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## UNIT 10 EMERGENCE OF RASHTRAKUTAS\*

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### 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit, we will discuss about the origin and emergence of the Rashtrakutas and the formation of Rashtrakuta empire. Later, we will also explore the organization and nature of Rashtrakuta state with social, religious, educational, cultural achievements during the Rashtrakutas. After studying the Unit, you will be able to learn about:

- major and minor kingdoms that were ruling over different territories of south India between 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries;
- emergence of the Rashtrakutas as a dominant power in Deccan;
- the process of the formation of Rashtrakuta empire and contributions of different kings;
- the nature of early medieval polity and administration in the Deccan;
- significant components of the feudal political structure such as ideological bases, bureaucracy, military, control mechanism, villages etc.; and
- social, religious, educational, architectural and cultural developments within the Rashtrakuta empire.

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### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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India witnessed three powerful kingdoms between *c.* 750 and 1000 CE: Pala empire, Pratihara empire and Rashtrakuta empire in south India. These kingdoms fought each other to establish their respective hegemony which was the trend of early medieval India. Historian Noboru Karashima treats the empire as a new type of state, i.e. feudal state showing both discontinuities and continuities with states that had emerged in these areas from 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards. Rashtrakuta empire dominated the Deccan for almost 200 years till the end of 10<sup>th</sup> century and also controlled territories in north and south India at various times, which

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lasted the longest of the three. It was not only the most powerful empire of the time but also acted as a bridge between north and south India in economic as well as cultural matters. It also promoted and expanded north Indian traditions and policies in south India. Significantly, India touched new heights of stability and achievements in the field of polity, economy, culture, education and religion in this phase.

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## 10.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE EMPIRE

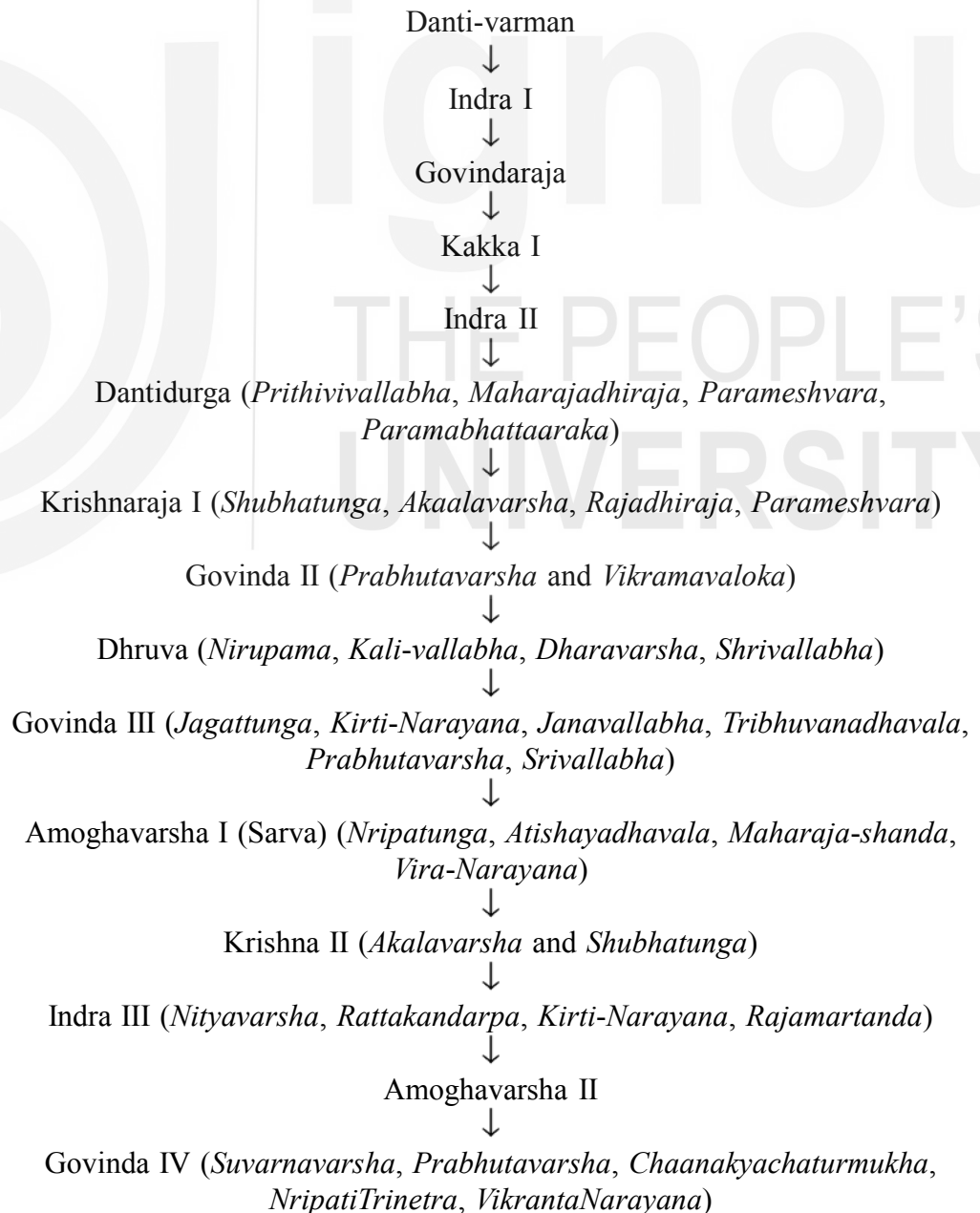
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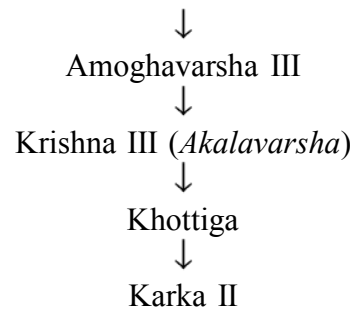
The word ‘Rashtrakuta’ means chief of the *Rashtra* (division or kingdom). It is possible that the line of kings belonged to this class of provincial officers, as the designation appears in the inscriptions of many dynasties. We may say for sure that the Rashtrakutas were high officials, either provincial chiefs or another kind of administrators. For example, a Rashtrakuta Govindaraja, son of Shivaraja acting as *vijnapti* (petitioner), is mentioned in the Naravana plates of Chalukya Vikramaditya II of Badami. Romila Thapar also cites that Dantidurga – founder of the main branch of the Rashtrakutas – was one of the subordinates of Chalukyas and a high official in the administration. Historians are still not clear about origin of the Rashtrakutas and its branches. Following the tradition of devising Puranic pedigrees, the Rashtrakutas also claim in their inscriptions that they belong to the Satyaki branch of *Yaduvamsha* (e.g. Inscription Nos. IX, X and XXI) and the line of Tungas (e.g. Inscription Nos. XXIV, XXV and XXVI). Historian Nilkantha Sastri, based on the study of inscriptions, claims that the Rashtrakutas were of Kannada origin, and their plates indicate that Kannada was their mother tongue despite the extensive use of Sanskrit. Also, the standard title *Lattaloorapuravareshvara* (“the eminent lord of the city of Lattalura”) assumed by Rashtrakuta princes of both the main line and of the secondary branches indicates their original home. Lattalura has been identified with Latur in the Bidar district of Hyderabad. In this way, we can say that Deccan was the original home of the Rashtrakutas, which generally means the whole region occupied by the Telugu speaking population as well as Maharashtra with certain parts of northern Karnataka (Kannada speaking).

The Rashtrakuta dynasty is famous for a long line of brave warriors and able administrators, which helped them in the formation of a vast empire. They fought continuously with the Pratiharas, eastern Chalukyas of Vengi (in modern Andhra Pradesh), Cholas, Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai. The Pallavas were in decline and their successors – the Cholas – were emerging. Weaknesses of these kingdoms became helpful in victories and the establishment of Rashtrakuta empire. There was no power in northern India strong enough to interfere with affairs of the Deccan that also provided an opportunity for the emergence of Rashtrakutas. Thapar argues that geographical position of the Rashtrakutas, i.e. in the middle of the Indian subcontinent led to their involvement in wars and alliances with both the northern and, more frequently, the southern kings. It resulted in expansion of the empire in all directions. Historian Karashima argues that one of the crucial factors for the formation of Rashtrakuta power might have been an environment within their territory favourable to the growth of agriculture. Thapar also explores favourable economic factors and mentions that the Rashtrakutas had the advantage of controlling a large part of the western seaboard and, therefore, trade with West Asia, particularly with the Arabs, provided the wealth to back their political ambitions.

### 10.3 THE RASHTRAKUTA EMPIRE

There were several branches of the Rashtrakutas ruling in different parts of India in the early medieval period. Earliest known ruling family of the Rashtrakutas was founded by Mananka in Malkhed, having the *Paalidhvaja* banner and the *Garuda-laanchhana*. Another Rashtrakuta family was ruling in the Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. The Antroli-Chharoli inscription bearing the *Garuda* seal dated 757 CE mentions four generations: Karka I, his son Dhruva, his son Govinda, and his son Karka II belonging to a collateral branch of the Malkhed line holding sway in the Lata country in Gujarat. Dantidurga was the founder of the imperial Rashtrakuta line. He seems contemporary of Karka II. Exact relation of these kings to the Malkhed line cannot be decided with certainty, though it is not impossible that Karka I of the charter of 757 CE was identical with the grandfather of Dantidurga himself. The kingdom was founded by Dantidurga who fixed his capital at Manyakheta or Malkhed near Modern Sholapur. Manyakheta branch of the Rashtrakutas soon became dominant and imperial by assimilating other branches in due time. We can prepare a dynastic chart of the imperial line of Rashtrakutas with their titles as follows:





We now come to the main line of Rashtrakutas. **Dantidurga**, a strong and able ruler, was the real founder of a lasting empire. The earliest record of his reign – the Ellora inscription of 742 CE – mentions the titles *prithvivallabha* and *khagavaloka* (he whose glances are as keen as the edge of a sword) for him. Lata and Malava were in a disturbed condition after the Arab invasion and taking that advantage Dantidurga took control of the territories. Dantidurga also attacked Kanchi, the capital of the Pallavas, and struck up an alliance with Nandivarman Pallavamalla to whom he gave his daughter Reva in marriage. The warlike monarch Dantidurga captured the outlying territories of the extensive Chalukyan empire and then assaulted on the heart of empire and easily defeated Kirtivarman. The Samangadh inscription of 754 CE records that Dantidurga overthrew the last Chalukya ruler of Badami called Kirtivarman II and assumed full imperial rank and described himself as:

- *Prithvivallabha*,
- *Maharajadhiraja*,
- *Parameshvara*, and
- *Paramabhataraka*

Kirtivarman continued to rule with diminished glory until the reign of Dantidurga. Dantidurga describes his territory as comprising four lakhs of villages, which probably included his sway only over a little more than one half of the Chalukyan empire of Badami.

Dantidurga died childless, which aroused a dispute between **Krishnaraja I** – his uncle – and other family members who succeeded in seizing the throne for a while but whom Krishnaraja I overthrew easily in 756 CE because of his popularity. He had the titles *Shubhatunga* (High in Prosperity) and *Akalavarsha* (Constant Rainer) mentioned in Bhandak Inscription of Krishnaraja I of 772 CE. The newly established Rashtrakuta kingdom expanded in all direction under him. He started with the completion of the overthrow of the Chalukyas of Badami. The Bhandak plates of 772 CE show that the whole of Madhya Pradesh had come under his rule. In other inscriptions, he is said to have overcome Rahappa and thereby gained the *Palidhvaja* banner and the imperial title *Rajadhiraja Parameshvara*. Historian Sastri treats Rahappaas Kakka II of Lata which may be taken to mark the end of the first Lata branch of the Rashtrakutas. Southern Konkana was also conquered and brought under his sway by Krishnaraja I. He also expanded his empire in the southern direction by establishing lordship over the Ganga kingdom. Also, his son and *yuvaraja* Govinda compelled Vijayaditya I of the Vengi branch of Chalukya for formal submission. The Rashtrakuta empire under Krishnaraja I may, thus, be taken to have extended over the whole of the modern Maharashtra state, a good part of the Mysore

country, practically the whole of the former Hyderabad state, with Vengi farther east acknowledging its supremacy and a good portion of Madhya Pradesh.

Krishnaraja I died sometime between 772 CE and 775 CE and was followed on the throne by his son *yuvaraja* **Govinda II**. Govinda II bears the titles *Prabhutavarsha* (Profuse Rainer) and *Vikramavaloka* (the man with a heroic look) in the Alas plates. His name is omitted in some of the later grants of the line. It was due to civil war for the throne between him and his younger brother Dhruva ruling in the region of Nasik and Khandesh as the governor. The first war between brothers ended disastrously for Govinda II. He then allied with the Pallava ruler of Kanchi, the Ganga king, the king of Vengi and the ruler of Malava who were traditional foes of the Rashtrakutas, but got defeated in a battle and **Dhruva** assumed the sovereignty. Dhruva assumed the titles:

- *Nirupama* (Unequaled),
- *Kali-vallabha* (fond of war),
- *Dharavarsha* (Heavy Rainer) and
- *Shrivallabha* (the Favourite of Fortune).

Dhruva severely punished all kings who assisted Govinda II in the late civil war after securing the throne. He made his younger but ablest son **Govinda III** emperor during his lifetime.

Govinda III (793-814) became one of the greatest Rashtrakuta rulers who had the titles of:

- *Jagattunga* (prominent in the world),
- *Kirti-Narayana* (the very NârâyaGa in respect of fame),
- *Janavallabha* (favourite of the people),
- *Tribhuvanadhavala* (pure in the three worlds),
- *Prabhutavarsha* (the abundant rainer), and
- *Shrivallabha*.

He first quelled the rebellions of his elder brothers in the south. In the north, after a successful expedition against Nagabhata of Kanauj and the annexation of Malawa along with Kosala, Kalinga, Vengi, Dahala and Odraka, Govinda III again turned to the south. We are told in the Sanjan Inscription that Govinda “terrified the Kerala, Pandya and the Chola kings and caused the Pallavas to wither. The Gangas of Karnataka, who became dissatisfied through baseness, were bound down with fitters and met with death.” Govinda’s southern campaign seems to be no more than a *digvijaya*: the traditional proclamation of superior power by a triumphant march across the territory of the neighbouring rulers demanding tokens of their submission. Performing better than his father’s expectations, he spread the fame of the Rashtrakuta empire literally from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin through his skills both in diplomacy and on the battlefield. It is said that the Rashtrakutas became as unassailable as the Yadavas after the birth of Sri Krishna.

Govinda’s successor became his only son *Maharaja Sarva* better known as **Amoghavarsha I** (814-878 CE) who, also like his father, proved himself as one of the greatest of Rashtrakuta monarchs. Amoghavarsha ruled for 68 years, but

by temperament he preferred *digvijaya* in the sphere of religion, literature, and architecture better than to war. He had the titles:

- *Nripatunga* (Exalted among kings),
- *Atishayadhavala* (Wonderfully white in conduct),
- *Maharaja-shanda* (Best of the great kings), and
- *Vira-Narayana* (The heroic *Narayana*).

He was genuinely interested in the religious traditions of contemporary India and used to spend his time in the company of Jaina monks and other forms of spiritual meditation. His inscriptions count him among the most prominent followers of Jainism. He was not only an author himself but also a patron of authors. Jinasena, the author of *Adipurana*, was among the Jaina preceptors of Amoghavarsha I. He did not only promote Jainism but also the Brahmanical religion and also performed several rituals for the welfare of his subjects. He was also a great builder and is celebrated in the inscriptions Nos. XXIV, XXV, and XXVI as the maker of the capital city Manyakheta to excel in the city of Indra.

There were many rebellions in the far-flung Rashtrakuta empire under his long reign. His death was followed by the accession of his son **Krishna II** in about 879 CE. Krishna II had the titles *Akalavarsha* and *Shubhatunga*. He was not wholly successful in curbing rebellions. The only success of his reign was the termination of Lata viceroyalty. The wars he undertook against Vengi and the Cholas got him on the whole nothing but disaster, disgrace, and exile for some time. His son **Indra III** became king in 915 CE. Indra III had the titles:

- *Nityavarsha* (constant rainer),
- *Rattakandarpa* (Eros among the Rattas)
- *Kirti-Narayana*, and
- *Rajamartaong* (Son among kings).

Amoghavarsha I's grandson Indra III re-established the empire. The advance of the Rashtrakuta forces through Lata and Malawa right up to Kalpi and Kanauj and the dethronement of Mahipala were, no doubt, significant military achievements of Indra. After the defeat of Mahipala and the sack of Kanauj in 915 CE, Indra III was the most powerful ruler of his times. According to Al-Masudi who visited India at that time, the Rashtrakuta king Balhara or Vallabharaja was the greatest king of India and most of the Indian rulers accepted his suzerainty and respected his envoys.

Indra III's reign comes to a close towards the end of 927 CE. He was followed on the throne by his son **Amoghavarsha II** and reined for one year according to the Bhandana grant of Silahara Aparajita (997 CE). His younger brother, the ambitious **Govinda IV**, celebrated his coronation with great pomp. Govinda IV had the titles:

- *Suvar Gavarsha* (rainer of gold),
- *Prabhutavarsha*,
- *Chanakyachaturmukha*,
- *VikrantaNarayana*, and

- *Nripati Trinetra.*

He was not a good king. His life, rule and acquisition of throne provoked resentment among the feudatories. They became united for a revolution which ended with the defeat and dethronement of Govinda IV and the transfer of the crown to **Amoghavarsha III** in 934-35 CE for saving the fair name of the royal family. Amoghavarsha III had a short reign of four to five years. He was a gentle, peaceful and wise king and strongly marked by a religious turn of mind. He engaged himself in the promotion of the royal family by granting many villages to Brahmins and building many temples of Shiva. His son and *yuvaraja* Krishna III managed all other affairs of the state. His greatness as a soldier is indeed attested by the early wars he waged as crown prince on behalf of his brother-in-law Butugga, and perhaps by the success of Rashtrakuta arms in the confused struggles that went on the Vengi kingdom. The Deoli and Karhad plates (Nos. XXIV and XXV) indicate that **Krishna III** became king after his father's death in 939 CE and bestowed with the particular imperial title *Akalavarsha*.

Krishna III was the last in a line of brilliant rulers. He was engaged in a struggle against the Paramaras of Malava and the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. The Karhad plates (No. XXV) issued from the king's camp at Melpadi in the North Arcot district mention that he also undertook one of the earliest but extensive military conquest against the Chola ruler of Tanjore, who had supplanted the Pallavas of Kanchi. Krishna III defeated the Chola king Parantaka I (949 CE), annexed the northern part of the Chola empire and distributed the Chola kingdom among his servants. He, then, pressed down to Rameshwaram and set up a pillar of victory there and built a temple. After his death, all in late 966 CE or very early in 967 CE his opponents united against his successor half-brother **Khottiga**. The Rashtrakuta capital Manyakheta was sacked, plundered and burnt in 972 CE by the Paramara kings and the emperor was forced to abandon Manyakheta. **Karka II** succeeded Khottiga, who was overthrown by Tailla II, Chalukya. The Bhandana grant of Aparajita (997 CE) and the Kharepatan plates dated 1008 CE state that Tailapa, the Chalukya defeated Karka in battle and the *Rammarajya* ceased to exist. It marked the end of the Rashtrakuta Empire.

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## 10.4 DISINTEGRATION OF THE EMPIRE

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Ahavamalla Tailaparasa, one of the most potent feudatories of the Rashtrakuta Empire, became strong enough within a few years of the death of Krishna to overthrow Karka II and establish himself as independent monarch by laying the foundation of the Western Chalukya Empire of Kalyani. There were several reasons behind the sudden disintegration of the Rashtrakuta empire. The Rashtrakutas continuously engaged in the struggle with the Pratiharas, the Chalukyas, the Pallavas, and the Palas who were relatively equally matched empires, which turned into a war of attrition and the almost simultaneous decline of the rival powers. The Rashtrakuta Empire was based on a large number of small and big feudatories, and these *samantas* took advantage to break away and found smaller kingdoms. These feudatories always aspired to be independent, so local wars between them and the overlords were frequent, which disturbed the peace of the empire. Amoghavarsha never eliminated the threat of rebellion by subordinate rulers in his rule. Krishna in the process of saving the Rashtrakuta empire made it weak from the core. He rewarded warriors, relatives and friends

like Butuga and Taila for their services, loyalty, and bravery with an open heart and they became great powers of the empire. For example, Krishna III did not foresee the feudal developments likely to endanger the stability of his empire, and he gave the province of Tardavadi 1000 near the heart of the empire as *anungajivita* (military fief) to Taila. Their sway extended over home territory and directly administered by the emperor. In this way, Krishna was a good friend but by no means a wise emperor. He allowed momentary personal feelings to betray him into courses of action which proved politically disastrous to the empire. We can conclude that the feudalism — once the strength of the Rashtrakutas — swallowed them when kings became weak and incapable of managing feudatories.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Read the following sentences and write True or False.
  - i) The Rashtrakuta kingdom survived longer than the Pratiharas and the Palas which ruled over the Deccan for more than two centuries. ( )
  - ii) All the Rashtrakuta princes assumed the title of *Lammalura-puravareshvara*. ( )
  - iii) The Deccan was the original home of the Rashtrakutas. ( )
  - iv) The Rashtrakutas were high officials; either provincial chiefs or another kind of administrators. ( )
  - v) The warrior Rashtrakuta kings established and expanded their empire supported by the growth of agriculture, the control of western seaboard, and the trade with the Arabs. ( )
- 2) Fill in the blanks.
  - a) The Rashtrakutas often struggled with their contemporary kingdoms such as:
 

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- 3) Note down five favourable factors in the formation and expansion of the Rashtrakuta empire.
 

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- 4) How did Krishnaraja I and Govinda III contribute to the expansion of the Rashtrakuta empire?
 

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## 10.5 ADMINISTRATION

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The warrior kings of the Rashtrakutas created a vast empire in South India which was touching the northern parts of India comprising approximately seven and a half lakh villages. The Rashtrakutas not only won and created a vast kingdom but also maintained it well. A powerful monarchy was the core of the empire, assisted by a large number of feudatories. Interestingly, the realm was getting feudalised more and more with the maturity of the reign of each Rashtrakuta king. The system of administration in the realms was based on the ideas and practices of the Gupta Empire and the Harsha's kingdom in the north, and the Chalukyas in the Deccan. As before, the monarch was the fountainhead of all powers including the head of administration and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The king was responsible for the maintenance of law and order within the kingdom and expected absolute loyalty and obedience from his family, ministers, vassal chiefs, feudatories, officials, and chamberlains. The king's position was generally hereditary, but the rules about succession were not rigidly fixed. The eldest son often succeeded, but there were many instances when the eldest son had to fight his younger brothers and sometimes lost to them. Thus, the Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva and Govinda IV deposed their elder brothers. Kings were generally advised and helped by many hereditary ministers chosen by them from leading families. We do not know how many of them were there and how they worked. From epigraphic and literary records it appears that in almost every kingdom there was a chief minister, a minister of foreign affairs, a revenue minister and treasurer, chief of armed forces, chief justice, and *purohita*.

In the Rashtrakuta kingdom the directly administered areas were divided into:

- *Rashtra* (province),
- *Visaya*, and
- *Bhukti*.

The head of a *Rashtra* was called *Rashtrapati* (governor) who sometimes enjoyed the status and title of a vassal king. The *Visaya* was like a modern district under *Visayapati*, and the *Bhukti* was a smaller unit than it. A body of assistants called the *Rashtramahattaras* and *Vishayamahattaras* respectively assisted provincial governors and district level governors in the Rashtrakuta administration. The roles and powers of these smaller units and their administrators are not clear. It seems that their primary purpose was the realisation of land revenue and some attention to law and order. It appears that all officials were paid by giving them grants of rent-free land.

The feudatories played an essential role in the formation and administration of the Rashtrakuta empire. We know that the Rashtrakutas won many battles and expanded the empire which was not possible without the help of feudatories. The lords from the Ganga kingdom were primarily known for their valour in the expeditions of Rashtrakutas. The kings regularly rewarded these chiefs with land-grants for their loyalty and bravery that resulted in the emergence of lords as powerful as the king. For example, the position of Taila and Ganga Butuga in the reign of Krishna III. Sastri mentions from the study of inscriptions that Butuga was ruling Belvola 300, Purigere 300, Gangavadi 96000, Kisukad 70, Bagenad 70 and Banavasi 12000. The empire consisted of the areas administered directly and areas governed by the vassal chiefs. The areas ruled by the vassal

chiefs were autonomous as far as internal affairs were concerned and had a general obligation of loyalty, paying a fixed tribute and supplying a quota of troops to the overlord. The vassal chiefs or their son were required to attend the *darbar* of the overlord on special occasions, and sometimes they were expected to marry one of their daughters to the overlord or one of his sons.

The Rashtrakuta kings had large and well-organised infantry, cavalry, and a large number of war-elephants mentioned in the chronicles of Arab travellers. The large armed forces were directly related to the glamour and power of the king, which was also essential for the maintenance and expansion of the empire in the age of wars. The Rashtrakutas were famous for a large number of horses in their army imported from Arabia, West Asia, and Central Asia. The real power of the Rashtrakutas is reflected from their many forts garrisoned by special troops and independent commanders. The infantry consisted of regular and irregular soldiers and levies provided by the vassal chiefs. The regular forces were often hereditary and sometimes drawn from different regions all over India. There is no reference to war chariots which had fallen out of use.

Below these territorial divisions was the village. The village was the basic unit of administration. The village administration was carried on by the village headman and the village accountant whose posts were generally hereditary. Grants of rent-free lands were paid to them. The headman was often helped in his duties by the village elder called *grama-mahajana* or *grama-mahattara*. In the Rashtrakuta kingdom, particularly in Karnataka, we are told that there were village committees to manage local schools, tanks, temples and roads in close cooperation with the headman and received a particular percentage of the revenue collection. Towns also had similar committees, in which the heads of trade guilds were also associated. Law and order in the cities and areas in their immediate vicinity was the responsibility of the *koshta-pala* or *kotwal*. The petty chieftainship and the increased hereditary elements weakened the power of village committees. The central rule also found it difficult to assert his authority over them and to control them. It is what we mean when we say that the government was becoming feudalised.

## **10.6 POLITY, SOCIETY, RELIGION, LITERATURE**

The acquisition of several titles by the Rashtrakuta kings itself seems the adoption of the practice of north Indian kings. We can take a glimpse of the Rashtrakuta culture through titles used by different kings such as *Prithvivallabha*, *Khagavaloka*, *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parameshvara*, *Paramabhammaraka*, *Shubhatunga*, *Jagattunga*, *Akalavarsha*, *Rajadhiraja Parameshvara*, *Prabhutavarsha*, *Nityavarsha*, *Suvarnavarsha*, *Vikramavaloka*, *Nirupma*, *Shrivallabha*, *Janavallabha*, *Rajamartanda*, *NripatiTrinetra*, *KirtiNarayana*, *VikrantaNarayana* etc. These Brahmanical titles and the performance of Vedic sacrifices became a means to legitimise their rule following the north Indian practice. It is interesting to note that the number of titles of the kings corresponded to the power of Rashtrakuta kings and sometimes we find older titles also reused. Politically, they were engaged in assuming high sounding titles such as *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parameshvara*, *Paramabhammaraka* etc. and granting rent-free lands and villages to lords for their services for claiming the excellent position and the sole owner of the state. Another interesting way of proclaiming the subordination of feudatory and defeated rulers was to install their portrait

images as *dvarapalakas* in temples in the capital city. For example, Govinda III introduced two statues of the lord of Lanka like pillars of victory in adorning the portals of a Shiva temple in Manyakheta. The Rashtrakuta kings also donated villages to learned *Brahmanas* known as *Agrahara* villages. Govinda IV created 400 *Agrahara* villages at the time of his accession. Krishna maintained and symbolised his high imperial position also through the great works of art, the celebrated temple of Kailasha at Ellora being the most prominent among them. The temple of Kailashanatha is one of the largest rock-cut temples carved out of a single huge rock, which is universally recognised as the high-water mark of the excellence of the style of architecture and sculpture initially associated with the Pallavas.

The society at the time of Rashtrakutas became more stratified based on caste system. Besides the usual four castes, i.e. *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*, there existed some discriminated and untouchable social groups such as:

- shoemakers,
- carpenters,
- bamboo-workers,
- fishers,
- washermen,
- sweepers,
- *Chandalas* etc.

The dominant castes followed their traditional duties such as *Brahmanas* were devoted to religious rituals and teaching and *Kshatriyas* were engaged in administration and war. The *Vaishyas* had degenerated to the status of *Shudras* due to the decline in commerce and engagement in agricultural activities. Simultaneously, the position of the *Shudras* improved considerably due to the expansion of agriculture and enlistment in the army. The condition of women seems to not have degraded in contemporary society. Women participated in religious and administrative activities with men. Ladies of the king's household also attended the court on festive occasions. Princesses were also appointed to government posts, such as the Rashtrakuta princess Chandrobalabbe, a daughter of Amoghavarsha I, administered the Raichur *doab* for some time. According to Arab writers, in the Rashtrakuta Empire ladies did not veil their faces, which indicate towards the non-existence of the *purdah* system. A. S. Altekar says that the widow marriages had gone out of fashion in the higher levels of the society, but the widow's right to inherit the property of her husband was being gradually recognised.

Archaeologist Pandit Vishveshwar Nath concludes through the studies of inscriptions that the kings of the Rashtrakuta dynasty from time to time used to observe the Shaiva, the Vaishnava, and the Shakta religion. The Rashtrakuta kings presented an excellent example of religious tolerance and gave patronage to all the faiths such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Islam. They did not kill anyone for his or her religious beliefs. Toleration was also shown between the members of the different sects. The hope that religious charity will earn divine favour became a funding source to religious and socio-religious activities. In this phase of Indian history, the southern states came more and more under

the spell of the Vedic and Agamic religion. Temples became a centre of Hindu gods and goddesses, culture, religion, education, and rituals. Buddhism was the least popular religion. The number of monasteries declined considerably during the rule of the Rashtrakutas, and the inscriptions reflect only three large, active and vital monasteries: at Kanheri, Kampil, and Dambal. Jainism continued to be a strong rival of Hinduism due to the generous patronage of the Rashtrakuta kings like Amoghavarsha I, Krishna II and Indra III and the literary and religious activities of some famous monastic scholars. A great patron of Jainism, Amoghavarsha I appointed a Jaina monk Gunabhadra as tutor to his heir-apparent Krishna II, extended patronage to many Jaina scholars and gave grants to several Jaina monasteries. Even Muslims were welcomed and allowed to preach their faith by the Rashtrakuta kings. It meant that politics and religion were, in essence, kept apart. Religion was necessarily a personal duty of the king. Thus, Amoghavarsha I, who was a staunch follower of Jainism, also worshipped the Hindu goddess Lakshmi equally. In this sense, we can say that the state was mostly secular.

Altekar mentions that *Agrahara* villages, Jaina and Buddhist monasteries, and temples also acted as the centres of higher Sanskrit education in the Rashtrakuta empire. These institutions provided instruction in different branches of learning. The Rashtrakuta kings were also learned person such as Amoghavarsha himself wrote the *Prashnottara Ratnamalika*: a small Jaina dialectic. The plates issued by the Rashtrakutas show the extensive use of Sanskrit and the presence of several scholars in their court. The liberal support and promotion of Sanskrit and Kannada education in the empire led to the composition of several pieces of literature and significant development in the field of research, logic, art, and sciences. Halayudha wrote his *Kavirahasya* in the court of Krishna III, which explains the conjugational peculiarities of roots have the same form with a eulogy of the poet's patron. Jainism had notable patrons in the Rashtrakuta court. Amoghavarsha I had many Jaina authors in his court. Naturally, Jaina literature made significant progress in this period. Harisena, his spiritual preceptor, had composed the *Harivamsha* in 783 CE but his *Adipurana*, which he left unfinished, was begun in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. It was completed by his disciple Gunachandra in 897 CE. The *Amoghavritti* of Sakatayana — a work on grammar — and the *Ganitasarasamgraha* of Viracharya — a treatise on mathematics — were also composed in the reign of Amoghavarsha I. Later, Somadeva composed the *Yashastilaka* and *Nitivakyamrita*. Also, the Kannada literature witnessed its beginning and significant prosperity in the Rashtrakuta period as Amoghavarsha himself was the author of the *Kavirajamarga*: the earliest work on poetics in Kannada. Amoghavarsha also refers to his contemporary Kannada poets Srivijaya and Gunavarman I whose works exist only in scattered quotations. Several Kannada works were written at the court of the Chalukyas of Vemulwad, who were feudatories of the Rashtrakutas.

Pampa I, the earliest and most celebrated of the Kannada poets, flourished here and wrote the *Adipurana* and the *Vikramarjunavijaya*. The latter provides valuable information about the northern campaign of Indra III. Ponna, the author of the *Shantipurana*, is another famous poet of this period who got the title of *Ubhayakavichakravartin* on account of his proficiency as a poet both in Sanskrit and Kannada by Krishna III. Chamundaraja, the Jain general and minister of Marasimha II of Gangavadi, composed the *Chamunarayapurana* in prose. Ranna, the author of the *Ajitapurana* and the *Gadayuddha*, was his younger

contemporary. Altekar points out that in this period most of the Kannada writers were Jainas by faith, which shows an essential step towards religious cooperation and tolerance in the field of academics. The vernacular language was necessary for preaching to the masses, which led to a plethora of vernacular literature.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Which of the following statements is Right or Wrong?
  - i) The system of administration in the Rashtrakuta empire was based on the ideas and practices of the Gupta Empire, the Harsha's kingdom, and the Chalukyas. ( )
  - ii) Provincial governors and district level governors in the Rashtrakuta administration were assisted by a body of assistants called the *Rashtramahattaras* and *Vishayamahattaras* respectively. ( )
  - iii) In the Rashtrakuta kingdom, there were only directly administered areas. ( )
  - iv) The Rashtrakutas were famous for a large number of horses in their army imported from Arabia, West Asia, and Central Asia. ( )

- 2) List the central administrative units of the Rashtrakuta kingdom.

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- 3) In Section A are given the names of Kannada authors and in B the titles of their books. Match Section A and Section B.

#### Section A

#### Section B

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| a) Amoghavarsha I | i) <i>Kavirajamarga</i>                           |
| b) Pampa I        | ii) <i>Shantipurana</i>                           |
| c) Ponna          | iii) <i>Ajitapurana</i> and <i>Gadayuddha</i>     |
| d) Chamundaraja   | iv) <i>Chamundarayapurana</i>                     |
| e) Ranna          | v) <i>Adipurana</i> and <i>Vikramarjunavijaya</i> |

- 4) Describe religious policy of the Rashtrakutas.

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## 10.7 SUMMARY

The history of the Rashtrakutas is considered as an important phase in the history of India. From the collapse of the Chalukyas of Badami to the revival of Chalukya power under Taila II at Kalyani is roughly two centuries, and during this long interval the line of Rashtrakutas started by Dantidurga continued to rule Western Deccan. The circle became complete. Their direct rule was confined to the area that is called Rattapadi seven and a half lakhs in Tamil inscriptions. In the North, the Pratiharas and the Palas were defeated in wars by the Rashtrakutas, and the Paramaras became their vassals. In the South, the Ganga country was a viceroyalty under the Rashtrakutas for many years, and the rising empire of the Cholas suffered a severe loss. In the eastern half of the Deccan, the Rashtrakutas tried to bring the Chalukyas of Vengi under control. A series of battles strained the resources of the state and gave rise to feudal conditions and the growth of mighty vassals who disturbed the peace of the realm and ultimately overthrew the Rashtrakuta power. The memorials of Rashtrakuta rule in art, architecture, religion, and literature claim an essential place in the heritage of India. The Kailasha temple of Krishna I reflects extraordinary architecture. Hinduism and Jainism prospered in the Rashtrakuta empire in an environment of religious harmony. In this era, Kannada became one of the important languages of South India through the evergreen works of several scholars. The administration of the empire won the admiration of foreign visitors.

## 10.8 KEY WORDS

<i>Palidhvaja</i>	: Royal banner.
<i>Parameshvara</i>	: Devotee of Shiva.
<i>Anungajivita</i>	: Award for extraordinary military service.
<i>Rashtramahattara</i>	: Official of province.
<i>Agrahara</i>	: Brahmin village.

## 10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) (i) True (ii) True (iii) True (iv) True
- 2) The Pratiharas, the Palas, the Cholas, the Pallavas, the Eastern Chalukyas.
- 3) See Section 10.3
- 4) See Section 10.3

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) (i) Right (ii) Right (iii) Wrong (iv) Right
- 2) Butuga and Taila. See Section 10.5.
- 3) (a) i (b) v (c) ii (d) iv (e) iii
- 4) See Section 10.6

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## 10.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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