

Early Medieval India [History Notes]

The intermediate transition period between the ancient and the medieval is referred to as the “early medieval”. It was marked by the formation of various states at the regional level. The period between c. 600 - 1200 CE can be divided into two phases, each phase different for north and south India.

In this article, you can read all about early medieval India and associated rulers such as Harshavardhana, Pulakesin I, Pulakesin II, among others. This is an important aspect of the ancient history segment of the [UPSC syllabus](#). You can also download the PDF of these UPSC history notes in the button below.

Early Medieval India - Age of Regional Configuration (c.600 - 1200 CE)

In north India, the period from c. 600 - 750 CE was ruled by Pushyabhutis of Thaneswar and the Maukharis of Kannauj. The corresponding period from c. 600 - 750 CE in south India consisted of three major states - the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai.

In north India, the period c. 750 - 1200 CE can be further divided into two phases:

1. Phase I (from c. 750 - 1000 CE) - This age in north India included three important empires, the Gurjara Pratihars in north India, the Palas in eastern India and the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan.
2. Phase II (from c. 1000 - 1200 CE) - This phase is also known as the **age of conflict**. There was a splitting of the tripartite powers into smaller kingdoms. The Gurjara Pratihara empire in north India disintegrated into various Rajput states which were under the control of different Rajput dynasties like Chahamanas (Chauhans), Paramaras of Malwa, Chandellas and so on. These Rajput states showed resistance against the Turkish attacks (from north-west India) which were led by Mahmud Ghazni and Mohammad Ghori in the 11th and 12th centuries.

In south India, the period from c. 850 - 1200 CE was ruled by the Cholas.

Northern India (c. 600 - 750 CE)

Pushyabhutis of Thaneswar

The Guptas ruled over northern and western India for about 160 years, with their centre of power at Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The fall of the [Gupta empire](#) led to the disintegration of northern India into a number of small kingdoms. From about the 5th century CE, the white Hunas ruled over western India, Punjab and Kashmir, and from the middle of the 6th century CE, north and western India came under the control of about half a dozen feudatories of the Guptas. Gradually one of these dynasties named Pushyabhutis ruling at Thanesar in Haryana extended its authority over all the other feudatories. The chief sources for tracing the history of the Pushyabhuti dynasty are the **Harshacharita** written by Banabhatta and the travel accounts of Hiuen Tsang. Banabhatta was the court poet of Harsha Vardhana and Hiuen Tsang was the Chinese traveller who visited India in the 7th century CE.

Dynastic History

Pushyabhutis - were the feudatories of the Guptas.

Prabhakar Vardhana (middle of the 6th century) -

- The first important king of the Pushyabhuti dynasty.
- His capital was Thanesar, north of Delhi.
- He married his daughter, Rajyashri to Grahavarman, a Maukhari ruler.
- He was known for his military triumphs.
- He was succeeded by his elder son, Rajyavardhana. The ruler of Malwa, Devagupta in league with Shashanka, the ruler of Gauda (Bihar and Bengal) had killed Grahavarman (brother-in-law of Rajyavardhana) and imprisoned Rajyashri. On hearing this, Rajyavardhana marched towards Malwa, defeated its army and killed Devagupta but was treacherously murdered by Shashanka.

Harsha Vardhana (c. 606 - 647 CE)

- Harsha Vardhana succeeded his brother, Rajyavardhana.
- He was just 16 years of age when he ascended the throne, but proved to be a great warrior and a capable administrator. After the death of his brother, he marched towards Kannauj and rescued his sister, Rajyashri when she was about to immolate herself (sati).
- Harsha followed a tolerant religious policy. He was a follower of Shiva in his early years of life, and gradually became a great patron of Buddhism.
- He is considered to be the last great Hindu king of India and also the lord of the north (Sakala Uttarapatha Natha).
- In his first expedition, Harsha drove out Shashanka from Kannauj and made Kannauj his new capital. Harsha fought against Dhruvasena of Valabhi and defeated him. Dhruvasana II became a vassal (as mentioned in the Nausasi copper plate inscription). He was also victorious against the ruler of Sindh in the north-west. Harsha's last military campaign was against the kingdom of Kalinga in Odisha and it was a success. Harsha established his hold over the whole of north India. The regions of modern Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha were under his direct control, but his sphere of influence was much more extensive. The peripheral states such as Kashmir, Sindh, Valabhi, and Kamarupa (east) acknowledged his sovereignty. His southern march was stopped on the banks of the Narmada river by the Chalukyan king Pulakesin II, who ruled over a major part of modern Karnataka and Maharashtra with his capital in Badami in the modern Bijapur district of Karnataka. Except this, Harsha did not face any major opposition and was successful in politically uniting a large part of the country.
- Harsha organised a religious assembly at Kannauj to honour the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang towards the end of his reign (in c.643 CE). He invited representatives of all religious sects - Hinduism, Buddhism and [Jainism](#). Hiuen Tsang explained the values of the Mahayana doctrine. It was a grand conclave and a huge tower with a golden statue of the Buddha was constructed for the occasion and it was later worshipped by Harsha. On the final day of the huge assembly, Hiuen Tsang was honoured with costly gifts.
- Hiuen Tsang mentions in his account about the conference held at Allahabad, known as Prayag. It was one among the conferences routinely convened by Harsha once in five years.
- Hiuen Tsang speaks of Harsha in glowing terms, 'the king was kind, courteous and helpful to him, and the pilgrim could visit the different parts of the empire'.
- Harsha was a literary figure. He wrote three plays - Nagananda (based on Bodhisattva Jimutavahana), Priyadarshika and Ratnavali (both romantic comedies). It is believed that he himself wrote the text of the two inscriptions Madhuban and Banskhera. According to Banabhatta, he was a brilliant flute player. He is also credited with a work on grammar and two sutra works.

- His biographer Banabhatta adorned his royal court. Besides Harshacharita, Banabhatta wrote Kadambari. Other literary figures in Harsha's court were Matanga Divakara and the famous Bhartrihari, who was a poet, philosopher and grammarian.
- Nalanda, which was the centre of [Buddhism](#), had a huge monastic establishment in the time of Harshavardhana. Huien Tsang gives a valuable account of the Nalanda university. The term Nalanda means "giver of knowledge". It was founded by Kumaragupta I during the Gupta period. It was patronised by its successors and later by Harsha. Nalanda was basically a Mahayana university and was maintained with the revenue derived from 200 villages endowed by different rulers. The Buddhists were divided into 18 sects in the time of the Chinese pilgrim. According to the Chinese pilgrim I-tsing who visited India in 670 CE, there were 3000 students on its rolls. It had an observatory and a great library housed in three buildings. It was an institute of advanced learning and research and attracted scholars from across the world.

Administration and Society under Harsha

- The administration of Harsha was organized on the same lines as the Guptas', however, it was more decentralized and feudal. Bhaskara Varma of Kamarupa, Purnavarman of Magadha, Udit of Jalandhar and Dhruvabhatta of Vallabhi were the leading feudatories during Harsha's reign. Harsha's army consisted of the traditional four divisions - infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. The number of cavalries was more than one lakh and the elephants more than sixty thousand. This was much more than the [Mauryan](#) army. The feudatories contributed their quota of the army at the time of need and hence made the imperial army vast in number.
- Land grants continued to be made to the priests for their special services rendered to the state. These land grants had the same privileges as enjoyed by Brahmadeya lands. The Chinese pilgrim states that the people were taxed lightly and the revenue was divided into four parts:
 - One part was for the expenditure of the king.
 - Second part was for scholars.
 - Third part was for the endowment of officials and public servants, and the
 - Fourth part was for religious purposes.
- The king was just in his administration and punctual in discharging his duties. He made frequent visits of inspection throughout his dominion.
- The Chinese pilgrim, Huien Tsang mentions that Pataliputra and Vaishali were in a state of decline, while Prayag and Kannauj gained importance.
- The Brahmins and Kshatriyas were reported to lead a simple life, but the nobles and priests led a luxurious life. The Shudras were agriculturists and their status improved as compared to the past when they were meant to serve the other three varnas. The untouchables such as the chandalas lived miserably.

The Maitrakas

They were tributary chiefs of the Guptas, who formed a separate kingdom in western India and ruled over Saurashtra in Gujarat. The Maitrakas had their capital at Vallabhi. Dhruvasena II was the most important ruler of the Maitrakas, who was a contemporary of Harsha Vardhana and was married to his daughter. He was also part of Harsha's assembly at Prayag. Being a port town, the region had flourishing trade and commerce. The Maitrakas ruled till the middle of the 8th century.

The Maukharis

The Maukharis were subordinate rulers of the Guptas and adopted the title Samanta. They exercised control over Kannauj (western Uttar Pradesh) and eventually Kannauj replaced Pataliputra as the capital

of northern India. The city of Kannauj was merged with the Pushyabhuti kingdom after the successful expedition of Harsha. After that, he shifted the capital from Thanesar (Kurukshetra) to Kannauj. The Mukharis are mentioned in the work of Patanjali.

Maukhari Dynasty

Hari Varhmana Maukhari (mid 6th century)-

- Adopted the title Maharaja (not much is known about him).

Advaita Varma-

- Son of Hari Varhmana and adopted the title of Maharaja.

Ishanavarmana (c. 554 CE)-

- He is considered to be the real founder of Maukhari supremacy and adopted the title Maharajadhiraja (as per the Asirgarh copper plate inscription).
- The kingdom expanded to Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Gauda (Bengal) under his reign.
- He strongly resisted the attack from the Huns and defeated them. The Maukharis fought with the Huns as feudatories of Baladityagupta of the Gupta dynasty.

Sarvavarmana (c. 560 - 585 CE)-

- Presumed to be the son of Ishanavarmana.
- Ruled over Magadha. The Asirgarh inscription in Nimar district (Madhya Pradesh) mentions his victory over Damodar Gupta and describes Nimar as "Maukhari outpost in the Deccan".

Avanti Varmana (c. 585 - 600 CE)-

- Sarvavarmana was succeeded by his son Avanti Varmana who adopted the title of Maharajadhiraja and extended the boundary of the empire by transferring capital to the historical city of Kannauj.
- The Maukharis attained their peak during his rule.

Grahavarmana (around c. 600 CE)-

- Grahavarmana was married to the daughter of Prabhakar Vardhana of the Pushyabhuti dynasty.
- He was treacherously killed by Shashanka, the king of Gauda.

Thereafter, the Maukharis gradually declined and disappeared.

Southern India (c. 600 - 750 CE)

The second historical phase in the regions south of the Vindhyas began from c. 300 - 750 CE. The second phase differed in some aspects from the first but also had some processes in continuation with the first phase.

First historical phase (c. 200 BCE - 300 CE)	Second historical phase (c. 300 - 750 CE)
The main kingdoms were - the Satavahanas, the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas.	The important kingdoms were the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai.
The first historical phase was marked by the emergence of numerous crafts, internal and external trade, widespread use of coins and a good number of towns.	Towns, trade and coins were in a state of decline. This phase was marked by the expansion of the agrarian economy.
In this phase, there were extensive Buddhist monuments in both Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Cave inscriptions also indicate the existence of Jainism and Buddhism in southern parts of Tamil Nadu.	Brahmanism was followed extensively and Vedic sacrifices were common. Jainism was confined to Karnataka only.
The epigraphs during this period were mostly written in Prakrit.	Sanskrit became the official language in the peninsular region.

Deccan

Western Chalukyas of Badami

The Satavahanas (in northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha) were succeeded by the local power - the [Vakatakas](#).

- The Vakatakas were followed by the Chalukyas of Badami.
- The Chalukyas set up their kingdom towards the beginning of the 6th century in the western Deccan and played an important role in the history of the Deccan and south India for about two centuries (till 757 CE), after which they were overthrown by their feudatories, the Rashtrakutas.
- The [Chalukyas](#) established their capital at Vatapi, modern Badami in the district of Bijapur (Karnataka). The Chalukyas of Badami are primarily called the Western Chalukyas.
 - The family of the Western Chalukyas had two offshoots - the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and the Chalukyas of Lata.
- The Chalukyas claimed to be Brahmins in order to acquire legitimacy and respectability.

Western Chalukya Dynasty

Pulakesin I (c. 535 - 566 CE)

- Founder of the Chalukya dynasty.
- Established the kingdom with Vatapi (Badami) as its capital.

Kirtivarman I (c. 566 - 598 CE)

- Son of Pulakesin I, defeated the Mauryas of the Konkan, the Nalas of the Bastar area and the Kadambas of Banavasi (near Mysore).

Mangalesha (c. 598 - 609 CE)

- After the death of Kirtivarman I, war broke out between his brother Mangalesha and nephew Pulakesin II in which Pulakesin II emerged victorious.

Pulakesin II (c. 610 - 642 CE)

- The most important ruler of the Chalukya dynasty.
- The **Aihole inscription** issued by him, which was written by his court poet Ravikirti, gives details of his reign. The inscription is an example of poetic excellence written in Sanskrit. It describes his victory over the Kadambas of Banavasi. The Gangas of Mysore acknowledged his suzerainty.
- Another notable achievement of Pulakesin II was the defeat of Harshavardhana (his contemporary) on the banks of the river Narmada. He put a check to the ambition of Harsha to conquer the south and acquired the title of Dakshinapatheshvara (lord of the south).
- Another important event in the reign of Pulakesin II was the visit of Hsuan Tsang who described him as a devout Hindu but tolerant towards other religious sects like Buddhism and Jainism.
- In his first expedition against the Pallavas, Pulakesin II emerged successful and annexed the region known as Vengi (between Krishna and Godavari). His brother Vishnuvardhana took charge of the region known by the name Chalukyas of Vengi/Eastern Chalukyas.
- In his second expedition against the Pallavas, he suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Narasimhavarman I of Pallavas near Kanchi and got killed. King Narasimhavarman adopted the epithet of Vatapikonda (conqueror of Vatapi).
- Badami was taken over by the Pallavas for a period of 13 years. The political conflict between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas continued for more than a hundred years.

Vikramaditya I (c. 655 - 680 CE)

- The successor of Pulakesin II was Vikramaditya I. He was successful in throwing the Pallavas out of Badami and once again consolidated the Chalukya kingdom. He also captured Kanchi - the capital of Pallavas.

Vinayaditya I (c. 680 - 696 CE) - Not much is known about him.

Vijayaditya (c. 696 - 733 CE)

- He ruled for thirty-seven years and this period is known for temple building.

Vikramaditya II (c. 733 - 743 CE)

- The Vatapi dynasty was at its peak during his reign. He repeatedly invaded the territory of Tondaimandalam and is also credited with the successive victories over Pallava king Nandivarman II. In order to celebrate his victory, he got engraved a Kannada inscription on the victory pillar of the Kailasanath temple.
- In 740 CE, he completely defeated the Pallavas and thus avenged the earlier humiliation of the Chalukyas by the Pallavas.

Kirtivarman II (c. 743 - 757 CE)

- He was the last ruler of the Chalukyas. He was defeated by Dantidurga, the founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Thus, the Chalukyan rule ended around c.757 CE and Rashtrakutas - a feudatory of the Chalukyas came to power.

Chalukyan Art and Architecture

The Chalukyas were great patrons of art and architecture. They developed the **Vesara style** in the building of structural temples. However, the Vesara style reached its culmination only under the Rashtrakutas and the Hoyasalas (13th century). The structural temples of the Chalukyas exist at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal in modern Karnataka state. Cave temple architecture was also famous under the Chalukyas. The cave temples are found in Ajanta, Ellora and Nasik. The Chalukya temples may be divided into three phases:

The early phase (last quarter of the 6th century):

The three elementary cave temples were built at Aihole (Vedic, Jaina and Buddhist temple). These were followed by developed cave temples at Badami (three belong to Vedic and one to Jaina sect).

The second phase:

- It is represented by the temples at Aihole and Badami. Among the seventy temples found at Aihole, four important ones are:
 - Ladh Khan temple
 - Jain temple at Meguti
 - Durga temple (resembles a Buddha Chaitya)
 - Huchimalligudi temple
- Among the temples at Badami, the Muktheeswara temple and the Melagutti Sivalaya are notable for their architectural grandeur. A group of four rock cut temples at Badami are marked by high workmanship. The walls and pillars are adorned by beautiful images of gods and human beings.

The mature phase:

It includes the structural temples at Pattadakal (built around the 8th century and are now a World Heritage Site). There are ten temples, four in northern Nagara style and the remaining six in Dravidian style. The Papanatha temple is the most notable in the northern style. The Sangameshwara temple and the Virupaksha temple are famous for their Dravidian style. The Virupaksha temple is built on the model of the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram. It was built by one of the queens of Vikramaditya II. Sculptors brought from Kanchi were employed in its construction.

Read more about Chalukyan Architecture in: [NCERT Notes on temple architecture and sculpture - Part III](#).

Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi

As already mentioned, Pulakesin II annexed the region of Vengi (eastern Deccan) from the Pallavas and appointed his brother Vishnuvardhana as its governor in 624 CE.

- After the death of Pulakesin II, Vishnuvardhana declared independence and thus, the Chalukyas of Vengi/eastern Chalukyas of Vengi came into prominence.
- At first, the capital of eastern Chalukyas was Vengi but later it was shifted to Rajamahendravaram (modern Rajamundry).

- The eastern Chalukyas of Vengi were the main cause of conflict between the powerful Cholas and the western Chalukyas as they controlled the strategic Vengi region.
- They ruled over the region for about five centuries and during the later half of their rule, the region witnessed the development in terms of Telugu culture, art, poetry and literature.
- They continued ruling the region as feudatories of the Cholas until 1189 CE. The kingdom was ultimately taken over by the Hoysalas and the Yadavas.

Rulers:

Vishnuvardhana (around c. 624 CE)

Vijayaditya II (c. 808 - 847 CE)

- Considered to be one of the most important rulers of this dynasty, he fought successfully against the Gangas, the Rashtrakutas and also led campaigns into Gujarat.

Vijayaditya III (c. 848 - 892 CE)

- He had won over the Pallavas, the Gangas, the Rashtrakutas, the Pandyas, the Kalachuris and south Kosala.

Bhima I (c. 892 - 922 CE)

- He was captured by the Rashtrakuta king but was later released.

Vijayaditya IV (c. 922, for a brief period of six months)

- His reign witnessed successive disputes and the Rashtrakutas interfered openly. This resulted in the instability of the region and later rulers had a short governing stint.
- In 999 CE, the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi were conquered by the Chola king Rajaraja.

Chalukyas of Lata

They were the feudatories of the western Chalukyas, however, with the decline of western Chalukyas, they declared independence and started ruling the Lata region (Gujarat).

Rulers -

Nimbarka (not enough is known about him)

Barappa (c. 970 - 990 CE)

- He worked as a general of the western Chalukya king Tailapa II and then was made governor of the Lata region by the king.
- It is believed that the Solanki ruler Mularaja was defeated by the joint army of Barappa and the Shakambhari king.

- Hemachandra's Devyashraya Kavya mentions that Barappa was killed by Mularaja's son who invaded Lata.

Gogi -Raja (c. 990 - 1010 CE)

- It is believed that Barappa's son Gogi-Raja revived and got back the Lata region.

Kirti - Raja (c. 1010 - 1030 CE)

- A 940 Shaka (1018 CE) copper plate inscription of Kirti-Raja was found in Surat, which has the names of his ancestors - Nimbarka, Barappa and Gogi.

Vatsa - Raja (c. 1030 - 1050 CE)

- During his reign, he established a free food canteen (sattra) and also built a golden umbrella for the god Somnatha.

Trilochana - Pala (c. 1050 - 1070 CE)

- Two 972 Shaka copper plate inscriptions, 1050 CE Ekallahara and 1051 CE Surat, of Trilochana Pala have been found in which he is referred to as the Maha - Mandaleshvara.
- The 1050 CE inscription mentions his donation of the Ekallahara village to a Brahmin named Taraditya.

By 1074 CE, the region was conquered by the Solankis.

Kingdoms of the Far South

Two important kingdoms, the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai, dominated the far south during this period.

Pallavas of Kanchi

In the eastern part of the peninsula, on the ruins of the Satavahanas, arose a local tribe who adopted the exalted name of the Ikshvakus in order to demonstrate the antiquity of their lineage. They built many monuments at Nagarjunakonda and Dharanikota. Several copper plate charters have been discovered in the Krishna-Guntur region which belongs to them. The Ikshvakus were replaced by Pallavas - which means creeper. The Pallavas were possibly a local pastoral tribe who established their authority in the Tondaimandalam region - the land between the north Penner and north Vellar rivers. The authority of the Pallavas extended over both southern Andhra and northern Tamil Nadu, and had their capital at Kanchi (modern Kanchipuram) which became a town of temples and Vedic learning.

Rulers

The early Pallava rulers (around c. 250 CE - 350 CE) issued their charters in Prakrit. The important ones among them were Shivaskandavarman and Vijayaskandavarman. The second line of Pallava rulers (c. 350 CE- 550 CE) issued their charters in Sanskrit. The rulers of the third line who ruled from about c.

575 to their ultimate fall in the 9th century issued the charters both in Sanskrit and Tamil. Simhavishnu was the first ruler of this line.

Simhavishnu

- He destroyed the Kalabhras and firmly established the Pallava rule in Tondaimandalam. He also extended the Pallava territory up to the river Kaveri and set up capital at Kanchi (south of Chennai).
- He adopted the title of Avanisimha (lion of the earth).

Mahendravarman I (c. 590 CE - 630 CE)

- The long drawn Pallava-Chalukya conflict began during this period. Pulakesin II marched against the Pallavas and captured the northern part of their kingdom.
- Mahendravarman I was a follower of Jainism in the early part of his career. He later converted to Shaivism under the influence of the Shaiva saint Thirunavukkarasar alias Appar.
- He was a great patron of art and music. He authored the Sanskrit work Mattavilasa Prahasanna. His title Chitrakarapuli reveals his talents in paintings. The music inscription at Kudumiyamalai is ascribed to him.
- He was also a great builder of cave temples and introduced the rock cut temples. This style of Pallava temples are seen at places like Mandagapattu, Mahendravadi, Mamandur, Dalavanur, Tiruchirappalli, Vallam, Seeyamangalam and Tirikalukkuram.

Narasimhavarman I (c. 630 CE- 668 CE)

- He was also known as Mamalla, which means “great wrestler”.
- He avenged the defeat of his father at the hands of Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II. He invaded the western Chalukya Kingdom and captured Vatapi with the help of his friend - Sri Lankan Prince, Manavarma. He assumed the title Vatapikonda.
- He dispatched two naval expeditions to help his friend Manavarma but subsequently Manavarma was defeated and he had to seek refuge at his court.
- He was the founder of Mamallapuram and monolithic rathas were erected during his reign.

Mahendravarman II (c. 668 CE - 670 CE)

- The Pallava-Chalukya conflict continued and Mahendravarman II died fighting the Chalukyas.

Parameshvaravarman I (c. 670 CE - 695 CE)

- He defeated the Chalukya king Vikramaditya and also the Gangas.
- He built a temple at Kanchi.

Narasimhavarman II/Rajasimha (c. 700 CE - 728 CE)

- His regime was peaceful and he took more interest in the development of art and architecture. The Shore temple at Mamallapuram and the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram were built in this period.
- He sent embassies to China and the maritime trade flourished during his reign.

He was succeeded by Parameshvaravarman II and Nandivarman II. The Pallava rule lasted till the end of the 9th century CE. The Chola king Aditya I (in c. 893 CE) defeated the last Pallava ruler Aparajita and seized the Kanchi region. With this, the rule of the Pallava dynasty came to an end, however, the reign was important for the growth of Tamil Bhakti literature and the Dravidian style of art and architecture in south India.

Important Characteristics of Ellora Group of Caves, Ajanta Group of Caves and Mamallapuram

Ellora Group of Caves	Ajanta Group of Caves	Mamallapuram
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO World Heritage Site, famous for sculptures. The patrons of these caves range from the dynasties of Chalukyas to Rashtrakutas. Developed during the period between the 5th and 11th centuries, newer as compared to Ajanta caves. Apart from animals, trees, flowers which are picturised beautifully, human emotions like love, compassion, greed, etc. are depicted with professional skill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO World Heritage Site, famous for paintings. They were inscribed during the Vakataka reign by the Buddhist monks. Developed in two phases- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First phase -c.200 BCE to 200 CE. Second phase- c. 200 CE to 400 CE. The travel accounts of Fa-Hien (during the reign of Chandragupta II, c.376 415 CE) and Hiuen Tsang (during the reign of Harshavardhana, c. 606 - 647 CE) mention these caves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also called Mahabalipuram or seven pagodas, was founded by 7th century Pallava king- Narasimhavarman . The five monolithic temples or five rathas are the remains of the seven temples, for which the town was named as seven pagodas. These were collectively designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rock-cut cave temples are in thirty-four caves- these are related to Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivikas and Brahmanism religious sects. 17 caves are dedicated to Brahmanism. 12 caves are dedicated to Buddhism. 5 caves are dedicated to Jainism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total of 25 caves and all are related to Buddhism. 25 were used as Viharas (residential caves) and 4 were used as Chaityas (prayer halls). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The five monolithic rathas are known as the Panchapandava Rathas. <p>The Arjuna Ratha - contains sculptures of Siva, Vishnu, Mithuna and Dwarapala.</p> <p>The Dharmaraja Ratha has a three-storied vimana and a square base. It is the</p>

		<p>most elegant amongst all the rathas.</p> <p>The Bhima Ratha contains sculptures of Harihara, Brahma, Vishnu, Skanda, Ardhanarishvara and Siva as Gandhara.</p>
<p>Some of the important features about the caves of Vedic religions are-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The earliest caves are simple and square-shaped, however, Kailashnatha cave (cave 16) is an exception. It is a massive monolithic structure. It represents the abode of Lord Shiva. It is two-storeyed - the lower storey has carved out life-sized elephants and it seems that these elephants are holding the temple on their backs. On entering the temple, the deities to the left are mostly Shaivite and the deities to the right are Vaishnavite. Some of the beautiful specimens are- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The attempted lifting of Kailasa mountain by Ravana. The marriage ceremony of Siva-Parvati. Ganga - the river goddess mounted on a crocodile and the river goddess Yamuna mounted on a tortoise. The destruction of Mahishasura by the goddess Durga. 	<p>Some of the important features of mural paintings were-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural colours were used, black, red, white, yellow, blue and green being the prominent ones. The human emotions are beautifully depicted, dominant ones being compassion and peace. Shadow, as well as light, are intelligently used. Mostly the paintings involve the scenes from the Jataka stories and some episodes from the life history of Buddha. Some of the beautiful specimens include- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sculptures of Yakshis and Hariti with children are significant. The popular Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara carved out independently is yet another beautiful feature. 	<p>Some of the important carvings in Mamallapuram are-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The descent of the Ganga (described as 'Bhagiratha's Penance' or 'Arjuna's Penance'). The sculptural panel in the Krishna mandapa, where the village life with cows and cowherds is depicted with beauty and skill, is another artistic wonder. The Shore temple was constructed during the reign of Rajasimha and consists of three shrines dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu. It is a five-storeyed rock-cut monolith.
<p>Some of the important features of the Buddhist caves are-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The panels in these caves portray scenes from the life of Buddha. Designed as monasteries for teaching 	<p>The technique employed was-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The plaster was made of vegetable fibres, paddy husk, rock grit and sand. The plastered surface was 	

<p>and training the monks in religious treatises and scriptures, e.g. In cave 6, a man is reading a manuscript on a folding table.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Famous sculptures include Buddha in three sagacious postures - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preaching (vyakhyana mudra). Touching the earth by the index finger of the right hand (bhumi sparsha mudra). Meditating (dhyana mudra). 	<p>covered with a thin film of lime, ready to receive the pigment.</p> <p>3. They also used a stretch of cloth to reinforce the application of pigment on the surface.</p>	
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Pandyas of Madurai

Not much is known about the Pandyas of the early medieval times. The Pandyas ruled Madurai and Tirunelveli districts of Tamil Nadu. They were in conflict with their contemporaries like the Pallavas.

Rulers:

Kadungon (c. 560 - 590 CE)

Maravarman Avanishulamani (c. 590 - 620 CE)

He was the son of Kadungon and is believed to have ended the Kalabhras' rule in the area and revived the Pandyas. The Kalabhras were called evil rulers who overthrew innumerable kings and established their hold on the Tamil land. They had put an end to Brahmadeya rights granted to the Brahmanas in numerous villages and mostly patronised Buddhist monasteries. The Kalabhra revolt was so widespread that it could be put down only through the joint efforts of the Pandyas, the Pallavas and the Chalukyas of Badami.

Rajasimha (c. 735 - 765 CE)

- Defeated the Pallavas and expanded the empire.

The Pandyas were completely overthrown by the Cholas in the 10th century.

Kadambas of Banavasi

The Kadamba kingdom was founded by Mayurasarman, who defeated the Pallavas with the help of the forest tribes. The Pallavas avenged the defeat but recognised the Kadamba authority by formally presenting Mayurasarman with the royal insignia. Mayurasarman is said to have performed eighteen ashvamedhas and granted numerous villages to Brahmanas. The Kadambas established their capital at Vijayanti or Banavasi in North Kanara district in Karnataka.

Western Gangas of Mysore

They were another important contemporary of the Pallavas, and had been previously the feudatories of the Pallavas. They ruled southern Karnataka (around the 4th century) - between the Pallavas in the east and the Kadambas in the west. They are called western Gangas or Gangas of Mysore in order to differentiate them from the Eastern Gangas who ruled in Kalinga from the 5th century. Their capital was at Kolar, a region of rich gold mines. The western Gangas made land grants mostly to the Jainas.

