

Pala Dynasty:

- The Pala dynasty was founded by Gopala.
- It was asserted by the Khalimpur (West Bengal) copper plate of Dharampala, a successor of Gopala.
- The Pala empire was an imperial power during the late classical period in the Indian subcontinent, which originated in the region of Bengal (modern day Bangladesh and West Bengal).
- It is named after its ruling dynasty, whose rulers bore names ending with suffix of Pala (“protector” in Sanskrit).
- They were followers of the Mahayana and the tantric schools of Buddhism.
- The empire was founded with the election of Gopala as the emperor of Gauda in 750AD.
- The Pala stronghold was located in Bengal and Bihar, which included the major cities of Vikramapura, Patliputra, Gauda, Monghyr, Somapura, Ramavati, Tameralipta and jaggadala.
- The Palas were astute diplomats and military conquerors.
- Their army was noted for its vast war elephant corps.
- Their navy performed both Mercantile and defensive roles in Bay of Bengal.
- They built grand temples and monasteries, including the Somapura Mahavihara and patronized the great universities of Nalanda and Vikramshila.

Dharampala (770-810 AD):

- He initially got defeated at the hands of Rashtrakutas and Pratiharas, but finally conquered a large part of Northern India.
- Bengal and Bihar were the centres of power during his reign, which were under his direct rule.
- The Tibetan tradition believes that the Dharmapala was a patron of Buddhism.
- He is accredited to the establishment of the Buddhist monastery at Vikramshila.

Devapala (810-850 AD) and other rulers:

- He was the successor of Dharampala.
- He was also a patron of Buddhism.
- He made military campaigns to Kamboja (west) and Vindhya (south) and also exterminated the Utkals and conquered Prayag (Assam).
- In the late 9th century, power of Palas declined.
- The Palas during this time suffered defeat at the hands of Rashtrakutas and Pratiharas.
- The subordinate rulers of Assam and Odisha assumed independence.
- The revival of Pala power happened during the age of Mahipala I.
- However, again the Pala power weakened (Rashtrakuta ruler Indra III defeated Mahipala) and there arose smaller kingdoms in Assam (ruled by Harjavarma) and Odisha (ruled by the Ganga dynasty).

Decline:

- At its height in the 9th century, the Pala empire was the dominant power in the northern India, with its territory stretching across parts of modern day eastern Pakistan, northern and north-eastern India, Nepal and Bangladesh.
- Empire reached its peak under emperors Dharampala and Devapala.
- The Palas also exerted a strong cultural influence under Atisha in Tibet, as well as in south-east Asia.
- Pala's control of North India was ultimately ephemeral, as they struggled with the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas for the control of Kannauj and were defeated.
- After a short lived decline, Emperor Mahipala I defended Imperial bastions in Bengal and Bihar against South Indian Chola invasions.
- Emperor Rampala was the last strong ruler, who gained control of Kamarupa and Kalinga.
- The empire was considerably weakened by the 11th century, with many areas engulfed in rebellion.

- The resurgent Hindu Sena dynasty dethroned the Pala empire in 12th century, ending the reign of the last major Buddhist Imperial power in the Indian subcontinent.

Significance:

- The Palas brought stability and prosperity to Bengal after centuries of civil war between warring divisions.
- They advanced the achievements of previous Bengali civilizations and created outstanding works of arts, most notably in the sculpture and architectural sphere.
- They laid the basis of the Bengali language, including its first literary work, Charyapada (written by Shabrapa).