It was during the period of rapid dynastic changes in Western India that a new power rose on the frontiers of India and in the strategic region of the Red Sea, the Levant, Arabia and the Persian Gulf. In 620, when Pulakesin II of the Chalukya Dynasty and Dadda II, the Gurjara King of Broach, were both adopting a forward policy, Mahammad the Prophet was leading his followers from Medina against Al Sufyan of Mecca. Both Mecca and Medina were control points on the carvan routes along the Red Sea coast to the Fertile Crescent in the north and to the Frankincense Country to the south. Both were great trade centres and gave access to the Red Sea and the Levant ports. The victory of Mahammad at Al Badr (on the Red Sea coast, west of Medina) made Islam a temporal power. Within a short period Mahammad had laid the foundations of a great Empire. In 632 he died but the conquests of Islam continued under the four early Caliphs (632-660) and under the Ummayyads (660-750). In 635 Damascus fell to the Muslims, 637 Jerusalem, 638 Mesopotamia, 640 Egypt, 643 Tripoli, 698 Carthage and in 711 the conquest of Spain had begun. In the year 732, which marked the first centenial of the Prophet's death, the Islamic Empire stretched from the Bay of Biscay to the
Indus and the confines of China and from the Aral Sea to the lower cataracts of Nile. Muawiyah the founder of the Ummayyad Dynasty fixed his capital at Damascus in 660. The Black Sea and the Caspian Sea routes from Central Asia to the Mediterranean alone remained with Byzantium. The Byzantine Empire defied the expansion of the Arab Empire to Eastern Europe across the Dardanelles-Bosporus. The Mediterranean had become an Arab Sea with the conquest of Egypt, Carthage and Spain. Byzantium and the medieval City States of Europe had to pay heavily for the luxuries of the East. The chieftains and merchant princes of the extensive, but loosely organised, Arab Empire imposed heavy duties on goods in transit and controlled the east-west trade.

By 712 the Arabs had founded the Kingdom of Sind and much of the trade of Debal, (the port of Baroericum of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.) Patala and Minnagar, passed into the hands of the Arabs. The Abbasids, who succeeded the four early Caliphs, and the Ummayyads, established a brilliant Empire which was to last from 750 to 1258 A.D. In 766 the capital of the Arab Empire was shifted from Damascus, near the Mediterranean and of the Persian Gulf-Fertile Crescent routes, to Baghdad, on the Persian Gulf-Euphrates-Tigris route. The swing of political power from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf brought in its wake a concentration of Arab commercial activities in the Persian Gulf ports. The
nearness of the Persian Gulf to the Arab State of Sind in India and the close commercial links established by Sind with the Valabhi ports, Broach and Malwa, the political instability of Western India, at the time of the advent of the Arabs, together with the commercial prosperity of the Western India ports, induced the Arabs to penetrate into the kingdoms of the Valabhis, the Gurjaras, the Chalukyas and the Rastrakutas. By the 8th century, the Arabs (now Muslims), had trade interests all along the western coast of India. However the Arab Empire was at its best a loosely knit unit. The local chieftains in the Arab ports continued to thrive on a transit trade. The trade of the west coast ports of India was well established long before the advent of Islam. The new religion only gave the Arabians, the Egyptians and the Persians an added zeal to their commercial and military expansion on a magnitude never experienced before. In 636 A.D., only four years after the death of the Prophet Mohammad, the Arabs had reached Vale, the port of the Valabhis, from where the attack was directed to Broach.\(^4\) When Caliph Umar (634-644), appointed Usman, Governor of Bahrein in 636, he sent an expedition to Tane, Broach and Debal. The early impressions the Arabs had of India were not encouraging. Usman who was asked to bring information about Hind wrote to the Caliph, "water (in Hind) is scarce, the fruits poor and the robbers bold".\(^5\) India was a remote country for the early Caliphs of Damascus, inhabited by
infidels and rebellious people. The Gurjaras, the Valabhis and the Chalukyas, were all antagonistic towards Arab penetration into the Arabian Sea trade. But rapid political changes were taking place in Western India and Broach, with the tripartite struggle for power between the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas and the Palas. The Rashtrakutas were probably able to establish their authority, at least intermittently, over Gujarat and Malwa. Unlike the Gurjaras, they were friendly with the Arabs and allowed them free access to their towns. With the ascendancy of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan and parts of Central and Western India, Arab trade in India began to thrive. Almost all the Arab travellers of the 8th and 9th centuries were struck by the tolerance shown to Islam, particularly by the 'Balharas', who set up Muslim Magistrates to settle cases according to Muslim law. The Arabs knew the Rashtrakutas as Balharas, a corruption of Vallabhas, a title which the Rashtrakuta kings assumed after Dantidurga of Ellichpur received it from his overlord, Vikramaditya II, in recognition of his military services in the Chalukya wars against the Arabs and the latter's defeat at Navasarika in 738 A.D. By this time the commercial hold of the Arabs in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea had become quite strong.

The Rashtrakutas rose to power on the ruins of the Chalukya Empire. They originally belonged to the Usmanabad
District (of old Hyderabad State) but migrated to Ellichpur (Achalpura) in Berar, sometime in the first quarter of the 7th century A.D. Here they remained for generations as the feudatories of the Chalukyas. Some of the earlier victories of Dantidurga were achieved while he was still a feudatory of the Chalukyas. He fought along with his suzerain, Vikramaditya II and the Chalukya Viceroy of Gujarat, Pulakesin, in 738 A.D. at the battle of Navasarika. It is said that the Arab invaders were so completely crushed that they never dared return to Gujarat. Dantidurga's victory over the Pallavas of Kanchi in 743 A.D. also was as a loyal feudatory of Vikramaditya. But after the death of Vikramaditya in 747 A.D. and the collapse of the Chalukya Viceroyalty in Gujarat, Dantidurga became ambitious to take over the Chalukya Empire. The original territories of Dantidurga had a commanding position with regard to the Burhanpur-Khandesh-Mahishmati route to Ujjain, the Vidisa-Sironjí route to Mathura and the Burhanpur route to the Deccan Plateau. From this strategic location he extended his influence, when the Chalukya power declined. He conquered Malwa and established his headquarters at Ujjain, the great market town on the Western Malwa route to the Gangetic Plain. It is said that he made the Gurjaras, the overlords of Ujjain, his doorkeepers in his Ujjain Palace. He vanquished the Gurjaras of Nandipuri and appointed his nephew Karkka as its Viceroy. Dantidurga is said to have
fought on the Mahi, Mahanadi and Rewa (Narbada) and defeated Kanchi, Kalinga, Kosala, Sri Saila, Lata and Tanka. But his crowning achievement was the victory over the Chalukyas of Vatapi. A later record says that Dantidurga, "having wrested the supreme sovereignty from the Chalukyas, humbled the circle of proud kings from the Himalayas down to the limit of Setu." Although this is a tall claim, Dantidurga was undoubtedly the founder of the Rashtrakuta power and by 753 A.D. had defeated the Chalukya Emperor Kirtivarman and claimed the Chalukya territories. But the Rashtrakuta struggle with the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Rajputana and the Chalukyas continued even though they were also perhaps an off-shoot of the Chalukyas.

Dantidurga died in 758 A.D. and was succeeded by his uncle Krishna I. He defeated the Chalukyas of Vengi and the Gangas of Mysore. The Bhandak Plates record that the entire Marathi speaking part of Madhya Pradesh was under his control. But he seems to have lost Malwa in the north to his Gurjara-Pratihara rivals. Nagabhata, after having crushed the Arabs, is said to have saved Western India. He established his supremacy over the Gurjara Kingdom of Nandipuri and probably also took over Jodhpur where the main branch of the Pratiharas ruled. Nagabhata I set up a new principality in Broach. The Hansot Plate gives the name of the suzerain of Broach as Nagavaloka, generally
identified as Nagabhata I. The land grant was issued from Broach and records the gift of a village in Akrureshwara Vishaya (Ankleshwar). Nagabhata therefore seems to have been in possession of Broach and the territories up to the river Kim in 756 A.D.\(^{(10)}\) two years before the death of Dantidurga. But according to the Antroli-Chharoli Plate dated 757, Karkka II, a feudatory of the Rashtrakuta chief of Gujarat, gave away villages to one in Jambusar in Broach District from practically the same area. The beneficiary of the Grant being in Broach District, A.S. Altekar is of the opinion that the Broach principality, extending from the Mahi to the Kim, was included in the dominions of Karkka and that sometime between 756 and 757 A.D. Dantidurga succeeded again in defeating the Gurjaras and ending their supremacy in Lata. Lata at this time perhaps did not extend to Broach or the Mahi river. The area between the Mahi and the Narbada was called Barukachcha Samaheya in ancient times but in the 8th century according to the Elura Dasavatara Inscription (750 A.D.) of Dantidurga, Lata was the country between the Mahi and the Narbada and perhaps even extended up to Kaira.\(^{(11)}\) Broach, being an important port, was naturally the target of the two neighbouring powers, the Gurjaras and the Rashtrakutas. The Rashtrakuta alliance with the Arabs, the new power which rose in West Asia and the Arabian Sea, has a parallel in the commercial alliance of the Andhras with the Romans.
in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. It was to maintain the balance of power in their favour that the Rashtrakutas allied with the Arabs. The Gurjaras under Nagabhata I and his successors seem to have held Broach intermittently. But they never played a dominant role in politics or commerce. It is true that they stood as a bulwark against the Arabs of Sind. From the days of Junaid (725 A.D.) to those of Mohammad Ghazini, (11th C.) for more than three centuries, and particularly, between 750 and 850, it was the Gurjara Pratiharas who successfully resisted the invasion of the Arabs and stemmed the tide of their expansion in the north and north-west India. If the Arab progress was slow in India, compared to their meteoric rise in west Asia, north Africa and even parts of Europe, in the centuries following Mohammad's death, it was largely due to the resistance of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. The Gurjaras were unfriendly with the Arabs. The Rashtrakutas, on the other hand, welcomed their participation in the commerce of the Arabian Sea. It might have been a far-sighted policy of the Rashtrakutas because the Arabs were already in control of the West Asian and African trade. But it determined the course of Arab Commercial expansion in India. The fate of Broach at this time hung between the military victories of the Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, one determined to keep out the Arabs from
the Indian trade, and the other welcoming them with all the facilities that were at their disposal. The Rashtrakutas, although they claimed to have conquered the Kingdoms of Malwa and Gujarat, and made the Gurjara rulers their feudatories, were mainly a Deccan power. Their hold on Gujarat, Malwa and the Gangetic Plain, was intermittent. It is doubtful whether they ever succeeded in subduing the Gangetic powers. But they did achieve certain victories over the Gurjara. Neither the Rashtrakutas nor the Gurjara had any long spell of success. The Gurjara-Pratiharas distinguished themselves under Nagabhata I, Vatraraja, Nagabhata II, Bhoja and Mahendrapala, roughly from 730 A.D. to about 907 A.D. The Gurjaras succeeded in occupying Broach and Malwa except for short periods when the Rashtrakutas overwhelmed them. The Rashtrakutas reached the zenith of their power under Dhruva and Govinda III (773-814 A.D.) and reportedly succeeded in curbing the power of the Gurjaras in Malwa and Gujarat. The Palas of Bengal played an imperial rôle under Dharmapala and Devapala (770-870 A.D.) but they never reached Malwa or Gujarat. But they kept the Gurjara-Pratiharas often engaged in the Gangetic Valley. Malwa and Gujarat were bones of contention between the Rashtrakutas and the Gurjaras.

Krishna I of the Rashtrakuta Dynasty was succeeded by Govinda II, but Dhruva, his brother challenged him.
In the fight between the two brothers, Govinda was assisted by the chieftains of Malwa, Vengi, Kanchi, and Gangavadi. The combined army was defeated by Dhruva, who soon proceeded against those who assisted his brother. During his time the Rashtrakutas seem to have re-established themselves in Malwa. The struggle for power between the Palas and the Gurjaras for the possession of Kanauj made Dhruva try his luck and extend his sway to the north. He is said to have defeated the Gurjaras at Jhansi. But the Gurjaras seem to have continued as a power in Malwa and Gujarat. Dhruva however could not press his victories and march further north or occupy Malwa permanently. He returned to the south in 790 A.D. laden with a rich booty. Under Dhruva, the Rashtrakutas power is said to have reached Ganga in the north and the Pallava Kingdom in the south. The Palas of Bengal dared not challenge him. In 793 A.D. he abdicated in favour of his son Govinda III. During his reign he placed his brother Indra as the Viceroy of Gujarat and Malwa. Indra had to face the might of the Gurjara King Nagabhata II whom he succeeded in defeating according to the Sisavai Grant issued from Baroda. But since the Gurjara king was not annihilated it may be concluded that there was no decisive victory and that Gujarat and Malwa continued to be the target of both the powers. However it is mentioned that after Govinda's victory over Malwa, Kosala, Kalinga, Vanga,
Dahalo and Odraka, he returned to the Narmada where the ruler of Sribhavan (Sarbhan) in Broach District paid homage to him.

The Rashtrakutas on the whole gained undisputed ascendancy in the upper and western Deccan. But their hold on Malwa, Gujarat and Rajputana in the north and the kingdom of the Pallavas and Pandyas in the south was intermittent. They were challenged in the north by the Gurjaras and the Palas, and in the south by the Pallavas, Gangas and the Keraliyas.

The period of the Rashtrakuta ascendancy was from 753-975 A.D. Dhruva, Govinda III and Indra III extended their influence to the north. Under Krishna III the Rashtrakuta army literally reached as far south as Rameshwaram. The Rashtrakutas excelled in the arts of peace. With the long maritime coast at their disposal their commerce with the Arab Empire thrived. The Arab writers of the period speak very highly of the Rashtrakuta Kingdom. (13)

Indra who was appointed Viceroy of Gujarat, by his Rashtrakuta overlord, Govinda III, was succeeded by Karkka. When Amoghavarsha, son of Govinda III, became the Rashtrakuta ruler, he was hardly 13 or 14. It was decided therefore that Karkka, the Rashtrakuta Viceroy of Gujarat, should set up a Regency. The arrangement worked for 3 or 4 years. The
Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi were in no mood to recognise the regency of Karkka and marched against him. Karkka, it is said was able to retrieve the situation in 821. (14) Karkka's known dates are 812, 816 and 821 A.D.

Right through the reign of Amoghavarsha, there were continuous wars with Vengi and Gangavadi. Although he inflicted a crushing defeat on Vengi in 830 A.D., the Rashtrakutas lost it by 842 A.D. The Gangas resisted Amoghavarsha for 20 years of his reign. Amoghavarsha did not make any serious effort to occupy Gangavadi, even though he succeeded in driving the Gangas out. A marriage alliance in 860 A.D. put an end to the hostilities between the two powers. The Rashtrakutas still held Anga (Bengal), Vanga (Bihar), Magadha, Malawa and Vengi in Amoghavarsha's time but Malwa continued to be the bone of contention between the Gurjaras and Rashtrakutas. It is also doubtful whether the Rashtrakutas held Anga, Vanga and Magadha, because the Palas were very powerful here, and were at war with both the Gurjaras and the Rashtrakutas. Devapala of the Pala dynasty is said to have defeated Amoghavarsha. Amoghavarsha's dominion therefore could not have extended much beyond the upper Deccan Plateau. That the Rashtrakutas were undoubtedly a Deccan power is proved by the fact that Amoghavarsha built the city of Manyakhet in the heart of the Deccan and made it his capital. It took the place of old Paithan as a distributing centre and market town in the Deccan. With the
continuous thrusts of the Gurjaras towards south Gujarat and the unsettled political conditions on the frontiers of the Gurjara-Pratihara and Rashtrakuta kingdoms Paithan's commercial supremacy in the Deccan suffered a set back. Political conditions deteriorated further on the north western frontiers of the Rashtrakuta kingdom, after the death of the feudatory Karkka in 830 A.D. His regency over the Rashtrakuta Empire had ended in 821 when Amoghavarsha attained majority and assumed the reins of Government. Karkka retired to Gujarat as its Viceroy but remained loyal to his overlord. But his sons Dhruva II adopted a forward policy and challenged the Rashtrakuta over-lordship. The political rivalry between the two Rashtrakuta houses came at a time when the Gurjara-Pratiharas had restored the fortunes of their clan under Bhoja, defeated Dhruva II sometime between 845-860 A.D. But Bhoja's Kingdom was blocked in the north by the Pales. His hold over Malwa was also nominal so that the conquest of Gujarat, by him did not substantially benefit Broach. By the 9th century the Kalachchuris, who had withdrawn to Jabbulpur, also revived their power. Under their leader Kokkala they are reported to have swept through from the frontiers of the Arab Kingdom of Sind to Vanga in the east. He is said to have defeated even the Rashtrakuta king Akalavarsha II 878-914 A.D.) and placed a Kalachchuri feudatory in the Konkan. Later
the Kalachchuris and the Rashtrakutas allied in the face of a threat from the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. How far the Chalukyas extended their sway is not known, but they seem to have defeated the combined army of the Rashtrakutas and the Kalachchuris. In 888 A.D. Krishna II re-established the Rashtrakuta line in Gujarat. The line continued under Indra III. The last known Rashtrakutas ruler of Gujarat was Kakhata whose date is 972 A.D.

From the period of the early Arab entry into India in the 7th century to the 10th century, Western India (and practically the whole of India) was in the throes of political upheavals. It is not surprising therefore if the Arab travellers of these centuries make only passing references to Broach, which, most probably was ruled by the Gurjara-Pratihara during most part of the period. But all the Arab travellers were impressed by the might of the Balharas whose main port was Saimur (Konkan coast). The Arabs who were used to a patriarchal society and a clan form of Government, must have been struck by the pomp, luxury and splendour of an Indian kingdom, and had an exaggerated view of the Balharas. The Balharas were friendly with them, which also must have contributed largely to the Arab praise showered on them.

The merchant Suleiman, who came to India in 851 A.D. says that the Balharas were the most eminent of the princes
of India and that all Indians acknowledged his suzerainty. This was the period when Amoghavarsha was the ruler of the Rashtrakutas. Amoghavarsha was undoubtedly one of the most powerful of the Indian monarchs in 851 A.D. but decay was already setting in, in the Rashtrakuta Kingdom in his reign. Suleiman's observation is one of the earliest on India by the Arab travellers who came to India during this period. Suleiman says that the Rashtrakuta Kingdom commences on the sea at the country of Komkam (Konkan). It cannot therefore have included Broach. He says that the Balharas were at war with the Gurjaras of Jurz. Jurz at this time was considered to be somewhere in the environs of Jodhpur. The Gurjara challenge to Rashtrakuta power in Gujarat was serious in the 9th century. The Arabs of Sind and Multan also found the Gurjaras a threat to their kingdoms in north western India. The territories of the Gurjara-Pratiharas intervened between the Arab Kingdoms of Mansurah (Sind) and Multan and the Rashtrakuta kingdom in the south. The Gurjaras also withstood Arab penetration into the Gangetic Plain. Broach, even during the short periods when it was a Rashtrakuta port could not avail of the Rashtrakuta friendship with the Arabs and maintain the land trade with the Persian Gulf through Sind and Multan because of the intervening territory of the Gurjaras, who were antagonistic to both the Arabs and the Rashtrakutas. Broach also lost touch with Malwa and the Gangetic Plain. The sea route along the coast of
Saurashtra was also unsafe because of Valabhi threat in the earlier centuries and that of the Medhs in the later centuries of this period. Broach had to be contented with a small hinterland, perhaps confined to Gujarat and Malwa when it was part of the Gourjara Kingdom or take second place to Saimur when it was a Rashtrakuta port.

There is no doubt that both the Gurjara Kingdom and the Rashtrakuta Kingdom under-went rapid frontier and boundary changes. Masudi (912) places the northern limit of the Rashtrakuta Kingdom at Aravalli, and the southern, at Thana, probably further than warranted. Even so it is a limited territory for a monarch of such renown as the Arabs represent the Balharas. Khurda (who died in (912) also says that the Balhara is the greatest king of India but in the list of towns mentioned by him, he cites those of Sind and Cutch and these are followed by those of Malabar. There is no mention of the towns in the Balhara Kingdom. Perhaps the Arabs knew only the coast and the Rashtrakutas were a Plateau power. The Arabs refer to them as Balharas of Manked (Manyakhed). In the commodities of the trade mentioned by him are cotton and cotton cloths, aloe wood, wheat, pearls, costus, canes, bamboos and pepper. He mentions Broach only in passing, but some of the commodities might have come from Broach.
Masudi lists Saimur, Surbara and Tana as being on the coast of the Balhara Kingdom but not Broach. While recognising the greatness of the Balhara King, he seems to be impressed by the large army of the Gujarat King, his wealth, and the number of horses and camels he possessed. (17)

Al Ishtakhri, writing about 951 A.D., mentions Kambaya, Surbaya and Saimur after Kamhal (Anhilawad). (18) Ibn Hawkal (976 A.D.) says that the chief trading cities of India are Famhal (Anhilawad) and Kambaya, Surbarah, Sindan and Saimur and that from Cambay to Saimur is the land of the Balharas. This places Broach in the territory of the Rashtrakutas but no mention is made of it. However he says that the land between Kambaya and Saimur is dotted with villages. (19)

From Rashiduddin's work of 1310 which is now accepted as the work of Abu Rihan Al Biruni (end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th century), one gets a clearer picture of India, and Broach in particular, but by this time the Solankis of Anhilawad Patan had established a strong kingdom, and Cambay had taken the place of Broach as the major outlet of Gujarat. The Solankis of Gujarat are considered to be an offshoot of the Chalukyas who perhaps overwhelmed the Rashtrakutas in Gujarat by the 10th century and established themselves as an independent branch in Gujarat.
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