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MEDIEVAL HISTORY

for Civil Services Exam

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MEDIEVAL HISTORY

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MAJOR DYNASTIES
(EARLY MEDIEVAL
INDIA 750-1200 AD)

MAJOR DYNASTIES OF NORTH INDIA (750-1200 AD)

■ Introduction

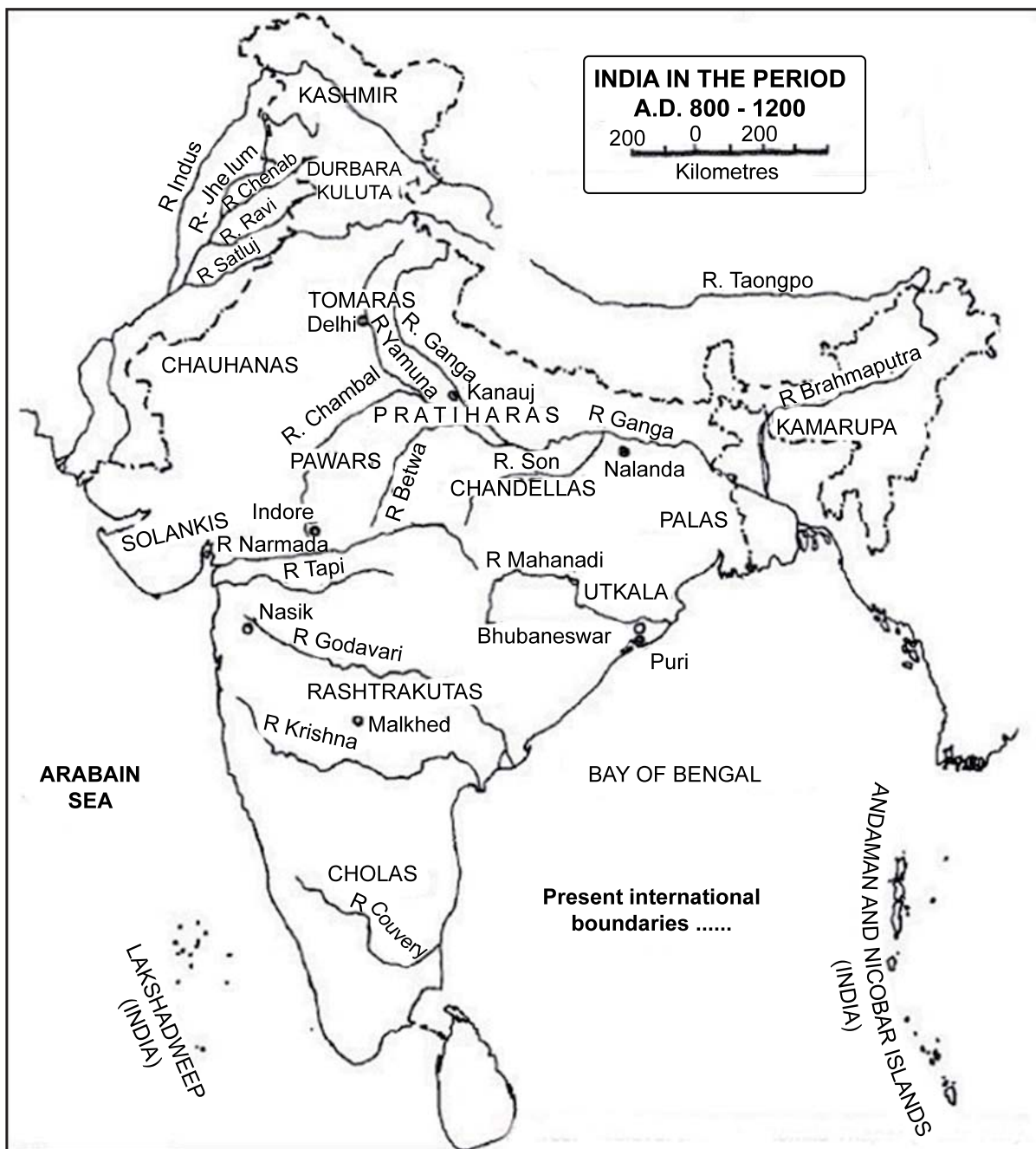
- The period between 750 AD and 1200 AD is referred to as an early medieval period of Indian History.
- It was earlier treated by historians as a 'dark phase' because during this time the whole country was divided into numerous regional states which were busy fighting with each other.
- But recent studies have indicated that, though politically divided, **India witnessed a growth of new and rich cultural activities in the fields of art, literature and language.**
- In fact, some best specimens of temple architecture and Indian literature belong to this period.
- Thus, far from being 'dark' it may be treated as a bright and vibrant phase of Indian history.
- There were **Gurjara Pratiharas in North India, Palas in Eastern India, and Rashtrakutas in South India.** These powers were constantly fighting with each other with an aim to set up their control on Gangetic region in northern India. (This armed conflict among these three powers is known as '**Tripartite struggle**'.)
- Later on, the breakup of these powers resulted in the rise of many smaller kingdoms all over the country.

■ The Tripartite Struggle

- The Tripartite struggle was a **struggle for power and control over the central Gangetic valley** among three major empires in India during the 8th Century.
- These three empires were **the Pratiharas, the Rastrakutas and the Palas.**
- The **Pratiharas** were settled in western India in the **Avanti-Jalaor region.**
- The **Rastrakutas** who were essentially from the **Deccan region** were interested in Kannauj due to the fact that it formed an important center for trade and commerce.
- The **Palas** occupied the **eastern parts of India (present day Bengal)** and were very strong contenders in this struggle.

Major Causes of Tripartite Struggle

- ▶ To **acquire supremacy over Kanauj**, as a symbol of prestige
- ▶ To **get control over the rich resources of the Gangetic valley**
- ▶ To get **control over Gujarat and Malwa** whose **nearness to the coast** was very important for **foreign trade**
- ▶ **Lust for war booty** which was the **important source for maintaining a huge army**
- ▶ **Desire to impress the smaller kingdoms** with the sense of their power and demand respect



■ The Pratiharas (8th to 10th Century)

- **Bhoja** had a long reign of 46 years and his eventful career drew the attention of the **Arab traveller, Sulaiman**. He **re-established the supremacy** over **Bundelkhand** and **subjugated Jodhpur**.
- The **Daulatpura copper plate of Bhoja** shows that the Pratihara king had succeeded in reasserting his authority over central and eastern Rajputana.
- **Mihirbhoja** was succeeded by his son **Mahendrapala I**, whose most notable achievement was the **conquest of Magadha and northern Bengal**.
- Mahendrapala's death was followed by a struggle for the possession of the throne.

- **Bhoja II** seized the throne, but half brother, **Mahipala** soon usurped the throne.
- The Rashtrakutas again challenged the strength of the Pratihara empire and its ruler, **Indra III**, completely devastated the city of Kanauj.
- However, the withdrawal of Indra III to the Deccan enabled Mahipala to recover from the fatal blow.
- **Mahendrapala II**, son and successor of Mahipala, was able to keep his empire intact, but it received a shattering blow during the reign of **Devapala**, when the **Chandelas become virtually independent**.
- The process of decline of the Pratihara Empire which had begun with Devapala accelerated during the reign of **Vijayapala**.
- The **Arab traveler Al-Masudi**, who visited India in the year 915-16, also refers to the power and resources of the King of Kanauj whose kingdom extended up to Sind in the west and touched the Rashtrakuta kingdom in the south.

Facts to Know

- **Mahendrapala I** was a liberal patron of literature.
- The most brilliant writer in his court was **Rajasekhara** who was an eminent Sanskrit poet, dramatist and critic.
- **Rajasekhara's literary works** include:
 - **Karpuramanjari** (A play written in *Sauraseni Prakrit*)
 - **Viddhasalabhanjika**
 - **Balaramayana**
 - **Balabharta**
 - **Kavyamimamsa**

■ The Palas (8th to 11th Century)

- **The Pala Empire was founded by Gopal in 750 AD.**
- **Sulaiman, an Arab merchant** who visited India in the 9th century has **termed the Pala empire as Rhumi**.
- He was elected as the king by the notable men (Feudal Chieftains) of the region to end the anarchy prevailing there after the death of Sasanka of Bengal. (**Khalimpur Copper plate Inscription**)
- **Gopala was an ardent Buddhist** and is supposed to have **built the monastery at Odantapuri (Sharif district of Bihar)**.
- Gopala was succeeded by his son **Dharmapala** who raised the Pala kingdom to greatness. The kingdom expanded under him and it **comprised the whole of Bengal and Bihar**.
- The kingdom of Kanauj was a dependency, ruled by Dharmapala's own nominee.
- Beyond Kanuja, there were a large number of **vassal states in the Punjab, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar** whose rulers acknowledged Dharmapala as their overlord.
- After a reign of 32 years Dharmapala died, leaving his extensive dominions unimpaired to his son **Devapala**.
- Devapala ascended the throne in 810 AD and ruled for 40 years. He extended his control over **Pragjyotishpur (Assam), parts of Orissa and parts of modern Nepal**.
- **Devapala was a great patron of Buddhism** and as a Buddhist, he founded the famous **Mahavihara of Vikramashila near Bhagalpur**. He also credited with the **construction of a vihara at Somapura (Paharpur)**. He also patronised one of the great **Buddhist authors Haribhadra**.
- **Balaputradeva, a king of the Sailendras dynasty**, ruling Java, sent an **ambassador to Devapala**, asking for a grant of five villages in order to endow a monastery at Nalanda. Devapala granted the request and appointed **Viradeva, as head of Nalanda Monastery**.
- Devapala's court was adorned with the **Buddhist poet Vijrakatta, the author of Lokesvarasataka**.

- The rule of Devapala's successors was marked by a steady process of disintegration.
- A series of **invasions led by the Chandellas and the Kalachuris** dismembered the Pala Empire.

■ The Rashtrakutas (9th to 10th Century)

- **The Rashtrakutas were of Kannada origin. Dantidurga was the founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty.** He defeated the Gurjaras and captured Malwa from them. Then he annexed the Chalukya kingdom by defeating Kirtivarman II. Thus, the **Rashtrakutas became a paramount power in the Deccan.**
- Dantidurga successor **Krishna I** was also a great conqueror. He **defeated the Gangas** and the **eastern Chalukyas of Vengi.**
- Krishna I built the magnificent **rock-cut monolithic Kailasa temple at Ellora.**
- The next important king of this dynasty, Govinda III. He achieved victories over north Indian kingdoms.
- Govinda III successor **Amoghavarsha I** (815- 880 A.D.) ruled for a long period of 64 years. He **lost control over Malwa and Gangavadi.** Yet, his reign was popular for the cultural development. He was a follower of Jainism, Jinasena was his chief preceptor. He was also a patron of letters and he himself wrote the famous Kannada work, Kavirajamarga. He had also built the Rashtrakuta capital, the city of Malkhed or Manyakheda.
- Among the successors of Amoghavarsha I, Krishna III (936-968 A.D.) was famous for his expeditions. He marched against the Cholas and defeated them at Takkolam. He marched further south and captured Tanjore. He went as far as Rameswaram and occupied it for sometimes. He built several temples in the conquered territories including the Krishneswara temple at Rameswaram. Throughout his reign he possessed the Tondaimandalam region including the capital Kanchi.
- After the death of Krishna III, the power of the Rashtrakutas declined.

■ The Senas (11th to 12th Century)

- The **Sena dynasty** ruled Bengal after the Palas and its **founder was Samantasena** described as a '**Brahmakshatriya**'.
- The title Brahmakshatriya shows that **Samantasena was a brahmin, but his successors called themselves simply Kshatriyas.**
- **Samantasena's son Hemantasena** took advantage of the unstable political situation of Bengal and carved out an independent principality.
- **Vijayasena**, son of Hemantasena, conquered nearly the whole of Bengal.
- **Vijayasena** assumed several imperial titles like **Paramesvara, Paramabhattaraka, and Maharajadhiraja.**
- Vijayasena had **two capitals**, of which one was at **Vijaypuri of Bangladesh.**
- Vijayasena was succeeded by his son, **Ballalasena**, who was a **great scholar.**
- **Lakshmanasena**, who succeeded Ballalasena in 1179, reign was remarkable for patronizing literature.
- Lakshmanasena's reign saw the decline of the Sena power because of internal rebellions.

Facts to Know

- The famous poet Sriharasha composed the '**Vijayaprasasti**' in memory of Vijayasena.
- **Vijayasena's son, Ballalasena**, was a great scholar.
- **Ballalasena** wrote four works of which two are extant. They are:
 - **Banasagara** is an extensive work on **omens and portents**
 - **Adbhutasagara** on **astronomy.**
- **Lakshmanasena** was a devout **Vaishnava** and, **Jayadeva**, the famous **Vaishnava poet of Bengal** and **author of the Gita Govinda** lived at his court.

- The **invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji** gave it a crushing blow. A detailed account of the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji has been given in **Tabakat-i-Nasiri**.

■ The Rajaputa's Origin

- 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 AD onwards.
- The **Hunas, Gurjaras and the other allied tribes who entered India during the 5th and 6th centuries merged themselves with the Indians**, just as their predecessors, the Greeks, the Kushanas and the Sakas had done.
- In the southern group, the principal clans were the **chandellas, Kalachuris or Haihayas and Gaharwars**. They apparently descended from the so called aboriginal tribes like the Gonds, and the Bhars.
- The evidence of a **close connection between the Chandellas and the Gonds** is particularly strong. The Chandella Rajputs were originally Hinduised Bhars or Gonds or both, who became Kshatriyas on attaining political power.
- **The Gaharwars were associated with the Bhars; the Bundelas and the northern Rathors were offshoots of the Gaharwars.**
- As a general rule, the Rajputs formed by the social promotion of aborigines were inimical to the Rajputs descended from foreigners.

Facts to Know

- The term **Rajput** denotes a tribe or clan, the members of which claimed themselves as **Kshatriyas** belonging to the 'solar or lunar' dynasties.
- According to some scholars the origin of the Rajputs is connected with that of the **Gurjaras**. In the early years of the **6th century AD**, a tribe known as the **Khazars** came to India along with the **Hunas**. These **Khazars** were known as **Gurjaras**.
- According to the bardic tales, the **Pratiharas (Pariharas)**, the **Chalukyas (Solankis)**, the **Paramaras (Pawars)** and the **Chahamanas (Chauhans)** are 'fire-born' (**Agnikula**), originating from a sacrificial fire-pit at **Mount Abu** in southern **Rajputana**.

■ Chandellas

- After the break-up of the Pratihara empire, the **Chandellas** rose to the power and established their **rule over Bundelkhand**.
- Like most medieval dynasties, the **Chandellas claim their descent from Chandratreya, a descendant of the 'Moon dynasty'**.
- The **earliest capital of the Chandella kings was Khajuraho**, the splendor of which reached its zenith in the 10th century.
- **Yasovarman**, also known as **Lakshavarman** was the greatest of Chandella rulers.
- The decline of the Pratihara power made Yasovarman free to defy the former and to launch the Chandellas to aggressive militarism.
- The **Khajuraho inscription** describes with obvious exaggeration the extensive conquests made by Yasovarman.
- Though an element of doubt attaches to the achievements of Yasovarman, there is no doubt that he made extensive conquests in north India and made the Chandellas a formidable power.

- **Yasovarman built a magnificent temple at Khajuraho**, identified with the **Chaturbhuja temple**, in which he **installed the image of Vishnu**.

■ Chahamanas

- There were several branches of the Chahamanas dynasty and the **main branch ruled in Sakambhari, modern Sambhar, in Jaipur** and the others ruling in different places, were collateral. (Some of these were the feudatories of the Pratiharas.)
- **Vasudadeva** founded the main line in the middle of the 6th century AD with **Ahichchhatra** as the seat of his power.
- Taking advantage of the weakness of the Pratiharas consequent to their struggle with the Rashtrakutas, the next important ruler **Vakpatiraja defied the authority of the Pratiharas**.
- During the reign of **Vakpatiraja** the Chahamanas acquired a distinctly higher status as is revealed by his assumption of the title Maharaja. He **built a Shiva temple at Pushkara**.
- **Vakpati** had three sons—**Simharaja, Vatsaraja** and **Lakshmana**.
- **Simharaja** was the first in the family who took the title of **Maharajadhiraja**. (This indicates that he made himself independent of the imperial Pratiharas.)
- Simharaja's son and successor **Vigraharaja II** was the real founder of the future greatness of the Chahamanas. He conquered Gujarat, forced the Chalukya Mularaja to take refuge at Kanthakot in Kutch. He extended his conquests as far south as the Narmada.
- Prithviraja I is reputed to have killed a body of 700 Chalukyas who had come to Pushkara to rob the Brahmins.

Facts to Know

- Prithviraja III became the theme of two great poems, viz:
 - ▶ **Prithvirajavijaya** written by his court poets **Jayanaka**
 - ▶ **Prithviraj Raso** by **Chanda (Chandbardai)**

Prithviraja III

- **Prithviraja III** suppressed the revolt of his cousin, **Nagarjuna**.
- **He invaded the Chandella kingdom and defeated its King Paramardi**.
- **Thereafter, he invaded the Chalukya kingdom of Gujarat and forced Chalukya, Bhima II to conclude a treaty**.
- **Prithviraja III** also entered into **hostility with Jayachandra, Gahadvala ruler of Kanauj**. It is said that Jayachandra organised a svayamvara ceremony for the marriage of his beautiful daughter Samyukta. Prithviraja was not invited. Prithviraja succeeded in carrying off the Gahadvala princess by force.
- **Muhammad Ghori invaded India in 1190**. It was not till the capture of the strong fort of Tabarhindah, identified with Sirhind, by Muhammad Ghori that Prithviraja became conscious of the gravity of the situation.
- **Prithviraja met the enemy at the field of Tarain in 1190-91**. The first battle of Tarain was **disastrous for the Sultan Muhammad Ghori**.
- Despite this victory, **Prithviraja III did not take adequate steps to guard the north-western frontier** of his empire and allowed himself to dissipate his energy in fighting the Gahadvala king Jayachandra.

- Meanwhile, Muhammad Ghori came to Tarain in 1192 practically unopposed by passing through Multan and Lahore. One lakh soldiers were killed in the battle, including **Govindaraja, chief of Delhi. Prithviraja was taken prisoner and executed thereafter.**

■ Gahadvalas

- The emergence of the **Gahadvalas in Kanauj** in the latter part of the 11th century is so sudden that it is difficult to determine their origin.
- The well-known theory of their connection with the dynasties of the Sun and the Moon cannot be accepted as true, although traditions trace them back to an obscure descendant of Yayati.
- **The Gahadvala dynasty was founded by Yasovigraha.**
- **Yasovigraha's son Mahichandra, also called Mahindra and Mahitala,** was a ruler of some consequence who ruled in some part of Uttar Pradesh.

Facts to Know

- **Jayachandra's** is associated with the history of Sanskrit literature for the liberal patronage extended by him to Sriharsha.
- Sriharsha well-known works are:
 - Naisadhacharita
 - Khandana-khanda-khadya. (*It is one of the most famous and important of those Vedanta treatises which emphasize on the negative or skeptical side of the system.*)

- **Mahichandra's son, Chandradeva,** took hold of the opportunity of the departure of Mahmud from northern India and defeated upon the **Rashtrakuta ruler, Gopala,** on the banks of the Yamuna.
- **Chandradeva** conquered all the **territory from Allahabad to Varanasi** and made **Varanasi the second capital** of the Gahadvalas.
- **Chandradeva** imposed a **tax called turushkadanda** possibly to defray the expenses of war against Muslim invasions or to make annual payments to the latter.
- **Chandradeva** was succeeded by his son **Madanachandra, also known as Madanapala.**

Jayachandra

- **Vijayachandra's son** and successor, **Jayachandra ascended the throne in 1170.**
- His career and achievements, known from his copper-plates and the panegyrics of the Prithviraja Raso, are illumined by the Muslim chronicles and other independent sources.
- Jayachandra was the last great monarch of Kanauj whose power and resources must have impressed the Muslim historians.
- Jayachandra's peaceful reign was seriously menaced by Muhammad Ghori, who, after conquering Delhi and Ajmer from the Chahamanas, advanced with a large force against Kanauj in 1193.
- Jayachandra met him on the plain between Chandwar and Etawah, and fell fighting. The defeat and death of Jayachandra did not lead to the annexation of the kingdom of Kanauj by the Muslims.
- **Harishchandra, son of Jayachandra,** was allowed to rule as a vassal to Muhammad Ghori.
- **Harishchandra's successor, was deprived of his ancestral kingdom by Iltutmish** which ended the glory of imperial Kanauj after six centuries of political domination in northern India.

■ Indian Feudalism

- **The period from 750 to 1200 in Indian history has been termed as a period of 'Indian Feudalism'** by few historians who believed that a number of changes took place in Indian society.
- One significant change was the **growing power of a class of people** who were variously called **Samantas, Ranaks, Rauttas, etc.**
- Their origins were very different. Some were **government officers who were defeated rajas** who continued to enjoy the revenue of limited areas.
- Others were **local hereditary chiefs or tribal leaders** who had carved out a sphere of authority with the help of armed supporters. In course of time, these revenue-bearing lands began to be considered hereditary and monopoly of a few families.
- **The hereditary chiefs began to assume many of the functions of the government.** They not only assessed and collected land revenue but also assumed more and more administrative power such as the **right to grant lands to their followers without the prior permission of the rulers.** This led to an increase in the number of people who drew sustenance from the land without working on it.

Salient Features of Indian Feudalism

- **Emergence of hierarchical landed intermediaries:** Vassals and officers of state and other secular assignees had military obligations and were called **Samanta**. Sub-in-feudation (varying in different regions) by these donees to get their land cultivated led to the growth of different strata of intermediaries. **It was a hierarchy of landed aristocrats, tenants, share croppers and cultivators.** This hierarchy was also reflected in the powers, administrative structure, where a sort of lord vassal relationship emerged. In other words, Indian feudalism consisted of the unequal distribution of land and its produce.
- **Prevalence of forced labour:** The right of extracting **forced labour (Vishti)** is believed to have been exercised by the Brahmanas 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 other. As a result, a kind of serfdom emerged, in which **agricultural labourers were reduced to the position of semi-serfs.**
- **Curtailement of land rights of peasants:** Due to the growing claims over them by rulers and intermediaries, **peasants also suffered a curtailment of their land rights.** Many were reduced to the position of tenants facing ever-growing threat of eviction. A number of peasants were only **share-croppers (ardhikas).** The strain on the peasantry was also caused by the burden of taxation, coercion and increase in their indebtedness.
- **Extra economic coercion:** Surplus was extracted through various methods. Extra economic coercion was a conspicuous method, new mechanisms of economic subordination also evolved.
- **Relatively Closed Village Economy:** It was relatively a closed village economy. The transfer of human resources along with land to the beneficiaries shows that in such villages the peasants, craftsmen and artisans were attached to the village and, hence, were mutually dependent. Their attachment to land and to service grants ensured control over them by the beneficiaries.

■ Administration in Northern India between 8th to 12th Century

General Administration

- For administrative purposes, the **kingdom was divided into a central region, directly ruled by the king, and many fiefs ruled by the feudal lords.**

- **The territories under Pala and Pratihara were divided into bhukti (provinces) and mandala or visaya (districts).**
- The governor of a bhukti was called **uparika** and the head of a district, **visayapati**.
- **Samantas** or **bhogapatis** were smaller chieftains, who dominated over a number of villages.
- In Pala and Pratihara empires, uparika collected land revenue and maintained law and order with the help of the army.
- The administration of the fiefs also followed the same pattern.
- The **village self-government in north India weakened** during this period due to the domination of the feudal chiefs, while at the same time it was at its **best in south India under the Cholas**.

Military Administration

- The army consisted of royal retainers or the **personal army of the king** and the **contingents supplied by the feudal lords**.
- The lack of cohesion in the army was, in fact, responsible for the lack of unity in the armies of the rulers of this period.
- The army consisted of an **infantry, cavalry** and **war-elephants**, but the cavalry was neither numerous nor there were majority of horses of fine breed.
- **Military service practically came to be the monopoly of Rajputs**. Consequently 90 percent of the people had no opportunity of sharing in the defence of their land and they did not put up any strong opposition to the authority of any military usurper.

Revenue Administration

- **Taxation during this period was heavier compared to the ancient times**. This was so because expenditure over the royal household and the court continued to increase.
- The military budget also continued to be inflated because of ceaseless fighting.

Judicial Administration

- Provision for justice had been laid down as one of the principal duties of the state in India, but the rulers during this period did not pay adequate attention to it.
- In the **bhuktis**, there was a **dandanayaka** who seems to have been **in-charge of justice, police and prisons** simultaneously.
- There is no mention of any other officer who might have been principally in charge of justice. So it seems that most of the disputes were settled by arbitration through the caste and village panchayats.

Different types of Feudal Chiefs

- Some **feudal lords were government officers** who were increasingly paid not in cash but by **assigning to them revenue-bearing villages**.
- Others were **defeated kings** and their supporters who **continued to enjoy the revenues of limited areas**.
- Some others were **local hereditary chiefs or military adventurers** who had **carved out a sphere of influence** with the help of armed supporters.
- Still others were **tribal or clan leaders**.
- The actual position of these people varied. Some of them were only village chiefs; some dominated a tract comprising a number of villages, while others dominated an entire region.

- Thus, there was a definite hierarchy among these chiefs and they constantly contested against each other and tried to enhance their position.

■ Nature of Society

- This society can be called as '**feudal**' society, because the dominant position was held by those who drew their sustenance from land without working on it.

Caste System

- The caste system formed the basis of the society as in earlier periods, but now the Kshatriyas and **the Brahmins were given more privileges**, while **more and more social and religious disabilities were placed on the Sudras and other lower castes** than in the earlier period.
- Contemporary writers mention a **large number of sub-castes** such as **potters, weavers, goldsmiths, musicians, barbers, and fishermen**.
- Some of the castes were **earlier guilds of workers** which now began to be classified as **castes (Jatis)**.
- It is significant to note that the **Smriti writers of the period regarded handicrafts as low occupations**. Thus, most of the workers were also classified as untouchables.

Position of the Women

- **The position of women gradually deteriorated**. During the period of the **Smritis, women were bracketed with the Sudras, and were denied the right to study the Vedas, to utter Vedic mantras, and to perform Vedic rites**.
- During early medieval period, disruption in women's old privilege of choosing a life of celibacy and asceticism.
- Since women and property are bracketed together in several reference in the epics, Smritis and Puranas, there is no doubt that **woman herself was regarded as a sort of property**.
- **Women could be given away or loaned as any item of property**.
- **Manu and Yajnavalkya, for example, hold that a woman is never independent**. This was like the attitude of a **typical patriarchal society based on private property**. Because of this attitude, the **Brahmanical law did not allow any proprietary rights to women**; the provision for stridhana is of a very limited character and does not extend beyond the wife's rights to jewels, ornaments and presents made to her.
- Manu declares that the wife, the son and the slave are unpropertied, whatever they earn is the property of those to whom they belongs to. This sort of social philosophy took strong roots in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, although the institution of monogamous family and private property had been developed much earlier.

Education & Learning

- The **attitude of the learned classes** of north India **became increasingly rigid during** this period.
- They tended to repeat the past learning, instead of putting forward and welcoming new ideas.
- **They also tended to isolate themselves from the main currents of scientific thought outside India**. This is **reflected in the writings of Al-Beruni**, a noted scientist and scholar from Central Asia who lived in India at Mahmud Ghazni's court.
- Although a great admirer of Indian sciences and learning, **Al-Beruni noted the insular attitude of the learned people of the country, viz., the Brahmins**.

- The attitude of trying to confine knowledge among a very narrow group, and of taking an arrogant attitude towards new ideas, from whichever source they might come, was largely responsible for making India backward.

Religious Developments

- **Both Buddhism and Jainism continued to decline during the period.**
- It was during this period that **Buddhism almost disappeared from the land of its birth after the fall of the Palas.**
- There was a **marked revival and expansion of Hinduism.** This took many forms, the most important being the **growing popularity of Shiva and Vishnu.** A number of popular movements arose around the worship of these gods, while at the intellectual level, the tenets of Buddhism and Jainism were challenged.
- In due course, **Shiva and Vishnu became the chief gods,** and the worship of the Sun, Brahma, etc. declined in popularity.
- In eastern India, a new form of worship arose. This was the **worship of Shakti,** or the **worship of the female principle as the cause of creation.**
- Thus, the **Hindus began to worship goddesses Durga, Kali, etc. who were associated with Shiva,** and the **Buddhists worshipped Taras as the consorts of the Buddhas.**

■ Rise of Self-sufficient Village Economies

- A very important development of the period was the **rise of a self-sufficient village economy where production approximated local requirements, with little attempt at producing a surplus to be used specifically for trade or exchange.**
- This existing system led to accepting the standard of minimum production, since the incentive to improve production was absent.
- As the pressure on the peasantry increased, production stayed at a subsistence level only.

Decline of Trade

- The **subsistence, economy of the village naturally led to a decline in trade,** since there was little surplus production which could be traded or exchanged.
- Trade was further **hampered by the emergence of a wide range of local weights and measures,** making long distance trade more difficult.
- Lack of trade led to a **decline in the use of coins,** and this decline in turn led to a further decline in trade.
- The **unstable political conditions** and the **ceaseless internal fighting** only helped this process of decline in trade.
- An important external development which contributed to this decline was the **decline of the Roman and Sassanid empires** which caused a **setback to the external demand for Indian goods in the West.**

■ Decline of Town and Cities

- **The decline in trade in turn affected the growth of towns.**
- Those that had attained a certain economic momentum continued, but the founding of new towns was less frequent than before.

- **The Arab geographers and writers of this period have commented on the paucity of towns in India as compared with China.**
- But in the **coastal areas and Bengal, towns were prospering** because they **continued to trade with West Asia and South-East Asia.**
