

Early Medieval India History

Notes

The early medieval period in India is a significant period in terms of development in the fields of culture, art, language, and religion. The transition between the ancient and medieval periods is called an early medieval period. With rulers like Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Harshvardhan, Pulakesin I, and others, this period in history had some of the greatest warriors and rulers.

India from 6th to 14th century spanned from c. 600 to 1200 CE, during which many significant events took place in northern and southern India during this period. Here, we have shared a brief overview of the period:

| Period | Early Medieval Period |
|-----------------|--|
| Duration | 6th to 14th Century |
| Major Kings | Harshavardhana, Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Pulakesin I, Pulakesin II |
| Major Dynasties | Pallava dynasty, Chola dynasty, Chalukya dynasty |

Early Medieval Period in India

In early [medieval history](#) of India, the northern and southern parts of the country were going through different phases and unique events. During the early years of medieval India, the northern parts of the country were under the reign of three major rulers from c. 600 to 750 CE.

Meanwhile, southern India comprised three leading states - the Chalukyas of Badami, the Pandyas of Madurai, and the Pallavas of Kanchi. Here is some more information about India from 6th to 14th century -

- The gradual collapse of the Gupta Empire from 480 to 550 CE is considered to be the beginning of the early medieval period in India.
- During early medieval India, there was no major state in north India and the area was ruled by multiple smaller dynasties.
- There was no dynasty that ruled over the major parts of the entire country until the [Delhi Sultanate](#).

Early Medieval India: 750 to 1200 CE

During the early medieval period, from 500 to 750 CE, the main kingdoms were the Pallavas, the Chalukyas, and the Pandyas. This period witnessed the expansion of the agrarian economy and saw a decline in trade. Early medieval period in India can be further divided into two phases, from c. 750 to 1200 CE. Here are the details about these two phases -

From 750 to 1000 CE

During the first phase, north India experienced the reigns of three major emperors, Gurjara Pratiharas, the Palas, and the Rashtrakutas. Therefore, this age is also known as the age of three empires. These kingdoms ruled over the major parts of northern and Deccan India. While the Pratiharas and Gurjaras ruled north India, the Rashtrakutas ruled over the Deccan parts of India during the early medieval period.

From 1000 to 1200 CE

The second phase of the early medieval period is referred to as the age of conflict in history. During this period, many rulers had conflicts with each other to expand their empires. The Rajput dynasties in India were also facing conflicts during this time in the early medieval period in India.

India From 6th to 14th Century

During the early medieval period in India, several kings ruled over their small empires. The north Indian state disintegrated into smaller Rajput regions that were controlled by various dynasties like Chandellas, Paramaras, and Chahamanas. Towards the end of the early medieval period in India, the states collectively opposed the Turkish attacks led by Mohammad Ghori and Mahmud Ghazni in 1100 and 1200 CE.

The period from 850 to 1200 CE was mostly under the rule of the Cholas in the South. We have shared some more information about early medieval India below.

Early Medieval Period: North India

The early medieval period brought an end to one of the biggest empires in Indian history, the Gupta empire. After the fall of the Gupta kingdom, entire northern India disintegrated into smaller kingdoms. This major event in history was followed by the establishment of the Pushyabhutis of Thaneswar in the north.

In the later years of early medieval India, many southern rulers also began trying to conquer the north. The great [King Harshavardhana](#) also ruled the north Indian empire for a brief period between 606 – c. 647 CE.

Early Medieval India: South India

The history of the early medieval period in South India is both rich and extensive. A number of great rulers ruled the many states of south India. Here, we have shared some of the most important rulers in southern India during the early mediaeval period -

- The Pallavas
- The Cholas
- The Chalukyas
- The Eastern and Western Gangas

Major Dynasties of Early Medieval India

Several dynasties were in conflict with each other during the early mediaeval period. This period of the conflict began after the fall of the Gupta empire in the north. Consequently, the empire of the north was broken into many smaller kingdoms. Here, we have shared details about the northern and southern major dynasties of early medieval India.

Major Dynasties in North India

In the early medieval period, North India witnessed a dramatic fall of the Gupta empire, after which, several regional kingdoms were formed. The major dynasties in North India during this period were -

- The Maukhari Dynasty was ruled by Hari Varhmana Maukhari in mid 6th century.
- Empire of Harsha - King Harshavardhan had control over entire north India from 601 to 647 CE.
- The Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty, was also the last largest dynasty in north India. This dynasty ruled a significant portion of northern India from the 6th century to 11th century. They were called the Imperial Pratiharas.
- In the east, the last major Buddhist rulers of the Pala Empire were administering Bengal from the 8th to 12th centuries in early medieval India. They also briefly ruled most of north India during the 9th century.

Major Dynasties in South India

Southern India had some of the richest cultural, social, and architectural developments during the early medieval period. The major dynasties in South India that contributed to these developments were -

- **Pallava dynasty** - From the 3rd to 9th centuries, the Pallavas ruled the entire Telugu region and parts of Tamil Nadu.
- **Chalukya dynasty** - Between the 6th to 12th centuries, the Chalukhya dynasty ruled the western Deccan and some parts of South India.
- **Rashtrakuta dynasty**- This Kannada dynasty ruled significant parts of the Indian subcontinent 6th to 10th centuries. The World Heritage site of Ellora was built during the rule of this dynasty.
- **Eastern Chalukyas** - This South Indian Kannada-Telugu dynasty ruled from 7th and 12th centuries in the early medieval period in India.
- **Chola Empire** - This is one of the most powerful South Indian empires, which ruled from Tamil Nadu. The reach of the Chola empire extended towards many Southeast Asian territories. The Chola Empire ruled from the 9th to 13th centuries.
- **Western Ganga dynasty** - This dynasty existed from 350 to 1000 CE and was a significant dynasty of ancient Karnataka. The famous monolithic Bahubali of Shravanabelagola was built during the rule of the Western Ganga dynasty.
- **Eastern Ganga dynasty** - the Eastern Ganga dynasty ruled over the Odisha region during the early medieval period. The rulers of the dynasty built the famous Jagannath Temple and Konark Sun Temple.

Characteristics of Early Medieval India

During early medieval India, Sanskrit became the official language in the peninsular area, and Brahmanism was followed largely. North India disintegrated into much smaller kingdoms during this period after the fall of the Gupta empire.

- The Chalukyas contributed to some of the most stunning architecture, such as the cave temples of Ellora and Ajanta.
- All in all, the early medieval period in India was an exciting time with a lot of socio-political disturbances and developments going on.

