land Grants

As a result of land grants and certain other factors there arose independent, self sufficient economic units. The beneficiaries of land grants enjoyed several economic rights which cut the economic ties between the central authority and the donated areas. For the continuity and development of their economy they were more dependent on the central government. The main idea behind tying down the peasants and artisans to the lands and villages they inhabited was to preserve the self-sufficient village economy.

Further, the conditions obtaining in the village which were independent of the beneficiaries of land grants and were placed under the charge of the village headman were not very dissimilar. According to Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* the headman might compel peasant women not only to work in his fields but also to spin yarn so that his clothes might be supplied to him locally. Some of the commodities thus produced were also put on sale, apparently to cater to the simple needs of the villagers.

That such local units' were coming into existence is also evident from the paucity of coins of common use from the Gupta period onwards. This factor can be linked up, on the one hand, with the decline of internal trade and the consequent necessity of produce local commodities to meet local needs and, on the other, with the weakening of the power at the centre, which gradually adopted the method of paying officials by grants of revenue or in kind. It is indicative of the growing disuse of coins in Post-Gupta times that the religious endowment which were made in cash by the princes and individuals in the first two centuries of the Christian Era, were now replaced by grants of land. Further, in the post-Harsha period hardly any coin can be ascribed with certainty to any ruling house. Of course, legal texts refer to the use of coins, land characters mentioned taxes levied in *hiranya*, and some inscriptions speak of the cost of construction and purchase in terms of money; but very few actual finds can be ascribed to this period. In fact, the absence of coin during the period C.E 600-900 has been noted by several scholars. It is therefore evident that coins in general became rarer from the time of Harsha onward, which leads us to the conclusion that trade suffered a decline and urban life began to disappear.

It seems that in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E silk was as good an earner of bullion for India as spices in the first century AD. The drainage of gold from Roman Empire in 1<sup>st</sup> Century C.E was stopped by means of a legislation, which, though supplemented by diplomacy, failed to check it (the drain) in the Byzantine empire. The solution was however, found in C.E 551 by the introduction of silk worms brought into the Byzantine empire secretly over land from China. It might have taken another 50 years to get the art of rearing silk worms spread in Byzantium, and by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E the problem of obtaining silk from the east may have been finally solved for the Byzantine empire. This adversely affected Indian foreign trade, which as far as north India is concerned was confined to silk. Evidently the stoppage of its export to the Byzantine empire drastically reduced whatever remained of the shrunken foreign commerce of north-western India in Gupta times. Hence, so long as some new articles did not take the place of silk, there was no means to restore the balance, and retrogression in foreign trade was inevitable. The decline of foreign trade may also have been caused by the expansion of the Arabs under banner of Islam. The agitated state of western Asia, Egypt and Eastern Europe, at least in initial stages of the Arab conquests, was bound to tell upon India's foreign trade with the countries lying to the west. Only when the Arabs had settled down as rulers in these countries and Sind, did trade revive from the third century of the hijra era (i.e. 9<sup>th</sup> Century C.E). But meanwhile there was nothing to arrest its decline. Thus we have clear indications of the decline of the foreign trade of northwestern India from the end of the Gupta period, and specially from the first half of the seventh century C.E.

Whatever internal trade and commerce existed had to be fitted into the emerging feudal structure. This is evident from the detailed rules laid down in the law books regarding the functioning of the guilds of artisans and merchants. It is symptomatic of the declining central authority that the king is

required not only to observe the laws of the guilds but also to enforce them. What actually prevailed can be inferred from three charters granted to the guilds of merchants by the rulers of the coastal areas of western India. The first charter was issued at the end of the sixth century C.E, while both the second and third charters were issued at the beginning of the eighth century C.E by Bhagasakti, the Chalukya king of the Konkan area.

On the basis of these three charters, we can make the following comments about the condition of merchants and their guilds in the post-Gupta period. The charters were made to the merchants among whom a few were elevated to the position of managers of the endowment or the town as the case might be. They tied down the merchants to the management of villages, which in one case were attached to a temple and in another to the rehabilitated town. The merchants enjoyed practically the same immunities and privileges as were enjoyed by priests and perhaps by some feudal barons in the villages granted to them. But since they were encumbered with the management of villages, they could not pay full attention to their trade and commerce. The charters, therefore, show the feudalisation of merchants by turning them into some kind of landed intermediaries. The activities of every guild were restricted to its locality so that it had no freedom of competition, a feature characteristic of the closed economy of Europe in the Middle Ages.

#### **4.3.5. Trade & Urban Centre**

One of the key arguments used for characterising our period as feudal has traditionally been the notion of commercial decline and deurbanisation. The historic towns and cities that had developed during the second phase of Indian urbanisation, between the sixth century B.C and the fourth century C.E, appeared to have lost their vitality and importance from the Gupta period onwards. The principal reason for this was considered to be the drying up of the profitable Indian trade with Rome and the extreme dearth of coinage. Hiuen Tsang's observations of urban decay during his travels in the seventh century are generally cited as evidence of the increase in ruralisation.

More recent research casts doubt upon the validity of this theory of decay. It is no longer believed that the Roman trade was so fundamental to the well-being of the country that its disappearance led to an irreparable commercial decline. Commerce never really died out; it merely changed its orientation. As was referred to earlier, as well as in the previous chapter, the great appetite for Indian goods in the Islamic markets and the Arab mercantile role in satiating it meant that the traditional Indian exports did not cease. The Chinese market remained buoyant too. There was no shortage of coins because all payments continued to be made in gold and silver specie.

Since, at this time, agricultural production generally expanded as a result of the opening up of new lands, partly through land grants and the drafting in of the newly constituted peasant labour, there was ample surplus for external trade. The epigraphic information concerning the mercantile classes, market centres, interest rates, merchant associations and the rates of levies and cesses belies greatly the notion of commercial wane. Even if we accept that the volume of trade could not have declined in our period, and that its value might in fact have increased, the issue of urban decay cannot be easily ignored. Whatever little that archaeology has yielded us from the post-Gupta sites has indeed confirmed a marked decay in urban architecture, particularly in north India. The historic cities of the earlier second phase, having grown from an epicentre, were located in the older imperial territories. They were centres of political power or of Buddhist patronage, with deep hinterlands and situated along the main trade routes.

With the fading away of the imperial idea, the decline of Buddhism, the growing importance of the coastal areas and the opening up of new hinterlands in different regional kingdoms, it was inevitable that the older cities would suffer decay. But this decay was not a reflection of a malady affecting the very idea of urbanism in general; it really was confined to the historic cities, such as Pataliputra and Taxila; and it did not prevent a new phase of urbanisation in our period. In fact, it is this third phase of Indian urbanisation, along with the incorporation of subsequent Islamic notions of urbanism, that gave

rise to the pre-modern towns and cities of the Indian sub-continent. The absence of archaeological confirmation is amply compensated by numerous regional inscriptional records. They point to a methodology that gives us fresh insights into the new phase of urbanism.

We discover that the hierarchy of settlements, as symbolised by such terms as *grama*, *pura*, *nagara* or *mahanagara*, did not change substantially; and the Indians of this period were perfectly aware of the differences in urban scale of, say, a *pura* settlement and a *nagara*. Secondly, the details specified in the charters of land grants give us a spatial context of the land that was being gifted: whether it was a purely rural space or a mixed rural–urban one. In the case of the latter, it would include such features as a market exchange point, residential quarters or manufacturing units. If these predominated in a kingdom's land grants, then that would allow us to determine the scale of urbanism. Thirdly, the records tell us about the various types of exchanges and, indeed, guilds of merchants and craftsmen. The market exchange in north India was generally called a *hatta*, and in the south it was the *nagaram*. The presence of market exchanges implied an urban population density, and exchanges could meaningfully continue trade only in the context of urban centres. Both barter and money were in common use. Fairs too could only be held in some sort of urban centres, however small. Fourthly, the inscriptions give us copious information about places of pilgrimage and the temples. Our period is profuse with the northern- and southern-style regional temples; and royal patronages were continually creating new sacred spaces that drew in people from the hinterlands. People generally like to live near a great cathedral, a mosque or a temple, and so it was in this period too; the sacred spaces also represented the continuity of an older tradition of sacred towns from the very early centuries of the second phase of Indian urbanisation.

In conclusion, therefore, we can say that, although the older towns and cities declined, the newer ones always arose, and some of these were to become even more bustling and busy during the following six centuries of the Sultanate and Mogul eras.

#### **4.3.6. Conclusion**

The two and a half centuries of Indian history covered in this chapter were characterised by two crucial developments that led to profound consequences for the succeeding years of history. Firstly, India became increasingly regionalised. Between the mid-eighth century and the end of the tenth century we see the growth of a number of regional kingdoms, of which some demonstrated unique features of state formation. Secondly, the regionalised society became highly feudal. Feudalism would long remain a persistent factor in the shaping of Indian society and its mindset, although its characteristics would undergo much transformation in succeeding centuries. The political economy of the kingdoms was substantially feudal; and, despite various dissenting views among historians, the inscriptions provide strong evidence of the way feudalism linked the state and its economy.

#### **4.3.7. Summary**

- *Feudalism became an important feature of the political system of North India in the post Gupta period of Indian history.*
- *This was because the authority of the rulers had been limited in many ways. The ministers were appointed on the hereditary basis and became all powerful.*
- *There were numerous feudal chiefs who had ties with ruling class. In the local and central govt these feudal chiefs had special privileges and powers which no ruler could ignore. This also led to the limited authority of the kings.*
- *The rulers were under the obligation to rule according to holy Sastras and Smritis could not enact or amend the laws at will. Thus rulers of this period were basically feudal lords with limited overall power.*
- *The basis of the sovereignty during this period was a mixture of Divine Right theory and contract theory. On the one hand the authors of treaties on polity regarded the ruler as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. On the other hand they also held that it the people who conferred*

*sovereignty on the ruler. So the natural duty of the ruler was to rule in the interests of the people while the duty of the people was to be loyal to him.*

- *A king was usually succeeded by his elder son. If a king dies without an heir the kingdom passed to the head of next in kin to the ruling dynasty. There was little scope for disputed succession in this period.*
- *The powers of the king were limited in practice due to privileges and prerogatives of the feudal lords. Since he had the theoretical ownership of all the lands, the feudal lords needed his recognition but then this prerogative of the kings was limited as the feudal lords had hereditary rights.*
- *The king was helped in the administration by a council of ministers besides crown prince. The chief priest and the court astrologer were recruited from Brahmin while all over posts were held by feudal lords. They usually belonged to Kshatriya caste. Sudras or lower caste had no place in the political set up of the king.*
- *Land grant, rise of self sufficient village economy hamper the trade and commerce of this period which in result led to urban decay in India during this period.*

#### **4.3.8. Exercises**

- To what extent is European model of feudalism relevant in the Indian context.
- Discuss the concept feudalism in Indian context.
- Give an account on the pattern of land grant in Post-Gupta India.
- Write an essay on the condition of trade and commerce in India on the eve of feudal setup.
- Assess the agrarian relation prevail during the early medieval India.

#### **4.3.9. Suggested Readings**

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**Unit.4**  
**Chapter-III**  
**TRADE AND COMMERCE**  
**Maritime Activities Spread of Indian Culture Abroad, Cultural Interaction.**

**Structure**

- 4.3.0. Objectives**
- 4.3.1. Introduction**
- 4.3.2. Inland Trade and Commerce**
  - 4.3.2.1. Stage of Decline (C.E 750-1000)**
  - 4.3.2.2. The Period of Revival & prosperity (C.C.E.900-1300)**
- 4.3.3. External Trade**
  - 4.3.3.1. India's Maritime Trade & Participants**
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- 4.3.4. Trading communities**
- 4.3.5. Organisation of Traders: The Guild**
- 4.3.6. Merchants, Craftsmen and their relation**
- 4.3.7. India's impact on South-East Asia: Causes and Consequences**
  - 4.3.7.1. Medium of Cultural Spread**
  - 4.3.7.2. The Centers of contact between Southeast Asia South India**
- 4.3.8. Conclusion**
- 4.3.9. Summary**
- 4.3.10. Exercise**
- 4.3.11. Further Readings**

#### 4.3.0. Objectives

The chapter deals with the trade and trading activities of early medieval India both within and beyond the territorial boundary of the country. Particularly the role of maritime trade in spread of Indian culture in different part of early medieval world will be dealt here in this chapter. Emphasis will be on the modes, causes and significance of the maritime trade of early medieval India. The objectives of this unit are to.

- *examine the various facets of trade and commerce in early medieval India;*
- *understand the various aspects of inland trade and commerce;*
- *explain various aspects of overseas trade of early medieval India;*
- *identify modes through which Indian culture spread abroad; and*
- *describe a brief history of medieval Indian cultural expansion in South East Asia.*

#### 4.3.1. Introduction

Early medieval period of India as evidence from earlier chapter was a period of political and cultural creativity. Establishments of regional and local kingdoms, growth of regional culture and new agrarian setup were coincided with the rapid development of commodity production, the manufacturing by hand of goods which made India's reputation in these early times as a land of fabulous wealth and elegance. This reputation attracted people to the subcontinent, feeding further the vitality of commerce within and beyond South Asia. The overseas maritime trade resulted in interaction of Indians with the rest of the world. In fact Indians merchants travelled far and wide and left their cultural footprints wherever they went. In return they also brought home ideas, impressions, customs and traditions from these distant lands. The transmission of Indian culture particularly to the distant parts of Central Asia, China, Japan, and especially Southeast Asia is one of the greatest achievements of Indian history or even of the history of mankind also. None of the other great civilizations-not even the Hellenic-had been able to achieve a similar success without military conquest. Though they were influenced by Indian culture, they are nevertheless part and parcel of the history of those respective countries. Here in this chapter we will look into the various aspects of trade and commerce as flourished in the early medieval age and their impact on the growth of Indian culture during the period under discussion.

#### 4.3.2. Inland Trade and Commerce

The collection, sharing and exchange of goods are described trade. It also involves dissimilar parts 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 through them constitute a significant source of revenue of the state. For proper understanding of the historical characteristics of trade throughout the early medieval times we will discuss the topic in two broad phase c.700-900 C.E., and c 900-1300 C.E. Briefly, the two phases are marked through: Relative decline of trade, metallic currency, urban centres and a somewhat closed village economy in the first stage, and reversal of mainly of the aforesaid tendencies in the second stage.

##### 4.3.2.1. Stage of Decline (C.E 750-1000)

The era from C.E. 750-1000 witnessed wide-spread practice of granting land not only to priests and temples but also to warrior chiefs and state officials. This phenomena lead to the emergence of a hierarchy of landlords and growth of self sufficient village economy, where local needs were being satisfied in the vicinity through the imposition of numerous restrictions on the mobility of actual producers. This indirectly led to relative dearth of medium of exchange. Followings are the characteristic features of trade during this stage.

**Mode of Exchange:** India was ruled through several significant dynasties flanked by C.E. 750 and 1000. These contain the Gujara Pratiharas in Western India, the Palas in Eastern India and the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan. All had the distinction of having been served through some of the mainly powerful kings of the day, several of whom had very extensive lasting reigns. It is astonishing that their



accessible coins are very few and in no method compare either in quantity or excellence with the coins of earlier centuries. Since money plays a significant role in the sale and purchase of goods, the paucity of actual coins and the absence of coin-moulds in archaeological discovers lead us to consider in the shrinkage of trade throughout the era under survey. Of course some parts of India witnessed minting and circulation of coins but their volume was limited. During this period cowries and money in the form of gold/ silver dust functioned as medium of exchange.

Even when such early medieval coin kinds as the Indo-Sassanian, Shri Vighraha, Shri Adivaraha, Bull and Horseman, Gadhaiya, etc. appeared in Western and North western India and to some extent in the Ganga valley, they could not create much dent in the overall economy. Separately from the doubts in relation to the era of emergence of these coins, their very poor excellence and purchasing power also indicate the shrinkage of their actual role. Further, in relation to the rising population and expanding region of resolution, the overall volume of money circulation was negligible. Hence, we can say that the case for the relative decline of metallic money throughout the first stage is based on convincing empirical proof. This was bound to have an impact on India's trading behaviors.

**Relative Decline of Trade:** Internally, the fragmentation of political power and the dispersal of power to local chiefs, religious grantees, etc. appear to have had an adverse effect, at least in the initial centuries of the land grant economy. Several of the intermediary landlords, particularly of less productive regions, resorted to loot and plunder or excessive taxes on goods passing through their territories. This necessity has dampened the enthusiasm of traders and merchants. Frequent wars amongst potential ruling chiefs were also a cause of decline.

The fall of the great Roman Empire in the fourth century and the knowledge of silk production by Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) adversely affected India's foreign trade. India therefore, lost a significant market which had fetched her considerable amount of gold in the early centuries of the Christian era. The decline of foreign trade was also caused through the expansion of Arabs on the North-west frontiers of India in the seventh and eighth centuries. Their attendance in the region made overland routes unsafe for Indian merchants. A story in the Kathasaritsagara tells us that a group of merchants going from Ujjain to Peshawar were captured through an Arab and sold. Later, when they somehow got free, they decided to leave the North-western region forever and returned to South for trade. The fights amongst the Tibetans and Chinese throughout these centuries also affected the flow of goods beside the routes in central Asia. Even the Western coast of India suffered dislocation and disruption of sea trade as the Arabs raided Broach and Thane in the seventh century and destroyed Valabhi, and significant port on the Saurashtra coast, in the eighth century. Though as we have pointed out, later, the Arabs played a significant part in the growth of Indian maritime trade after the tenth century; initially their sea raids had an adverse effect on the Indian commercial action. There are some references in the modern literature to India's get in touch with South-east Asia, but it is doubtful whether it could create up for the loss suffered on explanation of the decline of trade the West.

**Urban Settlements: Decay:** The first stage was also marked through the decay and desertion of several cities. It is a significant symptom of commercial decline because the cities are primarily the settlements of people occupied in crafts and commerce. As trade declined and the demand for craft-goods slumped, the traders and craftsmen livelihood in cities had to disperse to rural regions for alternative means of livelihood. Therefore cities decayed and townsfolk became a part of village economy. Beside the accounts of Hiuen Tsang, the Pauranic records too, while referring to Kali age indicate depopulation of significant municipalities. The decay of significant cities such as Vaishali, Pataliputra, Varanasi, etc. is apparent from the archaeological excavations which reveal poverty of structure and antiquities. The pan-Indian scene is marked through desertion of urban centres or their state of decay' in the era flanked by the third and eighth centuries. Even those settlements which sustained upto the eighth century, were deserted thereafter. One can mention Ropar (in Punjab), Atranjikhhera and Bhita (in Uttar Pradesh), Eran (in Madhya Pradesh), Prabhas Patan (in Gujarat),

Maheswar and Paunar (in Maharashtra), and Kudavelli (in Andhra Pradesh) in this category of urban settlements.

***Decline in Craft Production:*** The commercial action throughout the first stage of early medieval era had declined but did not disappear totally. In information, trade in costly and luxury goods meant for the use of kings, feudal chiefs and heads of temples and monasteries sustained to exist. The articles such as valuable and semivaluable stones, ivory, horses, etc. shaped a significant part of the extensive aloofness trade, but the proof for transactions in the goods of daily use is quite meager in the sources belonging to this era. The only significant article mentioned in the inscriptions are salt and oil which could not be produced through every village, and therefore had to be brought from outside. If the economy had not been self-enough, the references to trade in granules, sugar, textile, handicrafts, etc. would have been more numerous. In short the nature of commercial action throughout C.E. 750-1000 was such which catered more to the landed intermediaries and feudal lords rather than the masses. Though there were some pockets of trade and commerce such as Pehoa (close to Karnal in Haryana) and Ahar (close to Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh) where merchants from distant and wide met to transact business, they could not create any important dent in the closed economy of the country as a whole.

#### **4.3.2.2. The Period of Revival & prosperity (C.E.900-1300)**

This stage is marked through the revival of trade and commerce. It was also the era of agrarian expansion, increased use of money and the reemergence of market economy in which goods were produced for swap rather than for local consumption. These centuries also witnessed a substantial growth of urban settlements in dissimilar parts of the sub-continent. The widespread practice of land grants had been an important factor in agrarian expansion. Though it is recognized that it is not easy to quantify this development, one can also not overlook the noticeable local variations and disparities. Though, the era from the beginning of the tenth century to the end of the thirteenth was the age of greater manufacture of both cereals and pulses as well as of commercial crops. Naturally, it created a favorable climate for widening the scope of both internal and external trade. Characteristic features of this period are as follows.

***Crafts and Industry:*** The growth of agricultural manufacture was complemented through increased craft manufacture. This phase witnessed increased craft manufacturing which stimulated the procedure of both local and inter-local exchange. Textile Industry, which had been well recognized since ancient times, urbanized as a major economic action. Coarse as well as fine cotton goods were now being produced. Marco Polo (C.E. 1293) and Arab writers praise the excellent excellence of cotton fabrics from Bengal and Gujarat. The availability of madder in Bengal and indigo in Gujarat might have acted as significant aides to the growth of textile industry in these regions. Manasollasa, a text of the twelfth century, also mentions Paithan, Negapatinam, Kalinga and Multan as significant centres of textile industry.

The silk weavers of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu also constituted a very significant and influential part of the society. The oil industry acquired great importance throughout this era. From the tenth century onwards, we get more references to the farming of oilseeds as well as to ghanaka or oil mills. Sugarcane farming and cane crushers in this era also indicate big level manufacture of jaggery and other shapes of sugar. Besides the agro- based industry, the craftsmanship in metal and leather goods too reached a high stage of excellence. The literary sources refer to craftsmen linked with dissimilar kinds of metals such as copper, brass, iron, gold, silver, etc. A number of big beams at Puri and Konarka temples in Odisha indicate the proficiency of the iron smiths of India in the twelfth century. Iron was also used to manufacture swords, spearheads and other arms and weapons of high excellence. Magadha, Benaras, Kalinga and Saurashtra were recognized for the manufacture of good excellence swords. Gujarat was recognized for gold and silver embroidery.

The Ginza records of the Jewish merchants belonging to the twelfth century reveal that Indian brass industry was so well recognized that the customers in Aden sent broken vessels and utensils to

India to refashion them according to their own specifications. The existing specimens of Cola bronzes and those from Nalanda, Nepal and Kashmir display the excellence of the Indian metal workers. In the field of leather industry Gujarat occupied an enviable location. Marco Polo mentions that the people of Gujarat made beautiful leather mats in red and blue which were skilfully embroidered with figures of birds and animals. These were in great demand in the Arab World.

***Re-introduction of metallic coins:*** The revival of trade received considerable help from the re-emergence of metal money throughout the centuries under discussion. There is, though, substantial discussion in relation to the degree and stage of monetization. Very often the contenders of the penetration of money in the market invoke literary and inscriptional references to numerous conditions purporting to describe several kinds of coins of early medieval India. Therefore texts such as Prabandhachintamani, Lilavati, Dravyapariksha, Lekhapaddhati, etc. mention bhagaka, rupaka, vimshatika, karshapana, dinar, dramma, nishka, gadhaiyamudra, gadyanaka, tanka, and several other coins with their multiples. No less prolific are inscriptional references. For instance the Siyadoni inscription alone refers to diversities of drammas in the mid-tenth century. The Paramara Chalukya, Chahmana, Pratihara, Pala, Candella and Cola inscriptions corroborate mainly of the conditions establish in modern literature. There has also been considerable speculation in relation to the value of these coins, their metal content and their connection with one another. Nothing could be more simplistic than to suggest the penetration of money in the market basically on the foundation of listing of numismatic gleanings from a mixed bag of inscriptions and literature. We need to scrutinize the contexts of such references.

As distant as the actual specimens of coins are concerned, one can say that the practice of minting gold coins was revived through the Kalacuri King of Tripuri in Madhya Pradesh, the Gahadavala King close to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, the Chandella rulers in Central India, King Harsha of Kashmir and some Cola Kings in Tamil Nadu also issued gold coins. Despite the plethora of references to coins, the proof of overall volume of money in circulation is approximately negligible. Nor can one overlook the poor purchasing power of early medieval coins, irrespective of the metal used. All coins of the era were highly debased and reduced in weight. Also, in conditions of the rising population and expanding region of resolution, the use of money appears to have been highly restricted. The case revise of early medieval Rajasthan shows that the revival of trade, multiplication of exchange centres and markets and prosperity of merchant families took lay only with the help of “partial monetization”. Likewise, the cash nexus on the Western coast (Konkan region) under the Shilaharas (C.E. 850-1250) was also marked through limited use of money. The kinds and denominations of coins remained not only very localized but could not penetrate deep into the economic ethos. Masses were distant absent from handling of coins. The currency organization of South India throughout C.E. 950-1300 also shows that transactions at all stages of the society were not equally affected through coined money. For instance, the fabulous expenses accounted to have been incurred through the Pandyas as regular buyers of imported horses cannot be thought in conditions of what we know as very poor Pandyan currency. Barter was still a significant means of swap in local inter-local and perhaps even in inter-national commerce. There are references which indicate that caravans of merchants exchanged their commodities with those of other regions. Though the revival of even “partial monetization” was contributing to economic growth, yet no less important was the parallel development of credit instrument through which debits and credits could be transferred without the handling of cash money. In the texts of the era we discover references to a device described hundika or the bill of exchange which might have been used through merchants for commercial transactions. Through this device credit could be extended through one merchant to another and, therefore, the obstacle to commerce due to shortage of coined money could be overcome. The Lakhapaddhati, a text which throws light on the life of Gujarat in the twelfth- thirteenth centuries, refers to several means of raising loan for consumption as well as commercial ventures through the mortgage of land, homes and cattle.

***Commodities of Trade and their Consumers:*** There are numerous inscriptions which refer to merchants carrying food grains, oil, butter, salt, coconuts, areca nuts, betel leaves, madder, indigo, candid sugar, jaggery, thread cotton fabrics, blankets, metals, spices, etc. from one lay 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 fiber and cotton cloth brought through the traders to the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf on their method home from India. Al Idrisi also refers to the transshipment of rice from the country of Malabar to Sri Lanka in the twelfth century. The export of palm sugar and coir for ropes is noted through Friar Jordanus who wrote in relation to the C.E. 1330. 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 several sources as significant articles of swap. High value things such as horses, elephants, jewellery, etc. also came to several swap centres. The chief customers of Indian goods were of course the rich inhabitants of China, Arabia and Egypt. Several of the Indian goods might have established their method to Europe as well as via Mediterranean. While the characteristics of foreign trade will be discussed at length later, it needs to be highlighted that the domestic demand was not insignificant. A new class of consumers appeared as a result of big level land grants from the eighth century onwards. The priests who earlier subsisted on meager fees offered at domestic and other rites were now entitled to hereditary enjoyment of vast landed estates, benefices and rights. This new landowning class, beside with the ruling chiefs and rising mercantile class, became a significant buyer of luxuries and necessities because of their better purchasing power.

The brahmanical and non-brahmanical religious establishments, which commanded vast possessions in the form of landed estates and local levies, urbanized as significant consumers of approximately all marketable goods. They required not only such articles as coconuts, betel leaves and areca nuts, which had acquired great ritual sanctity, but also increased quantity of food for presentation to gods or for sharing as prasadau. The personnel of religious establishments, which numbered up to several hundreds in case of big and significant temples, constituted a significant consuming group to be fed and clothed through peasants, artisans and merchants. Therefore big temples with their vast possessions and varied necessities also helped in generating commercial action. This phenomenon was more marked in South India where several temple sites became significant commercial centres.

***Trade Routes and Means of Communication:*** A vast network of roads linked dissimilar ports, markets and cities with one another and served as the channel of trade and commerce. The overland connections amongst dissimilar regions is indicated through the itinerary of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who came to India in the seventh century from crossways the Hindukush and visited several cities and capitals from Kashmir in North to Kanchi in South and from Assam in East to Sindh in West. An inscription of C.E. 953 refers to merchants from Karnataka, Madhyadesha, South Gujarat and Sindh coming to Ahada in Rajasthan for mercantile behaviors. Bilhana, an eleventh century poet from Kashmir tells us in relation to the bus travels from Kashmir to Mathura, and how he reached Banaras after passing through Kannauj and Prayaga. From Banaras he proceeded to Somanatha (on the Saurashtra coast) via Dhar (close to Ujjain) and Anahilavada (in North Gujarat). From Somanatha, he sailed to Honavar (close to Goa), and then went overland to Rameshwaram on the Eastern coast. Albiruni (C.E. 1030) mentions fifteen routes which started from Kannauj, Mathura, Bayana, etc. The route from Kannauj passed through Prayaga and went eastward up to the port of Tamralipti (Tamluk in the Midnapur district of West Bengal), from where it went beside the Eastern coast to Kanchi in South.

Towards the North-east, this route led to Assam, Nepal and Tibet, from where one could go overland to China. Kannauj 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 Northwestern route was the chief channel of commercial intercourse flanked by India and Central Asia in the pre-Gupta centuries. But in the early medieval era, it was mainly 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 contemporary port of Karachi in Sindh. A branch of this route passed through Abu in the Western foot of the Aravali Hills, and linked ports and cities of Gujarat with Bayana, Mathura and other spaces 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 a significant 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 beside the Eastern and Western coasts in South India also served as significant means of inter-local contacts.

The pleasures and pains of travel in ancient times depended on the geographical circumstances of the trade routes. The routes through desert and hilly regions were certainly more arduous and hard. 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 lay to another. In the modern literature, there are references to dissimilar kinds of boats which necessity have been used in river traffic whereas big ships plied on the high seas.

An important development in the post-tenth centuries was the keen interest shown through rulers to stay the highways in their kingdoms safe. They took events to punish thieves and robbers and provided military as well as monetary help to villagers to protect the traders and travelers passing through their region. The Chalukya kings of Gujarat had a separate department described the Jiala-patha-karana to look after highways. They also built new roads to connect significant ports and markets in their state and exhumed tanks and wells for the benefit of travelers. Trade being a significant source of revenue, political authorities had to be concerned in relation to the safety and well being of traders and merchants. Marco Polo's reference to Cambay as a lay free from pirates designates that Indian kings also took steps to safeguard their ports against piracy which was a major threat all beside the sea route from South China to the Persian Gulf.

#### **4.3.3. External Trade**

There was a time in the past, when Indians were the masters of the sea borne trade of Europe, Asia and Africa. They built ships, navigated the sea, and held in their hands all the threads of international commerce, whether carried on overland or sea. In Sanskrit books we constantly read of merchants, traders and men engrossed in commercial pursuits. From the earliest time India has an enormous trade links with Asia and western countries. This glory of Indian overseas trade even continued in the early medieval period. Most important aspect external trade during this period was big level trading behaviors were accepted through sea. This phenomena again helps the Indian culture to spread in to different part of the world. In this discussion we will dealt about the countries occupied in sea trade, the commodities of trade, main ports and security of the sea routes.

##### **4.3.3.1. India's Maritime Trade & Participants**

The era under survey was marked through great expansion of sea trade flanked by the two extremities of Asia viz. the Persian Gulf and South China. India which lay midway flanked by the two extremities greatly benefited from this trade. The hazards of extensive sea voyages were sought to be curtailed through anchoring on the Indian coasts. The Asian trade throughout these centuries was mainly dominated through the Arabs, After having destroyed the significant port and market of Valabhi on the Saurashtra coast in the eighth century, they made themselves the chief main time force in the Arabian Ocean. Though, it did not affect the location of Arabs who sustained to uphold their supreme hold on the Asian trade. Fragmentary information in indigenous sources and notices in foreign accounts suggest that despite the forceful competition of the Arabs, Indians were going to the lands beyond the seas for trade from the tenth century onwards.

Abu Zaid, an Arab author of the tenth century refers to Indian merchants visiting Siraf in the Persian Gulf, while Ibn Battuta (14th century) tells us of a colony of Indian merchants at Aden in the

Red Sea. A Gujarati text of the 14<sup>th</sup> century refers to a merchant Jagadu of Kutch who traded with Persia with the help of Indian mediators stationed at Hormuz. In South India, the Colas, took keen interest in maritime trade. The Tamil inscriptions establish in Malaya and Sumatra indicates the commercial behaviors of Tamil mercantile society in these regions. The Colas also sent a number of embassies to China to improve economic dealings with her. They even sent naval expedition against the Srivijaya empire in the eleventh century to stay the sea route to China safe for their trade. Though, through and big the references to the physical participation of Indian merchants are quite limited. This did not affect the demand for Indian products which reached the outside world through the Arabs and the Chinese.

#### **4.1.32. Commodities Exchanged**

As regards the articles involved in the Asian trade, the Chinese texts indicate that the Malabar coast received silk, porcelain-ware, camphor, cloves, wax, sandalwood, cardamom, etc. from China and South-east Asia. Mainly of these may have been the things of re-export to the Arabian world, but some were meant for India, particularly the silk which was always in great demand in local markets. Marco Polo informs us that the ships coming from the East to the ports of Cambay in Gujarat brought, in the middle of other things, gold, silver and copper. Tin was another metal which came to India from South-east Asia. -

In return for eastern products, India sent its aromatics and spices, particularly pepper. According to Marco Polo pepper was consumed at the rate of 10,000 pounds daily in the municipality of Kinsay (Hang-Chau) alone. Chau Ju Kua, a Chinese port official of the thirteenth century, tells us that Gujarat, Malwa, Malabar and Coromandel sent cotton cloth to China. It is pointed out through Ibn Battuta (C.E. 1333) that fine cotton fabrics were rarer and more highly priced than silk in the municipalities of China. India also exported ivory, rhinoceros horns, and some valuable and semiprecious stones to China.

A number of Arabic inscriptions establish at Cambay, Samaratha and Junagadh reveal that merchants and shippers from the Persian Gulf visited Western India in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ships coming to the Gujarat coast from Hormuz in the Persian Gulf are also mentioned in the Lekhapaddhati.

As regards the articles of trade with the Arab and the Western World, the Jewish merchants accepted several goods from the West coast of India to the Egyptian markets. These incorporated spices, aromatics, dyes, medicinal herbs, bronze and brass vessels, textiles, pearls, drops, coconuts, etc. India also exported teakwood which was required for ship-structure and homes construction in the approximately treeless regions of Persian Gulf and South Arabia. Some surplus food-granules, mainly rice, were also sent out from the Indian ports to the communities in other coastal regions which did not produce enough foodstuffs to meet their needs. The fine and embroidered leather mats of Gujarat were according to Marco Polo highly priced in the Arab world. India was also recognized for its iron and steel products, particularly the swords and spears, which enjoyed a wide market in Western countries. As distant as imports from the West are concerned, the mainly important thing was the horse. As the number of feudal lords and chiefs increased in the early medieval era, the demand for horses also increased manifold. Horses were brought both through land and sea. Ibn Battuta tells us that horse-dealers coming through the Northwestern land routes earned big profits. According to an Arab author, Wassaf (C.E. 1328) more than 10,000 horses were brought annually to the Coromandel coast, Cambay and other ports of India in the thirteenth century. Horses were brought from such spaces as Bahrein, Muscat, Aden, Persia, etc. Besides horses, dates, ivory, coral, emeralds, etc. were also brought to India from the West.

#### **4.3.3.2. Ports & trading Centers**

There were a number of ports on the Indian coasts, which not only served the inland trade network but also acted as a link flanked by the eastern and western trade. In information, approximately every creek that could give facility for a safe anchorage of ships, urbanized into a port of some national or international significance.



On the mouth of the Indus, Debal was a significant port which according to Al Idrisi (twelfth century), was visited through vessels from Arabia as well as from China and other Indian ports. Chief ports on the Gujarat coast were Somanatha, Broach and Cambay. Somanatha had links with China in the East and Zanzibar (in Africa) in the West, Broach or ancient Bhrigukachha has had a very extensive history. Cambay is recognized as Khambayat in Arabic sources, and Stambhatirtha in Sanskrit sources. Its earliest reference goes back to the ninth century C.E. Sopara and Thana were other significant ports on the Western coast of India. On the Malabar coast, Quilon had appeared as the mainly significant port. The Arab Writers tell us that ships coming from the West described at the port of Quilon for collecting fresh water before sailing for Kedah in South-east Asia. Likewise, the Chinese sources of the thirteenth century also state that Chinese traders going to the country of the Arabs had to change their ships at Quilon.

Throughout the three centuries flanked by the tenth and thirteenth, the Coromandel coast urbanized into a virtual clearing homes for the ships coming from the East and West. The Arab author, Wassaf, tells us that the wealth of the isles of the Persian Gulf and the beauty of other countries as distant as Europe is derived from the Coromandel coast. The mainly significant port in this region was Nagapattinam. Puri and Kalingapattam were significant ports on the Odisha coast. In Bengal the fortunes of Tamralipti were reviving though according to some scholars, it was being superseded through another port of Saptagrama.

During the early medieval period India had an extensive trade links with the different parts of the world. Hence she became hub for foreign trade. Earlier the Muslims had their control on India's trade and later who set aside by the Portuguese. Gujarat, Goa, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon etc., described as important ports and these were very much helpful to India to open her doors for foreigners. In *Vijayanagara*, the complete freedom of travel and ownership granted by the kings without enquiry whether he was a Christian, Jew, Moor or Heathen, as well as the great equality and justice shown to all by the ruler and his subjects, drew an enormous number of merchants to the city. Thus, India's foreign trade has rich heritage from the early days.

#### **4.3.4. Trading communities**

The traders form a significant link flanked by producers and consumers. They collect agricultural surplus and products of artisans and craftsmen from dissimilar regions and distribute them in excess of a wide region. Throughout the early medieval centuries, the procedure of collection and sharing of goods involved a big number of merchants, big as well as small, local as well as inter-local. There were hawkers, retailers and other petty traders on the one hand and big merchants and caravan traders on the other. While their role was adversely affected throughout the first stage (C.E. 700-900) on explanation of limited commercial swap, the revival of trade in the second stage (C.E. 900- 1300) led to considerable augment in the status, effectiveness and power of merchant communities. The ancient Indian texts specify trade beside with agriculture and cattle rearing as the lawful means of livelihood for vaishyas. In the seventh century, the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang distinctly mentions vaishyas as traders and shudras as cultivators. Though, the procedure of the two coming closer had already started and shudras were undertaking trade in such articles as wine, honey, salt malt, etc. The barriers of brahmanical varna order were crumbling in the post-Gupta centuries and people were adopting professions cutting crossways varna divisions. Trade was followed through the people of all varnas and castes. Some were compelled to take it up while others establish it more lucrative than other economic behaviors.

In view of the relative decline of trade throughout these centuries, the role of merchants in the society was considerably eroded. As trade slumped and markets disappeared, the merchants had to seek patronage and shelter with the temples and other emerging landed magnates. It robbed them of their selfgoverning commercial action, and forced them to cater to the needs and necessities of their patrons. Some inscriptions from Odisha and Central India reveal that traders, artisans and merchants were

amongst those who were transferred to donees. This necessity has meant a serious reduction in their free trading behaviors. Nor is there any important proof of administrative role being assigned to merchants flanked by the eighth and tenth centuries. This is in obvious contrast to their role in management apparent from sticks and sealings from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar throughout the Gupta era. Though, trade did not disappear totally, some merchants were still active, particularly beside the coast. But they were small in number and their behaviors were mainly confined to the luxury articles required through kings, chiefs and temples. In South India too, trade was not a very significant action throughout the centuries under survey. This is indicated through the relative absence of the mention of merchants as a separate class in the records of the era. In other words, it can be said that the first stage of early medieval India was marked through the thinning absent, if not disappearance, of the wealthy and free merchant class.

The second stage of early medieval India brought the mercantile society back into prominence, and we notice big number of merchants carrying luxury and essential goods from one lay to another. They accumulated fabulous wealth through commercial exchanges and acquired fame in society through creation gifts to temples and priests. Several of them took active part at several stages of management, and even occupied the ministerial positions in royal courts.

The literature and inscriptions of the era refer to the big number of merchants who were recognized through the specialized trade they followed. Therefore, we come crossways dealers in gold, perfumes, wine, granules, horses, textiles, curds, betels, etc. Some of the merchants employed retailers or assistants to help them in trading behaviors. As inter-local trade urbanized a group of merchants specialized in examining and changing coins for traders Money lending also became one of the major behaviors of merchants. Though people deposited money in temple treasury for the religious purpose of endowing flowers, oil, lamps, there are very few references to guilds accepting deposits and paying interest thereon. There appeared a separate group of merchants, described *nikshepa-vanika* in western India, who specialized in banking or money lending. The *Lakhpaddhati*, a text from Gujarat, refers to a merchant's son who claimed his share in the ancestral property to start the business of money lending. *Medhatithi*, a legal commentator, speaks of the association or corporation of moneylenders. The modern literature, though, presents a bad picture of moneylenders and describes them as greedy and untrustworthy who cheat general man through misappropriating deposits. This era also witnessed the emergence of several local merchant groups, i.e. the merchants who were recognized after the region they belonged to. They were mostly from Western India. As this region had a wide network of significant land routes connecting coastal ports with the cities and markets of northern India, the merchants of sure specific spaces in this region establish it more profitable to specialize in inter-local trade. Therefore, the merchant groups described *Oswal* derive their name from a lay described *Osia*, *Palivalas* from *Patli*, *Shrimali* from *Shrimala*, *Modha* from *Modhera* and so on. Mainly of them are now a days collectively recognized as *Marwaris*, i.e. the merchants from *Marwar*. Separately from their functional and local names, merchants were also recognized through several common conditions, the two mainly general being *shreshthi* and *sarthavaha*. Both these conditions were recognized from very early times.

*Sresthi* was a rich wholesale dealer who existed in a city and accepted on his business with the help of retailers and mediators. At times he lent out goods or money to small merchants, and therefore acted as a banker too, though, as we have already pointed out, money lending was becoming a separate and specialized action. The *sarthavaha* was the caravan leader under whose guidance the merchants went to distant spaces to sell and purchase their goods. He was supposed to be a highly capable person knowing not only the routes but also the languages as well as the rules of swap in dissimilar regions. The expansion of agriculture and the availability of surplus from the 8th/9<sup>th</sup> century onwards led to augment in commercial exchanges in South India too.

It resulted in the emergence of a full time trading society looking after the local swap. This society also participated in wider inter-local and inter-oceanic trade. As in the North, South Indian



merchants too specialized in the trade of specific commodities such as textiles, oil or ghee, betel leaves, horses, etc. At the local stage, local markets described *nagaram* were the centres of swap. They were situated in a cluster of agrarian settlements, and they integrated not only collection from hinterland but also commercial traffic from other regions. The numbers of these *nagarams* increased considerably throughout the Cola era in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the term *nagarattar*, i.e. member of the *nagaram* assembly, became a generic term for all Tamil merchants.

***Social Role of Traders:*** As growth of trade brought economic prosperity to merchants, they sought to gain social prestige through participating in the maintenance of temples, priests and religious functions. Numerous inscriptions refer to the grant of cash or goods through merchants for these purposes. Some merchants became very influential and joined the ranks of state officials and ministers. A tenth century inscription refers to a merchant of Modha caste who was the chief of Sanjan (close to Thane) in Maharashtra. In Gujarat, the merchant family of Vimala played a significant role in the political and cultural life of the region. He and his descendants Vastupala and Tajapala occupied significant ministerial positions at the court and are recognized for structure the wellknown marble temples dedicated to Jaina gods at Mount Abu. A thirteenth century inscription from central Gujarat reveals that several significant merchants, traders and artisans were a part of the local administrative bodies.

***Character and Conduct of Traders:*** The foreign authors and travelers such as Al-Idrisi (twelfth century) and Marco Polo (thirteenth century) praise Indian traders for their truthfulness and honesty in business dealings. But in the modern Indian literature we come crossways several instances of greedy and dishonest merchants. The Kashmiri author Kshemendra refers to a typically selfish merchant who used to feel overjoyed at the approach of a famine or some other calamity because he could expect good money on his hoarded food granules. A text of the eleventh century from Western India, divides merchants in two main classes—on the foundation of their location and character—high and low. It points out that rich merchants who indulged in big level sea or land trade enjoyed great reputation while small merchants such as hawkers, retailers, etc. who cheated people through using false weights and events were looked down upon in society. It also comprises artisans in the list of dishonest people. It may, though, be noted that some of these views reflect the modern feudal tendency in which persons working with their own hands and possessions were measured low in society.

#### **4.3.5. Organisation of Traders: The Guild**

The merchants derived their power and prestige not only from wealth but also from the guilds or associations shaped through them to protect their interests. In the first stage the decline of trade weakened the corporate action of merchants, and several of the guilds were reduced to mere local or occupational sub-castes. But as trade revived in the second stage, merchant guilds reappeared as a significant characteristic of the modern economic life.

Guilds were voluntary associations of merchants dealing in the similar kind of commodity such as granules, textiles, betel leaves, horses, perfumes, etc. The guilds framed their own rules and regulations concerning the membership and the code of conduct. They fixed the prices of their goods and could even decide that specific commodity was not to be sold on a scrupulous day through its members. The guild merchants also acted as the custodians of religious interests. The inscriptions refer to numerous instances when they collectively agreed to pay an additional tax on the sale and purchase of their goods for the maintenance of temples or temple functions.

The guild normally worked under the leadership of a chief who was elected through its members. He performed the functions of a magistrate in deciding the economic affairs of the guild. He could punish, condemn or even expel those members who violated the guild rules. One of his main duties was to deal directly with the King, and settle the market tolls and taxes on behalf of his fellow merchants. The growth of corporate action enabled guild-chiefs to consolidate their power and location in society, and several of them acted as the representative of their members on the local administrative

councils. A member of the guild worked under a strict code of discipline and was also robbed of some initiative or action but still he enjoyed numerous benefits. He received full backing of the guild in all his economic behaviors and was, therefore, saved from the harassment of local officials. Unlike a hawker or vendor, he had greater credibility in the market on explanation of his membership of the guild. Therefore, inspired by the information that guild chiefs tended to be rude and authoritative at times, the merchants established guilds as a significant means of seeking physical and economic protections. The digests and commentaries of the era refer to the corporate body of merchants through several conditions, such as *naigama*, *shreni*, *samuha*, *sartha*, *samgha*, etc. The *naigama* is described as an association of caravan merchants of dissimilar castes who travel jointly for the purpose of carrying on trade with other countries. *Shreni*, according to *Medhatithi*, was a group of people following the similar profession such as that of traders, moneylenders, artisans, etc. though some authors measured it to be a group of artisans alone. The *Lekhapaddhati* designates that a special department described the *Shrenikarana* was constituted through the kings of western India to look after the behaviors of the guilds of merchants and artisans in their region. Another text *Manasollasa* reveals that several merchant guilds maintained their own troops (*shrenibala*) for personal safety. Inscriptions too refer to the corporate action of merchants. An inscription from western India refers to *vanika-mandala* which was almost certainly a guild of local merchants.

The expansion of agriculture and the growth of trade from the tenth century led to the emergence of several merchant guilds or organisations in South India too. The inscriptions refer to these organisations often as *samaya*, i.e. an organisation born out of an agreement or contract in the middle of its members to follow a set of rules and regulations. The two mainly significant merchant guilds of South India were recognized as the *Ayyavole* and the *Manigramam*. Geographically, the region of their operation corresponded to the present day state of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and South Andhra Pradesh. The Cola kings from the tenth century onwards made a concerted effort to trade and commerce through trade missions, maritime expeditions, abolition of tolls, etc. It greatly increased the behaviors of these guilds which were involved in not only inter-local but also inter-oceanic trade crossways the Bay of Bengal. The merchant guild described *Ayyavole* was also recognized as the guild of “the 500 Swami of Aihole” *nanadesi*. While some have argued that such organisations were primarily traders in several kinds of merchandise and not a single unified corporation of merchants. *Anjuvannam* was another body of merchants in South India, which almost certainly represented an association of foreign merchants, and not a group of five communities or castes as some scholars consider. The vast trading network in South India was controlled through a number of merchant organisations which worked in secure cooperation and harmony with one another. The guild-chiefs, on explanation of their manage on trade and trading organisations, recognized secure links with the royal houses and enjoyed great name and fame in the society.

#### **4.3.6. Merchants, Craftsmen and their relation**

The exact nature of connection flanked by the merchants and craftsmen, the two interdependent parts of commercial world, is not recorded in the modern sources. It is, so, not recognized whether craftsmen such as weavers, metalworkers, etc. acted independently or worked under the command of merchants who supplied them money or raw material or both. There is, though, some proof to suggest that as merchants came to exert greater manage on the mobilization of raw material and finished products, their power on the behaviors of artisans increased considerably. *Albiruni*, who came to India in the eleventh century as well as *Lakshmidhara*, a jurist of the 12th century, tell us that artisans existed in the midst of merchants. It may suggest that merchants supplied capital and raw material to artisans who were to produce goods as per the demand and specifications provided through merchants. There are references to some oilmen and weavers who sold their goods themselves and became rich enough to create endowments to temples and priests. In common, the artisans and craftsmen throughout the early medieval era were economically dependent on big merchants.

#### **4.3.7. India's impact on South-East Asia: Causes and Consequences**

The transmission of Indian culture to distant parts of Central Asia, China, Japan, and especially Southeast Asia is one of the greatest achievements of Indian history or even of the history of mankind. The entire South East Asian region was influenced by Indian culture and they are nevertheless part and parcel of the history of those respective countries. In this section we will discuss some fundamental problems concerning the transmission of Indian culture to the vast region of Southeast Asia.

##### **4.3.7.1. Medium of Cultural Spread**

There are several theories regarding the transmission of Indian culture to Southeast Asia such as the 'Kshatriya' theory; the 'Vaishya' theory; and the 'Brahmin' theory. The Kshatriya theory states that Indian warriors colonised Southeast Asia. The Vaishya theory attributes the spread of Indian culture to traders. Finally, the Brahmin hypothesis credits Brahmins with the transmission of Indian culture. Besides the role of indigenous people of south east Asia and Buddhist monks of India played important role in the spread of Indian culture in this area.

***Kshatriya, Vaishya and Brahmin Theory:*** Kshatriya theory held that Indian kings and warriors had established such colonies and the Sanskrit names of Southeast Asian rulers seemed to provide ample supporting evidence. As research progressed, it was found that there was very little proof of any direct Indian political influence in those states of Southeast Asia. It was demonstrated that Southeast Asian rulers had adopted Sanskrit names themselves-thus such names could not be adduced as evidence for the presence of Indian kings.

The Vaishya theory, in contrast, emphasised a much more important element of the Indian connection with Southeast Asia. Trade had indeed been the driving force behind all these early contacts. Inscriptions also showed that guilds of Indian merchants had established outposts in many parts of Southeast Asia. Some of their inscriptions were written in languages such as Tamil. However, if such merchants had been the chief agents of the transmission of Indian culture, then their languages should have made an impact on those of Southeast Asia. But this was not so: Sanskrit and, to some extent, Pali words predominated as loan words in Southeast Asian languages. The traders certainly provided an important transmission belt for all kinds of cultural influences. Nevertheless, they did not play the crucial role which some scholars have attributed to them. One of the most important arguments against the Vaishya theory is that some of the earliest traces of Indianised states in Southeast Asia are not found in the coastal areas usually frequented by the traders, but in mountainous, interior areas.

The Brahmin theory is in keeping with what we have shown with regard to the almost contemporary spread of Hindu culture in southern and central India. There Brahmins and Buddhist and Jain monks played the major role in transmitting cultural values and symbols, and in disseminating the style of Hindu kingship. In addition to being religious specialists, the Brahmins also knew the Sanskrit codes regarding law, politics and art and architecture. They could thus serve as 'development planners' in many different fields and were accordingly welcome to Southeast Asian rulers who may have just emerged from what we earlier described as first- and second-phase state formation.

***Role of Indigenous people:*** During the process of indianisation of south East Asia the inhabitant of this region also played an important role. Early Indonesian inscriptions show that there was a considerable development of agriculture, craftsmanship, regional trade and social differentiation before Indian influence made itself felt. However, indigenous tribal organisation was egalitarian and prevented the emergence of higher forms of political organisation. The introduction of such forms required at least a rudimentary form of administration and a kind of legitimisation of these new governmental forms which would make them, in the initial stages, acceptable to the people. It was at this point that chieftains and clan heads required Brahmin assistance. Although trade might have helped to spread the necessary information, the initiative came from those indigenous rulers. The invited Brahmins were isolated from the rural people and kept in touch only with their patrons. In this way the royal style emerged in Southeast Asia just as it had done in India.

Initially the local rulers adopted Indian name, later they celebrated great sacrifices and gave valuable presents to the Brahmins. Early inscription inform us that after being consecrated by the Brahmins, early rulers of Indonesian Island subjected the neighbouring rulers and made them 'tribute givers' (kara-da). Thus these inscriptions present in a nutshell the history of the rise of an early local Indonesian dynasty. It seems that the dynasty had been founded by a son of a clan chief independently of the Brahmins, who on their arrival consecrated the ruler of the third generation. With this kind of moral support and the new administrative know-how, the ruler could subject his neighbours and obtain tribute from them. Around the middle of the first millennium several of such small states seem to have arisen in this way in Southeast Asia. They have left only a few inscriptions and some ruins of temples; most of them were obviously very short-lived. There must have been a great deal of competition, with many petty rajas vying with each other and all wishing to be recognised as maharajas entitled to all the Indian paraphernalia of kingship. Indian influence increased in this way and in the second half of the first millennium a hectic activity of temple erection could be observed on Java and in Cambodia, where the first larger realms had come into existence.

Though it is now generally accepted that Southeast Asian rulers played an active role in this process of state formation, we cannot entirely rule out the occasional direct contribution of Indian adventurers who proceeded to the East. The most important example of this kind is that of the early history of Funan at the mouth of the Mekong. Chinese sources report the tale of a Brahmin, Kaundinya, who was inspired by a divine dream to go to Funan. There he vanquished the local Naga (serpent) princess by means of his holy bow and married her, thus founding the first dynasty of Funan in the late first century. We have heard of a similar legend in connection with the rise of the Pallava dynasty and this may indicate that Kaundinya came from South India where the Kaundinyas were known as a famous Brahmin lineage.

A Chinese source of the fourth century describes an Indian usurper of the throne of Funan; his name is given as Chu Chan-t'an. 'Chu' always indicates a person of Indian origin and 'Chan-t'an' could have been a transliteration of the title 'Chandana' which can be traced to the Indo-Scythians of northern India. Presumably a member of that dynasty went to Southeast Asia after having been defeated by Samundragupta. In the beginning of the fifth century another Kaundinya arrived in Funan and of him it is said in the Chinese annals: He was originally a Brahmin from India. There a supernatural voice told him: 'You must go to Funan.' Kaundinya rejoiced in his heart. In the South he arrived at P'an-p'an. The people of Funan appeared to him; the whole kingdom rose up with joy, went before him and chose him king. He changed all the laws to conform to the system of India.

This report on the second Kaundinya is the most explicit reference to an Indian ruler who introduced his laws in Southeast Asia. In the same period we notice a general wave of Indian influence in Southeast Asia. We must, however, note that even in this case of early Funan there was no military intervention. Kaundinya had obviously stayed for some time at P'an-p'an at the Isthmus of Siam, then under the control of Funan, and he was later invited by the notables of the court of Funan to ascend the throne at a time of political unrest.

***Contribution of Buddhist Monk:*** So far we have discussed the contribution of Brahmins to the early transmission of Indian culture to Southeast Asia. Buddhist monks, however, were at least as important in this respect. Two characteristic features of Buddhism enabled it to make a specific impact on Southeast Asia: first, Buddhists were imbued with a strong missionary zeal; and, second, they ignored the caste system and did not emphasise the idea of ritual purity. By his teaching as well as by the organisation of his monastic order (sangha) Gautama Buddha had given rise to this missionary zeal, which had then been fostered by Ashoka's dispatch of Buddhist missionaries to Western Asia, Egypt, Greece, Central Asia, Sri Lanka and Burma.

Buddhism's freedom from ritual restrictions and the spirit of the unity of all adherents enabled Buddhist monks to establish contacts with people abroad, as well as to welcome them in India when

they came to visit the sacred places of Buddhism. Chinese sources record 162 visits to India of Chinese Buddhist monks for the period from the fifth to the eighth century. Many more may have travelled without having left a trace in such official records. This was an amazing international scholarly exchange programme for that day and age.

In the early centuries the centre of Buddhist scholarship was the University of Taxila (near the present city of Islamabad), but in the fifth century when the University of Nalanda was founded not far from Bodh Gaya, Bihar, the centre of Buddhist scholarship shifted to eastern India. This university always had a large contingent of students from Southeast Asia. There they spent many years close to the holy places of Buddhism, copying and translating texts before returning home. Nalanda was a centre of Mahayana Buddhism, which became of increasing importance in Southeast Asia.

One King Balaputra of Shrivijaya established a monastery for students of his realm at Nalanda around C.E 860 which was then endowed with land grants by King Devapala of Bengal. But the Sumatran Empire of Shrivijaya had acquired a good reputation in its own right among Buddhist scholars and from the late seventh century attracted resident Chinese and Indian monks. The Chinese monk I-tsing stopped over at Shrivijaya's capital (present-day Palembang) for six months in C.E 671 in order to learn Sanskrit grammar. He then proceeded to India, where he spent fourteen years, and on his return journey he stayed another four years at Palembang so that he could translate the many texts which he had collected. In this period he went to China for a few months in C.E 689 to recruit assistants for his great translation project (completed only in C.E 695). On his return to China he explicitly recommended that other Chinese Buddhists proceeding to India break journey in Shrivijaya, where a thousand monks lived by the same rules as those prevailing in India. In subsequent years many Chinese Buddhists conscientiously followed this advice.

Prominent Indian Buddhist scholars similarly made a point to visit Shrivijaya. Towards the end of the seventh century Dharmapala of Nalanda is supposed to have visited Suvarnavdipa (Java and Sumatra). In the beginning of the eighth century the South Indian monk Vajrabodhi spent five months in Shrivijaya on his way to China. He and his disciple, Amoghavajra, whom he met in Java, are credited with having introduced Buddhist Tantrism to China. Atisha, who later became known as the great reformer of Tibetan Buddhism, is said to have studied for twelve years in Suvarnavdipa in the early eleventh century. The high standard of Buddhist learning which prevailed in Indonesia for many centuries was one of the important preconditions for that great work of art, the Borobudur, whose many reliefs are a pictorial compendium of Buddhist lore, a tribute both to the craftsmanship of Indonesian artists and to the knowledge of Indonesian Buddhist scholars.

#### **4.3.7.2. The Centers of contact between Southeast Asia South India**

At least as far as the early centuries are concerned, South India-and especially Tamil Nadu-deserves the greatest credit for maintain highest contact with south east Asia. In subsequent periods, however, several regional shifts as well as parallel influences emanating from various centres can be noticed. The influence of Tamil Nadu was very strong as far as the earliest inscriptions in Southeast Asia are concerned, showing as they do the influence of the script prevalent in the Pallava kingdom. The oldest Buddhist sculpture in Southeast Asia-the famous bronze Buddha of Celebes-shows the marks of the Buddhist sculptures of Amaravati (Coastal Andhra) of the third to the fifth centuries C.E. Early Hindu sculptures of Western Java and of the Isthmus of Siam seem to have been guided by the Pallava style of the seventh and eighth centuries. Early Southeast Asian temple architecture similarly shows the influence of the Pallava and Chola styles, especially on Java and in Cambodia.

The influence of the North Indian Gupta style also made itself felt from the fifth century C.E onwards. The centre of this school was Sarnath, near Varanasi (Benares), where Buddha preached his first sermon. Sarnath produced the classical Buddha image which influenced the art of Burma and Thailand, as well as that of Funan at the mouth of the Mekong. The art of the Shailendra dynasty of Java in the eighth and ninth centuries-of which the Borobudur is the most famous monument-was obviously



influenced by what is termed the Late Gupta style of western Central India, as manifested in the great cave temples of Ajanta and Ellora. An inscription at the Plaosan temple in Central Java (C.E 800) explicitly refers to the 'constant flow of the people from Gurjaradesha'-due to which this temple had been built. Indeed, the temple's sculptures show a striking similarity with those of the late Buddhist caves of Ajanta and Ellora.

In later centuries Southeast Asia was more and more influenced by the scholars of the University of Nalanda and the style of the Pala dynasty, the last of the great Indian dynasties which bestowed royal patronage on Buddhism. The influence of Mahayana Buddhism prevailing in Bihar and Bengal under the Palas was so strong at the court of the Shailendras of Java that a Buddhist monk from 'Gaudi' (Bengal), with the typical Bengali name of Kumara Ghosh, became rajguru of the Shailendra king and in this capacity consecrated a statue of Manjushri in the royal temple of the Shailendras in C.E 782. Bengal, eastern Bihar and Odisha were at that time centres of cultural influence. These regions were in constant contact with Southeast Asia, whose painters and sculptors reflected the style of eastern India in their works. Typical of this aesthetic was the special arrangement of figures surrounding the central figure: this type of arrangement can be found both in Indonesian sculptures and in the temple paintings of Pagan (Burma) during this period.

In the same era South Indian influence emerged once more under the Chola dynasty. Maritime trade was of major importance to the Cholas, who thereby also increased their cultural influences. The occasional military interventions of the Cholas did not detract from this peaceful cultural intercourse. At the northern coast of Sumatra the old port of Dilli, near Medan, had great Buddha sculptures evincing a local variation of the Chola style; indeed, a magnificent locally produced statue of the Hindu god Ganesha, in the pure Chola style, has recently been found at Palembang. Close to the famous temple of Padang Lawas, central Sumatra, small but very impressive Chola-style bronze sculptures of a four-armed Lokanath and of Tara have been found. Presently kept in the museum of Jakarta, they are dated at C.E 1039 and a brief inscription containing Old Malay words in addition to Sanskrit words in Tamil proves that the figures were not imported from India but were produced locally. Nevertheless, Chola relations with Southeast Asia were by no means a one-way street. It is presumed that the imperial cult of the Cholas, centred on their enormous temples, was directly influenced by the grand style of Angkor. The great tank at Gangaikondacholapuram was perhaps conceived by the Chola ruler in the same spirit as that which moved contemporary Cambodian rulers who ordered the construction of the famous Barays (tanks) of Angkor, which are considered to be a special indication of royal merit.

In the late thirteenth century Pagan (Burma) was once more exposed to a strong current of direct Indian influence emanating from Bengal, at that time conquered by Islamic rulers. Nalanda had been destroyed by the end of the twelfth century and large groups of monks in search of a new home flocked to Pagan and also to the Buddhist centres of Tibet. The beautiful paintings in the temples of Minnanthu in the eastern part of the city of Pagan may have been due to them. Islamic conquest of northern India cut off the holy places of Buddhism.

A millennium of intensive contacts between India and Buddhist Southeast Asia had come to an end. But there was another factor which must be mentioned in this context. In C.E 1190 Chapata, a Buddhist monk from Pagan, returned to that city after having spent ten years in Sri Lanka. In Burma he led a branch of the Theravada school of Buddhism, established on the strict rules of the Mahavihara monastery of Sri Lanka. This led to a schism in the Burmese Buddhist order which had been established at Pagan by Shin Arahan about 150 years earlier. Shin Arahan was a follower of the South Indian school of Buddhism, which had its centre at Kanchipuram. Chapata's reform prevailed and by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Burma, Thailand and Cambodia had adopted Theravada Buddhism of the Sri Lanka school. In Cambodia this shift from Mahayana to Theravada Buddhism seems to have been part of a socio-cultural revolution. Under the last great king of Angkor, Jayavarman VII (C.E 1181-1218), royal Mahayana Buddhism had become associated in the eyes of the people with the enormous burden

which the king imposed upon them in order to build the huge Buddhist temples of Angkor Thom. Even in Indonesia, however, where Tantrist Buddhism with an admixture of Shaivism prevailed at the courts of rulers all the way from Sumatra down to Bali, direct Indian influence rapidly receded in the thirteenth century. This was only partly due to the intervention of Islam in India, its other cause being an upsurge of Javanese art which confined the influence of Indian art to the statues of deified kings erected after the death of the ruler. The outer walls of the temples were covered with Javanese reliefs which evince a great similarity to the Javanese shadow play (wayang kulit). The Chandi Jago (thirteenth century) and the temples of Panantaran (fourteenth century) show this new Javanese style very well. It has remained the dominant style of Bali art up to the present time. A similar trend towards the assertion of indigenous styles can also be found in the Theravada Buddhist countries. The content of the scenes depicted is still derived from Hindu mythology or Buddhist legends, but the presentation clearly incorporates the respective national style.

After the conquest of North India in about 1200 and Central India and its harbours in about 1300, by Muslim rulers, Islam also spread to Southeast Asia via the maritime trade routes which connected India with the spice islands of the East. India once more became an important transmitter of cultural influences under the new dispensation. Indian Sufism played an important role in the early spread of Islam in Indonesia.

#### **4.3.8. Conclusion**

Thus from the above discussion it appears that early medieval period of Indian history no doubt start with a decline in trade and commerce but very soon bounce back and revived. The information found from literary sources, epigraphical and numismatic as well as archaeological investigation inform us about the condition of trade and commerce during the period between C.E 750 -1300. Within India territory inland trade flourished because of agrarian and urban economy. In the external trade overseas trade played important role. Indians established trade contact with the foreigners. Trade and commerce also led to cultural exchange. The art and culture of the various countries got itself reflected over the Indian culture as well as get reflected in the other countries also. Particularly the maritime trade led to spread of Indian culture in South East Asian nations which is still visible in the art and culture of modern south East Asia.

#### **4.3.9. Summary**

- *Trade & Commerce point of view the early medieval times of India is divided into two broad phase c.700-900 C.E., and c 900-1300 C.E.*
- *Briefly, the two phases are marked through: Relative decline of trade, metallic currency, urban centres and a somewhat closed village economy in the first stage, and reversal of mainly of the aforesaid tendencies in the second stage.*
- *The first stage witnessed wide-spread practice of granting land not only to priests and temples but also to warrior chiefs and state officials. This phenomena lead to the emergence of a hierarchy of landlords and growth of self sufficient village economy, where local needs were being satisfied in the vicinity through the imposition of numerous restrictions on the mobility of actual producers. This indirectly led to relative dearth of medium of exchange. Followings are the characteristic features of trade during this stage.*
- *This stage is marked through the revival of trade and commerce. It was also the era of agrarian expansion, increased use of money and the reemergence of market economy in which goods were produced for swap rather than for local consumption.*
- *These centuries also witnessed a substantial growth of urban settlements in dissimilar parts of the sub-continent. The widespread practice of land grants had been an important factor in agrarian expansion. Though it is recognized that it is not easy to quantify this development, one can also not overlook the noticeable local variations and disparities.*

- *Though, the era from the beginning of the tenth century to the end of the thirteenth was the age of greater manufacture of both cereals and pulses as well as of commercial crops. Naturally, it created a favorable climate for widening the scope of both internal and external trade. Characteristic features of this period are as follows.*
- *Maritime trade was an important aspect of external trade of early medieval India. This phenomena again helps the Indian culture to spread in to different part of the world. The era under survey was marked through great expansion of sea trade flanked by the two extremities of Asia viz. the Persian Gulf and South China.*
- *As regards the articles involved in the Asian trade, the Chinese texts indicate that the Malabar coast received silk, porcelain-ware, camphor, cloves, wax, sandalwood, cardamom, etc. from China and South-east Asia. Mainly of these may have been the things of re-export to the Arabian world, but some were meant for India, particularly the silk which was always in great demand in local markets.*
- *There were a number of ports on the Indian coasts, which not only served the inland trade network but also acted as a link flanked by the eastern and western trade. In information, approximately every creek that could give facility for a safe anchorage of ships, urbanized into a port of some national or international significance.*
- *The traders form a significant link flanked by producers and consumers. They collect agricultural surplus and products of artisans and craftsmen from dissimilar regions and distribute them in excess of a wide region. Throughout the early medieval centuries, trading communities established themselves as guild.*
- *As growth of trade brought economic prosperity to merchants, they sought to gain social prestige through participating in the maintenance of temples, priests and religious functions.*
- *During early medieval period maritime trade activities transmitted Indian culture to the entire South East Asian region.*
- *Indian culture spread to various parts of the world in ancient times through different modes.*

#### **4.3.10. Exercise**

- Analyse the status of trade and commerce of India during C.E 700-1300.
- To what extent second urbanization was the result of agrarian expansion in early medieval India? Examine.
- Discuss the role of merchant guilds in the growth of craft, trade, and urbanization in early medieval India.
- Discuss the causes and consequences of spread of Indian culture to South East Asia during early medieval period of India?
- Write an essay on the maritime trade of early medieval India.

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# The End