

# **Ancient Bengal**

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**Ancient Bengal**

**Gupta  
Pal  
Sen**

- No one can determine the exact time when people started living in this place.

### **Time period**

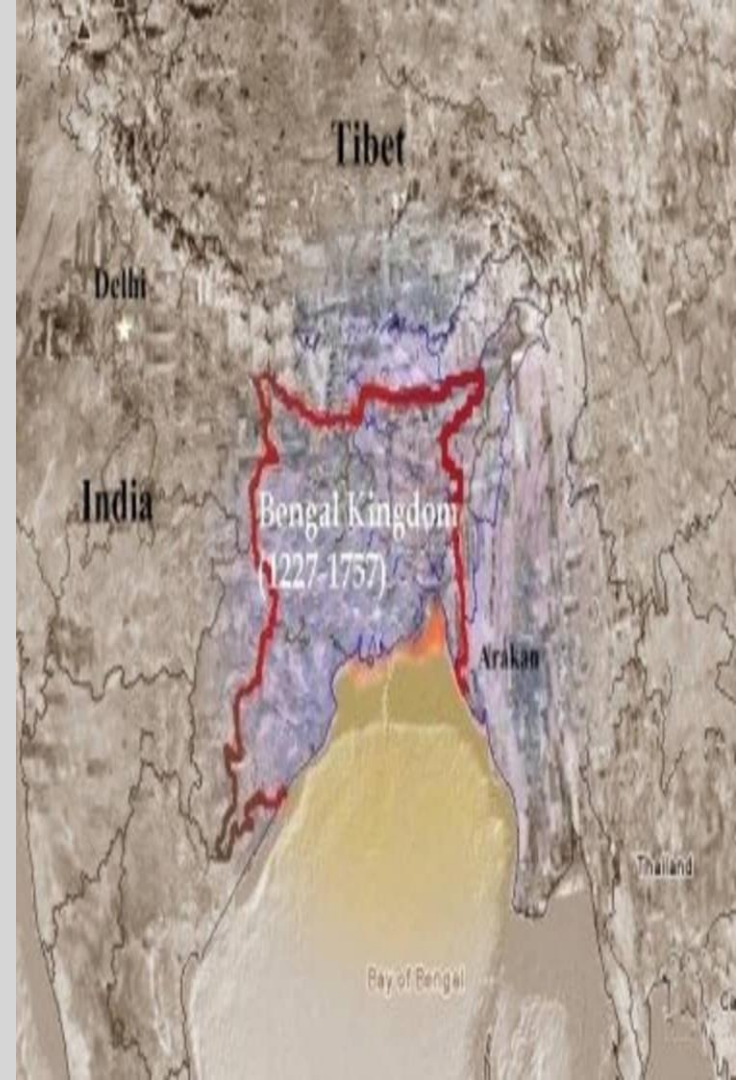
**According to historians the time period of ancient age is-**

- **500 BC to 1300 AD**
- **500 BC to 600 AD**

# Ancient Bengal

Many great dynasties have ruled Bengal.

The most notable of these are the Maurya, Gupta, Pala, Rata, Chandra, Dev, Kharagada, Burma, and Sen dynasties.



# Gupta

The Guptas emerged from the fall of the Mauryas.

Gupta empire located in some parts of northern and central and western India.

**Time Period:** from the 4th century till the end of the 6th century.



# Golden Period

It is known as the Golden Age of India because of the considerable achievements in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, science, religion, and philosophy during the Gupta Empire.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
—	=	≡	५	६	७	८	९	३
Gupta numerals around 4th century A.D.								

- They were the first to use algebra
- Develop the idea of zero
- Explain the concept of infinity.

# Rulers of Gupta Period

- Sri Gupta (240-280 ACE.): He is the first ruler who ruled over a minor kingdom.
- His son Ghatotkacha Gupta
- Chandra Gupta I (320-335 or 340 BCE.): He is known as the main **founder of the Gupta dynasty**. He assumed the title of Maharajadhiraja. In his ruling life, he succeeded in raising the power and prestige of his dynasty. He started gold coins. **Bihar and a part of Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad** were included in his empire.

# Rulers of Gupta Period

**Samudra Gupta** (335–375 CE): Samudra Gupta was a great general and conqueror.

Titles: Maharajadhiraja and Vikramanka.

Ruling area: He created a big empire. His empire included almost the whole of Northern India.

**Notable works:** He protected his empire from foreign enemies, maintained peace within its frontiers, and helped in its progress. Samudra Gupta possessed not only a powerful army but also **a strong navy**.



# **Rulers of Gupta Period**

**Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya (Nearly 380-413 or 415 A.D.):**

Chandra Gupta was the son of Samudra Gupta.

Some scholars have identified him with Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya of Ujjayini of Indian legends whose court is said to have been adorned by nine scholars (Navaratna) of repute including Kalidasa.

# Nalanda (427-1197)

One of the first universities in the world, **Nalanda University**, was **established by Kumaragupta of the Gupta dynasty**. Many kings and scholars contributed to it as well. The facility included 10 temples, 8 distinct compounds, meditation rooms, classrooms, lakes, and parks. In its nine-story library, monks copied books and other materials so that each scholar can have their collections.

At its peak, the University housed 10,000 students in dorms, which may have been a *first for an educational institution, along with 2,000 professors*.

# Nalanda

The **primary teaching focus was Mahayana Buddhism, but other secular subjects like grammar, logic, epistemology, and sciences.**

## **Shashanka (600 ad and 625 ad) the king of Gauda**

- ❑ Shashanka was the first important king of ancient Bengal, who occupied a prominent place in Bengal history.
- ❑ Historians provide information about shashank from two dated inscriptions, issued in his 8th and 10th ruling years from **Midnapore**, and another undated inscription from **Kharagpur**.

## Shashanka (600 ad and 625 ad) the king of Gauda

**Extending political influence:** The ruler Shashanka first established himself in Gaura, the north-western region of Bengal, and made Kornosubora in Murshidabad his capital.

Then he gradually extended his rule in Bihar.

The contribution of Shashanka in the history of Bengal was that he defended the independence of the Gaura empire against a very powerful northern Indians powers.

## Shashanka (600 ad and 625 ad) the king of Gauda

**Art & Architecture of Shashanka Dynasty:** The archaeological site of Kolkata found a number of structures include the base of several square and circular **stupas, remains of square rooms** (probably classrooms or rooms where the students put up), remnants of two walls (possibly the boundary of the capital). He build a massive dighi (lake) measuring over 140 acres. That is nearly equal to the total area of 80 football fields. He developed metropolitan city ideas.

**Bengali Calender:** Shashanka, is credited with creating the Bengali calendar. The term Bangabda (Bangla year) is found too in two Shiva temples many centuries older than Akbar era, suggesting that a Bengali calendar existed long before Akbar's time.

## **Matsyanyayan (650-750)**

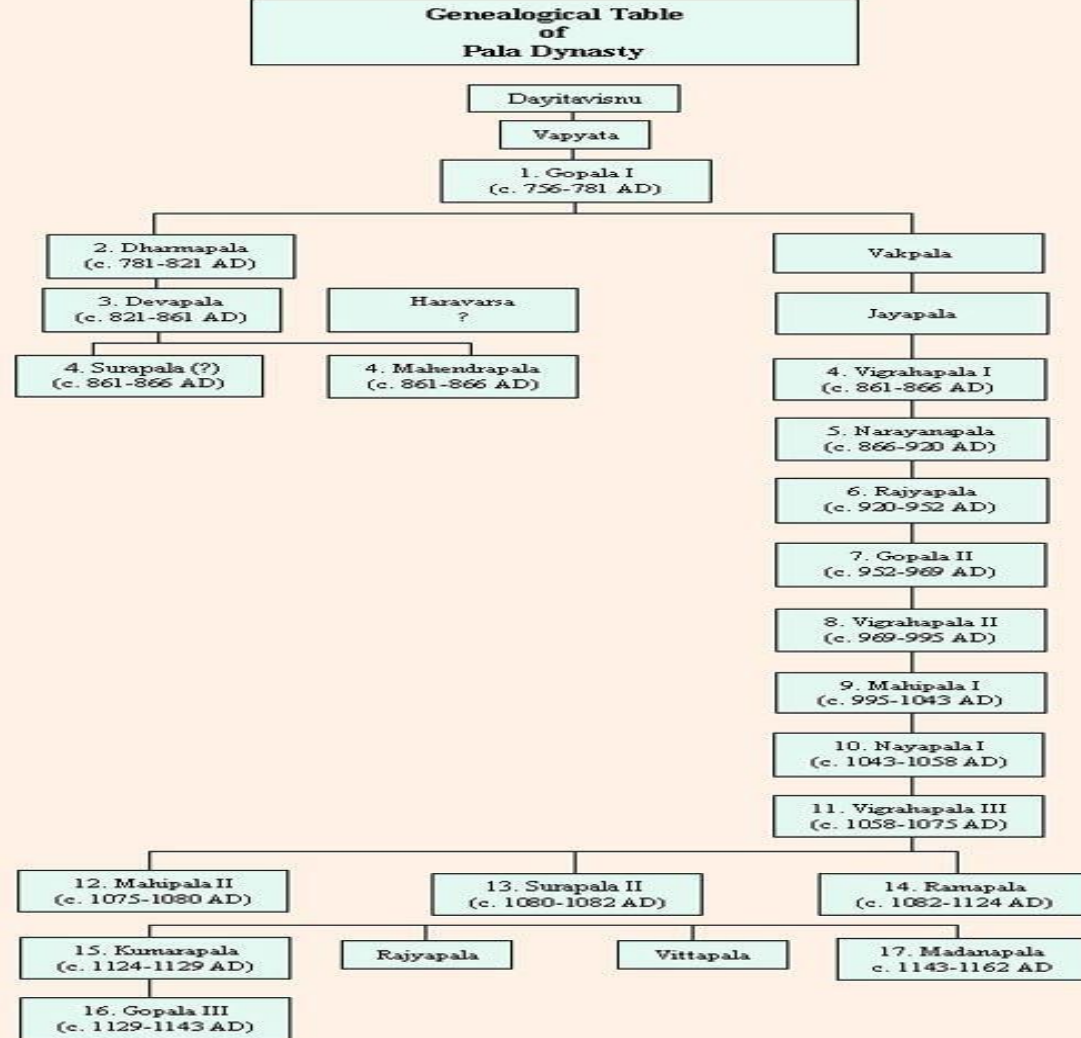
- ❑ Matsayanyam, a Sanskrit term, refers to a situation when big fish swallows a small fish.
- ❑ After the death of Shashanka, the Bengal was overwhelmed by repeated foreign invasions, the most notable of which was the invasion of Yashovarman of Kanauj (725-752 ACE).
- ❑ During that time, one government cannot be stable for a long time. This period is called the Matsyanyayan.

## Rise of Palas

- Pala kings put an end to the disorder.
- ‘Pala’ means protector.
- Ruled for 400 years! (Mid 8<sup>th</sup>-late 11<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Followers of Buddhism



# Rise of Palas



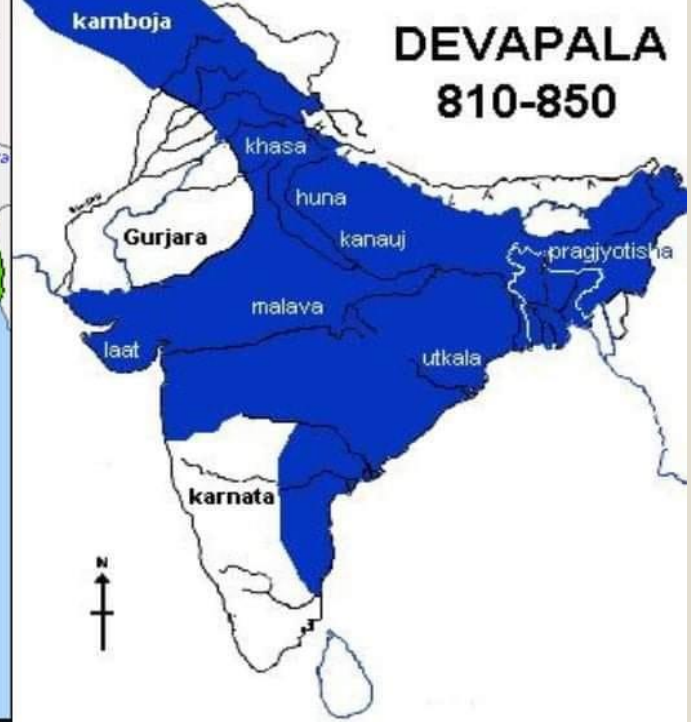
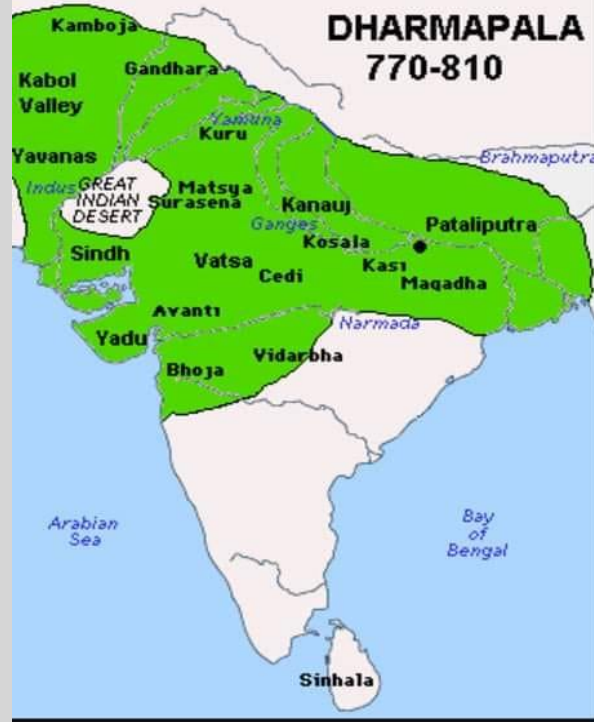
Dharmapala  
(c 781-821  
ACE)

Devapala  
(c 821-861  
ACE):

Dharmapala was a devout Buddhist and a great patron of Buddhism. He is the son of the Gopala. He had credited the **foundation the Vikramasila Mahavihara**. Which is an important place for Buddhists in India. **Somapura Mahavihara** was founded by Dharmapala.

Dharmapala  
(c 770-810  
ACE)

Devapala  
(c 810-850  
ACE)



These two rulers Increased their empires in northern and western Bengal and Bihar.

## Pala Administration:

- They improved upon the administrative structure developed by Gupta Empire.
- They could govern for so long because they had a strong administration system.
- Well-designed structure spanning from the center to the rural areas prevailed during this period.
- Long list of state officials have been found on sources from Pala period.

## Religious Tolerance

- The most glorious aspect of Pala's rule was their policy of public welfare. The Pala rulers were Buddhists, but the majority of their subjects were Hindus. Dharmapala had adopted the policy of religious toleration as the state policy. This policy was followed by his successors.

## **Spread of Buddhism**

- This region became the hub of Buddhist teaching.
- Many came from different corners of the world.
- Buddhism spread to areas like Myanmar, Indonesia, etc.
- Viharas or monasteries became center of excellence.
- Nalanda university was revived.

## Education

The Dharmapala created the Somapura Mahavihara at Paharpur, the Vikramasila Mahavihara, Odantpur Vihara in Bihar.

Somapura Vihara and Vikramasila Vihara were acknowledged in the Buddhist world as two important centers.

# **Terracotta & Sculpture**

The terracotta plaques from Paharpur Vihara represent the Pala dynasty. Of all the arts of the period sculptural art witnessed phenomenal development.

In the Pala ruler's time, there are a school named 'Pala School of Sculptural Art'.



## Literature

Sanskrit language and poetry developed during the Pala rule. The Abhinanda and the famous Gaudapadakarika were written poets at that time.

## Sena (11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> century)



The Sena Empire was a Hindu dynasty that ruled from Bengal through the 11th and early 13th centuries.

## Sena

The empire at its peak covered much of the north-eastern region of the Indian subcontinent.

The rulers of the Sena Dynasty traced their origin to the south Indian region of Karnataka of the Deccan. According to some, they were

-Brahmakhatryia

-Khatrya

## **The founder of Sena Dynasty**

Samanta Sena was the founder of the dynasty.

Hemanta Sena proclaimed himself king in 1095 AD, and came after Samanta. His successor, Vijaya Sena, had an unusually long reign of more than 60 years and contributed to establishing the dynasty.

Ballala Sena expelled the Pala from Gaur, took control of the Bengal Delta, and established Nadia as its capital.

After succeeding Ballala Sena in 1179, Lakshmana Sena governed Bengal for almost 20 years. He expanded the Sena Empire to include Odisha, Bihar, and likely Varanasi.

# **Sen Administration**

In general, the Pala system of government was maintained under the Senas of Bengal. Even during the Senas, there were still administrative divisions such as Bhuktis, Vishayas, Mandals, etc.

Evidence shows that the Sena monarchs gave their Queen or Rajmahishi land concessions.

The Purohitas and Mahapurohitas were also granted land through official grants.

# Literature

Lakshmanasena's rule is notable for encouraging a lot of literary activity. He had a strong Vaishnava faith.

At his court, Jayadeva, a well-known Bengali Vaishnava poet and the writer of the Gita Govinda resided.

# Religion

The birth of orthodox Hinduism is typically linked to the rule of the Senas of Bengal.

This is when it is thought that the persecution of Buddhists in Bengal began, which led to a mass exodus of Buddhists to nearby nations.

**Thank You**