

Pala Dynasty UPSC

The Khalimpur copper plate inscription states that Vapyata, a warrior, was the father of the first Pala monarch Gopala. Varendra, in North Bengal, was the fatherland (Janakabhu) of the Palas, according to the Ramacharitam.

In the seventh century, numerous kingdoms ascended to power in Northern and Eastern India following the death of Harshvardhana. Shashanka, the monarch of the Gauda Kingdom, lived during the reign of King Harshavardhana and ruled over the Bengal region from 590 to 625 CE. Lawlessness broke out in the northern and eastern regions of the nation shortly after Gauda King Shashanka's passing, allowing the Palas to gain power and establish the Pala Dynasty.

- Gopala assumed the throne because the Bengal region was in a state of uprising following the fall of the Shashanka empire, and there was no centralised authority to manage the realm.
- The Pala Dynasty ruled over Bihar, Bengal, and portions of Orissa and Assam for about four centuries, with many ups and downs.
- Even though his soldiers outnumbered his opponents, the Pala rulers were at war with their neighbours, the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas.
- The Pala Empire is known as the Golden Age in Bengali history.

Pala Dynasty Founder

Gopala, credited with founding the Pala Empire, founded the Pala Dynasty in the eighth century. All of the Pala monarchs' names ended with the last morpheme, "Pala," which signifies 'protector.'

Pala Dynasty Rulers

The Palas were staunch advocates of Mahayana Buddhism and ruled over East India for about 400 years, from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. The Pala rulers were at war with their neighbours, the Rashtrakutas and Pratiharas.

The famous Pala Dynasty Rulers are mentioned below:

Gopala (750–770 AD)

- He was the first monarch of the Pala Empire and its founder. He was a warrior's son by the name of Vapaata.
- In a coup to overthrow the Matsyanyaya, the populace chose Gopala as their ruler.
- At the time of Gopala's demise, the Pala Dynasty was on the verge of capturing most of Bihar and Bengal.

Dharmapala (770–810 AD)

- Dharmapala succeeded Gopala as king sometime around 770 AD.
- The Pala, Pratihara, and Rashtrakuta kingdoms fought each other for control of Kanauj during his reign.
- He removed the king of Kanauj, Indrayudha, and replaced him with Chakrayudha.
- Dharmapala held a big darbar in Kannauj, which several kings attended. He was unable to keep up with his duties.

- In a battle in Monghyr (Bihar), Dhruva, a Rashtrakuta monarch, vanquished Dharmapala, ending his rule in 810 CE.

Devapala (810–850 AD)

- Dharmapala's son Devapala succeeded him as king. He was the strongest Pala king ever.
- He held power until 850 CE. He ruled over several states, including Assam and Utkala (Orissa).
- Amoghavarsha, the emperor of the Rashtrakuta empire, had been vanquished by him.
- Once Devapala's reign ended, the Pala Dynasty started to crumble slowly.
- Although his successors Mahendrapala and Shurapala managed to maintain the unity of the Pala kingdom, the Pala empire's subsequent weak rulers, such as Narayanapala and Vighrahapala II, paved the road for its demise.

Mahipala I

- Mahipala I, the emperor of the Pala Dynasty, came to power in 988 CE.
- He strengthened the Pala empire once more. He took back north and south Bihar, the western and northern parts of Bengal.
- But once he took over, the Pala kingdom started to crumble again.
- In the 12th century, the Hindu Sena dynasty leader Vijayasena overthrew the Pala Empire.

Rampala

- He was the final mighty Pala king and the sixteenth king of the Pala dynasty.
- The kingdom broke up under his son Kumarapala's rule.
- His court poet Sandhyakar Nandi produced the dual-meaning Ramacharitam in Sanskrit.

Madanapala

- The Sena dynasty succeeded the Palas after him.
- The 18th and generally last emperor of the Pala dynasty was Govindapala. However, there is some debate as to his ancestry.

Administration of Pala Empire

The Gupta dynasty's administrative methods served as the foundation for the administration model developed by the Pala empire. The Pala Dynasty's government was monarchical, and the throne was passed down via the families. The monarch, known as the king, held absolute power.

- The Pala kings received titles of Parameshwar, Paramvattaraka, or Maharajadhiraja.
- A group of hereditary ministers that the King personally appointed from illustrious families served as his assistants.
- In the Pala empire, some regions were directly ruled by the King while vassal chiefs governed others.
- The Vassal chiefs received autonomy over the areas they controlled. They sent troops and fixed tributes to the King.

- The areas of the Pala Dynasty that were directly handled were divided into numerous provinces known as Bhukti and were overseen by administrators known as Uparika. They collected the levy and maintained law and order in the province.
- In addition, it is believed that Pala rulers were skilled diplomats who forged connections with several cultures to promote new trade routes.
- They kept close cultural and commercial links with Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

Religion During the Pala Dynasty

Mahayana Buddhism was greatly supported by the Palas. Dharmapala's spiritual mentor was the Buddhist philosopher Haribhadra. In the Pala Dynasty, Buddhism and Hinduism were the two main religions.

- After King Harsha Vardhana's rule, Buddhism was almost completely lost. The Palas' arrival rekindled interest in Buddhism throughout the Indian subcontinent.
- They also patronised Vaishnavism and Shaivism. Priests and Brahmanas received land concessions from the King.
- Great monasteries were erected by the Palas during their rule. Somapura Mahavihara is one of the important viharas constructed by the Pala monarchs (now in Bangladesh).
- During the Palas, Mahayana Buddhism was introduced to countries like Tibet, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, and Indonesia.
- Numerous temples were constructed in Bengal, Bihar, and Assam during the Pala era..
- As a result, a blend of Hindu and Buddhist culture developed over the lengthy Pala period and as the Pala Dynasty's official religion.

Pala Empire Architecture

Palas Dynasty Rulers constructed several mahaviharas, stupas, chaityas, temples, and forts. Most buildings were religious structures, with Buddhist and Hindu art dominating the first two centuries and the next two hundred.

- Nalanda, Devikota, Pandita, Jagaddala, Vikram Shila, Somapura, and Traikutaka Vihara stand out among the many mahaviharas. Monks' residences were created according to a plan.
- At these centres, which also featured bronze image casting facilities, numerous palm-leaf texts relating to Buddhist themes were authored and embellished with pictures of Buddhist deities.
- One of the largest Buddhist temples in the Indian subcontinent is Somapura Mahavihara in Paharpur, a creation of Dharmapala. Its architectural design has inspired the design of nations like Myanmar and Indonesia.

Pala Dynasty: Paintings

The religious writings on Buddhism illustrated by the Palas of eastern India contain the first instances of miniature painting in the country.

- One of India's first instances of miniature painting comes from the Pala School of Painting, which is also regarded as the country's originator of the style.
- The Buddhist monasteries (mahaviharas) at Nalanda, Vikramsila, Odantapuri, and Somarupa were important hubs of the Palas painting style.
- The artworks take the form of several palm-leaf manuscripts with Buddhist-themed illustrations.

- White, black, blue, and red are primary colours. Sinuous line, delicate and nervous lines, sensuous elegance, linear and ornamental emphasis, and muted colour tones are characteristics of Pala paintings.
- In the Nalanda district, wall paintings have been discovered in Saradh and Sarai sthal. Images of animals and people may be seen at the bottom of the platform constructed of granite stone flowers in geometric forms.
- The naturalistic Pala style has elements of Ajanta's classical art and the perfect shapes of modern metal and stone sculpture.
- The best illustration is the Astasahasrika-Prajnaparamita (The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand) manuscript.

Pala Sculpture Art

The Bengali sculptors reached new heights and are renowned for their artistic brilliance during the Pala school of sculpture, which is recognised as a distinctive period of Indian art. A new style of stone and metal sculpture emerged during the Pala Dynasty, and they became well-known for their bronze casting.

- The Palas style was characterised by elegant jewellery and slim and beautiful features.
- Numerous statues made of stone and copper were built, mostly in monastic settings like Bodh Gaya and Nalanda.
- Buddhism served as the main source of inspiration for the sculptures. Hindu gods and goddesses, including Surya, Vishnu, Ganesh, and others, were sculpted in addition to Buddha.
- The sculptures often solely show the frontal portions of the body.