

Northern India [Medieval Indian History - Chedis, Senas, Gangas, Western Chalukyas]

The period in medieval Indian history from c.1000 – 1200 CE is referred to as the **age of conflict** and it led to the breakdown of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Palas and the Rashtrakutas (the tripartite powers) into smaller kingdoms all over the country. In this article, you can learn all about the dynasties of the Chedis of Tripuri, Senas of Bengal, Gangas of Odisha and the Western Chalukyas. This is important for the medieval history segment of the [UPSC syllabus](#).

Northern India [1000 - 1200 CE]

To know more about the Rajputs, their clans, the Kingdoms of Kashmir, the Hindu Shahis, click on the link below.

[Northern India \[Medieval Indian History 1000 - 1200 CE\]](#)

Chedis of Tripuri

The Chedi region was between the Narmada and the Godavari rivers and was ruled by the Kalachuri dynasty. Earlier, Kalachuris were subordinate to the Pratiharas but around the middle of the 10th century, they declared independence. The Kalachuri dynasty ruled the Chedi region (Dahala-mandala) with their capital at Tripuri (present-day Jabalpur, M.P). The Kalachuris of Chedi fought against the Chandellas of Jejakabhukti and later entered into matrimonial alliances with them. They had conflicts with Palas, Pandyas, [Cholas](#) and Pallavas.

Chedi Rulers

Kokkala I (c. 845 - 885 CE)

- He founded the Kalachuri dynasty. He invaded northern Konkan and helped the [Rashtrakuta](#) king, Krishna II against the eastern Chalukyas and the Pratiharas.
- He was married to a Chandella princess.
- His eldest son succeeded him on the throne while the younger ones were made rulers of the mandalas/provinces. A descendant of one of them founded a separate kingdom in south Kosala with its capital at Tummana.

Yuvraja (c. 915 - 945 CE)

- He was a powerful ruler who defeated the Rashtrakuta army. In order to commemorate his success, the famous poet Rajasekara staged his drama, Vidya Salabhanjika.
- The Kalachuri inscription mentions his successful raids against Kashmir and the Himalayan region.

Lakshmanaraja (around 3rd quarter of the 10th century CE)

- He defeated Vangala (south Bihar) and Somavamsi king of south Kosala. He invaded Lata in the west and also defeated the king of Gurjara, probably Mulraja I, the founder of the Chalukya empire.

Gangeya Deva (c. 1019 - 1040 CE)

- During his reign, the Chedis emerged as one of the greatest political powers in India. He adopted the title of Trikalingadhipati (the lord of Trikalinga) and also the title of Vikramaditya.
- His success may be attributed to the fact that his kingdom did not face any raids from the Ghaznavids. The other political powers to its north and north-west were strongly affected by the raids of Sultan Mahmud.
- During his reign, the four-armed Lakshmi seated cross-legged on the lotus, holding a lotus in the upper two hands with inscriptions in the Nagari script “Shrimad -Ga/ngeyade/va” on the reverse side was introduced.
- He issued coins of varied sizes, weights and of different metals such as gold, silver, silver-gold, copper, and silvery-copper.

Lakshmi Karna (c. 1041 - 1073 CE)

- Also known as Karna. He was successful in the south and also in the northwest. He carried his victorious arms along the eastern coast to as far as Kanchi.
- It is believed that he defeated the [Pallavas](#), the Pandyas (south), kungas and Someshwara I.

Yashkarna (c. 1073 - 1125 CE)

- He had to face a number of invasions as the Chalukyas of the Deccan raided his empire and the Paramaras destroyed Tripuri. He was also defeated by the Chandellas and all these attacks weakened the Kalachuris.

Vijayasimha (c. 1177 - 1211 CE)

- The last ruler of the dynasty and it was during his reign, Chandella king Trailokyavarman captured nearly the whole of the Kalachuri kingdom including Baghelkhand and Dahala-mandala.

The Chedi possessions were also lost to the rising dynasties such as the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Ganpatis of Warangal and the Vaghela Rajputs.

Senas of Bengal

The Sena Dynasty ruled Bengal for the period c. 1097 - 1225 CE. The Sena dynasty ruled most of the northeast region of the Indian sub-continent. Earlier, both Bihar and Bengal were under the dominion of the Pala dynasty. Unlike Palas who were Buddhists, the Sena rulers were devout Hindus. According to the Deopara inscription, they had their origin in the south Indian region of Karnataka. The inscription mentions one of the founders in the south, Samantha Sen, whose successor was Hemanta Sen, the first of the family to whom royal epithets are given in the family records and who seized power from the Palas and styled himself, king, in c. 1095 CE. His successor, Vijaya Sena, helped to lay the foundation of the dynasty.

Vijaya Sena (c. 1095 - 1158 CE)

- Founder of the Sena dynasty who ruled for over 60 years and brought peace and prosperity to Bengal. It is believed that he took advantage of the revolt of Samantachakra in the Varendra region during the rule of Mahipala II and gradually consolidated his position in western Bengal. He ultimately assumed an independent position during the reign of Madanapala.
- He defeated Bhojavarman and conquered Vanga.
- Vijaya Sena had two capitals - Vijayapura and Vikrampura.
- Vijay Prasasti (Eulogy of Vijay) was composed by the famous poet Sriharsha in memory of Vijaya Sena. The Barrackpore copper plate mentions him as Maharajadhiraja. The Deopara Prasasti stone inscription eulogises the Sena kings, especially Vijaya Sena.

Ballal Sena (c. 1158 - 1179 CE)

- Ballal Sena's kingdom consisted of five provinces of Banga, Barendra, Bagri (probably a portion of lower Bengal), Mithila and Rar. He made Nabadwip the capital as well.
- It is believed that Ballal Sena revived the orthodox Hindu practices in Bengal, in particular with the establishment of the reactionary tradition of Kulinism (Hindu caste and marriage rules).
- His wife Ramadevi was the princess of the western Chalukyan empire, which reflects the cordial relations between the two kingdoms.
- He wrote Adbhut Sagara and Dana Sagara.

Lakshmana Sena (c. 1178 - 1207 CE)

- Under the able leadership of Lakshmana Sena, the Sena dynasty reached its peak. His kingdom extended to Odisha, Bihar, Assam and probably to Varanasi as well. He also defeated the ruler of the Gahadavala dynasty, Jayachandra.
- Seven copper plate inscriptions belonging to his reign mention him as a great military leader and a patron of learning. These inscriptions also mention his victories over the kings of Kamrupa, Gaur, Kalinga and Kashi. To celebrate his successes, he erected pillars at Allahabad, Benares and Puri. He was the first ruler of Bengal who extended his power beyond Benares. Some inscriptions found at Gaya mention him as its ruler.
- He assumed the title of Ariraja-Madana-Sankara along with the titles Gaureswara and Paramvaishnava. The title Paramvaishnava indicates that he was a devout Vaishnav unlike Ballal Sena and Vijaya Sena who were Shaivas. His official proclamations started with an invocation to Narayana.
- His court was adorned by poets like **Jayadeva** (the famous Vaishnava poet of Bengal and author of **Geeta Govinda**), Umapati Dhar, Dhoyi, etc. He himself was a learned person and completed the work of Adbhut Sagara that was started by his father Ballal Sena.
- However, during the last years of his rule, the Sena dynasty weakened and started to disintegrate. South Bengal, Orissa and Kamrupa no longer remained under Sena suzerainty. Also, the central Asian invasions aided its fall.

At the beginning of the 13th century (c. 1203 - 1204 CE), Muhammad Bin Khalji, one of the generals of Mohammad Ghori attacked Nabadwip and invaded Bihar and Bengal and annexed them to their Islamic kingdom. He conquered northwest Bengal while eastern Bengal remained under Sena rule. However, by the middle of the 13th century, the Deva dynasty overthrew the Sena and with it, the Sena rule declined completely.

Gangas/Chodagangas of Orissa

The Chodagangas, also known as the Eastern Ganga Dynasty, ruled Kalinga from the 11th - 15th century. The kingdom consisted of present-day Odisha, parts of West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Kalinganagara was their capital (present-day Srimukhalingam in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh bordering Odisha). **The Sun temple at Konark was built by Chodagangas.** It is also important to mention that the Kesaris ruled Orissa prior to the Gangas and built the Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar.

Anantavarman Chodaganga was the founder of the dynasty who claimed to be a descendant of the Western Ganga dynasty (that ruled southern parts of present-day Karnataka from 4th- 10th century) and the Chola dynasty. They, therefore, carried the south Indian culture to Odisha.

Chodaganga Rulers

Anantavarman Chodaganga (c. 1076 - 1150 CE)

- He was titled Trikalingadhipathi (the ruler of three Kalingas) in 1076 CE, which consisted of Utkal (north), Kosal (west) and Kalinga proper (south).
- He built the famous Jagannath temple of Puri in Odisha.

Narsimhadeva (c. 1238 - 1264 CE)

- He built the Sun Temple at Konark, a [UNESCO World Heritage site](#).

During the rule of king Bhanndeva (c. 1414 - 1434 CE), the dynasty declined and thereafter, the Chalukyas of Vengi ruled the region.

Western Chalukyas of Kalyani/Later Western Chalukyas

The Later Western Chalukyas ruled from Kalyani (present-day Basavakalyan in Karnataka) between the 10th and the 12th century CE. The kingdom consisted of modern Deccan and southern India. Earlier, most of the Deccan and central India was under the control of Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta (for over two centuries). Around 973 CE, a feudatory of Rashtrakuta from the Bijapur region, Taila/Tailapa II defeated his overlord and made Manyakheta his capital. The later ruler Someshwara I shifted the capital to Kalyani.

Tailapa II (c. 957 - 997 CE)

- Tailapa II was the founder of the Later Western Chalukyas. With help from the earlier Chalukyas and Kadambas, he regained most of the lost territories of earlier Chalukyas and also consolidated his empire.

Satyasraya (c. 997 - 1008 CE)

- Tailapa II's son who defeated Rajaraja Chola and conquered his territories.
- Dasavarman, Vikramaditya V and Jayasimha were the successors of Satyasraya.

Someshwara I (c. 1043 - 1068 CE)

- He was the son of Jayasimha who expelled Rajadhiraja Chola. Some inscriptions mention that “he broke the line of succession of Rajendra Chola by killing him”.
- Someshwara II succeeded Someshwara I. The younger brother of Someshwara II, Vikramaditya was more capable and conquered the Cholas, Kerala and Ceylon. Someshwara II soon fell into bad ways and lost the loyalty of his younger brother, who then started to rule the southern part of the kingdom independently.

Vikramaditya VI (c. 1068 - 1076 CE)

- The most successful ruler of this dynasty who was titled “Permadideva” and “Tribhuvanamalla” (Lord of three worlds).
- Vikramaditya marched against Vira Rajendra Chola. The latter asked for peace and offered his daughter’s hand to Vikramaditya. After the death of Vira Rajendra Chola, Vikramaditya placed his brother-in-law on the throne.
- Vikramaditya suffered defeat at the hands of eastern Chalukyan ruler Jayasimha and was placed as the governor of Bellary. However, in c. 1076 CE, Vikramaditya regained his power with the help of the Hoysalas and ascended the throne as Vikramaditya VI. He also introduced the Chalukya-Vikrama era in 1076 CE.
- His court was adorned with two great writers Bilhana and Vijneshwara. Bilhana’s work Vikramankadeva Charita glorifies Vikramaditya VI. Vijneshwara wrote Mitakshara - a commentary on Yagnavalkya Smriti (on Hindu family law).
- He followed Shaivism and built numerous temples - the Mallikarjuna temple, the Mahadeva temple, the Kaitabheshwara temple and the Kalleshwara temple.
- Vikramaditya VI was succeeded by Someshwara III and it was during his reign that Vishnuvardhana Hoysala declared independence. The later rulers could not stop their feudatories from declaring independence. However, under the able leadership of Someshwara IV, son of Taila III, the Chalukyas recovered their territory. Around c. 1190 CE, the attack from the Hoysalas and Yadavas of Devagiri resulted in the decline of the Later Western Chalukya dynasty.

Developments in Art and Architecture, and Science and Technology

The period did not witness much growth in science and technology, which largely depends on the growth of any society. Al- Biruni, the Central Asian scholar and scientist mentioned that “the insular attitudes of the educated, in particular the Brahmanas, led to a tremendous lack in inter-cultural scientific learning and collaboration”.

- The field of mathematics witnessed certain advancements as the 9th-century Ganitasarasangraha of Mahaviracharya and the Lilavati of Bhaskara II were written during this period. Bhaskara II (c. 1114 - 1185 CE) was a great mathematician and astronomer of medieval India and his main work, the Siddhanta Shiromani (Sanskrit for “Crown of Treatises”) consists of four parts:
 1. **Lilavati** - It deals with arithmetics and covers calculations, measurement, permutations, progressions, etc.
 2. **Bijaganita** - It deals with algebra and the concept of zero, infinity, positive and negative numbers and indeterminate equations including Pell’s equation are covered in this section.
 3. **Grahaganita** - It deals with planetary mathematics - about motion, instantaneous speeds, etc. Bhaskara precisely defined many astronomical quantities such as the length of the sidereal year (time taken by the earth to revolve around the sun - 365.2588 days)

4. **Goladhyaya** - it deals with spheres.

Bhaskara also wrote the 'Karana Kautuhala'.

- In the field of science, new metals were discovered like mercury. During this period, much was written about plant sciences and the treatment of animals but the lack of research on the interbreeding of horses resulted in the dependence of Indians on the import of horses from Central Asia.
- In the field of education, there was not much change, the concept of mass education did not exist. Education was restricted to the upper strata of the society e.g, Brahmanas and mainly Vedas and Grammar were taught. However, at Buddhist viharas such as Nalanda, Vikramashila and Uddandapura monasteries of Bihar, much emphasis was laid on secular subjects. Kashmir was an important centre of education and learning centres flourished during this period. A number of important maths education centres were set up at Madurai and Sringeri in South India. These centres of education provided a platform to discuss philosophy and religion.

Religious Movements and Beliefs in Philosophy

- During this period, Hinduism revived and flourished, however, [Jainism](#) and Buddhism continuously declined. Buddhism remained confined to eastern India and was mainly patronised by the Palas. The Chalukyan rulers of Gujarat were patrons of Jainism and built the grand Dilwara temples of Mount Abu.
- The important distinctive feature of this era was the growth of the **Bhakti movement** in South India by saints called **Alvars (worshippers of Vishnu) and Nayannars (worshippers of Shiva)**.
 - In Alvar Bhakti, the relationship between the devotee and Krishna was often expressed in terms of the lover - beloved or mother-child relationship and in Nayannar Bhakti, the relationship between the god and the devotee was similar to that between master and slaves.
 - The word Bhakti comes from the root 'bhaj' which implies to participate or share.
 - These saints spoke in common languages (Tamil and Telugu) which influenced the local masses to join the Bhakti movement.
 - Religion was considered as a living bond between the god and the worshipper.
 - The Bhakti movement was joined by both upper castes and lower castes, and it also included women saints. Buddhists, Jainas and tribals also became part of the Bhakti movement.
- During the 12th century, the Lingayat or Vir Shaiva movement gained popularity. It was founded by Basava and his nephew Channabasava, who lived at the court of the Kalachuri kings of Karnataka. The Lingayats worshipped Shiva and strongly opposed the caste system and child marriages. They rejected feasts, pilgrimage, fasts and sacrifices and supported widow remarriages.
- The Siddhas (Sittars) of Tamil Nadu were against idol worship and laid much importance on yoga and good conduct and were in contrast with the Bhakti cults.
 - They believed in monotheism and were mostly Shaiva, who practised an unorthodox type of Sadhana (spiritual practices) to attain liberation.
 - Siddhi, the yogic powers were obtained by continuous practice of certain yogic disciplines and Tapasya.
 - The Siddhas also used rasayanas (substances that were believed to transform the body to make it potentially deathless) and a particular type of pranayama (breathing practice).
 - It is believed that the Siddhas were founders of Varmam, a kind of martial art for self-defence and medical treatment.
 - Varmams are specific points in the human body which when pressed in different ways can give various results, like disabling an attacker or balancing a physical condition as an easy first aid medical treatment.

- Pulse reading called 'naadi paarththal' was developed by the Tamil Siddhas to identify the origin of diseases.
- In Northern India, Tantra was gaining importance when the Bhakti movement was flourishing in South India.
 - They rejected the caste system and like Bhakti, it was open to all castes.
 - The most famous Hindu yogi who adopted these practices was Gorakhnath and his followers came to be known as Nath-Panthis.
- Many schools of philosophy emerged during this period. Hindu philosophy generally consists of six orthodox or classical (astika) schools and three heterodox (nastika) schools. The orthodox schools believe in the authority of the Vedas while the heterodox schools do not recognise the authority of the Vedas. Out of these nine schools of philosophy, eight are atheistic and only the Uttara Mimamsa, also called Vedanta, has a place for God in it.
- By the beginning of the Christian era, six prominent schools of philosophy (Shatdarshan) developed - Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshik, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa (Vedanta).

Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy (Astika)

Samkhya -

- Kapila was the founder of this oldest school of philosophy. It literally means "count".
- The Samkhya considers that the universe consists of two realities (dual) - Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (matter), which further consists of three basic elements - Tamas, Rajas and Sattva.
- The acquisition of real knowledge helps a person to attain salvation and his participation in the life cycle can be ended forever. This knowledge can be gained through Pratyaksha (perception), Anumanya (inference) and Shabda (hearing).
- This school of philosophy lays emphasis on self-knowledge which can be acquired by means of concentration and meditation.
- In Samkhya, the necessity of God is not felt and the world owes its creation and evolution more to nature or Prakriti than to God.
- Samkhya forms the philosophical basis for [yoga](#).

Yoga -

- This school of philosophy was founded by Patanjali. It is a practical path for the realisation of self and the practice of control over pleasure, senses and bodily organs form the central theme of this school.
- Physical exercises in various postures (asanas) and breathing exercises (pranayama) are recommended to attain salvation. Through these exercises, the mind gets diverted from worldly affairs and concentration is achieved.
- Yoga doesn't need belief in God, this belief is accepted as a help in the initial stage of mental concentration and control of the mind. It admits the existence of God as a teacher and guide.

Nyaya -

- This is also known as the school of analysis, which was developed as a system of logic by Gautama. Its principles are mentioned in Nyaya Sutras.
- This philosophy adopts a scientific approach and holds that nothing is acceptable unless it is in accordance with reason and logic.

- According to this philosophy, pramanas (proofs) are the means of obtaining true knowledge and the principal means of acquiring knowledge is Pratyaksha Pramana (knowledge obtained through the five senses). The other pramanas are anumana (inference) and Shabda pramana (a statement of an expert).
- Philosophers like Vatsyayan (who wrote Nyaya Bhashya), Udayan (author of Kusumanjali) belong to this school.

Vaisheshika -

- This school, propounded by Kanada, gives importance to the discussion of Dravya or material elements.
- This school propounded the atomic theory and can be marked as the beginning of physics in ancient India. Earth, water, fire, air and ether (sky) are the five aggregates that give rise to new objects.

Mimamsa -

- This is also known as Purva Mimamsa which is concerned with the art of reasoning and interpretation.
- According to this school, Vedas contain the eternal truth and it recommends the performance of Yagya (Vedic sacrifices) to attain salvation.
- This philosophy relies on the Brahmanas and the Samhitas of the Vedas.

Vedanta -

- This school of philosophy is also known as Uttara Mimamsa. It signifies the end of the Vedas. The Brahmaputra of Badarayana compiled in the 2nd century BCE formed its basic text.
- This school of philosophy believes that the world is an illusion (Maya) and there exists only one reality, Brahman. So, it emphasizes brahmagyan, and relies on the Upanishads. Vedanta throws light on the esoteric teachings of the Aranyakas (the forest scriptures) and the Upanishads.
- Vedanta has its roots in Samkhya philosophy. The atman (soul) or the self is identical with Brahman and if the person acquires the knowledge of the self, he acquires the knowledge of Brahman and hence attains salvation.
- Both atman (soul) and brahman are eternal.
- The theory of karma is closely related to the Vedanta philosophy, i.e, the present birth of a person has to bear the consequences of his actions done in his previous birth.
- The core message of Vedanta is that every action must be governed by the discriminating faculty - that is the intellect.
- Vedanta has three sub-branches:
 - **Advaita/non-dualist Vedanta of Shankara:** It is also called monism. Shankara was the major proponent of Vedanta in the 9th century. He considers knowledge/jnana to be the chief means of salvation and Brahman to be without any attributes (nirguna brahman). Shankara believes in only one reality and that the atman is completely identical with brahman. According to him, God and the created world are one and differences arise due to ignorance. There are two levels of reality - conventional and absolute. Ignorance is the reason that a man mistakes conventional reality for absolute reality. Devotion to God and understanding the oneness of the atman with the brahman is the way for salvation.
 - **Visistadvaita/non-dualism of Ramanuja:** This philosophy is also called qualified monism. Ramanuja wrote a commentary on Vedanta in the 12th century and combined Vaishnava bhakti with Upanishadic monism. He identifies the brahman with Vishnu, holding that the brahman possesses attributes (saguna brahman). According to Ramanuja, atman and brahman are distinct but inseparable. As red rose cannot exist without redness, similarly brahman cannot exist without atman.

- **Dvaita of Madhva:** This is the dualist school of Hindu Vedanta philosophy which originated in the 13th century (South India). Madhva wrote commentaries on the Brahmasutra and Upanishads and a work called the Bharata Tatparya Nirnaya based on the Puranas and the epics. He believes God to be completely different from the individual soul and the world. He believes that the individual soul has many defects, but it can achieve perfection by worshipping God. According to him, the relationship between God and the soul is the same as the relationship between the master and his slave. Madhva's system consists of three basic elements - God, the souls (jivasi) and the insentient matter (jada). Madhva asserts that the living beings and inner matter are dependent on brahman, such dependence makes them different from God and makes them discrete entities (tattvas). He believes Vishnu has a paramount rank amongst all the deities, on the basis of his unique characteristics.

The first four classical schools - Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika are not entirely based on Vedas but the last two - the Mimamsa and Vedanta rely on the Vedas.

Heterodox Schools of Indian Philosophy (Nastika)

This school of philosophy does not accept the authority of the Vedas.

Charvaka/Lokayata -

Charvaka, the author of the Barhaspatya Sutras, was the founder of this philosophy (in the final centuries before the Christian era). It is an atheistic and materialistic school of thought. Lokayata refers to ideas obtained from common people and it lays importance to the intimate relationship with the Loka (world) and does not believe in the other world. According to this philosophy, direct perception is the best method to prove the truth of anything. It recognises earth, water, fire and air but denies ether because it cannot be known by perception. It emphasises joyful living and opposes the quest for salvation. This philosophy accepts the existence of only those which could be experienced by human sense organs and denies any divine existence. According to Charvaka, the Brahmanas manufactured rituals for their own benefits and for acquiring Dakshina (gifts).
