

## Origins

- Gopala founded the dynasty in 750 AD.
- He was a chieftain or military general who was elected as king by notable men of the area to prevent anarchy.

## Rulers

Gopala (Reign: 750 – 770 AD)

- First Pala king and founder of the dynasty.
- Son of Vapyata, a warrior.
- Was elected by a group of people.
- At the time of his death, Pala kingdom included Bengal and most of Bihar.
- He built the monastery at Odantapuri, Bihar.
- Considered the first Buddhist king of Bengal.

Dharmapala (Reign: 770 – 810 AD)

- Son and successor of Gopala.
- Expanded the kingdom.
- Was a pious Buddhist.
- Founded the Vikramshila University at Bhagalpur, Bihar.
- He had frequent wars with the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas.
- The Palas became the most powerful kingdom in northern and eastern India during his rule.

Devapala (Reign: 810 – 850 AD)

- Son of Dharmapala and Rannadevi, a Rashtrakuta princess.
- Extended the kingdom to Assam, Odisha and Kamarupa.
- Was a staunch Buddhist and built many monasteries and temples in Magadha.
- Defeated the Rashtrakuta ruler Amoghavarsha.

Mahipala I

- Ascended the throne in 988 AD.
- Recovered northern and eastern Bengal.
- Also took Bihar.

Ramapala

- The last strong Pala king.
- The kingdom disintegrated during his son Kumarapala's reign.

Madanapala (Reign: 1144 – 1162 AD)

- The last Pala king.
- After him, the Sena dynasty replaced the Palas.

## Legacy of the Pala Dynasty

- The Pala Empire was dethroned by the Hindu Sena dynasty in the 12th century.
- The Pala period is also known as a 'Golden Era' in Bengali history.
- They built magnificent monasteries and temples: Somapura Mahavihara (in Bangladesh), Odantapuri Monastery.
- They also patronised Buddhist centres of learning like Nalanda University and the Vikramshila University.
- During this time, the Bengali language developed. The first Bengali literary work Charyapada is attributed to this period. It was written in an Abahatta (the common ancestor of Bengali, Assamese, Odia and Maithili).
- Balaputradeva, the Sailendra king of Java sent an ambassador to Devapala.
- Buddhist poet Vajradatta who composed Lokeshvarashataka was in Devapala's court.
- Many Buddhist teachers from the Pala kingdom travelled to Southeast Asia to spread the faith. Atisha preached in Sumatra and Tibet.
- Sanskrit scholars were also patronised by the Pala kings. Gaudapada composed Agama Shastra during the time of the Palas.
- The Pala art (art seen in Bengal and Bihar during the Pala regime) influence is seen in the art of Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma and Java.