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SAMPOORNA-2023

MEDIEVAL INDIA



A Comprehensive Solution For Civil Services Exam

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1 Tripartite Struggle

INTRODUCTION

- **Three significant political powers rose to prominence between c. 750 and 1000 CE –**
  1. **The Palas**, who ruled over eastern India until the middle of the 9th century,
  2. **The Rashtrakutas**, who dominated the Deccan and also had control over territories in north and south India, and
  3. **The Gurjara-Pratiharas**, who dominated western India and the upper Gangetic valley.
- To establish their grip over the Gangetic area in northern India, these three kingdoms were engaged in incessant warfare with one another.
- This struggle between these three powers is frequently referred to as a **"tripartite struggle."**
- **The Rashtrakutas emerged as the most powerful of these three,** and their empire lasted the longest**.** In terms of trade and culture, the **Rashtrakutas also served as a link between north and south India.**

Note: We have studied Pala kingdom in detail in ancient India so, here we will focus on their military expeditions and role in tripartite struggle.

RASHTRAKUTAS

- Since one of the titles used by kings of the main and subordinate lines was **lattalura-puraveshvara** (lord of the great city of Lattalura/Latur of Maharashtra), it appears that they moved from the Latur area to Ellichpur (near the source of the Tapi, in current MP) around 625 CE.
- **Their capital was Manyakheta or Malkhed close to Sholapur,** and they are thought to have been a feudatory of the Chalukyas.
- They had **stunning military victories in the north and south**, and they **largely defeated the Palas and Pratiharas** in the tripartite conflict.
- It is crucial to note that even though their attacks did not cause the Rashtrakuta kingdom to expand into the Gangetic valley, **they carried with them valuable loot** and increased the Rashtrakutas' notoriety.
- They were **religiously tolerant**, and **they supported not only Shaivism and Vaishnavism, but also Jainism.**
- The **Rashtrakutas not only welcomed Muslim traders, but also allowed Islam to be preached** in their domains. They are **credited with constructing Ellora's famous rock cut Shiva temple.**
- They were also **generous patrons of art and literature.**
- Their courts were adorned by poets and authors who wrote in Prakrit and the apabhramsha language, in addition to Sanskrit scholars. **Swayambhu**, the great apabhramsha poet, and his son most likely lived at the Rashtrakuta court.

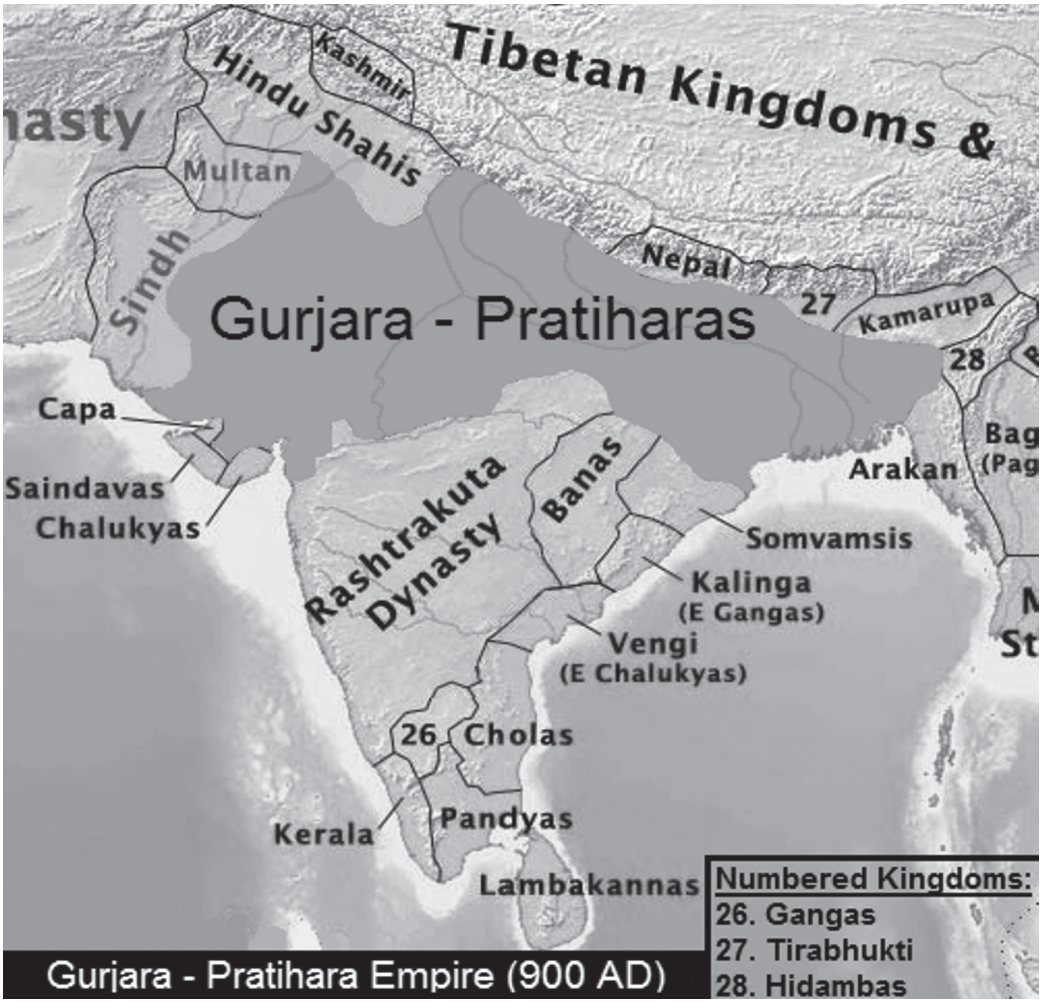
Political History

Rulers	Description
Dantidurga (733–756 CE)	• **Feudatory of the Chalukya king**, **Kirtivarman II, who later founded the Rashtrakuta kingdom** by seizing control of the Chalukya empire's northern regions and ascending to the throne in c.733 CE. • His name **'Dantidurga'** (meaning "he whose elephant is his fortress") also refers to his military prowess and achievements.
Krishna I (756–774 CE)	• He expanded the Rashtrakuta empire and took control of large portions of modern-day Karnataka and Konkan. Pallavas was also dealt a final blow. • During his reign, the magnificent **rock-cut Kailashnatha Temple at Ellora (near Aurangabad, Maharashtra) was built.** • The monolithic temple is **dedicated to Lord Shiva and is made of a single piece of rock.**

Dhruva (780–793 CE)	• During his reign, the kingdom grew into an empire that spanned the entire region between the Kaveri River and Central India. • He led **successful expeditions to Kannauj**, the seat of northern Indian power, and defeated the Gurjara-Pratiharas (Nagabhatta II) and the Bengal Palas (Dharmapala). • He also seized control of Talakad's Eastern Chalukyas and Gangas. • During his reign, the **Rashtrakutas rose to become a pan-Indian power.**
Govind III (793–814 CE)	• Dhruva's son, who led the Rashtrakutas to greater heights. • **According to the Sanjan inscription, he was victorious in the tripartite battle.** • He invaded north India, defeating Pala king Dharmapala and powerful Malwa from Pratihara king Nagabhatta II.
Amoghavarsha I (814–878 CE)	• He **established a new capital city, Manyakheta (modern Malkhed).** • He was **given the title Viranarayana** after defeating the invading Eastern Chalukyas at Vingavalli. • Also made peace with the Western Gangas by marrying off two of his daughters to them. It's worth noting that, **unlike his father, he preferred to keep friendly relations with his neighbours.** • He was a **patron of literature** and a **skilled scholar in Kannada and Sanskrit**. He wrote the **Kavirajamarga**, the first Kannada work on poetics, as well as the **Prashnottara Ratnamalika** in Sanskrit, which is considered a work of high merit and was later translated into Tibetan. • Because of his religious temperament, interest in the arts and literature, and peace-loving nature, **he is frequently compared to emperor Ashoka** and **dubbed as "Ashoka of the South,"** and he is **also compared to Gupta king Vikramaditya in patronising men of letters.**
Indra III (914–929 CE)	• There were numerous rebellions in Amoghavarsha's far-flung Rashtrakuta empire. • These were uncontrollable and restarted after his death. • Amoghavarsha's grandson who crushed various rebellions and re-established the empire. • In 915 CE, **he defeated Pratihara Mahipala I and sacked Kannauj, emerging as the most powerful ruler of his time**.
Krishna III (939–967 CE)	• The **last great Rashtrakuta ruler,** who expanded the empire from the Narmada to the Kaveri rivers and included the northern Tamil country (Tondaimandalam) while levying tribute on the king of Ceylon. • He was fighting against the Malwa Paramaras and the Vengi Chalukyas in the east. • He also **defeated the Chola king Parantaka I and annexed the northern part of the Chola empire around 949 CE.** He then marched to Rameshwaram, where he erected a victory pillar and built a temple. • Following his death, **all of his opponents banded together against his successor and sacked and burned the Rashtrakuta capital Malkhed in 972 CE.** • The **Rashtrakutas have come to an end.**

GURJARA-PRATIHARAS

- Like the Jats, **they descended from the Gurjaras**, who were **fighters and pastoralists**. In the eastern and central portions of Rajasthan, the Pratiharas founded a number of principalities.
- The **Pratiharas adopted their title, which literally translates to "door-keeper,"** because the early rulers of this dynasty revered the legendary hero Lakshmana, who served as his brother Rama's doorkeeper.
- **A Brahmana named Harichandra established the dynasty** in and around Jodhpur, in southwest Rajasthan.
- Arab troops that were approaching from the east of the Indus were successfully halted by the Gurjara-Pratiharas.
- During Nagabhatta I's rule in the second quarter of the eighth century, they gained notoriety.
- They had their **first capital at Bhinmal.**



- **Bhoja was the greatest dynastic leader** and the **actual founder of the Pratihara kingdom.**
- We don't know a lot about Bhoja's early years or his accession to the throne.
- By around AD 836, he had regained Kanauj, which had been the Pratihara empire's capital for a century. **He had restored the empire**.

Political History

Ruler	Description
Nagabhatta I (730–760 CE)	• Were renowned for stopping the Arab invasion and providing the Arabs with the most effective resistance. • He had authority over Gujarat, Rajputana, and the Malwa region.
Vatsaraja (780–800 CE)	• He made Kannauj in western U.P. as his capital and expanded his control over a significant portion of North India. • **The so-called "tripartite fight" started when Vatsaraja's** expansionist policies put him at odds with Dharamapala, the Pala King of Bengal and Bihar as well as the Rashtrakuta King Dhruva. • It lasted with ups and downs for another 350 years or so under several succeeding kings. • However, the Pratiharas were able to hold onto Kannauj till the very end.
Nagabhatta II (800–833 CE)	• In a tripartite struggle he defeated Dharampala of Pala dynasty. • But he himself got defeated by the Govinda III of Rashtrakuta dynasty. • Ramabhadra, who only had a short reign, and his son Mihira Bhoja both succeeded Nagabhatta II.

Mihir Bhoja/Bhoja I (836–885 CE)	• The most effective and well-liked monarch of the Pratiharas was Nagabhatta II, the grandson who ruled for more than 46 years. • The Palas, Rashtrakutas, and Kalachuris vanquished him in the early years of his rule, but he later mounted a return. • He defeated the Palas and the Rashtrakutas with the help of feudatories like the Chedis and the Guhilas. • **His administrative center was in Kannauj, also known as Mahodaya**. • **The Barah copper plate inscription,** one of his first inscriptions, makes reference to a military camp, or skandhavara, at Mahodaya. • **He is also related to the king Juzr who appears in the travel narratives of the Arab merchant Sulaiman**, who writes about the king's enormous wealth and military might in the ninth century. • The Arab author praised him for protecting his empire from robbers. • **Al-Masudi, another Arab traveller, addressed him as King Baura**. The Pratihara kings were said to have had India's strongest cavalry, according to Arab travelers. • **He was a Vishnu devotee who took on the title "Adivaraha".** • The Arabs of Sindh, the Kalachuris, and the Chandalas recognised his hegemony.
Mahendrapala (885–910 CE)	• Fought a battle with the king of Kashmir, but had to give up some of the Punjab territories won by Bhoja. • The **title Maharajadhiraja of Aryavarta (Great King of Kings of Northern India) was bestowed upon him**. Rajashekhar, a renowned Sanskrit poet, dramatist, and critic, adorned his court. • Rashtrakuta King Indra III defeated them and completely destroyed Kannauj. • Gujarat most likely fell into the hands of the Rashtrakutas during this period, as **Al Masudi mentions in his accounts that the Pratihara empire had no access to the sea.**
Rajyapala (960–1018 CE)	• In around 963 CE, the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III invaded north India and defeated the Pratihara ruler. • Mahmud Ghazni's raid on **Kannauj**; **Rajyapala** flees the battlefield. • Killed by Vindhyadhar Chandella.
Yashpala (1024–1036 CE)	• Last ruler of this dynasty

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS (PRELIMS)

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2022)

King	**Dynasty**
Nannuka	Chandela
Jayashakti	Paramara
Nagabhata II	Gurjara-Pratihara
Bhoja	Rashtrakuta

How many pairs given above are correctly matched?

(*a*) Only one pair **(*b*) Only two pairs**

(*c*) Only three pairs (*d*) All four pairs

Q. Consider the following events in the history of India: (2020)

1. Rise of Pratiharas under King Bhoja
2. Establishment of Pallava power under Mahendravarman – I
3. Establishment of Chola power by Parantaka – I
4. Pala dynasty founded by Gopala

What is the correct chronological order of the above events, starting from the earliest time?

(*a*) 2-1-4-3

(*b*) 3-1-4-2

(*c*) 2-4-1-3

(*d*) 3-4-1-2

IMPORTANCE OF KANNAUJ

- It's likely that the **strategic advantages of that city contributed to its importance in ancient times.**
- **On the right bank of the Ganges**, the city was perched above a cliff.
- This area was in fact the **highway for commerce and communication at the time.**
- Additionally, it served as the former seat of the empire of Harshavardhana. **Therefore, whoever had power over Kannauj might assert political authority over the entirety of North India.**

GENERAL SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION

- These empires' administrative systems were based on the Gupta empire's ideas and practices, Harsha's kingdom in the north, and the Chalukyas in the Deccan.

Status of Monarch

- **He was both the administrator and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces**. He was sitting in a magnificent Darbar. Infantry and cavalry squadrons were stationed in the courtyard.
- Before him were paraded the captured war elephants and horses.
- **He was accompanied by royal chamberlains,** who oversaw the arrival and departure of vassal chiefs, feudatories, ambassadors, and other high officials who frequently waited on the king.
- **The king was also in charge of justice**.
- The court was not only a centre of political and legal affairs, but also of cultural life.
- **The king's position was hereditary, and the eldest son usually succeeded the father**, but the succession **rules were not as strict**.
  - **The eldest son or another favourite son was sometimes designated as the ruler's Yuvaraj or successor.**
  - In that case, Yuvaraj remained in the capital and assisted with administrative tasks.
- On certain occasions, the ladies of the king's durbar also went to the durbar, and according to Arab authors, they did not cover their faces.
- The monarchs adopted lofty **titles like Maharajadiraj param-bhattaraka,** etc., and declared themselves to be **chakravartins, or the greatest of all Indian emperors**.

Administration

- The princes were mostly appointed as provincial governors, and in some rare cases, **princesses were also appointed to government positions**.
  - For example, for a time, a Rashtrakuta princess, Chandrobalabbe, daughter of Amoghavarsha I, administered the Raichur doab.
- **The kings were generally advised by ministers**, who were chosen from the leading families and whose positions were more or less hereditary.
- **According to epigraphic and literary records,** almost every kingdom had a foreign minister, revenue minister, treasurer, senapati, chief justice, and purohita.
  - Except for the purohita, all ministers were expected to lead military campaigns when called upon.
- **All three kingdoms had a large and well-organized infantry and cavalry force, as well as a large number of war elephants**.
  - **The Palas had the most elephants, the Pratiharas had the best cavalry, and the Rashtrakutas had a lot of forts that were guarded by special troops** and had their own independent commanders.
  - The infantry was made up of both regular and irregular troops, as well as levies supplied by vassal chiefs.
  - Warfare was common between kings and their vassals, known as **samantas**.
- The vassals ruled over the areas autonomously and were bound by the general obligation of loyalty, paying a fixed tribute, supplying a quota of troops, and fighting alongside the king in times of need or foreign attack.
- The **Palas and Rashtrakutas both had their own navies**, but further details are unknown.

Administrative Divisions of Empire

Areas	Description
Rashtra	• Under the supervision of **Rashtrapati or governor.**
Bhukti	• **Provinces**: supervised by Uparika, who was responsible for collecting land revenue and maintaining law and order.
Mandalas or Visaya	• **Districts**: **Visyapati**, the district's head, was expected to perform the functions of revenue collection and law and order enforcement.
Pattala	• **Cluster of villages** below the Districts. • Headed by **Bhojapati**.
Village	• The village was **led by the village headman and village accountant**, both of whom held hereditary positions. • He was frequently assisted by a village elder known as **grama-mahajana or grama-mahattara**. • In some villages, village committees were formed to manage local schools, tanks, temples, roads, and to settle minor disputes. • These subcommittees worked closely with the village headman and were paid a percentage of the revenue collected. • Similar committees existed in towns, with participation from the heads of trade guilds. • The **kosha-pala or kotwal** was in charge of law and order in towns.

Religious policy

- **In terms of religion, the majority of the kings were tolerant in their beliefs and actions,** generously patronising Hinduism (some were devout followers of Shiva or Vishnu), Buddhism, or Jainism.
- The Rashtrakuta kings **welcomed Muslims and allowed them to spread their faith.**
- **The kings, like in earlier times, were considered upholders of social hierarchy**, and the Chaturvarna system was generally maintained.
- **However, the state was essentially secular in the sense that politics and religion were kept separate**, and kings were not dominated by religious discourses.

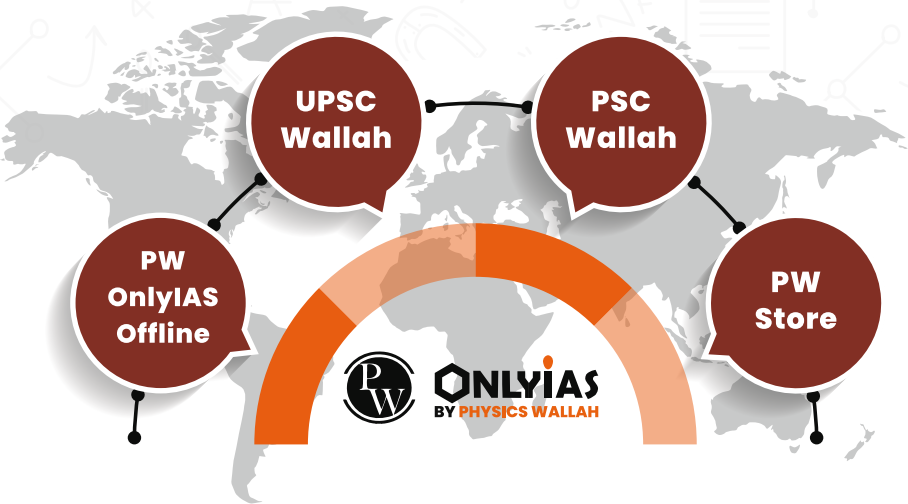
Trade and Commerce

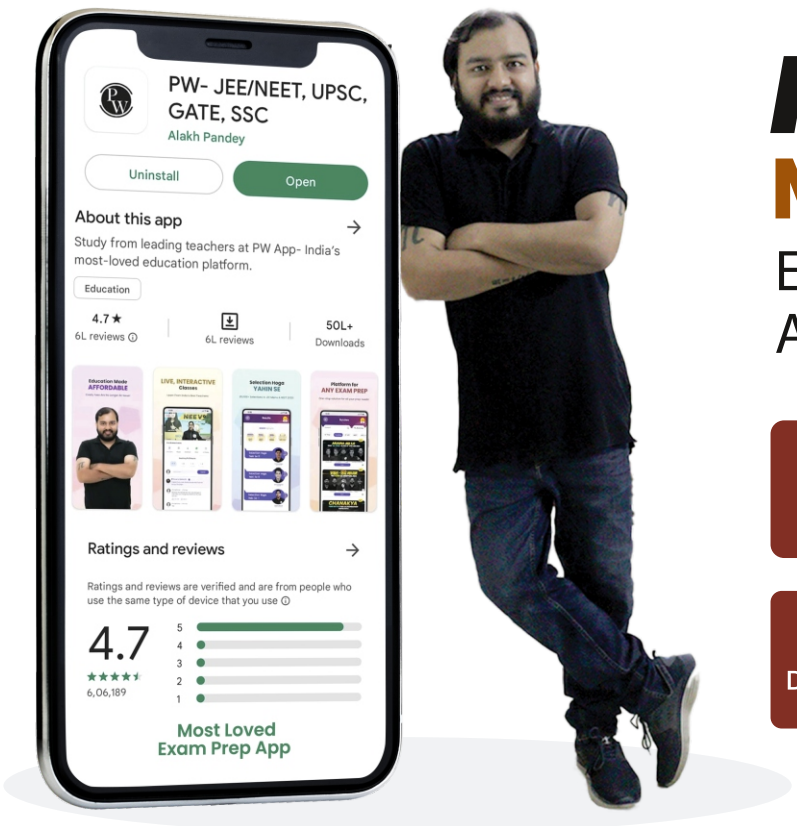
- In northern India, the **period between 750 and 1000 CE was regarded as one of stagnation**, if not decline, in terms of trade and commerce.
- This was **primarily due to the fall of the Roman Empire**, with which India had previously flourishing trade relations.
- **The decline of the Sassanid Empire (Iranian) as a result of the rise of Islam** also had an impact on India's overland foreign trade.
- Because India's wealth in gold and silver was primarily due to favourable foreign trade, there was a **scarcity of gold coins in northern India between the 8th and 10th centuries** as foreign trade declined. Surprisingly, trade between South India and South-east Asian countries increased during this time period.
- **Interestingly, the decline in trade and commerce was reflected in some of the Dharma-Shastras written during this period**, which prohibited travel beyond areas where the munja grass did not grow or where the black gazelle did not roam (outside India). Traveling across the salt seas was also thought to be polluting.
- **The ban was presumably intended to discourage Indians from travelling to areas dominated by Islam** in the west and Buddhism in the east, **thereby preserving the Brahmanas' stronghold**.
- **With the emergence of the vast Arab empire in West Asia and North Africa starting in the 10th century, international trade and commerce gradually recovered**.
- **Malwa and Gujarat became important trading hubs** as a result of the affluent Arab monarchs' demand for Indian fabrics, incense, and spices.

EMERGENCY AND STRENGTHENING OF FEUDAL SYSTEM

- Almost all officials were compensated with **grants of rent-free land**, which **led to the rise of hereditary revenue officers known as nad-gavundas or desa-gramakutas.** In Maharashtra, they were later referred to as **Deshmukhas and Deshpandes.**
- **The revenue assignments known as bhoga or fief granted** to his officers by the rules were temporary in theory and could be resumed whenever the ruler wanted, but this was rarely done except in cases of outright rebellion or disloyalty.
- As a result of the rise in power of these hereditary officials, village communities became weaker, and the kings' control and authority over these officials also diminished. As a result, the **government became feudal.**
- **The expansion of feudal society had far-reaching consequences** because it not only **weakened the ruler's position** by making him more dependent on feudal chiefs, but **it also resulted in a decline in trade and encouraged an economy** in which small principalities emerged with largely self-sufficient villages.
- However, in an age of disorder and violence, these feudal states could also provide common people with protection for their lives and property.







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