

## UPSC Civil Services Examination

### UPSC Notes [GS-I]

#### Topic: The Rajputs [Medieval Indian History Notes for UPSC]

##### The North Indian Kingdoms - The Rajputs

The Medieval Indian History period lies between the 8th and the 18th century A.D. Ancient Indian history came to an end with the rule of Harsha and Pulakesin II.

**The medieval period can be divided into two stages:**

- Early medieval period: 8th – 12th century A.D.
- Later Medieval period: 12th-18th century.

##### About the Rajputs

- They are the descendants of Lord Rama (Surya vamsa) or Lord Krishna (Chandra vamsa) or the Hero who sprang from the sacrificial fire (Agni Kula theory).
- Rajputs belonged to the early medieval period.
- The Rajput Period (647A.D- 1200 A.D.)
- From the death of Harsha to the 12th century, the destiny of India was mostly in the hands of various Rajput dynasties.
- They belong to the ancient Kshatriya families.
- They are foreigners.

**There were nearly 36 Rajput' clans. The major clans were:**

1. The Pratiharas of Avanti
2. The Palas of Bengal
3. The Chauhans of Delhi and Ajmer
4. The Rathors of Kanauj
5. The Guhilas or Sisodiyas of Mewar
6. The Chandellas of Bundelkhand
7. The Paramaras of Malwa
8. The Senas of Bengal
9. The Solankis of Gujarat

## The Pratiharas 8th-11th Century A.D

- The Pratiharas were also called as Gurjara.
- They ruled between 8th and 11th century A.D. over northern and western India.
- **Pratiharas: A fortification-** The Pratiharas stood as a fortification of India's defence against the hostility of the Muslims from the days of Junaid of Sind (725.A.D.) to Mahmud of Ghazni.

### Rulers

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#### Nagabhata I (725-740 A.D.)

- Founder of the Pratihara dynasty with Kanauj as its capital.

#### Vatsaraja and Nagabhata II

- Played a vital role in merging the empire.

#### Mihirabhoja

- The most powerful Pratihara king.
- During his period, the empire expanded from Kashmir to Narmada and from Kathiawar to Bihar.

#### Mahendrapala (885-908 A.D.)

- Son of Mihirabhoja, was also a powerful ruler.
- He extended his control over Magadha and North Bengal.

### Decline of the Pratiharas

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- Rajyapala was the last Pratihara king.
- Vast empire was reduced to Kanauj.
- The Pratihara power began to decline after Mahmud of Ghazni attacked the kingdom in 1018 A.D.
- After the decline of the Pratiharas their feudatories Palas, Tomars, Chauhans, Rathors, Chandellas.
- Guhilas and Paramaras became independent rulers.
- There was complete anarchism in Bengal between 750-760 A.D.

### Pala Dynasty

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#### Gopala (765-769 A.D.)

- Founder of Pala Dynasty and he also restored order.

- Ruled over Northern and Eastern India.
- He expanded the Pala dynasty and extended his power over Magadha.

### **Dharmapala (769-815 A.D.)**

- He is the son of Gopala and succeeded his father.
- He brought Bengal, Bihar, and Kanauj under his control.
- He defeated the Pratiharas and became the master of Northern India.
- He was a steadfast Buddhist and founded the famous Vikramasila University and several monasteries.
- He also restored the Nalanda University.

### **Devapala (815-855 A.D.)**

- Devapala is the son of Dharmapala who succeeded his father.
- He kept the Pala territories intact.
- He captured Assam and Orissa.

### **Mahipala (998-1038 A.D.)**

- The Palas became powerful during his reign.
- The Pala dynasty declined after the death of Mahipala.

### **Govinda Pala**

- He is the last Pala King.

### **Tripartite Struggle for Kanauj**

The Tripartite Struggle for Kanauj was between the Pratiharas of Central India, the Palas of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas of Deccan as all these three dynasties wanted to establish their supremacy over Kanauj and the fertile Gangetic Valley. The Tripartite Struggle lasted for 200 years and weakened all of them which enabled the Turks to overthrow them.

### **The Tomars of Delhi**

- The Tomars were the feudatories of the Pratiharas.
- They founded the city of Delhi in 736 A.D.

- Mahipala Tomar captured Thaneshwar, Hansi and Nagarkot in 1043 A.D.
- Chauhans captured Delhi in middle of the 12th century and the Tomars became their feudatories.

### **The Chauhans of Delhi and Ajmer**

- The Chauhans declared their independence in the 1101 century at Ajmer and they were the feudatories of the Pratiharas.
- They captured Ujjain from the Paramaras of Malwa and Delhi in the early part of the 12th century.
- They shifted their capital to Delhi.
- Prithviraj Chauhan was the most important ruler of this dynasty.

### **Rathors of Kanauj (1090-1194 A.D.)**

- The Rathors established themselves on the throne of Kanauj from 1090 to 1194 A.D.
- Jaichand was the last great ruler of this dynasty.
- He was killed in the battle of Chandwar in 1194A.D. by Muhammad of Ghori.

### **The Chandellas of Bundelkhand**

- Established them in the 9th century.
- Mahoba was the capital of Chandella during the period of Chief Yasovarman
- Kalinjar was their important fort.
- The Chandellas built the most famous Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in 1050 A.D. and a number of beautiful temples at Khajuraho.
- Paramal the last Chandella ruler was defeated by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1203A.D.

### **The Guhllas or Sisodiyas of Mewar**

- The Rajput ruler Bapa Rawat was the founder of the Guhila or the Sisodiya dynasty and Chittor was its capital.
- During the period of Rana Ratan Singh of Mewar.
  - In 1307 A.D. Ala-ud-din khilji invaded his territory and defeated him.
- Rana Sangha and Maharana Prata the Sisodiya rulers gave a tough fight to the Mughal rulers of India.

## The Paramaras of Malwa

- The Paramaras were also the feudatories of Pratiharas. They declared their independence in the 10th century and Dhara was their capital.

## Raja Bhoja (1018-1069)

- He was the most famous ruler of this period.
- He constructed a beautiful lake more than 250 sq. miles near Bhopal.
- He set up a college at Dhara for the study of Sanskrit Literature.

**The reign of the Paramaras came to an end with the invasion of Ala-ud-din Khilji.**

## Nature of the Rajputs

- The Rajputs were great warriors and chivalrous by nature.
- They believed in protecting the women and the weak.

## Religion

- The Rajputs were staunch followers of Hinduism.
- They also patronized Buddhism and Jainism.
- During their period the Bhakti Cult started.

## Government

- The Rajput government was outdated in character.
- Each kingdom was divided into a large number of Jagirs held by the Jagirdars.

## Major literary works of this period

- Kalhana's Rajatarangin
- Jayadeva's Gita Govindam
- Somadeva's Kathasaritasagar
  
- Chand Bardai, the court poet of Prithviraj Chauhan, wrote Prithviraj Raso in which he refers to the military exploits of Prithviraj Chauhan.
- Bhaskara Charya wrote Siddhanta Shiromani, a book on astronomy.

## Rajasekhara

- The court poet of Mahendrapala and Mahipala.
- His best known works were Karpuramanjari, Bala and Ramayana.

## Art and Architecture

During this period

- Mural paintings and Miniature paintings were popular.
- Temples at Khajuraho
- Lingaraja Temple at Bhubaneswar
- The Sun Temple at Konark
- The Dilwara Temple at Mount Abu

## End of the Rajput Power

- There was no strong military power during the Rajput period to keep the warring princes in check and to coordinate their activities against foreign invasions.

## Some popular terms

- **Jauhar:** Amass suicide of women in order to escape defilement at the hands of foreign victors.
- **Gita Govindam:** Song of the cowherd
- **Rajatarangini:** 'River of Kings'
- **Kathasaritasagara:** 'Ocean of tales'