

CHAPTER 1

Where, When and How



The Big Idea

- various terms used to describe the Indian subcontinent
- analysing change over a thousand years through various sources of history
- broad historical trends in the medieval period

History Maker

Al Biruni was a great traveller, astronomer, mathematician, historian, geographer and writer who came to India in the early medieval period. He wrote over 146 books. His book on India is called *Tarikh al-Hind*.



At a Glance

Medieval Indian History

Different Names of India

- Bharatavarsha
- Jambudvipa
- Sapta Sindhu
- Hindustan
- Hind

Sources

- archaeological
- literary

Main Trends

- rise of regional kingdoms and Rajputs
- feudalism
- establishment of the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire
- Sufi and Bhakti Movements

Timeline

ancient period in Indian history

before c. 700 CE

c. 701–1200 CE

early medieval period in Indian history

late medieval period in Indian history

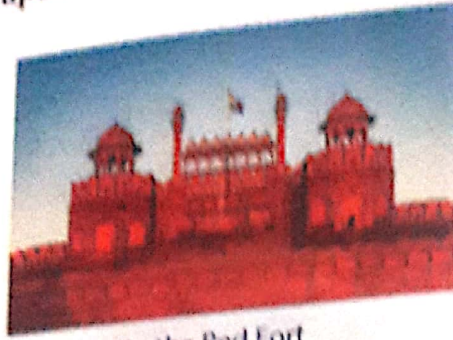
c. 1201–1750 CE

Warm-Up Exercise

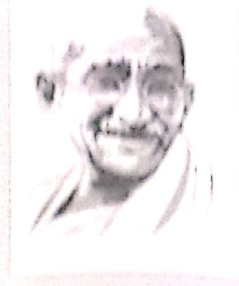
Given below are three iconic images of Indian history. Write 'ancient', 'medieval' or 'modern' below each image depending upon which period it belongs to.



♦ a punch-marked coin



♦ the Red Fort



♦ Mahatma Gandhi

What brings history alive for us? On what basis is history divided into different periods? These and other similar questions shall be answered in this chapter which introduces us to medieval Indian history.

PERIODISATION IN HISTORY

History, the study of events of the past, is commonly divided into the **ancient**, **medieval** and **modern** periods on the basis of changes in social, political and economic organisation, and shifts in ideas and beliefs. Each period is distinguished by specific characteristics and developments.

The actual **duration** of the medieval period varies from region to region.

- While the medieval period in Europe lasted between 600 and 1400 CE, the medieval period in India roughly extended from about 700–1750 CE.
- The medieval period in India under study is further sub-divided into:
 1. the **early medieval period** (c. 700–1200 CE)
 2. the **late medieval period** (c. 1200–1750 CE).

Analysing Sources of History

*uttaram yatsamudrasya himādreścaiva daksīnam
varsam tadbhāratam nāma bhāratī yatra santatiḥ*

'The country (varsam) that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bhāratam; there dwell the descendants of Bharata.'

Source: *Vishnu Purana*, 2.3.1

- ♦ How was India described in the *Vishnu Purana*?

VARIOUS TERMS FOR THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

India has been known by varied names through its different historical periods.

- In the ancient period, India was referred to by names such as **Bharatavarsha** and **Jambudvipa**. Bharatavarsha is mentioned in both the *Vishnu Purana* and the Rig Veda. South Asia was also called **Jambudvipa** or 'the land of the rose apple tree' in Puranic and Buddhist texts.
- Patanjali used the term 'Aryavarta' or land of the Aryas (literally, the good and the noble men) to denote the northern part of India lying between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas.

Word to Know

duration: the period of time during which something continues to happen or exist

- The Zend Avesta, sacred book of the Parsees, mentions **Sapta Sindhu** or 'the land of seven rivers' as the name for India.

- The ancient Greeks referred to the Indians as **Indoi** or 'people of the Indus'.

- During the medieval period, the name that gained popularity was **Hindustan**, along with the term **Hind**. These names are still used in present-day India and therefore, it is important to know how they came about.



1. The rulers of Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals called their Indian empire Hindustan.
 2. The term came to be used for the region of India lying between the rivers Indus and Brahmaputra and the Himalayan and Vindhyan mountain ranges.
 3. The river Indus or Sindhu formed the western frontier of India. The 'S' of Sindhu became 'H' in the languages of the visitors or invaders from the north-west.
 4. The people living on the eastern side of the river Hindu or Sindhu came to be called Hindus in medieval India.
 5. Thus 'the land of river Hindu' became Hindustan.
- India's present name is also derived from the river Indus.
 - While the name Hindustan continued to be popular throughout the medieval period, the geographical area which was covered by this name varied widely. For example:
 1. In the early medieval period, the name denoted the land lying between the river Indus and its tributaries and the land between rivers Ganga and Yamuna.
 2. In the late medieval period, the name came to denote much of what is today modern India, including south India.

SOURCES FOR STUDYING MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY

Just like a detective collects evidence to piece together the complete story of how a crime was committed, the historians use different types of sources to learn about the past and reconstruct history. These sources are a historian's tools to study the past.

Which sources to look out for while reconstructing medieval Indian history?

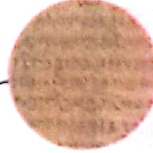
Archaeological Sources

The study of history through the material remains of human life is known as **archaeology**. Such sources may include monuments, paintings, sculptures, inscriptions and coins.



Monuments and Buildings

These structures can be big or small in size. Some are beautifully intact and others are in ruins. Forts, palaces, temples, mosques, clock towers, gardens and so on, are some examples.



Inscriptions

Inscriptions are writings engraved on solid surfaces such as metals, rocks, pillars and stone structures.



Coins

Coins in the medieval period were mainly made of metals such as silver, gold and some alloys. These had different scripts and figures inscribed on them.



Sculptures

The sculptures were made of bronze, wood or stone and depicted figures of gods and goddesses, and queens and kings. For example, the Nataraja or the dancing Shiva.



Paintings

Paintings can be found in the form of **murals**, portraits and **miniature** paintings on scrolls and pieces of paper compiled as books. Different styles of painting developed in different parts of India.



Literary Sources

Literary sources are found in the written form. They were written in many languages such as Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic, Urdu, regional languages and so on. In the early medieval period, paper was not used in India. The materials used for writing included palm leaves, bark of birch trees and animal skins. In the late medieval period, paper became the chief writing material.

Religious Written Sources

Religious texts such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and the sayings of saints such as *dohas* form a part of this literary source.

Autobiographies and Biographies

These are life stories of important individuals such as kings and emperors. They were written by the individual himself or by scholars residing at his court.

Court Chronicles

Several scholars wrote about the history of dynasties of the period. These texts were known as court chronicles.

Writings of Foreign Travellers

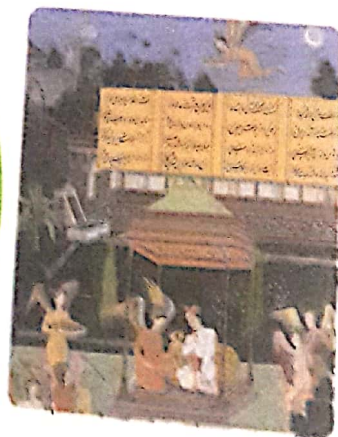
Many foreign travellers, scholars, pilgrims and royal ambassadors visited India during the medieval period and left behind an account of their journey and experiences.

Royal Decrees

Government documents or archives in the form of royal decrees or *farmans* issued by rulers form a part of this literary source.

Literary Compositions and Texts on Music

Non-religious Written Sources



Words to Know

mural: a large painting done on a wall

miniature: much smaller than things of the same kind

We shall read about the archaeological sources of history in detail as we study the various rulers and dynasties in medieval Indian history and the architecture of the period in this book. Let us first glance through the literary sources of medieval Indian history. You shall also engage with excerpts from some of these literary sources in this book.

Literary Sources of Medieval Indian History

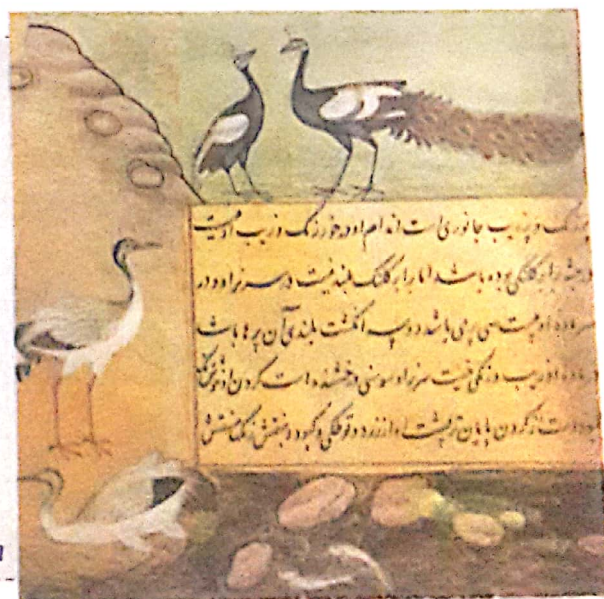
<i>Prithviraj Raso</i> by Chand Bardai	biography	an account of the Rajput ruler Prithviraj Chauhan's reign
<i>Humayunnama</i> by Gulbadan Begum	biography	tells us about the reign of the Mughal emperor Humayun
<i>Baburnama</i> (also known as <i>Tuzuk-i-Babri</i>)	autobiography	reveals the detailed attention Babur paid to the flora and fauna of Hindustan
<i>Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri</i>	autobiography	provides a fascinating insight into the court politics of the period and provides details of Jahangir's personal life
<i>Futuh-at-i-Firoz Shahi</i>	autobiography	written by sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq
Abd al-Qadir Badauni's <i>Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh</i> or <i>Selection of Chronicles</i>	court chronicle	deals with the reign of Babur, Humayun and Akbar
Barani's <i>Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi</i> or <i>Firoz Shah's History</i>	court chronicle	describes the history of the Delhi Sultanate
<i>Rajatarangini</i> by Kalhana	court chronicle	deals with the history of the rulers of Kashmir
Abul Fazl's <i>Akbarnama</i>	court chronicle	record of Akbar's reign by a court historian
<i>Ain-i-Akbari</i>	court chronicle	third volume of <i>Akbarnama</i> ; describes the administration under Akbar and includes statistical reports of his empire
<i>Rihla</i> by Ibn Battuta	account by a foreign traveller	traveller and scholar from Morocco; visited India during the Tughlaq rule; tells us about the geography of India
Al Biruni's <i>Tarikh al-Hind</i>	account by a foreign traveller	Al Biruni accompanied Mahmud Ghazni on his campaigns into northern India and left an account.
<i>The Journey Beyond Three Seas</i>	account by a foreign traveller	an account of Athanasius Nikitin's trip to India
<i>Mirat ul-Memalik</i> or <i>The Mirror of Countries</i>	account by a foreign traveller	Sidi Ali Reis was an Ottoman admiral whose travels to India and other countries are recorded in this book.
<i>a Sanskrit prashasti</i>	royal decree	in praise of the Delhi Sultan Balban

Connect to History

Calligraphy

- Calligraphy or the art of writing alphabets in an artistic manner was a common feature of the manuscripts written during the medieval period of Indian history.
- Floral and geometric motifs were used to decorate books and monuments of the period.
- Although the knowledge of calligraphy already existed in India, Persian influence led to the rise of a distinctive style.

◆ a page from *Baburnama*



Word to Know

statistical: using a group of numbers to represent facts or describe a situation

BROAD HISTORICAL TRENDS IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD IN INDIA

Before we delve deeper into the complex details of medieval Indian history, let us try and gain a broad understanding of the political, social, economic and cultural changes that took place during this period.

- The medieval period was marked by the rise of **regional kingdoms** throughout the country.
- An important group of people rose to prominence during this period, primarily as warriors and kings in northern and central India. These people were called the **Rajputs** (derived from 'Rajaputra' or 'the son of a ruler').
 1. The Rajputs claimed kshatriya caste status.
 2. Four clans played an important role in the history of this period—the Pratiharas, the Chauhans (Chahamanas), the Solankis and the Pawars (Paramaras). These clans called themselves the Agni Kula because they claimed to have originated directly from a sacrificial fire conducted by Sage Vashishtha on Mount Abu.
- Establishment of the **Delhi Sultanate** after the arrival of the Turks from the north-west and setting up of the **Mughal empire** were important political events of the period.
- The custom of granting land to nobles by the rulers in return for regular tributes and military help, was a significant political trend of the period.
- The important **social trends** of the medieval age included the increase in the number of new castes, the rise of tribal groups with their own

distinctive identities and customs and a sharp distinction between rural and urban areas.

- The flourishing of trade and commerce along with the introduction of a more systematic assessment of land revenue were the significant **economic trends** of the medieval period.
- The period also witnessed a revival of **Hinduism**.
- Religious reforms in the form of **Bhakti** and **Sufi movements** were major developments of the period.
- **Architecturally**, distinctive styles and technologies arose, which added to the grandeur and magnificence of medieval Indian buildings.

Be a Historian

RESEARCH AND CRITICAL THINKING

My Experiences in Hindustan by Sidi Ali Reis (Mirat ul-Memalik)

As soon as Humayun heard of our arrival he sent the Khanikhanan and other superior officers with 400 elephants and some thousand men to meet us, and, out of respect and regard for our glorious Padishah, we were accorded a brilliant reception. That same day the Khanikhanan prepared a great banquet in our honor; and as it is the custom in India to give audience in the evening, I was that night introduced with much pomp and ceremony into the Imperial hall. After my presentation I offered the Emperor a small gift, and a chronogram upon the conquest of India, also two gazels, all of which pleased the Padishah greatly.

Source: *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, Charles F Horne, ed.

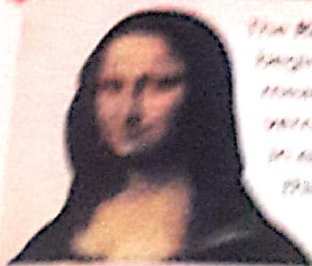
- Which custom of India has been described by Sidi Ali Reis?
- Find out what is a chronogram.

♦ a page from *Prithviraj Raso*



What Was Happening Elsewhere

REMARKS



• Mona Lisa by
Leonardo da Vinci

The *Rajatarangini* was a historical chronicle that dealt with the history of Kashmir. It was written by Kalhana, a Kashmiri scholar, in the 12th century. The work is a masterpiece of Sanskrit literature, written in a highly poetic and literary style. It is a valuable source of information about the history of Kashmir and the life of its rulers.

A new method of painting, called perspective, was introduced during the Renaissance in which artists used to draw objects and landscapes through a combination of geometry and anatomy.

Chapter Checklist

Tick (✓) the concepts you have understood.

The medieval period in India lasted roughly between 750-1550 CE and it was subdivided into the early and late medieval periods.

India has been known by different names such as Bharatavarsha, Aryavarta and Hindustan.

Inscriptions, coins, monuments, sculptures and paintings are the archaeological sources used to reconstruct the history of the period.

Court chronicles, biographies, autobiographies, texts on music and traveller's accounts form the literary sources of medieval Indian history.

The medieval period in Indian history had unique political, economic, social and cultural trends.

Let's Recall



I. Based on your understanding, tick (✓) the correct option.

- The common feature of manuscripts written in medieval period:
 - calligraphy
 - biographies
 - autobiographies
- The author of *Tarikh al-Hind* is:
 - Badauni
 - Ibn Battuta
 - Al Biruni
- A type of painting:
 - Nataraja
 - doha
 - miniature
- The foreign traveller Ibn Battuta hailed from:
 - France
 - Italy
 - Morocco
- A significant trend in the medieval period was the rise of this group:
 - Rajputs
 - Brahmanas
 - Republicans

II. State whether the following statements are true or false and rewrite the incorrect statements to correct them.

- India was called 'Sapta Sindhu' in the medieval period.
- Barani wrote the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*.
- Monuments, paintings and coins are literary sources.
- The *Akbarnama* was written by Chand Bardai.
- Al Biruni accompanied Muhammad Ghori to India.

New Kings and Kingdoms



The Big Idea

- emergence of new kings and kingdoms — the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas, Rashtrakutas, Chauhans, Ghaznavids and Cholas
- administration, economy and social life during the period

History Maker

Al-Masudi was a traveller and historian, who is also known as 'Herodotus of the Arabs'. He is known to have written an encyclopaedic history of the world, of which not much survives today. He visited the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom.



- the map of the world as envisioned by Al-Masudi

At a Glance

Regional Developments

New Kings and Kingdoms

- Gurjara-Pratiharas
- Palas
- Rashtrakutas
- Chauhans
- Cholas

administration

economy and social life

architecture and literature

Turkish Invasions

- Mahmud of Ghazni
- Muhammad Ghor
- role of Prithviraj Chauhan

Timeline

750 CE

Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas dominate northern India

1001-1027 CE

Mahmud of Ghazni invades India

1091 CE

First Battle of Tarnan

600 - 800 CE

801 - 1000 CE

1001 - 1200 CE

985 CE

Rajendra Chola ascends the throne

1012 CE

Rajendra I ascends the throne

1092 CE

Second Battle of Tarnan

The early period of medieval Indian history was marked by the scramble for power among the various Indian kingdoms in the north. It was also a period of political uncertainty caused by foreign invasions, which set the stage for the later events of Indian history as they evolved.

It also saw the rise of the Cholas in the south, which we shall look at closely through a case study in this chapter.

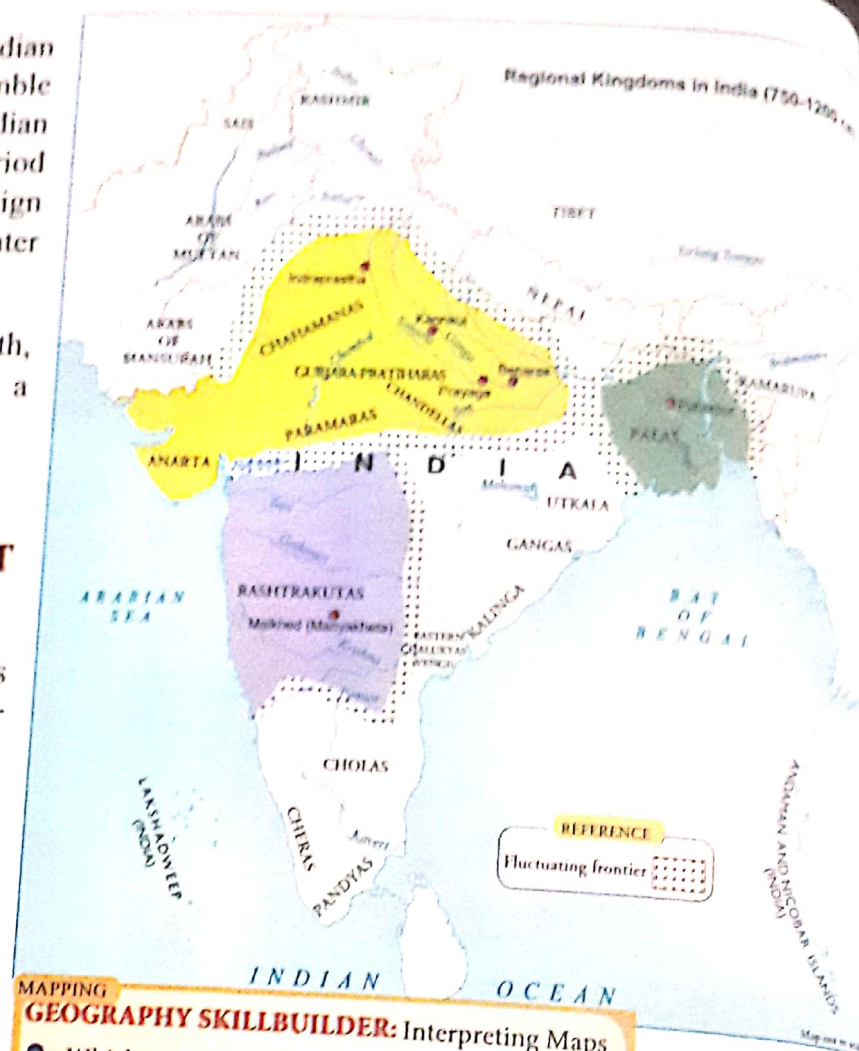
EMERGENCE OF NEW KINGDOMS IN NORTH, WEST AND CENTRAL INDIA

The 7th century saw the rise of chieftains or landlords known as **samantas** or subordinates in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. In due course of time, they acquired power and wealth and asserted their independence to establish their own kingdoms. For instance, Dantidurga defeated the Chalukyas and laid the foundation of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. On the other hand, chieftains such as the Gurjara-Pratiharas gave up their traditional occupation and successfully established their kingdom in Rajasthan.

The Tripartite Struggle

- Kannauj had become the centre of all political developments in north India during the long reign of king Harshavardhana.
- Kannauj's strategic position fostered trade and commerce, and the high fertility of soil encouraged agricultural growth. Therefore, all new kingdoms were equally interested in acquiring control over Kannauj.

The beginning of medieval Indian history was marked by a long-drawn struggle among the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Malwa, the Rashtrakutas of Deccan and the Palas of Bengal to establish their supremacy over **Kannauj**. This event is described by historians as the **Tripartite Struggle**.



MAPPING

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Which major dynasties of the medieval period are shown in the map?

However, the constant struggle weakened the three dynasties and led to their ultimate decline.

THE GURJARA-PRATIHARAS

The Gurjara-Pratiharas ruled over western India, i.e., in parts of western and central Rajasthan and parts of central India. Their location made it possible for them to resist the Arab incursions.

- They had initially been local officials but had carved out principalities for themselves.
- The Gurjara-Pratiharas had a long line of powerful rulers such as **Nagabhata I** (750–780 CE), the founder of the dynasty, **Vatsaraja** and **Bhoja**.



◆ Varaha on a Gurjara

- **Mihir Bhoja** (836-890 CE) established the largest empire in northern India, with Kannauj as his capital. He issued silver coins with the mark of Varaha, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He was called **Adivaraha**.
- The Gurjara-Pratiharas were also great patrons of learning and literature. **Rajasekhara**, the Sanskrit poet, was patronised by the Pratihara rulers.

THE PALAS



The Pala empire was founded by **Gopala** around 750 CE. His empire extended over the states of present-day Bengal, Bihar, parts of Odisha and Nepal.

- Later, under **Dharmapala** and his son **Devapala**, the empire extended over present-day Bengal, Kannauj, Odisha, Bihar, Assam, northern India and Nepal.
- The Tibetan chronicles inform us that the Palas were patrons of Buddhist learning, literature and education, donating generously to **Nalanda University**, a major centre of Buddhist learning.
- Dharmapala also established the famous **Vikramshila Buddhist University**.
- They had close trade and cultural relations with Southeast Asia, which added to their prosperity.
- Much later, **Mahipala** was defeated by Rajendra Chola of the Chola dynasty in 1023 CE.

- **Ramapala** (1082-1124 CE) was the last known king of the dynasty.
- The Khalji invasions eventually led to the decline of the Pala dynasty.

THE RASHTRAKUTAS

The Rashtrakuta dynasty was founded by **Dantidurga** or Dantivarman in the Deccan region, specifically in the area of present-day Maharashtra. It later included Maharashtra, Gujarat and Malwa.

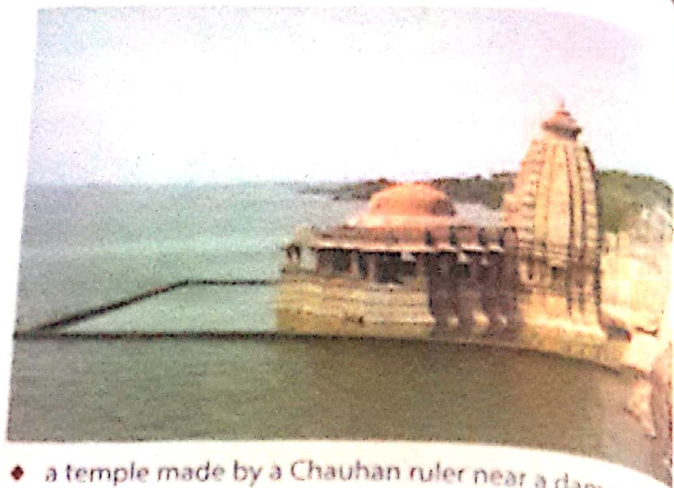
- The word *rashtra* in Sanskrit means 'territory' while *kuta* means 'chieftain'. Before acquiring the status of a ruling dynasty in the Deccan, the Rashtrakutas were chieftains in central India.
- The capital of the empire was at **Malkhed** or Manyakheta near modern Sholapur in Maharashtra.
- Apart from the Tripartite Struggle, they were in constant conflict with the Chalukyas of Vengi, the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai.
- The Rashtrakuta ruled for almost 200 years till the end of the 10th century.
- The greatest Rashtrakuta rulers were **Govinda III** (793-814 CE), **Amoghavarsha** (814-878 CE) and **Krishna III** (939-968 CE).
- The rock-cut cave temples at Ellora and Elephanta in modern-day Maharashtra are the legacy of the Rashtrakuta rulers.



THE CHAUHANS

The Chauhan or Chahaman dynasty of Ajmer was established in the 11th century CE. Before establishing their dynasty, the Chauhans were **vassals** of the Gurjara-Pratiharas.

- One of the greatest rulers of the Chauhan dynasty was **Vigraharaj**, who captured Chittor.
- **Prithviraj Chauhan**, the most famous Chauhan ruler, ascended the throne of Ajmer in 1177 CE.
- He followed a vigorous policy of expansion wherein his most famous expedition was against the Chandellas of Bundelkhand.
- The events of Prithviraj's reign have also been described in *Prithviraj Raso*, composed by his own court poet, Chand Bardai.
- Prithviraj Chauhan was engaged in the **First and Second Battles of Tarain** against Muhammad Ghori in 1191 CE and 1192 CE, respectively.
- He was defeated and imprisoned after the Second Battle of Tarain.



♦ a temple made by a Chauhan ruler near a dam on the Banas River in Rajasthan

A Snapshot of Socio-Political and Economic Set-up during the Period

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

THE KING

- The king was the head of administration.
- He was the commander-in-chief of the army and head of the justice system.
- His position was hereditary (although rules of succession were not fixed).
- He used titles such as **maharajadhiraja** and **chakravartin**.
- He had to contend with the power of other **semanas**.

THE MINISTERS

- A council of ministers advised the king.
- The **mahamantri** (prime minister) was the most important.
- Other ministers were **akshapatalika** (revenue minister), **sandhi vigrahika** (foreign minister), **mahapratihara** (guard of the royal palace), **rajapurohita** (royal priest), and **mahasenapati** (commander of the army).

THE TERRITORY

- The directly administered territories were divided into **bhuktis** (provinces) and **mandalas** or **visayas** (districts).
- The governor of a province, known as **uparika**, collected revenue and maintained law and order with the help of the army.
- The head of a district was known as the **visayapati**.
- The vassal chiefs were independent, but had to pay a fixed tribute as well as supply a quota of troops to the overlord, otherwise there were conflicts.
- Smaller chiefs were **bhogapatis**, who eventually merged with the **visayapatis**.

Word to Know

vassal: a person under the protection of a ruler to whom he owes tribute and military help

MILITARY ORGANISATION

- ✿ Infantry, cavalry and a large number of war elephants were maintained.
- ✿ The Palas had the largest number of war elephants.
- ✿ The Gurjara-Pratiharas had the finest cavalry.
- ✿ The Rashtrakutas had a large number of forts **garrisoned** by special troops.

VILLAGE AND TOWN ADMINISTRATION

The Village:

- ✿ The village was the basic unit of administration headed by the **gramapati**, who was also the accountant.
- ✿ Along with him, village committees looked after local schools, roads, water tanks, temples, and so on.

The Towns:

- ✿ Law and order issues were addressed by the **kotwal**.
- ✿ Town committees and head of trade guilds took part in the administration.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

The Society:

- ✿ The caste system was the basis of social life.
- ✿ The brahmanas and Rajputs (kshatriyas) had the highest position.
- ✿ The vaishyas (traders and merchants) took part in local administration.

The Economy:

- ✿ Agriculture was the main occupation.
- ✿ Trade relations with China, Southeast Asia and the Western world flourished.
- ✿ The main items of export were spices, textiles and precious stones.
- ✿ The main imports comprised horses, precious metals and stones.
- ✿ Merchants operated through guilds known as **shrenis**.
- ✿ The chiefs of the guilds, called **shrestins**, occupied important posts in city administration.

Agrahara or Brahmadeya

The brahmanas and the learned men were often given the land, as well as the right to collect the revenue from the land. Such grants were called **agrahara** or **brahmadeya**. The brahmanas had no further obligation to the king. They and their families could live comfortably off the revenue of the land.

Word to Know **garrison:** a group of soldiers residing inside a fort in order to defend it

THE TURKISH INVASIONS

The Ghaznavids

- Mahmud of Ghazni (998–1030 CE) was a Turkish conqueror who established his empire in Ghazni (present-day Afghanistan).
- He raided India 17 times between 1001 and 1027 CE at places like Punjab, Mathura, Multan and Thaneshwar.
- His most daring raids were at Kannauj in 1018 CE and Somnath in 1025 CE.

- Mahmud did not wish to rule over India. He plundered India and carried away wealth, artisans and learned men.
- Mahmud was closely associated with the rebirth of Iranian culture. With the wealth taken from India, he decorated the palaces, mosques and tombs in Ghazni. Many scholars resided at his court. Among them Firdausi, the author of *Shahnama* (the biography of Mahmud), was the most famous.



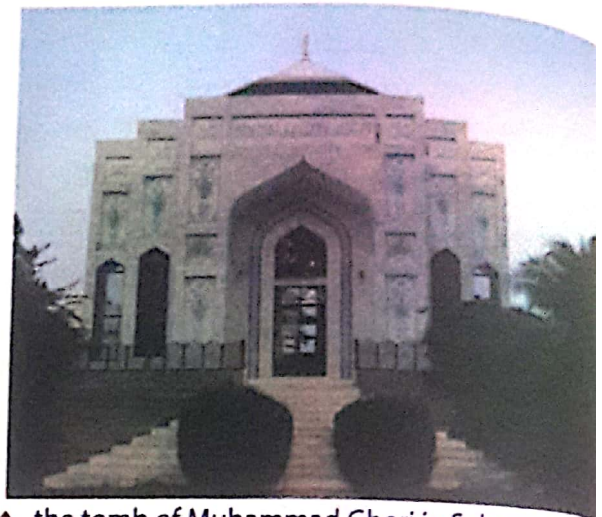
◆ a page from the *Shahnama*

Mahmud's attacks were devastating in nature as they showed the weakness of the existing kingdoms and paved the way for future invasions.

Muhammad Ghori and Prithviraj Chauhan

Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghori, ascended the throne of Ghazni in 1173 CE. He conquered Multan en route to Delhi and the Gangetic Valley and made Punjab his base.

- Around this time, Prithviraj Chauhan ascended the throne of Ajmer, defeated the Chandellas and occupied Delhi.
- Muhammad Ghori came into conflict with Prithviraj Chauhan, both desiring the control of the Gangetic Valley and Punjab.
- The **First Battle of Tarain** in 1191 CE was won by Prithviraj Chauhan.
- The **Second Battle of Tarain** in 1192 CE led to Muhammad Ghori's victory and his control over Delhi, Bihar, Bengal and the Ganga-Yamuna Doab.
- After the Battles of Tarain, Muhammad Ghori returned to Ghazni leaving the control of Indian territory in the hands of his trusted slave, Qutbuddin Aibak.



◆ the tomb of Muhammad Ghori in Sohawa, Pakistan

CASE STUDY

THE CHOLAS

The Cholas ruled in South India between 800 CE and 1200 CE. The founder of the empire was **Vijayalaya** who was initially a feudatory of the Pallavas. Vijayalaya built the capital town of Thanjavur, a beautiful city of temples. The glory of the Chola dynasty is, in large measure, attributed to **Rajaraja Chola I** and **Rajendra Chola I**.

Rajaraja Chola I

The expansionist policies of **Rajaraja Chola I** led him to defeat the Cheras, the Pandyas, the Ganga Dynasty in Karnataka and Chalukyas of Vengi.



a mural showing Rajaraja Chola I with his guru at Brihadeshwara

- He annexed the northern part of Sri Lanka and the Maldives islands to his empire.

- His kingdom was organised on the lines of efficiency—both economic and military.

Rajendra Chola I (1012–1044 CE)

Rajendra I continued with his father Rajaraja Chola's expansionist policies.

- He defeated the Chalukyas in the west and the Pala rulers of Bengal and completed the conquest of Sri Lanka.
- He marched across Kalinga to Bengal, crossing the Ganga and defeated the local rulers and assumed the title of **Gangaikondachola** or the Chola conqueror of Ganga and built a new capital near the river Kaveri called **Gangaikondacholapuram** or the 'city of the Chola conqueror of the Ganga'.



a depiction of Rajendra Chola I in battle

- Rajendra I also defeated the ruler of the Sri Vijaya empire, which extended over the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Java and neighbouring islands. He developed a navy for these expeditions.

Socio-Political and Economic Set-up during the Chola Period

Administration of the Empire



- The Chola empire was headed by the king and a council of ministers to aid and advise him.
- The Cholas maintained a large army comprising cavalry, infantry, elephants and a strong navy.





the ardhnanarishvara (half Shiva, half Parvati) at Gangaikondacholapuram

- The empire was divided into **mandalam**s or provinces. Each province was further divided into **valanadu** or districts and **nadu** or groups of villages. A large village was administered separately and called a **taniyur**.

- At times, princes were appointed as the governors of provinces.

- Officials were usually paid by granting them assignments of revenue-bearing lands.

Village and Town Administration

The Chola local self-government included two assemblies—the **ur** and the **sabha** or **mahasabha**.

- The inscriptions (particularly the one at Uttaramerur in Chingleput, Tamil Nadu) describe the village assemblies in great detail.

They tell us that the **ur** was a general assembly of all classes of people, who owned land within the village. In contrast, the **sabha** was an assembly found in villages where brahmanas owned all the land as **brahmadeya** grants.

- As the Chola rulers granted land to a large number of brahmanas, a number of brahmana settlements emerged in the Chola empire.

- The **sabha** operated through different committees to look after various aspects of local administration including temples, gardens, irrigation, assessment of land revenue, maintenance of law and order, and so on.



a Chola statue in bronze

- The **nagaram** was an assembly found in towns and cities. Its members were mainly traders, merchants and sometimes artisans. The **nagaram** played an important role in urban administration.



a Chola bronze statue of Nataraj

Types of Land

vellanvagai	land of non-brahmana peasant proprietors
brahmadeya	land gifted to brahmanas
shalabhoga	land for the maintenance of a school
devadana, tirunamattukkani	land gifted to temples
pallichchhandam	land donated to Jaina institutions

Economy

The Cholas encouraged trade and commerce, and the Coromandel and Malabar coasts were centres of India's trade with Southeast Asia.

- An elaborate land survey was carried out to fix the government's share of land revenue.
- Taxes were also collected from tolls on trade, professions and from the plunder of neighbouring territories.

Temples

The resources and extent of the Chola empire enabled the rulers to build great capitals and temples.



sculpture of an elephant at the Brihadeshwara Temple

- These temples were the centre of cultural life acting as an audience hall and a place for other activities such as ceremonial dances performed by the devadasis.

- They were also a hub of economic and social life.

- The temple was a miniature city or palace with living rooms for priests.
- The temples usually enjoyed revenue-free grants from rulers and donations from wealthy merchants.

Did You Know?

The style of temple architecture was known as **Dravida**. The building of storey upon storey above the chief deity room, called **garbhagriha**, was the main feature of the Dravida style of temple building.

Chola Inscriptions

Our main sources of information on the Chola dynasty and the socio-economic life of the people are the inscriptions of the period. The Tamil copper-plate inscriptions recorded title deeds of land grants, and also the conquests and events.

- Inscriptions inside the Brihadeshwara Temple at Thanjavur are useful in reconstructing the history of the period.
- We get to know about local self-government in the Chola empire primarily from the details provided in the Chola king Parantaka I's Uttaramerur temple inscriptions of 919 CE and 921 CE.
- Some of these also showed the royal seal of the dynasty. Marks of masons are sometimes found on these inscriptions.
- They also tell us about the conquests of king Rajaraja Chola and the gifts made to the temple.
- The systematic way of giving donations informs us about the organisational capabilities of the ruler.
- Land grants were given to the brahmanas, either individually or collectively.

Analysing Sources of History

ANALYTICAL SKILLS

Hail! Prosperity! This (is) the edict (sasana) of Rajaraja (alias) Rajakesarivarman, which is cherished by the multitude of the diadems of (i.e., which is obeyed by) the crowd of all princes. [3]

On the twentieth day of the twenty-sixth year (of the reign) of Ko-Rajakesarivarman, alias Sri-Rajarajadeva, who — while (his) heart rejoiced, that, like the goddess of fortune, the goddess of the great earth had become his wife, — in his life of growing strength, during which, having been pleased to cut the vessal (kalamm) (in) the hall (at) Kandalur, [4] he conquered by his army, which was victorious in great battles, Vengainadu, Ganga-padi, Tadigai-padi, Nulamba-padi, Kudamalai-nadu, Kollam, Kalingam, Ira-mandalam, (the conquest of which) gave fame (i.e., made (him) famous) (in) the eight directions, and the seven and a half lakshas of Iratta-padi, — deprived the Seriyas (i.e., the Pandyas) of their splendour, while (he) was resplendent (to such a degree) that (he) was worthy to be worshipped everywhere; — having been pleased to make gifts (in) the royal bathing-hall (tiru-manjana-salai) to the east (of the hall) of Irumadi-Soran within the Thanjavur palace (koyil), the lord (udaiyar).

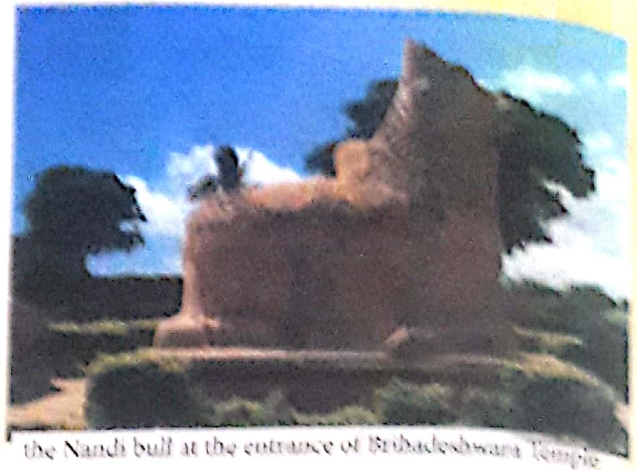
Source: Translation of the Brihadeshwara Temple Inscription, Thanjavur, No. 1 & 2 on the north and west walls, upper tier.

- What does this inscription tell us about the conquests of Rajaraja I?

Language and Literature

The Chola rulers patronised art and literature.

- Popular Bhakti saints called **nayanars** and **alvars**, who were devotees of Shiva and Vishnu, respectively, flourished in the Tamil region between the 6th and 9th centuries. They composed oral Bhakti poetry.
- The age of **Kamban** is considered the golden age of Tamil literature and his *Ramayana* is considered a classic in Tamil literature.

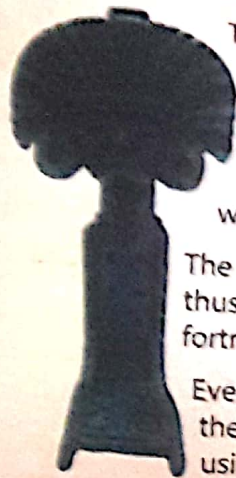


the Nandi bull at the entrance of Brihadishwara Temple

What Was Happening Elsewhere

GLOBAL CONNECT

INCAS



The Incas lived in South America between 1200 and 1535 *cs.* Manco Capac laid the foundation of the Inca dynasty in the 13th century. The Inca rule began with the conquest of the Moche culture in Peru. Later, the Incas under Tupac Yupanqui set out to conquer South America. He took on the title 'Pachacuti' which meant destroyer and put the Inca empire on a startling path of expansion and conquest. His conquests were continued by his son and heir, Topa Inca. In fact, the Incas were the largest native American civilisation that ever existed.

The Incas are remembered for their enormous fortresses which they built on top of steep mountains thus enabling them to defend themselves against their enemies. One of the most famous Inca fortresses is Sacasahuman located in Cuzco, the Inca capital.

Even though the Incas had no access to the wheel, they built a sophisticated road system to connect the villages. The Incas did not have a written language. Instead they used a record keeping system using knots on ropes called Quipus.

Chapter Checklist

Tick (✓) the concepts you have understood.

The early period of medieval Indian history led to the establishment of many small regional kingdoms throughout India. ☐

The Palas, Rashtrakutas and Gurjara-Pratiharas were engaged in a tripartite struggle to acquire control over Kannauj. ☐

The First and Second Battles of Tarain were fought between Prithviraj Chauhan and Muhammad Ghori in 1191 CE and 1192 CE, respectively. ☐

The rock-cut temples of Ellora and Elephanta in modern-day Maharashtra are the legacy of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. ☐

The king was the head of the administration, commander-in-chief of the army and dispenser of justice. ☐

North India was invaded many times in 11th and 12th centuries by Muslim rulers such as Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori. ☐

Rajaraja I and Rajendra I were the two famous Chola rulers. ☐

Inscriptions are the most important sources of the history for the Cholas. ☐

I. Based on your understanding, tick (✓) the correct option.

- The founder of the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty was:
 - Nagabhata I
 - Bhoja
 - Varaharaja
- Which dynasties were engaged in Tripartite Struggle for Kannauj?
 - Gurjara-Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas, Solankis
 - Palas, Rashtrakutas, Gurjara-Pratiharas
 - Palas, Rashtrakutas, Chahamanas
- The Pala king who established the Vikramshila University was:
 - Gopala
 - Devapala
 - Dharmapala
- How many times did Mahmud of Ghazni raid northern India?
 - 12
 - 15
 - 17
- The capital of the Rashtrakutas was at:
 - Malikhet
 - Kannauj
 - Chitor

II. State whether the following statements are true or false and rewrite the incorrect statements to correct them.

- Prithviraj Chauhan defeated Mahmud of Ghazni in the First Battle of Taram.
- Malikhet was the capital of the Pallavas.
- The Rajputs were the dominant force in southern India during the medieval period.
- The caste system formed the basis of the new kingdoms that arose in the 8th century.
- The governor of a province was known as the uparika.

III. Answer the following in one sentence.

- Name two Pala rulers who controlled the Ganga Plain.
- Which inscription describes the functions of local self-government during the Chola period?
- Who was the founder of the Chola empire? Where was their capital?
- Which officer addressed the issue of law and order during the 7th century?
- What is the meaning of 'Gangalkondachola'? Who adopted this title?

IV. Answer the following questions in brief.

- Discuss the Tripartite Struggle among the Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas.
- Who was Prithviraj Chauhan? Write a short note.
- Why did Mahmud of Ghazni raid India 17 times between 1001 and 1027 ce? What was the impact of his raids?
- Write a note on art and literature during the Chola period.
- How were the temples of the Chola period centres of socio-economic cultural life?

V. Answer the following questions in detail.

- Elaborate on the differences between the Turkish invaders—Ghazni and Ghori.
- Write a note on the Chola administration.
- What do you know about 200 years of the Rashtrakuta reign?
- Why can Rajendra Chola I be considered a true successor of his father Rajaraja Chola I?
- How are the Chola inscriptions useful in reconstructing the history of the period?

VI. Look at the photograph of the present-day Somnath Temple and answer the following questions.

1. Who attacked this temple?
2. Why did he attack parts of India during this period?



Intrapersonal

My History Corner

Role-play: Imagine yourself as the kotwal of a medieval Indian town. There has been a robbery and the thieves are on the run. What steps will you take to restore the lost valuables and repose people's trust in law and order?

HOTS:

- ❧ Why was the construction of huge temples important for the empires of medieval India?
- ❧ What was the significance of the Nalanda and Vikramshila universities in Indian history?
- ❧ 'Taxes from peasants and traders, as well as tributes from the local lords was the source of income of the kings in north India during this period.' Justify this statement on the basis of the socio-political and economic set-up of the period.

a temple complex at Gangaikondacholapuram

