

# **CC-5:HISTORY OF INDIA(CE 750-1206)**

## **II. POLITICAL STRUCTURES:**

### **(A) EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL STRUCTURES:RASHTRAKUTAS, PALAS, PRATI HARAS,RAJPUTS AND CHOLAS.**

Three powerful kingdoms emerged between 750-1200 CE out of the ruins of Harshavardhana's empire in North India. The Rashtrakutas were ruling in the northern Deccan, the Pratiharas in Avanti and the parts of southern Rajasthan, and the Palas in Bengal. All the three powers were engaged in a continual Tripartite struggle for the occupation of Kanauj and the domination of Northern India. All the three powers occupied Kanauj in turns, but finally the wars weakened them and led to their decline. The Rashtrakutas were replaced by the Later Chalukyas, the Palas in Bengal were replaced by the Senas and the Pratihara kingdom broke up into a number of small kingdoms. Some of them were ruled by the Rajput Princes. These kingdoms in turn were continuously at war with each other and as a consequence of that when India was threatened by invaders from the north-west, they failed to defend the borders.

#### **THE PALAS(750-1140 CE)**

The Pala dynasty which was founded by Gopala with its capital at Pataliputra, dominated Eastern and Northern India till the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. Gopala was succeeded by his son Dharmapala who was the greatest ruler of the dynasty. Dharmapala ruled in between 770-810CE. The struggle for supremacy over Kanauj was started during the reign of Dharmapala. Though he met with reverses occasionally, he could occupy Kanauj for some times. But the Pala rulers failed to maintain their control over Kanauj and Upper Gangetic Valley and were compelled to turn their energies in other directions. Dharmapala is credited for the establishment of the Vikramshila monastery.

Dharmapala was succeeded by his son Devpala (810-856CE) who extended his control over Pragjotishpur(Assam) and parts of Orissa. A part of Nepal was also brought under Pala suzerainty. But after his death the Pala empire began to disintegrate.

The Pala empire was revived in the first quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Mahipala I and continued till the middle of 12<sup>th</sup> century CE, when Vijaysena, the founder of the Sena dynasty overthrew them.

### **THE PRATI HARAS(800-1036 CE)**

They were at first local officials but gradually carved out a series of principalities in Gujrat or central and eastern Rajasthan. They came into prominence on account of the resistance they posed under their ruler Nagabhatta I to the incursion of the Arab rulers of Sind into Gujrat.

But the real founder and the greatest ruler of the Pratihara dynasty was Bhoja (835-85 CE), because he rebuilt the empire after it had almost disintegrated with the defeat of the Pratihara king Nagabhatta II, by the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III. By 836 CE Bhoja had regained Kanauj which remained the Capital of the Pratihara dynasty till the very end. He also re-established his sway over the Gurjaratra (central and eastern Rajasthan). But he was checked in the east by the Palas, and so turned his attention towards central India and Deccan. His attempts to conquer Gujarat and Malwa led to the revival of the conflict with the Rashtrakutas. Despite a sanguinary battle on the bank of Narmada, Bhoja was able to retain his control over considerable parts of Malwa. He may have ruled some parts of Gujarat as well. He annexed some territories on the eastern part of the Sutlej. Following the death of Devapala and the weakening of the Pala empire he extended his empire in the east. His empire was visited by Sulaiman, an Arab merchant who left a good account of his visit.

Mahendrapala I, the son of Bhoja (855-909 CE) maintained the empire of the Bhoja and extended it over Magadha and northern Bengal. His records have also been found in Kathaiwar, east Punjab and Awadh, showing his control over these areas.

He was succeeded by his son Mahipala, whose court was adorned by the famous poet, Rajashekhara. The Pratiharas thus dominated north India for over a 100 years from the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. But in 916 CE, the Rashtrakuta king Indra III attacked Kanauj and devastated it during the time of Mahipala. This weakened the Pratihara kingdom and Gujarat probably passed into the hands of the Rashtrakutas.

This loss of Gujarat, which was the hub of the overseas trade and the main outlet of the North Indian goods to the West Asian countries, was another blow to the Pratiharas.

The final blow was given by the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna III who invaded North India in about 963 CE and defeated the Pratihara ruler. This was followed by rapid dissolution of the Pratihara kingdom.

### **THE RASHTRAKUTAS(753-973CE)**

The Rashtrakuta kingdom was founded by Dantidurga, who overthrew the Chalukyas of Badami in 753 CE and fixed his capital at Manyakheta or Malkhed near modern Sholapur.

The Rashtrakutas soon dominated the entire area of northern Maharashtra. They also contended with the Pratiharas for the overlordship of the Gujarat and Malwa. Although their raids did not result in the extension of their empire to the Ganga valley, they brought rich plunder and added to the fame of the Rashtrakutas. They also fought constantly with the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, and in the south against the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai.

The greatest of the Rashtrakutas however were Indra III(914-922CE) and Krishna III(940-968CE). After the sack of Kanauj in 916 CE Indra III was the most powerful ruler of his times. Krishna III was engaged in a struggle against the Paramaras of Malwa and Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. Krishna III invaded the Chola kingdom and captured the cities of Kanchi and Tanjore in 943 CE and in 949CE the Chola Kingdom was defeated in the Battle of Takkolam. But he was not a wise statesman, for he alienated all his neighbours by waging war against them, and created serious problems for his successors.

Krishna's death was followed by internal differences, including succession disputes among his sons. The Paramaras of Malwa seized the opportunity and attacked the Rashtrakutas. In 973 CE the Rashtrakuta dynasty was overthrown by Taila II, a feudatory of Krishna III who claimed descent from the early Chalukyas of Vatapi.

## **THE RAJPUT KINGDOMS**

The four (Agni-kula) Rajput clans established their power in western India and over parts of central India and Rajasthan.

**Gahadavalas of Kanauj**-Following the fall of the Pratiharas, the Gahadavalas were able to establish themselves in the throne of Kanauj in the third quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. Chandradeva was the founder of the new dynasty. He conquered the place from Allahabad to Varanasi and kept the holy places of Kasi, Uttar Koshala (Ayodhya) and Indrasthana (Delhi) from the foreign invaders. Chandradeva was succeeded by a number of kings till in 1194 CE Mohammad Ghoris invaded the kingdom of the Gahadavalas and defeated and killed the king Jayachandra.

**Chandellas**- The Chandella dynasty of Bundelkhand was founded by Nannuka in the early years of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The important rulers were Yashovarman Dhanga and Kirtivarman. Peramal was the last Chandella king who enjoyed independence. In 1203 CE he submitted to Qutb-ud-din.

**Paramaras**-The Paramara dynasty of Malwa founded in 820 CE by Upendra also arose on the ruins of the Pratiharas. The most important king of this dynasty was Raja Bhoja (1018-1060 CE). In 1043 CE he joined a confederacy of the Hindu chiefs. After conquering the Muslim territories of Hansi, Thanesar and Nagarkot they besieged Lahore. He was probably the last independent king of the Paramaras. However it continued to exist as a purely local power up to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Chauhans**-The Chauhan clan of the Rajputs ruled over Sambhar and Ajmer. Vignaraja of Visaldeva the Chauhan chief conquered Delhi from the Toamara chief. He was succeeded by his nephew Prithviraj Chauhan who played a very important part in the history of India at the time of the conquest by the Muslims. He overran many small states in Rajasthan, invaded the Bundelkhand area and defeated the Chandella rulers in a battle near Mahoba. Following his failure to annex Gujrat, Prithviraj Chauhan turned his attention towards the Punjab and the Ganga Valley where he came into conflict with Mohammad Ghoris. He defeated Ghoris in the battle field of Tarain (1191 CE) and established his supremacy over Punjab. Ghoris repeated the attack next year defeated Prithviraj Chauhan in the second battle of Tarain in 1192 CE. Prithviraj was executed and thus ended the Chauhan dynasty.

## **THE CHOLA EMPIRE(c.850-1267 CE)**

**Vijayalaya(846-71CE)** - His capture of Tanjore from an ally of the Pandyas around the 850 CE was the first step in the rise of the Cholas, who were at that time feudatories of the Pallavas.

**Aditya(871-907CE)** – He was responsible for overthrowing the Pallavas and occupying their territory completely.

**Prantaka I(907-55CE)** – He won several victories with the help of his allies such as the Western Gangas, the Kodumbalur chiefs and the ruler of Kerala. He captured Madurai and took the title of Madurantaka (Destroyer of Madurai) and Maduraikonda (Capturer of Madurai). At the famous battle of Vellur he defeated the combined armies of the Pandyas and the King of Sri Lanka and thus the territories of the Pandyas became the territories of the Cholas. Prantaka I was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III in the battle of Takkolam and the cities of Kanchi and Tanjore were lost to the Rashtrakutas.

**Rajaraja I(985-1014CE)** – He was the greatest ruler of the Chola dynasty. He defeated a confederation of the three kingdoms of the Pandyas, the Kerala and Ceylon and occupied their territories. Destruction of Anuradhapura led to the establishment of the Chola province in North Ceylon.

His annexation of a few parts of Modern Mysore (Gangas) intensified the conflict with the new power of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. He invaded the Chalukya Kingdom in order to force the Chalukyas to retreat from Vengi, whose ruler was a Chola ally. He also annexed the Maldives. He constructed the magnificent Shiva (or Rajarajeshwara) temple at Tanjore.

**Rajendra I(1014-44CE)** – Rajendra Chola raised the Chola Empire to the position of being the most extensive and respected state of his time. He invaded and completed the conquest of Ceylon.

He led a triumphant march through the territories of Pandyas and Kerala, and made his son the viceroy of both with Madurai as Capital.

He defeated the Western Chalukyas who were trying to meddle in the succession dispute of Vengi and installed Rajaraja (a nephew of Rajendra I)

on the Vengi throne. He also punished the Kalinga ruler who sided with the Western Chalukyas.

Rajendra I led a military expedition to the Ganga Valley which seems to have been a success, and constructed a new Capital, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and a temple in celebration of the expedition.

With his naval forces Rajendra I invaded Malay peninsula and the Malay archipelago and overran Kadaram (Kedah near Penang), Sriavijaya (Sumatra), Nicobar Islands and many other places.

### **Chola Administration and Local Self Government**

Alongside of expansion and consolidation of a vast part of the India subcontinent and even beyond the Chola rulers tried to establish a sound system of administration in their Empire. The king was the most powerful and important person in the Chola administration. All authority rested in his hands, but there was also a council of Minister to advise the king.

### **Central and Local administration**

The Chola state included areas of central control, and loosely administered areas under different types of local control. The empire was divided into a number of Mandalas which were in turn divided into Valanadus (divisions). It was further divided into Nadus or districts and the smallest unit of administration was Kurrans or villages

The basic unit of administration was the Nadu, which consisted of a number of villages having close kinship ties and other close association.

The number of nadus increased as fresh lands were brought under cultivation by means of irrigation works and by engaging more and more people in agriculture.

In the Chola kingdom Nadus were grouped into Valanadus. The Chola states were divided into four Mandalams or Provinces and the Princes of the royal family were appointed as Governors of Provinces.

There were three assemblies – Ur, Sabha, Mahasabha. The Ur was the general assembly of the Village, and the Mahasabha was the gathering of the adult men in the Brahmana village, which were called agramams. The self-

government enjoyed by the villages was a very fine system. N agaram was an assembly of Merchants.

### **Army and Navy**

The Cholas maintained a large army consisting of elephants, Cavalry and infantry which was called the three limbs of the army. The infantry was generally armed with spears. The Chols also had a strong Navy, which dominated the Malabar and Coromandal coast and for sometimes the entire Bay of Bengal.

### **Economy**

Grants to Brahamanas and Temples increased which helped in expanding cultivation. Cultivation was the main profession source of Royal revenue.

Trade and commerce flourished in the Chola empire and there were some gigantic trade guilds which traded with Java and Sumatra. There was local self government in the villages about which we know from inscription. The Cholas had a well organised revenue department called Puravi-Varitinaikalam. Land revenue was collected in cash and kind. 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the gross produce was collected as tax. Kadamai was the name revenue.

### **Art and Architecture**

The temple architecture in the south reached its Climax under the Cholas. The Dravida style of temple came into vogue which laid emphasis on the buildings of storey upon storey above the chief deity room (garbhagriha). The temple has a pillared hall called the Mandapa with elaborately carved pillars and flat roof which was mostly used as an audience hall and a place for other activity such as ceremonial dances by devadasis. The temples apart from serving a place of worship also functioned as the hub of social and cultural life. The temple had lofty and elaborate gates called Gopurams. A fine example of Dravida style architecture is the 8<sup>th</sup> century temple of Kailashnatha at Kanchipuram. Similarly Brihadeshwara temple at tanjore is another fine Specimen of Dravida style built by Rajaraja I.

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