



## MEDIEVAL INDIA: SOUTH INDIA AND THE CHOLAS

### Short-Answer Questions

**1. Name three royal dynasties of South India.**

**Ans.** The Pandyas, The Cheras and The Cholas.

**2. What was the extent of the Chola Empire?**

**Ans.** Chola empire was basically concentrated in South India. Rajendra Chola conquered the whole of Sri Lanka. He then overran the Chalukyas of Vengi. He carried his arms right up to Central India. He then overran the whole of Orissa and Bengal right up to the southern banks of the Ganga.

**3. To which king the credit for founding the Chola Empire goes?**

**Ans.** Vijayalaya

**4. Name any three great rulers of the Chola dynasty.**

**Ans.** (i) Rajaraja the Great (985 to 1014 AD).  
(ii) Rajendra Chola (1014 to 1044 AD).  
(iii) Rajadhiraja Chola (1044 to 1052 AD)

**5. Why is Rajaraja called 'the Great'?**

**Ans.** Rajaraja is called 'the Great' because he ended internal dissensions in his dynasty, destroyed the naval fleet of the Cheras and subdued the Pandya revolts whose territory he annexed in his own empire. He also defeated the Chalukyas of Vengi as well as the ruler of Kalinga in the north and the ruler of Ceylon in the South.

**6. Give a brief account of the achievements of Rajendra Chola.**

**Ans.** Rajendra Chola carried his arms right upto Central India and defeated the ruler of Gondwana. He vanquished the Gangas and the Pallavas. He also waged wars against the rulers of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. He built his new capital which he named Gangaikonda Cholapuram and built several beautiful temples there.

**7. Who defeated Rajadhiraja Chola?**

**Ans.** Chalukyas defeated Rajadhiraja Chola in 1052 AD.

**8. Why did the people worship the Chola kings as gods?**

**Ans.** The Chola kings were great temple builders. Rajaraja was a great conqueror and builder. He built the Rajarajeshwara temple of Lord Shiva at Thanjavur. It is also known as Rajarajeswaram Temple. The king took the god's name because he wanted to appear like a god. Through the rituals of a temple, a god (king) worshipped another god. This is the reason why people worshipped the Chola rulers as gods.

**9. Into how many provinces the Cholas had divided their empire?**

**Ans.** The Chola kingdom was divided into six provinces called Mandalams.

**10. What were the names of provinces and districts under the Cholas?**

**Ans.** The provinces under the Cholas were called Mandalams and the districts were called Nadus.

**11. Name the four types of assemblies under the Cholas.**

**Ans.** Nattar, Nagarttar, Ur and Sabha.

**12. What was the rate of the land revenue under the Cholas?**

**Ans.** The land revenue was fixed as 1/3rd of the total produce.

**13. Why did the Cholas build a strong naval fleet?**

**Ans.** The Cholas had built a strong naval fleet which helped them in making conquests in Malaya and other islands in the Indian Ocean and to carry on trade with Ceylon, East Indies, Persia etc.

**14. Name any two features of temples built by the Cholas in the Dravidian style.**

**Ans.** (i) The chief features of Dravidian style was the construction of a pyramid like structure over the deity room (or Garbha griha). which came to be known as Vimana.  
(ii) The temple had a large enclosure and lofty gates called gopuram. With the passage of time the Gopuram became majestic and gained great heights.

**15. Which is the best example of Chola temples?**

**Ans.** Brihadesvara or Shiva Temple at Tanjore

**16. Who were the Nayanars?**

**Ans.** The Bhakti poets of Shaiva sects were called Nayanars.

**17. Who were the Alvars?**

**Ans.** The Bhakti poets of Vaishnav sects were called Alvars.

**18. Name the book written by Kamban.**

**Ans.** Tamil Ramayana

**19. Give a pen-picture of society under the Cholas.**

**Ans.** The Chola Society was a peaceful one. There were different sections in the society. At the same time, the society was based on Varnasrama. According to the Varnasrama, society was divided into four major divisions, namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. The poor and unprivileged people lived in slums. Bonded labourers were also there. Professionals like carpenters, weavers, blacksmiths, masons, goldsmiths also lived there. Slavery also existed. Greater Social freedom prevailed among the upper classes.

### **Structured Essay-Type Questions**

**1. With reference to Rajendra Chola, explain the following :**

- (a) States against whom he was successful in the battlefield.
- (b) His naval achievement.
- (c) Patron of art and literature.

**Ans. (a) Rajendra Chola:** Like his father, Rajendra Chola was also a great ruler. He carried his arms right upto Central India and defeated the ruler of Gondwana. Like his father he too was a brave warrior. He completed the work of building a strong empire which his father had begun. He vanquished the Gangas and the Pallavas. Marching from his capital he reached Central India and the rulers of Gondwana were forced to submit to his arms. He also waged wars against the rulers of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Like his father he also

maintained a strong navy and defeated the rulers of Andaman, Nicobar and Malaya Islands.

- (b) To protect the extent of their vast empire the Chola rulers kept a strong army which consisted of infantry, cavalry, elephants and navy. The Cholas had built a strong naval fleet which helped them in making conquests in Malaya and other islands in the Indian Ocean and to carry on trade with Ceylon, East Indies, Persia etc.
- (c) The Chola rulers were not only great conquerors and efficient administrators but also great lovers of art and architecture. They built many beautiful temples, canals, roads, cities and palaces throughout their kingdom. They developed a unique form of temple-architecture. Their technique of building temples is known as Dravidian style. The chief feature of this style was the construction of a pyramid like structure over the deity room (or Garbha griha), which came to be known as Vimana.

The best example of Chola temple is the Brihadesvara or Shiva Temple at Tanjore built by the Chola kings. It is a wonderful piece of architecture. Another temple built by the Cholas, in their capital Gangaikonda Cholapuram, is a fine example of the Chola architecture. The designs and paintings on the walls of these temples are considered unique specimen of art by art critics like Smith and Fergusson. The art of making stone and metal images had also made rapid progress under the Chola rulers. The temples of the Cholas in South India were not the places of worship alone.

**2. With reference to the Chola Administration, explain the following :**

- (a) Their Central Government
- (b) Their Provincial Government

**Ans. (a) The Central Government:** The king was the central authority in the Chola administration. He was also

the head of the administrative machinery. He carried on the administration with the help of his ministers and other officers. The Central Government looked after external defence, internal peace and order, promotion of general prosperity and cultural progress of the people.

- (b) **The Provincial Government:** To carry on the administration efficiently and properly the Chola kingdom was divided into six provinces called Mandalams which were governed by the governors chosen from among the members of the royal family. The provinces were divided into divisions called Kottams and divisions into districts called Nadus. The districts were further divided into tehsils or Kurrams comprising a group of villages.

**3. With reference to the Local Self-Government of the Cholas, explain the following :**

- (a) Local units under the Cholas  
(b) Four kinds of popular assemblies.

**Ans. (a) Local Self-Government :** The Chola rulers allowed sufficient freedom to their local units, viz., villages and Kurrams, which were administered by the Panchayats whose members were elected by the people. The local units were generally autonomous in respect of income and expenditure and of police administration. They also enjoyed freedom in judicial matters. The Chola administration was based on democratic principles.

- (b) There were four kinds of popular assemblies in the kingdom which carried on the business of the government. The first assembly, which was known as the Nattar decided all cases in the district. The second assembly called the Nagarttar looked after the trade and commerce and took steps for the promotion of trade. The third assembly called the Ur discussed and solved the problems at the village level. The fourth

assembly was called the Sabha which confined its activities to solving the problems of the Brahmanas.

**4. With reference to Chola Literature, answer the following :**

- (a) Progress made by Tamil language under the Cholas.
- (b) Nayanars and Alvars.
- (c) Who was the writer of *Kalingatuparani*?

- Ans.** (a) Great achievements were made in the field of literature as well under the Chola rulers. During this period spectacular advance was made by regional languages, especially Tamil language which made a significant progress. In this period several Bhakti poets of Shaiva and Vaishnav sects, called Nayanars and Alvars respectively, composed several works in Tamil and preached the path of salvation through bhakti or devotion to the deity. Among the secular literature the name of Kambar stands supreme. Kambar wrote the *Tamil Ramayana*, which is considered the pride of Tamil literature. Pugalandi wrote *Nala Venba* based on the love story of King Nala and his consort Damayanti. Simplicity and sweetness are the two characteristics of this epic.
- (b) Nayanars and Alvars were bhakti poets of Shaiva and Vaishnav sects respectively. They composed several works in Tamil and preached the path of salvation through bhakti or devotion to the deity. Their works were collected in 8 volumes which are known as Tirumurais which is also considered as the fifth Veda.
- (c) *Kalingatuparani* was a great work of Jayamkonda. Vikramachola was a famous poet and Tamil writer in the court of Kulotunga II and Rajaraja II. Buddhamitra and Rawankashi wrote a treatise on grammar. A Jain poet, Amrit Sagar, wrote several works to enrich the Tamil literature.