

Chola Dynasty

The Great Cholas:

- The Sangam age came to an end around 3rd century AD and the Cholas became feudatories in Uraiyur.
- Their history is almost obscure from the 3rd century AD to 9th century.
- Kalabhras occupied the south India after the decline of Sangam age and the Chola hegemony was also lost after it.
- Kalabhras were finally driven out by the Pallavas.
- However, the Cholas became prominent in the 9th century with their capital at Tanjore and established an empire comprising the major portion of south India.
- They also extended their influence in Sri Lanka, Maldives and the Malaya Peninsula.
- Therefore, they are called as the Imperial Cholas.

Rulers:

Vijayalaya:

- The founder of the Imperial Cholas, who was at first a feudatory to the Pallavas.
- He captured Tanjore from Muttaraiyars in 815AD and built a temple for Durga.

Aditya:

- He was the son of Vijayalaya and further strengthened the empire.
- He put an end to the Pallava Kingdom by defeating Aparajita and annexed Tondaimandalam.

Parantaka I (907-955 AD):

- He was the son of Aditya who further extended the Chola kingdom.

- He captured Madurai from Pandya ruler Rajasimha II and assumed the title of Maduraikonda (capturer of Madurai).
- Parantaka I was a great builder of temples.
- He provided the Vimana of the famous Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram with a golden roof.
- He, however, suffered a defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna III in the famous battle of Tokkolam in 949 AD.

Partanka II:

- The revival of Chola power began from the reign of Partanka II, who recovered Tondaimandalam to re-established the dominance of the dynasty.

Rajaraja I (985-1014 AD):

- Chola empire gained its supremacy when Rajaraja Chola I ascended the throne in 985 AD.
- The Chola kingdom under him grew into an extensive, well-knit and organized empire possessing a powerful standing army and navy.
- He assumed a number of titles like 'Mummidi Chola', 'Jayankonda', 'Sivapadasekara' etc.
- He defeated the Chera ruler Bhaskaraviramana in the Battle of Kandalur Salai.
- He established the Chola authority over Pandya country by defeating its ruler Amarabhujanga.
- He conquered Gangavadi, Tadigaipadi and Nolambapadi of the Mysore region.
- He invaded Sri Lanka and annexed the northern part of it as the Sri Lankan king Mahindra V fled away from his country.
- The Cholas emerged victorious over the western Chalukyas of Kalyani.
- He defeated Satyasraya and captured the Raichur doab, Banavasi and other places.
- He restored the Vengi throne to its rulers Saktivarmana and Vimaladitya.

- Rajaraja I got his daughter Kundavai married to Vimaladitya.
- Rajaraja's last military achievement was a naval expedition against the Maldives which was conquered.
- He was a devout follower of Shaivism.
- He completed the construction of the famous Rajarajeswara temple or Brihadeshwara temple at Tanjore in 1010 AD. This temple dedicated to Shiva is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- He also helped in the construction of a Buddhist monastery at Nagapattinam.

Rajendra I (1014-1044 AD):

- He ruled jointly with his father for a few years and succeeded him in 1014 AD.
- He assumed number of titles such as 'Mudikondan', 'Gangaikondan', 'Kadaramkondan' and 'Pandita Cholan'.
- He had put down all his rebellions and the Chola empire was at its peak at the time of his death.
- He defeated the king of Sri Lanka, Mahindra V who attempted to recover the northern part of Ceylon from the Cholas.
- He seized the southern Sri Lanka too and made the whole of Sri Lanka a part of the Chola empire.
- He reasserted the Chola authority over the Cheras and Pandyas.
- He defeated the Jayasimha II, the western Chalukya king and the river Tungbhadra was recognised as the boundary between the Cholas and the Chalukyas.
- In one of his campaign in the north, he attacked Bengal and defeated the Pala ruler Mahipala in 1022 AD.
- To commemorate the occasion, he assumed the title of GangaikondaChola (the Chola conqueror of Ganga).
- He built the new capital near the mouth of the river Kaveri and called it Gangaikondacholapuram.
- He also constructed the famous Rajesvaram temple in the city.
- He invaded the Malaya Peninsula and Srivijaya empire that extended over Sumatra, Java and the neighbouring islands and controlled overseas trade route to China.

- He was a follower of Shaivism but he was tolerant towards the Vaishnavism and Buddhist sects.
- He made liberal endowments to the Lord Nataraja temple at Chidambaram.

Later Rulers:

- Rajadhiraja I succeeded his father Rajendra I in 1044 AD.
- He was an able ruler and put down the rebellion and hostile forces.
- He assumed the title of 'Vijayrajendra' after sacking the Kalyani.
- He lost his life in the battle with Chalukyan king Someswara I at Koppam.
- His brother Rajendra II succeeded him who defeated Someswara I in the battle of Kudalsangamam.
- The next king was Virarajendra I who defeated the Chalukyas and erected a pillar of victory on the banks of river Tungbhadra.
- Virarajendra died in 1070 AD and was succeeded by Kulottunga I (1070-1122 AD).
- Kulottunga I was the grandson of Rajendra I through his daughter Amungadevi.
- He succeeded with Chola throne and united the Vengi kingdom with the Chola empire.
- During his reign Sri Lanka became independent.
- He was also given the title of Sungantavirtta (who abolished tolls).
- Weak rulers followed Kulottunga I.
- Subsequently, Vengi and Mysore region were captured by the western Chalukyas.
- Under the Kulottunga III the central authority became weak.
- The rise of the feudatories like the Kadavaryas and the emergence of the Pandya power posed a challenge to Chola supremacy.
- Rajendra III was the last Chola king who was defeated by Jatavarman Sundarapandya II.
- The Chola kingdom was absorbed into the Pandya empire.