

Northern India [Medieval Indian History 1000 - 1200 CE]

The period 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. The fragmentation of the Pratiharas in northern India resulted in the formation of a number of Rajput states which were ruled by different Rajput dynasties such as Chandellas, Chahamanas (Chauhans), the Paramaras of Malwa, etc. This is an important part of Indian history and forms a significant part of the [UPSC syllabus](#).

Rajput Clans

There are several theories regarding the origin of Rajputs.

- According to one theory, they were considered to be the descendants of foreign invaders (Kushanas, [Shakas](#)).
 - The invaders settled in Rajasthan, got Indianised and emerged as a warrior class.
- Another theory believes them to be Kshatriyas of the varna system.
- It can be said that diverse elements shaped the Rajput clan.
- They became homogenous by constant intermarriage and by adopting common customs. The characteristic features that were considered important by the Rajput clans were “attachment to land, family and honour”.
- The main four Rajput clans were:
 1. The Pratiharas
 2. The Chahamanas/Chauhans of Ajmer
 3. The Chandellas of Bundelkhand
 4. The Paramars of Malwa

In addition to the above clans, there were about 36 Rajput clans like the Tomaras of Delhi, the Solankis, the Chalukyas of Gujarat, Gahadavalas of Kannauj, etc. The Rajput clans constantly fought with each other and treated war as a sport. The Rajputs were mostly Hindu, however, some of them patronised Jainism as well.

Read more on the Pratiharas in the article [Early Medieval Northern India Notes](#).

Chahamanas/Chauhans

The Chahamanas/Chauhans of Sambhar ruled between the 7th and 11th centuries CE, in Rajasthan and its adjoining regions. They had their capital at Shakambhari (modern Sambhar near Jaipur). Later, the capital was shifted to Ajmer, so they are also known as Chahamanas of Ajmer. They were feudatories of the Pratiharas and later declared independence during the rule of king Simharaja.

Chahamana Rulers

Simharaja (c. 944 - 971 CE)

- Founder of the Chauhan dynasty.

Vigraharaja II (c. 971 - 998 CE)

- Invaded Gujarat and captured Chittor.

Ajayaraja II (c. 1110 - 1135 CE)

- Defeated the Paramars of Malwa and captured their city, Ujjaini.
- Founder of the city Ajayameru (Ajmer).

Vigraharaja IV/Visaldev (c. 1150 - 1164 CE)

- Defeated Tomaras of Delhi in c. 1151 CE but let them rule there as feudatories. He expanded his empire from the Siwaliks in the north to Udaipur in the south.
- He shifted the capital to Ajmer.
- He fought with the Paramars of Malwa during the reign of the famous king Bhoja.
- He wrote the famous play Harikeli Nataka.
- The structure that was later converted into the **Adhai-Din-Ka-Jhopra** was constructed during his reign.

Prithviraj III (c. 1177 - 1192 CE)

- He is known as Prithviraj Chauhan/Rai Pithora and is the most famous of all the Chauhans.
- He occupied the throne at the tender age of 11 (after his father's death), but controlled administration at the age of 16.
- His famous expedition in Bundelkhand against the Chandella ruler led to the loss of lives of famous Chandella warriors - Alha and Udal.
- In the [First Battle of Tarain](#) (c. 1191 CE), he defeated Mohammad Ghori. However, in the Second Battle of Tarain (c. 1192 CE) he was killed. This battle is considered to be the landmark event in the Islamic conquest of India.
- Prithviraj Raso and Prithviraj Vijaya are the two poems that were written by his court poets.

Hari-raj (c. 1193 - 1194 CE)

- After conquering Ajmer and Delhi, Mohammad Ghori appointed the young son of Prithviraj Chauhan, Govinda as his vassal chief in Ajmer. Hari-raj, brother of Prithviraj expelled Govinda for accepting Muslim rule. Govinda established the Chahamanas branch of Ranastambhapura (Ranthambore). Hari-raj regained Ajmer and followed a hostile policy towards the conquerors of Delhi.
- Qutub-ud-din Aibak defeated Hari-raj and conquered Ajmer.
- In c. 1301 CE, Alauddin Khilji captured Ranthambore and uprooted the last stronghold of Chauhan power.

Chandellas of Bundelkhand

The Chandellas of Bundelkhand are supposed to be the descendants of Chandratreya, mythical ancestor born of the moon. They were feudatories of Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kannauj and fought with the Pratiharas, the Palas and the Kalachuris of Chedi (who bordered the Chandellas to the south). The

Nagara style of temple architecture reached its peak at Khajuraho during the reign of Chandellas. The Chandella dynasty was founded by Nannuka.

Chandella Rulers

Nannuka (c. 831 - 845 CE)

- Founder of the Chandella dynasty.
- Established its capital at Khajuraho.

Vakpati (c. 845 - 865 CE)

- Defeated a number of opponents.

Vijayashakti and Jayashakti (c. 865 - 885 CE)

- Jayashakti (Jeja) and Vijayashakti (Vija) were sons of Vakpati.
- The Mahoba inscription mentions that Chandella was named 'Jejakabhukti' after Jayashakti.

Rahila (c. 885 - 905 CE)

- A number of victories are credited to him.

Shri Harsha (c. 905 - 925 CE)

- Harsha played a significant role in restoring the power of Mahipala (Pratihara king) after the [Rashtrakuta](#) invasion.

Yashovarman (c. 925 - 950 CE)

- Yashovarman became practically independent although the Pratihara suzerainty continued.
- He built the famous Lakshmana temple at its capital Khajuraho.

Dhanga Deva (c. 950 - 999 CE)

- The records of Harsha do not mention any Pratihara overlord.
- He adopted the title of 'Maharajadhiraja'.
- The inscriptions mention that Dhanga Deva undertook many military campaigns. A Khajuraho inscription claims that the ruler of Kosala, Kratha, Kuntala and Simhala humbly adhered to the commands of Dhanga's officers. It also claims that the wives of the kings of Andhra, Anga, Kanchi and Radha resided in his prisons, as a result of his success in wars.
- During his rule, the Vishvanatha temple at Khajuraho was built.

Ganga Deva (c. 999 - 1002 CE)

- Successor of Dhanga who ruled over his inherited territory.

Vidyadhara (c. 1003 - 1035 CE)

- The Ghaznavid ruler, Mahmud of Ghazni invaded the kingdom and Vidyadhara had to pay tribute to him.
- The Muslim invasions weakened the Chandella empire and the Kalachuri king Gangeya Deva taking advantage of the situation captured the eastern parts of the kingdom.
- During his reign, the Kandariya Mahadeva temple was built.

Vijayapala (c. 1035 - 1050 CE)

- Vijayapala defeated Gangeya Deva.
- During his reign, the Chandella power started to decline due to the constant conflicts between Chandellas and its neighbours, the Paramaras of Malwa and the Kalachuris of Tripuri. Also, the Chandella territory was raided by northern Muslim dynasties (Ghaznavids and Ghurids) which further aided its decline.

Paramardi Deva (c. 1165 - 1203 CE)

- Around 1183 CE, the Chahamanas ruler Prithviraj Chauhan attacked the empire and sacked Mahoba. King Paramardi Deva took refuge in the Kalanjara fort and the Chandella army led by Alha and Udal and others suffered defeat at the hands of the Chahamanas.
- According to some historians, the king either committed suicide out of shame or retired to Gaya. The other version is that Paramardi revived the Chandella power and ruled as a sovereign until around 1203 CE, when the Delhi Sultanate invaded the Chandella empire. Some other historians believe that he must have been murdered by his own minister for refusing to surrender to the Delhi forces.

The Chandella power declined due to rising Islamic influence and also due to the rise of other local dynasties like Bundelas, the Baghelas and the Khangars.

Paramaras of Malwa

The Paramaras (slayer of enemies) ruled at Malwa, with its capital at Dhara (Madhya Pradesh). The earliest known Paramara king was Upendra. As per the Harsola copper plate inscriptions by the Paramara king, Siyaka II, the Paramaras were feudatories of Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta and established themselves in the 10th century CE. The Paramaras were involved in fights with their neighbouring kingdoms like the Chalukyas of Gujarat, the Chalukyas of Kalyani, the Kalachuris of Tripuri, etc. It is believed that due to frequent attacks on its capital city Dhara, the later Paramara rulers had to shift their capital to Mandapa-Durga (Mandu). The Paramaras mostly followed Shaivism and also patronised [Jainism](#).

Paramara Rulers

Upendra (around the first quarter of the 9th century CE)

- After the victorious military expedition in Malwa, the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III made Upendra the ruler of the Deccan. He is the founder of Malwa's Paramara dynasty.
- The Paramaras lost Malwa to the Pratiharas. However, the power was regained by Vairasimha II and Siyaka II in the mid 10th century CE.

Siyaka II (c. 948 - 972 CE)

- He established the Paramaras as an independent power. He defeated the Rashtrakuta king Khottiga and also sacked the Rashtrakuta capital Manyakheta.

Munja/Utpala/Vakpatiraja II(c. 972 - 990 CE)

- He expanded his kingdom with several military conquests. He sacked Tripuri, capital of Kalachuris, defeated Hunas, conquered regions of the Chahamanas of Naddula, annexed Mount Abu and southern parts of Jodhpur from the other branch of the Chahamanas. He placed his sons and nephew in charge of the conquered territories. He also invaded the Chalukyan kingdom of Anahilapataka and Lata.
- He was defeated by Tailapa II, the western Chalukyan king and lost his southern territories (beyond the Narmada river) to the Chalukyas.

Sindhuraja (c. 990 - 1010 CE)

- Munja's brother, who defeated the Chalukyan king and recovered the regions lost to Tailapa II.
- He also achieved military success against a Huna chief, the Somavanshis of south Kosala, the Shilaharas of Konkana and the ruler of Lata (southern Gujarat).
- His biography, Nava-Sahasanka-Charita, was written by Padmagupta, his court poet.

Bhoja (c.1010 - 1055 CE)

- Sindhuraja's son and Munja's nephew Bhoja is the most popular ruler of the Paramara dynasty. He extended his empire from Chittor in the north to upper Konkan in the south and from the Sabarmati river in the west to Vidisha in the east.
- Bhoja formed an alliance with Rajendra Chola and Gangeya Deva Kalachuri against the Chalukyan king of Kalyani, Jayasimha II.
- Around 1042 CE, Jayasimha's son and successor, Someshwara I invaded Malwa and sacked its capital Dhara. Soon after, Bhoja regained control over Malwa, however, the southern boundary was pushed from the Godavari to Narmada.
- He could not extend his kingdom eastwards as he met strong resistance from Vidyadhara, the Chandella king. However, he was able to establish his influence among feudatories of the Chandella empire, the Kachchapaghatas of Dubkund. He also tried to capture Kannauj but his attacks were repulsed by its ruler Kirtiraja.
- He defeated and killed Viryamana, the ruler of the Chahamanas of Shakambhari. However, he faced strong resistance from the Chahamanas of Naddula.
- Bhoja assumed the title of Parameshvara Parama Bhattaraka which is identical to the title of Parama Deva.
- It is believed that Bhoja supported the Hindu-Shahi ruler Anandapala in his fight against the Ghaznavids. He was also part of the Hindu alliance that overthrew Mahmud governors from Thanesar, Hansi and other adjoining areas (around 1043 CE).
- The Solanki emperor Bhima Deva and the Kalachuri king Karna attacked his kingdom during the last year of his reign or immediately after his death. However, some historians opine that Bhoja died of a disease at the same time the allied forces attacked his empire.
- He was a polymath and has written about grammar, poetry, chemistry, yoga, etc.
- He built a temple of Sarasvati in Dhara and established a centre of Sanskrit learning.
- He founded the city of Bhojpur, built the Bhojeshwar temple and three dams in that region.

Jayasimha I (c. 1055 - 1070 CE)

- Son and successor of Bhoja. He had to face the Kalachuri-Solanki invasion. It is said that he asked for help from the Chalukyas of Kalyani.

Lakshmadeva (c. 1086 - 1094 CE)

- As per Nagpur Prashasti inscription of c. 1105 CE, Lakshmadeva achieved a number of military successes.

The last known Paramara king, Mahalakadeva was killed by the army of Ala-ud-din Khilji of Delhi in c. 1305 CE, although there are evidences that mention that the Paramara rule continued even after the death of Mahalakadeva until c. 1310 CE (at least in the northeastern part of Malwa). A later inscription mentions that the area had been conquered by the Delhi Sultanate by c. 1338 CE.

Chalukyas of Gujarat/Solanki Rajputs

The Chalukyas of Gujarat are different from the Chalukyas of Badami, Vengi and Kalyani. They exercised their power in Gujarat and Kathiawar between c. 950 - 1300 CE. The dynasty had three main branches:

1. The oldest branch ruled central India's Mattamayura region.
2. Another branch ruled Lata (south Gujarat) and its important city was Bhrigukachchha (Broach). This branch was founded by Barappa.
3. Mulraja I founded the other branch, with its capital at Anahilapataka (modern Pattan).

Mulraja I (c. 940 - 995 CE)

- Mulraja I fought against Kutch, Abhiras, Saurashtra and others. However, he suffered a setback due to the invasions of the Chahamanas and the Chalukyas of Lata.
- He was defeated by the Paramaras of Malwa and sought shelter under the Rashtrakuta king, Dhavala. He later regained his empire but his successors remained involved in constant conflicts with the Paramaras and the Kalachuris.
- He was a follower of Shaivism and also patronized Jainism. He built the Mulavasatika temple for Digambaras and the Mulanatha-Jinadeva temple for the Shvetambaras.

Bhima I (c. 1021 - 1064 CE)

- Grandson of Mulraja I.
- He built the Sun temple of Modhera and his queen Udaymati built the Rani-ki vav (Queen's step well) in his memory, which is listed in the [UNESCO's World Heritage Site list](#).
- In c. 1031 CE, Vimalsha, minister of Bhima I, built Vimal Vasahi temple dedicated to Jain lord Rishaba. It is one of the five famous Dilwara temples.
- Mahmud of Ghazni attacked Gujarat and plundered Somnath during Bhima I's reign.

Karan (c. 1065 - 1091 CE)

- He defeated a Bhil chieftain and founded Karnavati (present-day Ahmedabad).

Jaya Simha Siddharaja (c. 1092 - 1142 CE)

- He expanded the kingdom and included Saurashtra and Kutch in his empire.
- Also conquered Malwa.
- The Rudra Mahakala temple at Siddhapur was built during his reign.

Kumarapala (c. 1177 - 1240 CE)

- During his reign, the prosperity of Gujarat reached its peak.
- Rebuilt the Somnath temple.

Bhima II (c. 1177 - 1240 CE)

- He successfully resisted the invasions of Mohammad Ghori at the battle of Kayadara.
- In c. 1195, Mohammad Ghori's deputy, Aibak invaded again but Bhima II defeated him and adopted the title of Abhinav Siddharaj.

After c. 1243 CE, the Chalukyas of Gujarat lost to the Hindu Vaghela dynasty of Dholka (feudatories of Solankis). After c. 1292 CE, the Vaghelas became tributaries of the Seuna (Yadava) dynasty of Devagiri in the Deccan plateau. In c. 1297, Alau-din-Khilji conquered Gujarat.

Tomaras

They were feudatories of the Pratiharas and ruled the Haryana territory with its capital at Dellika (Delhi). They were one among the 36 Rajput clans and medieval bardic literature names the dynasty as "Tuar". A 13th century Palam Baoli (step well) inscription mentions that the land of Hariyanaka was first enjoyed by the Tomaras, then by the Chauhans and thereafter by the Shakas (i.e, Delhi Sultans).

- Anangapala Tomara was the famous king of the Tomara dynasty who established Delhi. He issued the coins featuring the horse man and bull and also bore the title "Shri Samanta Deva".
- The earliest surviving waterworks were constructed during the Tomara reign. Anangapala II was the founder of the citadel of Lal Kot in the Mehrauli area and also built Anang Tal (tank).
- The famous Suraj Kund reservoir at Faridabad, Haryana was commissioned by a Tomara king named Surajpala.

Gahadavalas of Kannauj

The Gahadavalas were Suryavanshi Kshatriyas and ruled Kannauj for over a hundred years. Chandradeva was the founder of the Gahadavala dynasty of Kannauj (around c. 1090 CE). They slowly threw the Palas out of Bihar and made Banaras their second capital city.

Chandradeva (around c. 1090 CE)

- Founder of the Gahadavala dynasty who won Delhi from the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas and made it a part of his kingdom.

Govindachandra (c. 1114 - 1154 CE)

- Grandson of Chandradeva, who defeated the Ghaznavids and during his reign, Kannauj reached unprecedented glory.
- His empire included the present-day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- Govindachandra patronised both Hinduism as well as [Buddhism](#).

Vijayachandra/Vijayapala/Malladeva (c. 1154 - 1170 CE)

- Son of Govindachandra, he fought successfully against the Ghaznavids.
- However, during his rule, Delhi was lost and the Tomara rulers stopped acknowledging Gahadavalas sovereignty and aligned with the Chauhans of Ajmer.

Jaichandra (c. 1170 - 1194 CE)

- The last great ruler of the Gahadavala dynasty. During his rule, Prithviraj Chauhan (Ajmer) annexed Delhi. Jaichandra sought help from Muslims of the north to invade the Chauhans of Ajmer-Delhi.
- He was defeated by king Lakshmansena of Bengal. After the fall of Delhi (around 1194 CE), the city of Kannauj was attacked by Mohammad of Ghori. It is believed that Jaichandra was defeated in the battle of Chanawar and was drowned in the Ganga. His kingdom was conquered by the army of Ghori.

It is believed that the survivors of the Gahadavala dynasty fled west to Rajasthan (Marwar desert region) where they established themselves as rulers in the 13th century. They founded the Rathore clan and ruled Marwar or Jodhpur.

Kingdom of Kashmir and North-West

The chronicle **Rajatarangini** ('the river of kings') written in Sanskrit by Kalhana (a Kashmiri Brahmin) gives a detailed historical account of Kashmir and north-west India. This earliest historical source consists of 7826 verses, which are divided into eight books called Tarangas (waves).

Karkota Dynasty

The Karkota dynasty established their power in Kashmir (early 7th century) and it emerged as a power in central Asia and northern India. Durlabh Vardhana was the founder of the Karkota dynasty. The Karkota rulers were Hindus and built spectacular Hindu temples at Parihaspur (capital). They also patronised Buddhism as some stupas, chaityas and viharas have been found in the ruins of their capital.

Durlabh Vardhana (c. 598 - 634 CE)

- During his rule, Hsuan Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim, visited Kashmir.

Lalitaditya/Muktapida (c. 697 - 733 CE)

- Most successful king of the Karkota dynasty as he extended his empire beyond the mountains. He ably defeated the Turks, Tibetans, Kambojas, etc. (Some historians believe that Kalhana exaggerated the triumphs of Lalitaditya).
- He built the famous Martand (sun) temple in Anantnag district and it is the oldest sun temple in India.
- He also defeated king Yashovarman of Kannauj.

Vajraditya (c. 734 - 741 CE)

- He had to face raids from Central Asia.

Jayapida (c. 745 - 776 CE)

- He led a three year long military expedition against the eastern rulers and defeated five chieftains of Gauda and ruler of Kannauj.
- He imposed heavy taxes and treated his subjects badly. It is said that he was cursed by a Brahman and that led to his death.

Avanti Varman ended the rule of the Karkota dynasty and established the Utpala dynasty, around 855 CE.

Utpala Dynasty

The dynasty was founded by Avanti Varman and it ruled Kashmir from the 8th to the 10th century. The tantrins (a body of foot soldiers), ekangas (a body of royal bodyguards) and the damaras (landed chiefs) played a vital role in the political history of medieval times. Kalhana's Rajatarangini mentions three women rulers, namely Yashovati (Gonanda dynasty), Suganda (Utpala dynasty) and Didda (Yashaskara dynasty).

Avanti Varman (c. 855 - 883 CE)

- Founded the Utpala dynasty. He exercised control over damaras, rural aristocrats who were the cause of internal disputes. He took measures to stabilise the state.
- He undertook innovative works in the field of irrigation. For example, he took appropriate steps to control and prevent flood waters from Wular (Mahapadma) entering the fields.
- He founded the cities of Avantipur and Suyapur. During his rule, temples (both Shiva and Vishnu) and Buddhist monasteries were built e.g, Avantiswara and Avantiswami temples.

Sankara Varman (c. 883 - 902 CE)

- Son and successor of Avanti Varman who led military expeditions in Punjab and Gujarat. However, his military expeditions led to the drain of treasury wealth and in order to make up for the losses, he levied heavy taxes on his subjects.

Yashaskara Dynasty

Queen Didda (c. 958 - 1003 CE)

- She was the granddaughter of Bhima Shahi, one of the Hindu Shahis of Kabul, daughter of Simharaja of Lohara (region around Pir Panjal range) and wife of king Kshemagupta. Her royal career is mentioned in the sixth taranga of the Rajatarangini.
- She ruled first as a regent for her son and various grandsons and thereafter as the sole ruler in her own right. She had considerable influence in the political affairs of the state even before becoming the regent. The coins bearing the name of Kshemagupta and Didda have been found. However, Kalhana describes

her as a merciless woman and explains in detail how ruthlessly she killed her son and three grandsons in order to ascend the throne.

- She founded the towns of Siddapura and Kankanapura.
- Didda placed Sangramaraja, the son of her brother, on the throne, thereby shifting the royal succession from the Yashaskaras to her natal family and thus the Lohara dynasty emerged as a ruling power in Kashmir.

Hindu Shahi Dynasty

The Turkish Shahiya dynasty ruled over Kabul (eastern Afghanistan) and Gandhara (northern Pakistan and Kashmir) after the fall of the Kushan empire (3rd - 7th century CE). The Shahiya dynasty was split into two eras - the Buddhist Shahis and the Hindu Shahis. A Brahmana minister of king Lagaturman, Kallar dethroned the Shahiya king (in the second half of the 9th century CE) and became the founder of the Shahi dynasty. The Shahis ruled the Buddhist and Hindu populations and thus patronised multiple faiths.

Hindu Shahi Rulers

Kallar (c. 890 - 895 CE)

- The Rajatarangini mentions him as “Lalliyashahi”.
- Around 870 CE, he had to shift his capital to Udabhanda from Kabul (present day Und village, Rawalpindi, Pakistan) after suffering defeat from the Arabs, Sarrarid Yaqui Ibn.

Jayapala (c. 964 - 1001 CE)

- He defended his empire from the Turkish rulers of Ghazni and is celebrated as a hero for his struggles.

Anandapala (c. 1001 - 1010 CE)

- The son and successor of Jayapala who was a great warrior.
- During the “Battle of Chach” between Anandapala and Mahmud Ghazni, huge losses were incurred on the Ghaznavids. However, Anandapala lost the battle and his kingdom suffered huge financial and territorial losses.
- Some historians compare him with king Porus, who strongly opposed Alexander.

Trilochanpala (c. 1010 - 1022 CE)

- He conquered the region of Shivalik hills, which was earlier under the rule of the Rai of Sharwa, thereby expanding his kingdom from the Indus river to the upper Gangetic valley.
- He rebelled against the Ghaznavids - Sultan Mahmud. He was assassinated by some of his own mutinous troops in 1022 CE. It is believed that Rai of Sharwa had a role in his assassination.

Bheempala (c. 1022 - 1026 CE)

- He was described by famous historian Utbi as the “fearless” owing to his great courage and strength. It is said that in the “battle of Nandana” he seriously injured the commander - Muhammad bin Ibrahim of the Ghaznavid army.

- He was the last “Shahi” emperor.
 - In the early 12th century, the kingdom was destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni.
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