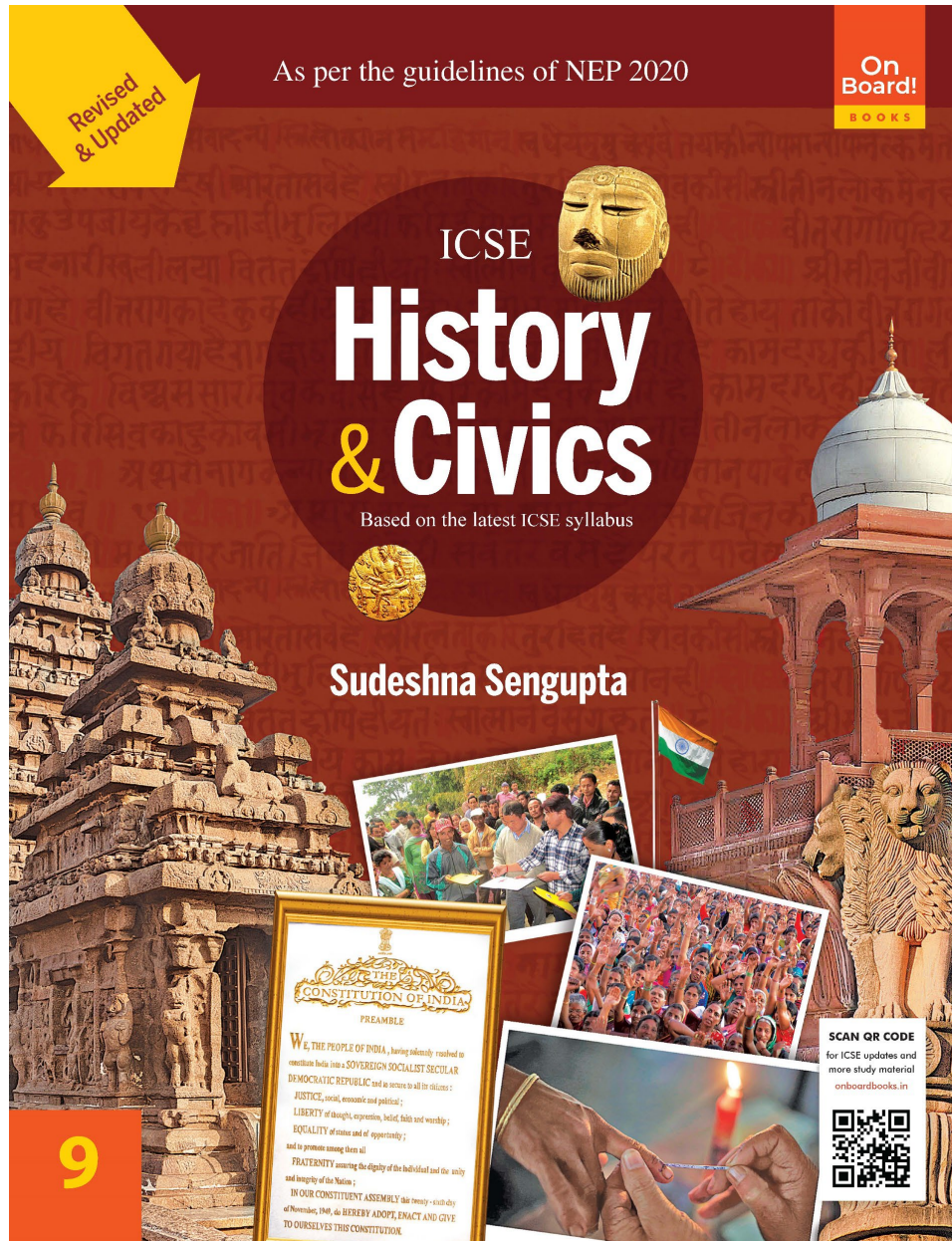


# On Board!

**B O O K S**

# History and Civics 9



# History 9

# Chapter 7: The Cholas

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# Chapter 7: The Cholas

The Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras were the three powerful dynasties ruling in Tamilakam or the Tamil country in ancient times. Cholas emerged as a formidable power in south India.

## THE CHOLAS

The Chola rise to power in the ninth century coincided with the decline of the Pallavas. The first Chola king was Vijayalaya. He ruled from AD 846 to AD 871. He conquered Tanjore around AD 850 and ruled over the region north of the Kaveri river. He was succeeded by Aditya I, who broke the Pallava power. His son Parantaka I reigned for forty-eight years from AD 907 to AD 955. He was a warrior king who subjugated the Pallavas completely.

Parantaka I also fought with the Pandya king, drove him into exile and captured Madurai, the Pandyan capital. He also invaded Ceylon. However, towards the end of his reign Parantaka I was defeated by the Rashtrakutas. The accession of Rajaraja the Great in AD 985 marked a new era in the Chola history.

### Rajaraja I (AD 985–1016)

Rajaraja I is regarded as the real founder of the Chola Dynasty. He was a powerful ruler and his first exploit was the conquest of the Chera Kingdom. He extended his dominions by conquering portions of the Deccan, Coorg and Kalinga. He realized the vital role that a strong navy could play in strengthening the Chola power. He also knew that control over the sea would help him monopolize trade. Thus Rajaraja I kept a powerful fleet and used it.

## Rajendra Chola (AD 1016–1044)

Rajaraja I was succeeded by his son Rajendra Chola. He ruled from AD 1016 to AD 1044. He was an able leader and a great soldier. He not only consolidated the Chola Empire but also expanded it further. Rajendra Chola defeated the Chalukyas of Kalyani. He also advanced up to the banks of the Ganga and defeated Mahipala, the Pala king of Bengal. Rajendra Chola's most daring campaign was in South-east Asia where he prevented the merchants from having monopoly over Indian trade.

The successors of Rajendra Chola continued to fight against the neighbouring kingdoms. This continuous conflict weakened the Cholas. As a result, the Chola power tottered towards the beginning of the thirteenth century.

### THE CHOLA ADMINISTRATION

The Cholas had a well-organized system of administration based on the concept of the village community. The local affairs were looked after by an assembly which was subject to the control of the royal officers. A number of districts formed a division, and a group of divisions formed a province. The affairs of the state received the personal attention of the king whose orders were communicated to the governors by the secretaries.

Local self-government was the hallmark of Chola administration. Villages enjoyed a lot of freedom in administrative matters. Each village had two assemblies or councils.

Some of the functions of these assemblies were:

- Controlling all revenue matters.
- Regulating local taxes and dues.
- Managing public works.
- Receiving donations and grants of land for charitable purposes.
- Settling disputes and punishing criminals.

There were committees that looked after various departments like justice and welfare duties. The work of the assemblies was subject to the supervision of royal officials.

The Cholas were greatly concerned with irrigation works, which they took up on a grand scale. So they constructed wells and tanks. They also dug channels to divert the water from rivers to the fields. Land revenue was the main source of revenue.

## **ART AND CULTURE**

The Chola period witnessed progress in art and culture.

### **Art and Architecture**

The main features of Chola architecture comprised:

- The gopuram or the gateway.
- The garbhagriha or the main shrine.
- The mandapa or the audience hall.
- The vimanas or the towers above the main shrine.
- The spacious courtyards.

The Chola temples were the centre of social activities during this period.

## Language and Literature

The Chola kings were also patrons of Tamil literature. The Chola period witnessed great progress in Tamil literature. Besides, regional languages like Telugu and Kannada prospered under the Cholas.

## Religion

Many new religious sects arose in this period. The doctrine of bhakti or complete devotion to God became popular in south India.

The period of Chola supremacy was an enlightened period in southern India. The kings were powerful and spread their dominance wherever applicable. From public works to architecture, from religious toleration to vernacular literature every aspect of life received attention from the kings.



## To Remember

**Background**—The region south of the River Krishna is known as south India, the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras were three powerful kingdoms of that period, in the ninth century AD the Chola power emerged supreme.

**The Cholas**—Vijayalaya was a powerful king, succeeded by Aditya I who broke the Pallava power, succeeded by Parantaka I, he subjugated the Pallavas completely, Rajaraja I: He was the greatest Chola ruler, extended the Chola Kingdom, maintained a strong navy and conquered Ceylon, Maldives and several other islands, built the Brihadesvara Temple, Rajendra Chola: He defeated the Chalukyas of Kalyani, adopted the title of Gangaikondachola, defeated the Sri Vijaya king, trade with South-east Asia brought prosperity to the Chola Empire, his successors were weak, the Chola Empire declined towards the beginning of the thirteenth century AD.

**The Chola administration**—It was a well-organized hierarchical system, the village at the grassroot level, then the district, leading to province, governed by viceroys, local self-administration was a hallmark of the Chola administration, assemblies like ur and sabha performed important functions, the Chola rulers paid attention to irrigation, land revenue was the main source of revenue, it was fixed at one-third of the produce.

**The Chola art and culture**—The Chola architecture had some special features like elaborate gopurams, mandapas, garbhagriha, vimanas, spacious courtyard, the Tanjore Temple and the Brihadesvara Temple worth mentioning, Language and literature: Literature flourished, Kamban translated the *Ramayana*, regional languages like Telugu and Kannada developed, Religion: The doctrine of bhakti became popular.

**Thank You**