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Medieval Indian History

Complete notes from the early medieval kingdoms to the Third Battle of Panipat, with Prelims Fact boxes, quick-revision panels and previous year questions.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

38	8	268
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FROM SIND TO PANIPAT: C. 650–1761

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Arabs conquer Sind	Second battle of Tarain	Delhi Sultanate begins	Vijayanagara founded	First battle of Panipat	Akbar's accession	Shivaji crowned	Aurangzeb dies	Third battle of Panipat



IN THIS BOOK

I	Dawn of Medieval India	II	Dynasties of North India	III	Kingdoms of South India	IV	The Era of Sultanate
V	The Era of Mughals	VI	The Maratha Empire	VII	Religious Movements	VIII	Quick Revision

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Updated to November 2026

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Medieval Indian History for UPSC

Notes for UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination and Mains General Studies Paper I

Prelims 2027 Edition · Compiled November 2026 · Compiled by Arvind KrS

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07

Chola Dynasty

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS History of India and Indian National Movement

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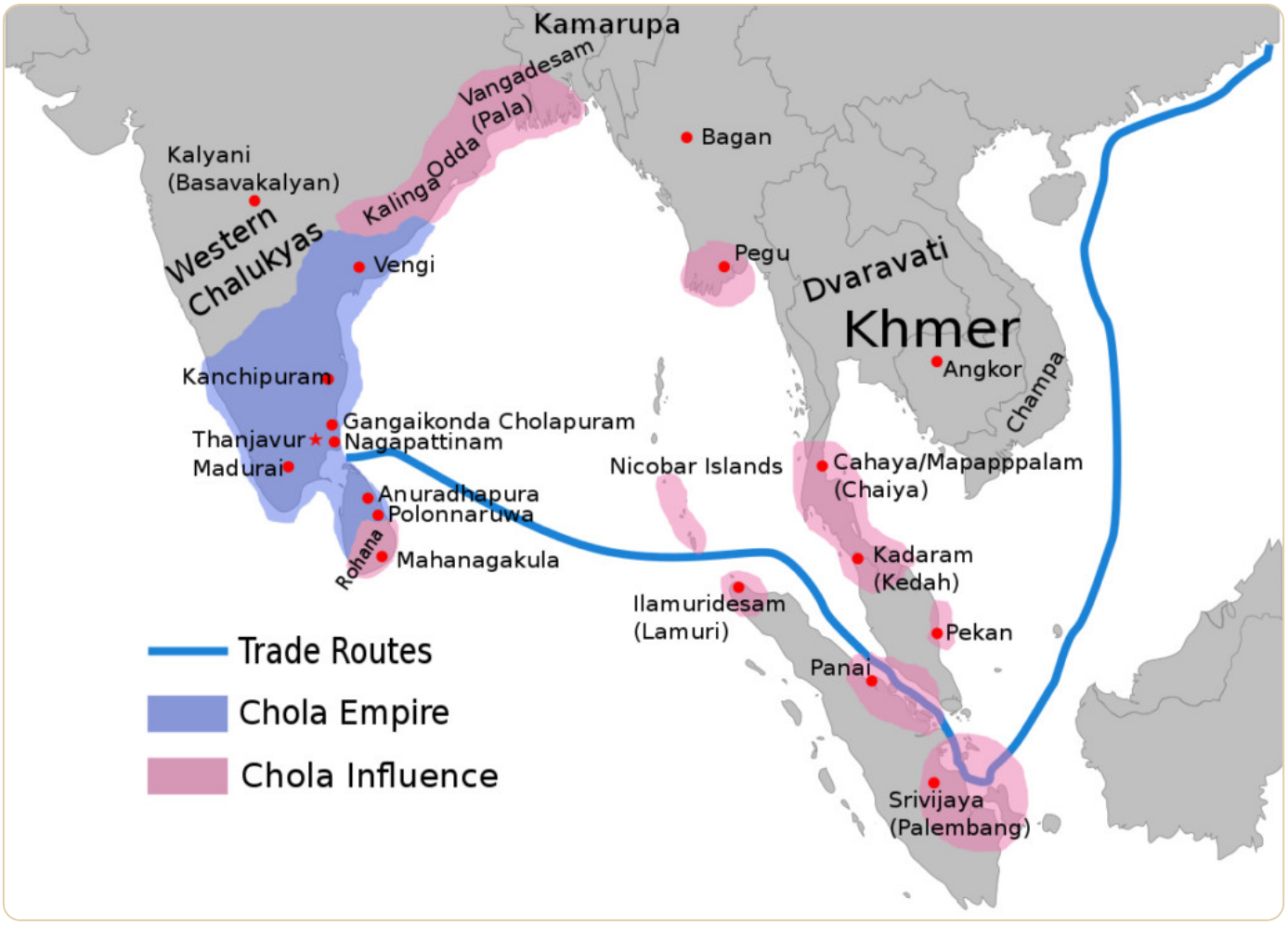
- The history of medieval south India has its separate space in the study of political, social, and economic realms of the society. The **history of medieval India in north is marred by extreme turmoil** due to rising and falling empires. But the **history of medieval south is relatively stable**.
- The **Tamil country was ruled by three dynasties namely the Chera, Chola and Pandyas** during the **Sangam Age.**
- The political history of these dynasties can be traced from the literary references like **Sangam literature**, **the records of Greek authors like Megasthenes, Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy, Ashokan inscriptions** which mention the **Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers** on the south of the Mauryan empire, **Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga.**
- After the end of the **Gupta dynasty** a little after the fifth Century AD, a process of political fragmentation started in the whole subcontinent. Feudatories and subjugated powers took the opportunity to become independent which led to **emergence of small kingdoms**. Rise of small Kingdoms increased rivalry and competition to gain political supremacy.
- **By 7th Century AD the Pallavas of Kanchi, Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai emerged to be the three major states.** This phase after the Guptas saw far more expansion of the agrarian

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economy. We also notice the march of **triumphant Brahmanism** with the beginning of the **construction of stone temples for Shiva and Vishnu in Tamil Nadu under Pallavas** and **in Karnataka under Chalukyas of Badami.**

Later Cholas

- **After the end of the Sangam era, the Cholas became feudatories in Uraiyur.** They again came into prominence in the **9th Century AD** when they established an empire in South India. **Tanjore became the capital of Chola Kingdom.**
- **Cholas extended their dominance in Sri Lanka and Malay Peninsula.** These Cholas colonized the South East Asian Countries and had the most powerful army and navy of the world at that time.



01 Important Rulers of Chola Dynasty

Vijayalaya Chola (848– 871 AD)

- **Vijayalaya Chola was the founder of the Imperial Chola empire.** He ruled over the region to the **north of the river Kaveri.** Vijayalaya took advantage of fight between the Pandyas and Pallavas and rose into prominence by **capturing Thanjavur and the surrounding regions from the Elango Muttaraiyars**, who was the final ruler of mutharaiyar dynasty.

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- After capturing Tanjavur, Vijayalaya built a temple of **Goddess Nishumbhasudini (Durga)**. He also undertook the **renovation of the city of Thanjavur.**
- Shortly after Vijayalaya's capture of Thanjavur, the Pandyan king Varagunavarman II and Pallava King Nandivarman III joined hands to reduce the growing prowess of Chola power under Vijayalaya.
- Vijayalaya Chola, a veteran of many battles, was getting old and thus handed the control of the army to the crown **prince Aditya I**. Soon, Aditya I succeeded his father as the emperor after his death in 871 AD.
- **Narttamalai, Pudukkottai** has a solesvara temple attributed to vijayalaya.

Rajaraja Chola I (985 – 1014 AD)

- **Rajaraja Chola I, born as Arulmozhi Varman**, was one of the greatest emperors of the Chola Empire who ruled between **985 and 1014 AD**.
- In his reign, the Cholas **expanded beyond South India stretching from Kalinga in the north to Sri Lanka in the south.** Rajaraja I possessed a **strong army and a considerable navy**. He fought many battles with the Chalukyas in the north and the Pandyas in the south.
- He followed the **Shaivism school of Hinduism** but was **tolerant towards other faiths**. In 1010, Raja Raja built the **Brihadesvara temple in Thanjavur dedicated to Lord Shiva.** He also helped in the construction of a **Buddhist monastery at Nagapattinam.**
- Rajaraja I was involved in many successful military conquests during his reign. The extent of the Chola Empire under Rajaraja I included the Pandya, Chera and the Tondaimandalam regions of Tamil Nadu, the Gangavadi, Nolambapadi and northern part of Ceylon. **Rajaraja's last military achievement was a naval expedition against the Maldives Islands.**
- Rajaraja Chola I died in 1014 AD and was **succeeded by his son Rajendra Chola**, who was declared as the crown prince in 1012 AD.
- The powerful standing army and a great navy organized under Rajaraja Chola-I achieved even greater heights under Rajendra Chola.

◆ PRELIMS FACT **RAJARAJA I: KEY FACTS**

- Titles: **Mummudi Chola** (ruler of the Chola, Pandya and Chera lands) and **Sivapadasekhara**.
- His navy destroyed the ships at **Kandalur Salai** (Kerala), c. 988.
- In 993 his army sacked **Anuradhapura**; **Polonnaruwa** became the Chola provincial capital, renamed **Jananathamangalam**.
- He began a **land survey** (c. 1000), and called his Thanjavur temple **Rajarajeshvaram**; it is now known as the Brihadisvara.

Rajendra Chola–I (1014– 44 AD)

- Rajendra Chola is considered as one of the greatest rulers and military generals of South India. He succeeded **his father Rajaraja Chola I in 1014 AD**.
- Rajendra had demonstrated his military leadership skills during his father's reign. After becoming the ruler, he **continued his father's policy of aggressive conquests and expansion**.

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- Apart from reaching northwards to **river Ganga** and moving overseas **to Maldives and Sri Lanka**, he also invaded the **Southeast Asian territories of Srivijaya in Malaysia, Indonesia and southern Thailand** making the Chola empire one of the most powerful empires of India.
- His important conquests are as under :
  - When Mahinda V, the King of Sri Lanka attempted to recover the northern part of Sri Lanka from the Cholas, Rajendra defeated him and seized even the southern Sri Lanka, thus taking **control of the whole of Sri Lanka.**
  - He reasserted the Chola authority over the Chera and Pandya countries.
  - He defeated Jayasimha II, the Western Chalukya king and consequently, river Tungabhadra was recognized as the boundary between the Cholas and the Chalukyas.
  - His most significant military expedition was of North India. The Chola army **crossed the Ganges** by defeating a number of rulers on its way. **Rajendra defeated Mahipala I of Bengal.** To commemorate this successful north-Indian campaign, **Rajendra founded the city of Gangaikondacholapuram and constructed the famous Gangaikondacholisvaram temple in the city.** He also excavated a large irrigation tank called Cholagangam on the western side of the city.
  - Another famous venture of Rajendra was his **naval expedition to Kadaram or Srivijaya**. It is difficult to pin point the real objective of the expedition. The naval expedition was a complete success as the Chola forces occupied a lot of places. But it was only temporary and no permanent annexation of these places was contemplated. **He assumed the title Kadaramkondan.**
- Like his father, **Rajendra I also followed Shaivism**. He built a **temple for Lord Shiva at the new capital Gangaikonda Cholapuram** and made liberal endowments to this temple and to the **Lord Nataraja temple located in Chidambaram.**
  - Rajendra I was **tolerant towards other religions and sects** including the Vaishnava and Buddhist sects.
- He established many educational institutes in his empire, for this he got the title **Pandita chola.**
- After the death of Rajendra I, his three successors were also killed in short time.

◆ PRELIMS FACT THE SRIVIJAYA RAID, 1025

- Launched in 1025 against **Srivijaya**, the maritime power of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula; its capital **Palembang** was the first city sacked.
- The Srivijaya king **Sangrama Vijayottungavarman** was taken prisoner, according to the Thanjavur inscription.
- **Kadaram** is identified with **Kedah** in present-day Malaysia.
- Suggested motives include Srivijaya's obstruction of Chola trade with China.

Kulathunga Chola I

- **Kulathunga Chola** I, grandson of Rajendra chola preserved the legacy of Imperial Cholas.
- He aboilished many taxes and got the title sungam tavirtta.
- He sent trade embassys to China
- He united the Vengi kingdom with the Chola Empire.
- He was contemporary to Ramanujacharya.

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Rajendra III

- **Rajendra III** was the **last Chola king** who was **defeated by Jatavarman Sundarapandya I**
- On the ruins of Chola empire Pandya and Hoysala kingdom came into existence.

02 Polity

- The system of governance under Cholas was **monarchical.** Besides **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** and **Thanjavur, Madurai and Kanchipuram** acted as **regional capitals under Rajendra I** where occasional courts were held.
- The **King was supreme with absolute authority and issued oral commands to officers** as and when needed. As there was **no formal legislative process**, the fairness of the King's order depended on his **intuition, morality and belief.**

03 Administration

- The Chola kingship was **hereditary in nature.** King was centre of all the power in which all the decision making power was vested, though he was **aided and advised by the council of ministers** on different matters.
- Chola Empire was divided into **provincial, district and local administration.** There was elaborate administrative machinery comprising various **officials called Perundanam and Sirudanam.**

04 Provincial Administration

- The Chola Empire was divided into **mandalams** and each mandalam into **valanadus and nadus.** In each nadu there were a number of **autonomous villages.**
- The **royal princes or officers were in charge of mandalams.** The **valanadu was under Periyanattar** and **nadu under Nattar.** The **town was known as Nagaram** and it was under the administration of a council called **Nagarattar.**

05 Village Assemblies

- The **system of village autonomy with sabhas and their committees** developed through the ages and reached its culmination during the Chola rule.
- Two inscriptions belonging to the period of **Parantaka I** found at **Uttaramerur** provide details of the formation and functions of village councils. The **local administration was vested in village.** Village administration was quite powerful and had the **power to collect revenue.**

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- Basically there was **two type of villages**.
  - The first type was called **ur**. This type of village was **consisted of people from different caste**.
  - The second type of village was called **agrahara**. In this type **only the caste Brahmins** were settled. Most of the **land in agrahara was tax free.**
- The **affairs of the village** were managed by **executive committees**. In this committee **only educated person owning property were elected** by drawing lots or by rotation. These members had to retire **every three years.**
- There were other committees for helping in the assessment and collection of land revenue for the maintenance of law and order, justice etc. One of the important committee was the **tank committee** which looked after the **distribution of water to the fields.**
- The **mahasabha** could settle new lands and exercise ownership rights over them. It could also raise loans for the village and levy taxes.
- The self-government enjoyed by the Chola villages was a well thought out system.

◆ PRELIMS FACT UTTARAMERUR ELECTION RULES

- The village was divided into **30 wards**, one member being chosen from each.
- A candidate needed more than a quarter **veli** of tax-paying land, a house on his own site, an age of **35 to 70**, and knowledge of Vedic texts.
- Selection was by **kudavolai** (pot-ticket): names were written on tickets, put in a pot, and a young boy drew one before the assembly.
- Those who had served on a committee (**variyam**) in the previous three years, or had not rendered accounts, were barred.

06 Military

- The Cholas maintained a **regular standing army**, of which the **King was the supreme commander**. The military consisted of **elephants, cavalry, infantry and navy**.
- The Chola army was spread throughout the country and was stationed in **local garrisons or military camps called as Kodagams**. Many war elephants were present in Chola army as they played a vital role in wars.
- The Chola army used weapons such as **bows, swords, spears, javelins, and shields** which were made up of steel.
- About **seventy regiments** were mentioned in the inscriptions of which the **royal troops** were called as **Kaikkolaperumpadai.** The royal troops had **personal troops, named Velaikkarar to defend the King**.
- The Cholas paid special attention to their navy, which played a prominent role in the expansion of Chola Empire. The naval achievements of the Tamils reached its peak under the Cholas as they controlled the **Malabar and Coromandel coast.**

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07 Revenue

- The **revenue department, called as puravuvarithinaikkalam**, was well established. All lands were surveyed in detail and classified for assessment of revenue. The **residential land and temple lands were exempted from taxes.** The **tax rates were fixed** depending on the fertility of the soil and the status of the land.
- Besides land revenue, there were **tolls and customs** on goods moved from one place to another, different kinds of **professional taxes, judicial fines and dues levied on ceremonial functions and occasions like marriages**.
- Various units of the **land measurement are kuli, ma, veli, patti, padagam, etc.**
- The main government expenditures were the **expenses on the King and his court, maintenance of army and navy and construction of roads, irrigation tanks and canals.**

08 Religion

- **Cholas were followers of Hinduism.** They built many temples and offered generous endowments to these temples. Both **Shaivism and Vaishnavism continued to flourish** during the Chola period.
- A **number of temples were built** with the patronage of Chola kings and queens. The temples remained centres of economic activity during this period. The mathas had great influence during this period.
- In addition to number of temples built during this time, **Buddhist monasteries like Chudamani vihara at Nagapattinam** were also constructed.
- However, despite the presence of different religions, there were no major incidences of violence in the name of god or religion.

◆ PRELIMS TRAP WHO BUILT CHUDAMANI VIHARA?

The **Chudamani Vihara** at Nagapattinam was not built by a Chola king. It was built (c. 1006) by the **Sailendra king of Srivijaya, Sri Mara Vijayottungavarman**, with the support of **Rajaraja I**, and named after his father. The grant is recorded in the Chola copper-plate charter known as the **Leiden plates**, now kept at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

09 Economy

- The main source of income for the Chola Empire was **revenue from land and trade tax**. Agriculture remained the principal occupation for the people.
- **Uraiyur,** the capital city of the early Chola rulers, was a famous **cotton textiles centre** from where cotton clothes were exported to foreign countries.
- The Chola Kings took great interest in development of **weaving industry** as weaving earned great amount of revenue for the Chola Kingdom. **Silk weaving** attained a high degree during the Chola rule. **Kanchipuram developed into a major silk city** and became famous for its high quality silk weaving. High degree of excellence made the **jewellery and the metal industries** prominent.

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- The traders organized themselves into guilds. The best known of these **guilds** where the **Manigramam and Ayyavole** guilds through other guilds such as **Anjuvannam and Valanjiyar** were also in existence.
- The **manufacture of sea-salt was carried on under government supervision and control.**

10 Society

- As **caste system was widely practiced Kshatriyas enjoyed special privileges in the society.** The inscriptions of the Chola period **classified castes into Valangai and Idangai castes.** Despite the division, there was cooperation among various castes and sub castes in socio-religious life of Chola people.
- The **position of women, however, did not improve**. **Sati**, a custom in which a widow immolates herself on her husband's death, was practiced in the royal families. The **practice of Devadasi system or dancing girls attached to temples** started during this period.
- Farmers occupied one of the highest positions in society as agriculture remained the principal occupation for majority of the people. Reclamation of forest lands and the construction and maintenance of irrigation tanks fuelled the agricultural prosperity.
- Trade and commerce prospered with improvements of **roads or peruvazhis** and merchant guilds. The weaving industry, particularly the silk-weaving at Kanchi flourished. During the Chola rule, weavers started to organize themselves into guilds and were able to establish their own residential colonies in towns.
- There were also **local organisations of merchants called 'Nagaram'** in big centres of trade like Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram.
- The metal works also developed owing to great demand of images for temples and utensils. Gold, silver and copper coins were issued in plenty at various denominations.
- **Commercial contacts** between the Chola Empire and China, Sumatra, Java and Arabia were extensively prevalent. **Arabian horses were imported in large numbers** to strengthen the cavalry.

11 Literature

- The **development of Tamil literature reached its apex** during the Chola period.
  - The **Ramayana composed by Kamban and the Periyapuranam or Tiruttondar Puranam by Sekkilar** are the two master-pieces of this age.
  - **Ottakuttan wrote Kulothunga Cholan Ula**, a poem extolling the virtues of the Chola king.
  - **Kalingattupparani, written by JayamKondar** describes the **Kalinga war f**ought by Chola King Kulottunga I. The grammarian **Buddhamitra wrote a text on Tamil grammar called Virasoliyam**.
  - **Jivakachintamani by Tirutakkatevar** and **Sulamani by Tolamoli** are a few notable works by non-Hindu authors.
  - **Nannul**, a Chola era **work on Tamil grammar,** discussed all five branches of grammar. It is still considered relevant today and is one of the most distinguished normative grammars of Tamil literature.

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- The Chola Kings took great interest in establishing **educational institutions** around the temples.
  - The **inscription at Ennayiram provides significant details about the colleges** that existed in these places. In addition to Vedas and Epics, subjects like mathematics and medicine were also taught in these institutions. **Endowments of lands** were made to run these institutions.
  - **Virarajendra, a Chola King maintained a school in the Jananamandapa** within the temple for the study of the Vedas, Shastras, grammar, and Rupavatara. The students were also provided **hostels** with provision of food.
- **Kamban flourished during the reign of Kulothunga Chola-III.** It was the age in which the great telugu poets Tikkana, Ketana, Marana and Somana enriched the literature with their contribution.

◆ PRELIMS FACT TWO MORE CHOLA-ERA AUTHORS

- **Sekkilar**, chief minister of **Kulottunga II**, wrote the **Periyapuranam** on the lives of the **63 Nayanars**. It is the twelfth and last book of the Shaiva canon, the **Tirumurai**.
- The Tamil grammar **Nannul** was written by the Jain ascetic **Pavanandi** (between 1178 and 1216) under the patronage of **Siya Gangan**, a Ganga chief of Kolar.

12 Art and Architecture

- The Cholas made a significant contribution in the **development of Dravidian style of art and architecture.** They built **enormous temples** and were appreciated for their magnificent temple architecture as well as delicate workmanship. A famous historian, **James Fergusson, once commented, "the Chola artists conceived like giants and finished like jewelers"**.
- Temple building received great momentum from the conquests of **Rajaraja Chola** and his son **Rajendra Chola I.** A new development in Chola art that characterised the Dravidian architecture in later times was the addition of a **huge gateway called gopuram** to the enclosure of the temple.
  - The **Brihadesvara temple at Thanjavur, built by Rajaraja I** is an excellent demonstration of South Indian art and architecture.
    - It consists of the **vimana, ardhamandapa, mahamandapa** and a **large pavilion** in the front known as the **Nandimandapa**.
  - The **Shiva temple at Gangaikondacholapuram built by Rajendra I,** and **Darasuram Temple built by Rajaraja II**, is another noteworthy contribution by the Cholas.
  - The **Airavathesvara temple at Darasuram in Thanjavur** district and the **Kampaharesvara temple at Tribhuvanam** are examples of later Chola temples.
    - The **Brihadesvara temple, the temple at Gangaikondacholapuram** and the **Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram** has been enlisted in the World Heritage Sites by the UNESCO and are called as the Great Living Chola temples.
- The Cholas also made notable contributions to the art of **Sculptures made up of bronze.** The walls of the Chola temples at Tanjore and Gangaikondacholapuram contain numerous icons of large size with exceptional execution. The **bronze statue of Nataraja or dancing Siva** was an absolute gem.
- The **Chola paintings** were also found on the **walls of Narthamalai and Thanjavur temples.**

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PRELIMS FACT GREAT LIVING CHOLA TEMPLES

- UNESCO listed the **Brihadisvara temple, Thanjavur** in **1987**; in **2004** the site was extended to include the **Gangaikondacholisvaram** (completed 1035) and the **Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram**.
- The Thanjavur temple was consecrated in Rajaraja I's 25th regnal year (c. 1010). Its granite vimana rises to about **60 m**.

PRELIMS FACT READING A CHOLA NATARAJA

- Cast by the **lost-wax (cire perdue)** method: the clay mould is broken to free the image, so every bronze is unique.
- Shiva dances inside a **ring of flames**; the dwarf **Apasmara** (ignorance) lies under his right foot.
- The front right hand shows the **abhaya mudra**; the upper right hand holds a drum and the upper left holds fire.
- From about the 10th century, large bronzes were made as **processional (utsava) images**.



Cire-perdu Or lost-wax



Nataraja



Ardhanarisvara Murti

13 Importance of Dynasty

- The Cholas support in the **development of Tamil literature and their passion for temple architecture** has resulted in many excellent works in the field of Tamil literature and temple architecture.
- The Chola rulers envisaged temples not only as the place of worship but also as a **centre of economic and educational activities**. The Chola school of art spread to south-east Asia and influenced their art and architecture.

CHOLA INSCRIPTIONS MENTION SEVERAL CATEGORIES OF LAND

VELLANVAGAI	LAND OF NON-BRAHMANA PEASANT PROPRIETORS
Brahmadeya	Land gifted to Brahmanas

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VELLANVAGAI	LAND OF NON-BRAHMANA PEASANT PROPRIETORS
Shalabhoga	Land for the maintenance of a school
Devadana, Tirunamattukkani	Land gifted to gods/temples
Pallichchhandam	Land donated to Jaina institutions

TYPES OF LAND GRANTS

AGRAHARA	PRIMARILY A RENT FREE VILLAGE IN THE POSSESSION OF BRAHMANAS
Devadana	Rent free land gifted to brahmanical temples deities. Its Jain and Buddhist counterpart is pallichanda
Shasanas	Land grants, often kara-shasanas, i.e rent paying land grants
Brahmadeya	Land gifted to Brahmanas or groups of Brahmanas

FEW IMPORTANT POINTS

- The famous **Virupaksha temple** is located at Hampi. This temple is devoted to Lord Shiva, who is known as Virupaksha there.
  - The term **Panchayatan** refers to a style of temple construction.
- A lot of details regarding the **village administration** under the Cholas is provided by the inscription at **Uttarmerur.**
- **Nataraj** is considered to be the world's greatest iconographical creations made by Sthapatis of south India, particularly during the Chola period.
- The **Dakshinamurti idol of Shiva** depicts him as a mentor (Guru, Teacher).
- The Chola sent goodwill mission of 72 traders to China in the reign of Chola king Kulottunga-I in 1077.
- Rajendra-I coverted the Bay of Bengal into a **'Chola Lake'.**
- **Kulottunga-I** gave complete freedom to Sri Lanka and got his daughter married to the Sinhala prince Vijayabahu.
- **Tagara trade centre** of ancient India was on the trade route connecting kalyana with vengi.
- **Kural** is considered as the Bible and Laghuveda of Tamil literature. It was written by the famous poet Tiruvalluvar .
- Famous south Indian **battle of Takkolam** was fought between Chola king Parantaka-I and Rashtrakuta king Krishna-III at Takkolam (949 AD). The Cholas were defeated.
- Pandya kingdom was devastated by **Malik Kafur**, commander of Allauddin Khalji.
- **Vaigai river** was the lifeline of Pandya state.
- According to the Sangam texts the terms **kon, ko and mannan** were attributed to king.
- The **river Kaveri** also known as **Ponni (Golden) river**, had a special place in the culture of Cholas. The annual floods in the Kaveri marked an occasion for celebration known as **Adiperukku**, in which whole nation took part.

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Prelims Quick Revision

- **Vijayalaya**: founder of the imperial Cholas; captured Thanjavur from the Muttaraiyars; built a Nishumbhasudini (Durga) temple.
- **Rajaraja I (985–1014)**: Brihadisvara (Rajarajeshvaram), Thanjavur, c. 1010; naval campaign to the Maldives.
- **Rajendra I (1014–44)**: founded Gangaikondacholapuram; Cholagangam tank; defeated Mahipala I of Bengal.
- **Kadaramkondan**: Rajendra I's title after the 1025 expedition to Kadaram (Kedah) and Srivijaya.
- **Kulottunga I**: Sungam tavirtta (abolished tolls); united Vengi with the Chola empire; embassy to China (1077).
- **Uttaramerur inscriptions**: of Parantaka I's reign; describe village councils chosen by kudavolai (pot-ticket).
- **Mandalam, valanadu, nadu**: Chola territorial units in descending order; towns (nagaram) run by the Nagarattar.
- **Ur and agrahara**: mixed-caste villages versus Brahmin villages with largely tax-free land.
- **Kaikkolaperumpadai**: royal troops; **Velaikkarar**: the king's personal guard; camps called Kodagams.
- **Puravuvarithinaikkalam**: the Chola revenue department; land measured in kuli, ma, veli, patti.
- **Valangai and Idangai**: right-hand and left-hand caste groups in Chola inscriptions.
- **Manigramam and Ayyavole**: leading merchant guilds of the Chola period.
- **Kamban and Sekkilar**: Tamil Ramayana and Periyapuranam (lives of the 63 Nayanars).
- **Great Living Chola Temples**: Thanjavur (UNESCO 1987); Gangaikondacholapuram and Darasuram added in 2004.
- **Takkolam (949)**: Rashtrakuta Krishna III defeated the Chola Parantaka I.

Previous Year Questions

2025

Who among the following led a successful military campaign against the kingdom of Srivijaya, the powerful maritime State, which ruled the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java and the neighbouring islands?

(a) Amoghavarsha (Rashtrakuta)
(b) Prataparudra (Kakatiya)
(c) Rajendra I (Chola)
(d) Vishnuvardhana (Hoysala)

Answer: (c). Rajendra I's navy raided Srivijaya around 1025, sacking Kadaram (Kedah) and other ports to secure Chola trade, which earned him the title Kadaram Kondan. (PROVISIONAL KEY)

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2016

In the context of the history of India, consider the following pairs:
Term — Description
1. Eripatti — Land revenue from which was set apart for the maintenance of the village tank
2. Taniyurs — Villages donated to a single Brahmin or a group of Brahmins
3. Ghatikas — Colleges generally attached to the temples
Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

a 1 and 2 only
b 3 only
c 2 and 3 only
d 1 and 3 only

Answer: (d). Eripatti was tank-maintenance land and ghatikas were temple-linked colleges; taniyurs were large villages made separate revenue units, while villages granted to Brahmins were brahmadeyas.

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UNIT V 11 CHAPTERS

The Era of Mughals

From Babur to the later Mughals, with the Sur interlude — conquests, religious policy, administration, the mansab and jagir systems, relations with other Indian states and the Deccan sultanates.

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MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY PRELIMS · GS PAPER I

25

Mughal Empire: Akbar

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS **History of India and Indian National Movement**

MAINS · GS PAPER I **Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times**

CONTENTS

01 Contests
02 Expansion of Empire (1560-76 AD)
03 Administration
04 Political Administration
05 Relations with Rajputs
06 Religion
07 Art and Architecture
08 Evaluation
09 Previous Year Questions

- The dream of establishing a Mughal empire envisaged by Babur, after defeating Ibrahim Lodi in the First Battle of Panipat (20 April, 1526), was still distant as Humayun, his successor and son was reduced to the status of a homeless wanderer after being defeated by Sher Shah Suri in the Battle of Chausa (1539) and the Battle of Kannauj (1540).
- It was **Shah Tahmasp, the Safavid ruler of Persia, who offered him refuge and gave military aid by which Humayun recovered Delhi and Agra from the Sikander Suri at Battle of Sirhind** (June, 1555).
- However, the problems of Mughal Empire did not end here as before Humayun could consolidate his empire, he was fatally injured by falling down the stairs of his library.
- The nascent Empire was facing confrontation from external enemies as well as the feuding nobility and it was in these precarious circumstances that **young Akbar**, whose very name meant the great one, **rose up to all the challenges and emerged as one of the greatest monarchs** this country has ever witnessed.
- While the dis crowned Humayun was wandering in Sindh, he met **Hamida Bano Begum** and tied the knot in 1541. A year later, Hamida gave birth to a boy, Akbar, who was destined to be one of the greatest Indian monarchs.
- However, as Humayun fled to Persia for help, Akbar was captured by his uncle Kamran, although he was treated well. The reunion with his father was made possible only when Humayun captured Qandhar from Kamran.

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- **After the death of Humayun, the 13-year old Akbar was enthroned at Kalanaur by Bairam Khan**, the Military general of Humayun and regent of Akbar in 1556.
- When Akbar ascended to the throne, his empire barely included areas of Punjab and Delhi. Even this situation was under constant threat as
  - **Hemu, the military general of Adil Shah Suri** (a nephew of Sher Shah Suri) had conquered Agra and Delhi by defeating the Mughal forces. It is said that by that time he had not lost a single of twenty-two battles he had fought and was bestowed the ancient title of Vikramajeet or Vikramaditya by Adil Shah who had also made him Wazir.
  - **Kabul** had been attacked and besieged by the **Badakhshan rulers**.
  - **Sikander Shah Suri,** defeated by Humayun, was waiting for an opportunity to regain his empire and was a constant threat.
- At this juncture, **Bairam Khan displayed his superior military statesmanship**. Before Hemu could consolidate the gains made by capturing Delhi, Bairam Khan launched a fierce attack on his forces.
- The fateful encounter happened in the Second Battle of Panipat (5 November, 1556) where, despite being in an advantageous position, **Hemu's army was routed** when an arrow hit Hemu in the eye leaving him unconscious. The **victory re-established the supremacy of Mughals** over the throne of Delhi.

01 Contests

- The Second Battle of Panipat was the beginning of an illustrious era under the Mughals. After a month long stay in Delhi, Akbar sought to vanquish all the rival claimants to the throne of Delhi.
- In this pursuit, **he along with Bairam Khan marched towards Sirhind to complete the military operation against Sikander Shah Suri** and in due course made him surrender at the fort of Mankot, Kashmir in 1557. Sikander Shah Suri was driven out to Bihar where he died two years later. **Adil Shah Suri had died in a battle against Bengal kingdom in 1557**, and other claimants to the Delhi throne had withdrawn. Thus, Akbar was left free to consolidate his empire, undisturbed by the rival claims against his sovereignty.
- Under the regency of Bairam Khan, further conquests led to the extension of the Mughal Empire from Kabul up to Jaunpur in the East and Ajmer in the West. Lahore and Multan, important centres of Punjab, were annexed.
- **Gwalior was captured from the Sur rulers** and forces were sent to conquer Malwa and Ranthambhor. All the while, Bairam Khan was at the helm of affairs and commanded full control over the nobility.
- However, these accomplishments made Bairam Khan arrogant and he failed to realise that Akbar was coming of age and wanted to take control of the state affairs in his own hand. This friction between the two was further aggravated by the court intrigues where the nobles who held grudges against Bairam Khan complained of his bias in favour of **Shiite Nobles**.
- **All this led to Akbar issuing a farman through which Bairam Khan was dismissed from his office.** Although Bairam was prepared to submit, but the conspiring nobles disgraced him to the limit where he declared rebellion against the crown. It took six months to quell the rebellion, and **finally Bairam was forced to surrender**. Akbar treated him without animosity and gave him an option to either serve the crown or retire to Mecca. Bairam chose the latter. However, on his way to Mecca in January 1561, he was murdered by an Afghan who had personal enmity against him.

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- **From 1561-67**, Akbar also had to face other forces of rebellion, the major ones being:
  - **Maham Anga and Adham Khan:** Maham Anga was Akbar's foster mother who had a role in dismissing Bairam Khan. Her son Adham Khan claimed sovereignty while he was sent to an expedition on Malwa. When he was removed from the command, he claimed the post of Wazir for himself and killed the acting Wazir in his office. This infuriated Akbar and in 1562, he had him thrown down from the parapet of the fort to his death.
  - **Uzbeks:** The Uzbek section of the nobility commanded great influence in the region of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Malwa. They had helped the Emperor in subduing the Afghan forces in these regions, but they became arrogant and started defying the authority of Akbar by rebelling against the crown. Akbar quelled these rebellions several times after 1561 and in 1565, he vowed to make Jaunpur his capital till he had vanquished them all. He defeated and killed the Uzbeks leader in 1567, thus bringing their rebellion to an end.
  - **Mirzas:** The Mirzas who were Timurids and thus related to Akbar by marriage, controlled the area of Western Uttar Pradesh from where they revolted against the Emperor. Akbar defeated them and made them flee to Malwa and then to Gujarat.
  - **Mirza Hakim:** He was Akbar's half-brother who had captured Kabul and Lahore and the Uzbeks had declared him as their ruler. Akbar marched to Lahore in 1581 and forced him to retreat.
- All these rebellions used up the time and resources of the empire, but they turned Akbar into a seasoned military general and diplomat, the qualities that he would make the most use of in his later endeavours. Also, most of the rebellious nobles who dreamt of an independent states for themselves were cowed down.

02 Expansion of Empire (1560-76 AD)

Malwa

- The Kingdom of Malwa was ruled by **Baz Bahadur** (1555-62) **with Mandu as its capital**. Baz Bahadur was a patron of art and during his period Mandu had become a celebrated centre for music. This period is associated with the **romance of Baz Bahadur and Rani Roopmati**, who was famous for her beauty, music and poetry.
- However, the defences of the state were neglected taking advantage of which **Adham Khan** led an expedition against Malwa and defeated Baz Bahadur who escaped from Malwa (1561). However, **Adham Khan made a mistake when he tried to abduct Roopmati,** as she chose to embrace death than to be part of his harem. The **cruelty of Adham Khan led to a reaction against Mughals** enabling Baz Bahadur to recover Malwa.
- **Akbar sent another expedition to Malwa under Abdullah Khan in 1562 who expelled Baz Bahadur and annexed Malwa to the Mughal Empire.** After living in exile for several years, **Baz Bahadur submitted to Akbar in 1570 and was accepted as a Mansabdar**. The extensive region of Malwa thus came under the Mughal rule.

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Garh-Katanga

- The **Kingdom of Garh-Katanga included Narmada valley and the northern parts of present day Madhya Pradesh**, with **Chauragarh** near Jabalpur as its capital. It was consolidated by **Aman Das** in the second half of the fifteenth century.
- He had helped **Bahadur Shah of Gujarat** in conquest of Raisen and was bestowed with the title of **Sangram Shah**. His son was married to the Chandella Princess, **Durgavati**. She was ruling as the Queen Regent when **Asaf Khan**, the Mughal Governor of Allahabad, invaded Garh-Katanga.
- Despite the betrayal by her allies, **Rani fought gallantly, but was wounded and fearing imminent defeat, she stabbed herself to death to avoid capture**. However, the Mughal Governor sent only a small proportion of the plunder to the royal court, and kept the rest for himself.
- When Akbar came to know about this, he not only forced Asaf Khan to part with his illegal gains, but also restored the Kingdom of Garh-Katanga to **Chandra Shah**, the younger son of Sangram Shah.

◆ PRELIMS FACT RANI DURGAVATI OF GARHA

Rani Durgavati was married to **Dalpat Shah**, son of the Gond king Sangram Shah. She made her last stand against Asaf Khan's army at **Narrai**, a site hemmed in by hills and the Gaur and Narmada rivers, on **24 June 1564**; the day is observed as her Balidan Diwas. Her son **Bir Narayan** died defending the capital, Chauragarh. In 1983 the university at Jabalpur was renamed Rani Durgavati Vishwavidyalaya.

Rajputana

- **After having consolidated his dominance over Northern and Central India, Akbar turned his attention towards the Rajputana** which presented a formidable threat to his supremacy. He had already established his rule over Ajmer and Nagaur. **Beginning in 1561, Akbar started his quest to conquer Rajputana**. He employed force as well as diplomatic tactics to make the Rajput rulers submit to him. Although many Rajput kingdoms accepted Akbar's suzerainty, **Udai Singh of Mewar and Chandrasen Rathore of Marwar refused to bow down.**
- Rana Udai Singh was the descendant of Rana Sanga, who had fought Babur at the Battle of Khanwa in 1527. As the head of the Sisodia clan, he possessed the highest ritual status of all the Rajput kings and chieftains in India. Thus, it was of paramount importance for Akbar to defeat Mewar.
- **In 1567, Akbar attacked the Chittorgarh fort in Mewar** that represented a key strategic importance towards establishing rule in Rajputana. Udai Singh's chiefs Jaimal and Patta held off the Mughal forces for four months in 1568. Many peasants too died fighting in the fort. **Udai Singh was banished to the Hills of Mewar.** After him, **his son Rana Pratap offered a formidable resistance** to the Mughal forces.
- In the famous **Battle of Haldighati (June, 1576), Mughal forces commanded by Man Singh of Ambar inflicted heavy casualties on army of Rana Pratap, but failed to capture him.**
- After the fall of Chittor, the Ranthambhor Fort was also seized. Jodhpur had already been conquered and these victories made other Rajput rulers like those of Bikaner and Jaisalmer to submit to Akbar. **Mewar was the only kingdom that continued to resist the Mughal forces.**

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◆ PRELIMS FACT HALDIGHATI: WHO FOUGHT

- **Date and place:** 18 June 1576, at the Haldighati pass near Gogunda, in present Rajsamand district of Rajasthan.
- **Mughal side:** led by Man Singh of Amber, with Asaf Khan among the commanders.
- **Mewar side:** the vanguard was led by the Afghan **Hakim Khan Sur**; Bhil archers fought under **Rana Punja**; **Jhala Man Singh** took the Rana's place to cover his retreat.

Gujarat

- The state of Gujarat was full of riches because of its fertile soil and prospering foreign trade. Akbar also wanted to annex it because the **Mirzas had taken shelter there** and could be a potent threat to his Empire. **Akbar did not want such a rich province to become a rival centre of power.** For these reasons, he advanced to Ahmedabad through Ajmer in 1572 and forced the Ahmedabad ruler to surrender without a fight. Following this, **Akbar defeated the Mirzas** who were ruling Broach, Baroda and Surat.
- **It was here in Cambay where Akbar saw the sea for the first time and also met the Portuguese** who were keen to establish an empire of their own in India, but their designs were frustrated by Akbar's conquest of Gujarat.
- However, as soon as Akbar went back to Agra, rebellions broke out all over Gujarat. **Akbar once again marched to Ahmedabad and defeated the enemy forces in 1573.**

Bengal

- The **region of Bengal and Bihar was being ruled by Afghan leader Daud Khan.** He had maintained a powerful army of 40,000 cavalry and an infantry of 1,50,000.
  - **Akbar marched steadily and captured Patna**, thus securing Mughal communications in Bihar. After this, Akbar returned back to Agra giving the charge of campaign to **Munaim Khan** who invaded Bengal and Daud Khan was forced to sue for peace but soon afterwards he raised the banner of rebellion.
  - Mughal forces once again defeated him and **Daud Khan was executed in 1576, thus ending the last Afghan kingdom in Northern India.**
- The **campaign of Bengal marked the end to the first phase of Akbar's expansion of the empire.** This also gave Akbar time to strengthen the administrative machinery of his empire.

◆ PRELIMS FACT AKBAR'S LATER CONQUESTS

After 1576, expansion turned to the north-west and the Deccan:

- **Kabul** (1585, after Mirza Hakim's death) and **Kashmir** (1586)
- **Sindh** (1591) and **Kandahar** (1595)
- **Ahmadnagar** fort (1600), after the earlier resistance led by **Chand Bibi**
- **Asirgarh** in Khandesh (January 1601), Akbar's last conquest

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03 Administration

Land Revenue Policy

- To start with, Akbar **adopted the revenue system of Sher Shah Suri** under which the cultivated area was measured and based on the productivity of the land, crop wise prices were decided. However, this system had two major problems
  - (a) **Fixing of prices often led to delays causing hardships to the peasants**, and
  - (b) Since the prices were fixed taking into account the land around the Capital city, **these were generally higher than the prevailing prices in the countryside**. Thus, peasants had to part more of their produce as tax.
- This led Akbar to **revert back to the system of Annual assessment**. The **Qanungos** were the local officials who reported on the actual produce, local prices and other such details. However, in many areas the dishonest Qanungos concealed the actual produce and this was a loss to the revenue finances of the empire. This corrupt practice was checked in 1573 when Akbar appointed officials called **Karoris** who

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kept an eye on the prices reported by the Qanungos and were responsible for the collection of a crore of dams (Rs. 2,50,000).

- The following were the **major revenue assessment systems** introduced by Akbar:
  - **Zabti:**
    - This was a **system of measurement of land** and the **assessment of revenue was based upon the productivity of the land and local prices**. This was a relief to peasants as they got remission when the productivity was low due to drought, floods or any disaster. This system is usually associated with **Raja Todar Mal**, who was the revenue minister of Sher Shah before serving Akbar.
  - **Dahsala:**
    - It was an **advanced modification of the zabti system**. In this, the revenue was decided on the basis of the average produce of different crops as well as the average prices prevailing **over the last ten years**. **One-third of the average produce was state's share**.
  - **Batai or Ghalla Bakshi:**
    - Under this system, the **produce was divided between the state and the peasants in fixed proportion**. The peasants were given a choice to pay either in cash or kind, though cash was preferred. Although the system was a fair one, it required honest officials to implement it.
  - **Nasaq:**
    - It was also known as **kankut or estimation**. Under it, a **rough estimate of the revenue to be paid by the peasant** was calculated based on his past payments.
- For assessment of revenue, the **land was classified on the basis of continuity of cultivation.**
  - **Polaj:** The land which remained under cultivation **almost every year**.
  - **Parati: Fallow land**, parati land paid at the full rate (polaj) when it was cultivated.
  - **Chachar:** Land which had been fallow for **3-4 years.**
  - **Banjar:** Land which had been fallow for **five years or more.**
- These were assessed at concessional rates and taxed fully only when they became polaj land. This was done to encourage conversion of uncultivated wasteland into cultivated land. **Akbar had directed the Amils to extend loans (taccavi) to the peasants in times of need and encourage them to sow high quality seeds.**

◆ PRELIMS FACT AKBAR'S MEASURING STANDARDS

- **Jarib**: a measuring rod of bamboo pieces joined by iron rings; it replaced the hempen rope, whose length changed with the weather.
- **Ilahi gaz**: a standard yard of about 33 inches that replaced the varying local units.
- **Bigha-i-Ilahi**: a square of 60 by 60 Ilahi gaz.
- **Ain-i-Dahsala**: the contemporary name for the dahsala settlement of 1580, worked out under Raja Todar Mal.

Mansabdari System

- Consolidation of Empire to such stretches was not possible without an organised nobility and a robust army unit. Akbar achieved both these objectives through Mansabdari System. This was a **system unique to the Mughal administration**.

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- Under this, **every officer was assigned a rank (mansab), the lowest being 10 and highest being 5000 for nobles.** Princes of the blood received higher mansabs.
- Remarkably, the **highest rank a noble could attain was raised from 5000 to 7000 towards** the end of Akbar's rule.
- Two senior nobles of the Akbar rule, **Mirza Aziz Koka and Raja Man Singh** were accorded with the rank of 7000 each. The mansabs were divided into two:
  - **Zat:** It was the personal rank and the status and salary of the officer was fixed according to it.
  - **Sawar:** This indicated the number of cavalrymen (sawars) a mansabdar was required to maintain.
- There were **three categories** within the mansab:
  - The officer who maintained **as many sawars as his zat rank.**
  - The officer who maintained **half or more sawars than his zat rank.**
  - The officer who maintained **less than half sawars than his zat rank.**
- **Every mansabdar had to bring his contingent for inspection regularly**. Every sawar was identified based on his **descriptive roll (chehra)** while **every horse was branded with imperial marks (dagh system).** For **every ten sawars, mansabdars had to maintain twenty horses**. This was called the **10-20 rule**.
- The salary to the mansabdars were paid by assigning them **jagirs**, which assigned the land revenue from an area to the mansabdar. This was **not a hereditary system**, rather only a mode of payment. **Out of this salary, the mansabdar had to pay the soldiers and also maintain a certain number of horses and elephants.** Only the best quality horses were retained in the army.
- The system was based on **merit** and an officer who was generally appointed at lower mansab could rise up in hierarchy based on his **performance**. Similarly, an officer can me demoted in rank as a mark of punishment.
- Also, Akbar encouraged **mixed contingents of all nobles** Mughal, Pathan Hindustani, Rajputs. This discouraged the forces of parochialism and tribalism. In addition to cavalrymen, bowmen, musketeers (bandukchi), sappers and miners were also recruited in the contingents.

04 Political Administration

- **Central:** Akbar organised the Central administration based on the **principles of separation of power and of checks and balances**. Some of the important functionaries in this were:
  - **Wazir:** He was the **head of the revenue department** and was responsible for all income and expenditures of the Empire. He was the principal link between the ruler and the administration. He no longer enjoyed the position of principal advisor to the Emperor and many nobles held mansabs higher than his.
  - **Mir Bakshi:** He was the **head of the military department** and was also considered the head of the nobility. It was he who recommended officers for various mansabs, but the wazir was responsible for assigning the jagir to the mansabdar , thus maintaining checks and balances. Mir Bakshi was also in

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charge of the **intelligence and information agencies** of the empire. Several **Intelligence Officers (barids)** and **news reporters (waqia-navis)** posted throughout the country reported to him.

- **Mir Saman:** He was **in charge of imperial household** and thus ensured provisions of various items required by the inmates of the harem or the female apartments. Several of these items were manufactured in royal workshops or karkhanas.
- **Chief Qazi:** He headed the **judicial department**
- **Chief Sadr:** He looked after the **charitable and religious endowments.**
- Apart from these ministers, Akbar himself was very much accessible to the common people. He held **Diwan-i-aam** in which he heard the grievances of the people. Private consultation with ministers were held in a chamber that came to be known as **Ghusal Khaana**.

- **Provincial:**
  - The Empire was **divided into 12 provinces** in 1580 and each province was **headed by a Governor (Subedaar).** Other officials included a **diwan, a bakshi, a sadr, a qazi and a waqia navis**. The principles of checks and balances was maintained in provincial administration too.
- **Local:**
  - **Subas were divided into Sarkars (equivalent to district)** which were **further subdivided into Parganas (equivalent to tehsil)**. Chief Officers of a Sarkar were
    - **Fauzdar:** He was responsible for maintenance of **law and order**.
    - **Amalguzar:** He was responsible for **assessment and collection of land revenue**. He was required to exercise a general supervision over all land holdings for uniform assessment and collection of land revenues.
- For revenue distribution, the territories of the empire were divided into **three:**
  - **Jagir:** Revenue was allotted to **nobles and royal family members**
  - **Khalisa:** Revenue was sent directly to the **royal exchequer**
  - **Inam:** Revenue was allotted to **religious men irrespective of their faith**. Half of this land consisted of cultivable wasteland so that the inam holders were incentivised to encourage the extension of agriculture.

The Jagirdari System

- Jagirdari system was **assigning revenue of a particular territory to the nobles for their services to the state.** It was a **modified version of Iqta of the Delhi Sultanate** and was an **integral part of the mansabdari system**.
  - The office of the central Diwan would identify parganas the sum total of whose jama was equal to the salary claim of the mansabdar. If the recorded jama was greater than the salary claim, the mansabdar was asked to deposit the extra with the central treasury. However, if the jama was less than the salary claim the remaining was paid from the treasury.

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- **Classification of jagirs:**
  - **Tankha Jagirs** – given in lieu of salaries and were transferable.
  - **Watan Jagirs** – were hereditary and non-transferable. It was given to zamindars or rajas in their local dominion. When a zamindar was appointed as mansabdar, he was given tankha jagir in addition to his watan jagir if the salary of his rank was more than his income from watan jagir.
  - **Mashrut Jagirs** – jagirs assigned on certain conditions.
  - **Altamgha Jagirs** – assigned to Muslim nobles in their family towns or place of birth.
- **Zamindars had hereditary rights over the produce of the land and had a direct share of 10-25 % in the peasants' produce.** He assisted the state in the collection of the revenue and also rendered military services to the state at times of need. The zamindar was not the owner of all the lands comprising his zamindari. The peasants who actually cultivated the land could not be dispossessed as long as they paid the land revenue. Both the zamindars and peasants had their own hereditary rights over the land.

05 Relations with Rajputs

- At the time when Mughal Empire was facing challenges in form of Afghans, internal rebellion and foreign powers, Akbar desperately needed more allies and less enemies. He had realized that the Rajputs, who held large areas in their possession and were skillful warriors and renowned for their valor and fidelity to their word, could safely be depended upon and thus, **converted them into friends**.
- Hence, Mughal Emperor Akbar decided to seek the cooperation of the Rajputs to expand the Mughal Empire. In pursuance of this policy, **he not only accorded high positions to the Rajput rulers who accepted his sovereignty, but also entered into marriage alliances with them.**
- Due to this liberal policy, Akbar found one of the most trusted ally in **Raja Bharmal of Amber**. He was made a high grandee and Akbar married her daughter, **Harkha Bai**. While marriages between Muslim Emperor and Hindu rulers were not unusual, Akbar took the relationship to a new height by giving complete religious freedom to his Hindu wives. Bharmal's son, Bhagwant Das, was accorded a mansab of 5000, while his grandson, Man Singh, rose to the rank of 7000, held by only one other noble, Aziz Khan Kuka.
- **Akbar abolished the pilgrimage tax on Hindus in 1563 and Jizya in 1564** to show his sense of equality towards the Hindu subjects. The **autonomy given to the Rajput rulers** made them realise that their interests were not harmed by accepting the suzerainty of the Mughal Emperor .
- However, there were exceptions to such friendly relations. **Even after the siege of Chittor, Rana Udai Singh continued his resistance.** In **1572, Rana Pratap succeeded to the throne of Mewar**. Akbar sent three embassies in succession under Man Singh, Bhagwant Das and Raja Todar Mal. But the proud Rana did not agree to pay personal homage to Akbar. **In 1576, Akbar moved to Ajmer and deputed Man Singh to lead a campaign against Rana Pratap**. In the resultant **Battle of Haldighati, Rana was defeated but he escaped** and continued his resistance by waging guerrilla warfare. There was a major revolt in Bengal and Bihar in 1579 and Mughals diverted their resources which gave Rana the opportunity to recover his empire. After 1585, Akbar moved to Lahore where he stayed for 12 years taking advantage of which **Rana recaptured his capital Kumbhalgarh and ruled till he died in 1597.**
- Akbar also faced resistance from Marwar where after the death of Maldeo (1562), his younger son **Chandrasen** succeeded to the throne. But he had to cede certain territories to his elder brother **Udai**

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Singh due to pressure from the Mughals. Chandrasen rose in rebellion against this interference but was defeated and was forced to seek refuge in Mewar.

- **Akbar's Rajput Policy was continued by Jahangir and Shah Jahan**. It was under Jahangir that the dispute with Mewar was settled when Amar Singh, son of Rana Pratap, reconciled with the Mughals and his son, Prince Karan Singh was accorded a rank of 5000 in the court of Jahangir.
- It was the result of such liberal policy of Akbar that the Rajputs, who had not only been hostile but fought consistently against the Sultans of Delhi for more than 350 years, became **strong allies of the Mughal throne**. Rajputs contributed freely and richly to the military, political, administrative, economic, social, cultural and artistic achievements of Akbar's reign. T**heir cooperation not only gave security and permanence to the Mughal rule, but also brought about an unprecedented economic prosperity and cultural renaissance in the country**, and a synthesis of the Hindu and Muslim cultures which is a priceless legacy of the Mughal rule.

06 Religion

- Akbar was born when the **Bhakti and Sufi movements** were at their peak and the idea emphasized essential unity of Hindu and Muslims was prevalent. Such liberal sentiments had great impression on young Akbar, who **abolished Jizya, pilgrimage tax and the practice of forcibly converting prisoners of war to Islam**.
- He followed the **policy of Sulh-i-kul,** under which the **ruler was distinguished by his paternal love towards his subjects without distinction of sect or creed** and it was his duty to prevent sectarian strife from rising. His sole aim was to **"ascertain truth, to find out and disclose the principles of genuine religion."**
- In **1575, Akbar built Ibadat Khana or the Hall of Prayer in his new capital, Fatehpur Sikri,** where he invited theologians, mystics and learned nobles to discuss religious matters. The proceedings were at first were confined to Muslims, but were later opened to people of all religions, even to atheists. He invited Purushottam and Devi, to expound the doctrines of Hinduism, Maharji Rana to explain the doctrines of Zoroastrianism, Portuguese Acquaviva and Monserrate for Christianity, Hira Vijaya Suri for Jainism. **However, this was not liked by the orthodox Mullahs and rumours spread that Akbar wanted to forsake Islam**. The growing strife forced Akbar to discontinue the discussions in Ibadat Khana in 1582.
- But he did not give up his quest for true religion. His contact with leaders of various religions convinced him that while there were differences among various religions, they all had some good points which need tobe emphasized. To achieve this objective, **he founded a religion of his own, named tauhid-i-ilahi (Divine monotheism) or din-i-ilahi**, with an aim to bring to an end the religious bitterness and conflict prevalent among various sections of the society.
- **Tauhid-i-ilahi was an order of the Sufistic type, and membership was voluntary**. There were no sacred books, no priestly class or rituals except the initiation ceremony in which the Emperor gave a formula called **Shasta**, which the person being initiated had to repeat. This contained **Akbar's favourite motto-'Allah-o-Akbar ' or 'God is Great'.** However, **tauhid-i-ilahi did not attract many followers and virtually died with Akbar**.
- Akbar also introduced a number of reforms that were socioreligious in a nature like **preventing Sati unless the widow herself desired it, allowing widow remarriage, encouraging secular education with subjects like geometry, astronomy, agriculture**.

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◆ PRELIMS TRAP MAHZAR IS NOT DIN-I-ILAHI

The **Mahzar** (1579) was a declaration signed by leading ulama, including Shaikh Mubarak, father of Abul Fazl. It gave Akbar the right to choose between conflicting interpretations of Islamic law; it did not found a new faith. **Tauhid-i-Ilahi** came later, in 1582. **Birbal** was the only Hindu to join it.



Ibadat khana

07 Art and Architecture

- During the reign of Akbar, many indigenous art styles were encouraged which led to the **common use of sandstone**. Akbar built a series of forts, the most famous of which is the **fort at Agra** (in red sandstone). His other forts are at **Lahore and Allahabad**.
- Akbar built **Fatehpur Sikri (city of victory) near Agra**. Many buildings of Gujarati and Bengali styles are found in this complex. The most magnificent building in it is the **Jama Masjid and the gateway to it is called Buland Darwaza** (176 ft high), built in c. 1572 CE to commemorate Akbar's victory over Gujarat. Other important buildings at Fatehpur Sikri are **Jodha Bai's palace and Panch Mahal** with five storeys.

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- **He built his own tomb at Sikandra (near Agra) which was completed by Jahangir.**
- Akbar **built a temple of Govindadeva at Vrindavan.**
- He also built **Jahangir Mahal** in Agra Fort.
- Akbar commissioned the illustrations of several literary and religious texts. He invited a large number of painters from different parts of the country to his court. Both Hindus and Muslims joined in this work. **Baswan, Miskina and Daswant** attained great positions as Akbar's court artists.
- **Illustrations of Persian versions of Mahabharata and Ramayana were produced in miniature form.**
- Many other Indian fables became miniature paintings in the art studio established by Akbar.
- Historical works like **Akbarnama** also remained the main themes of Mughal paintings.
- **Hamzanama** is considered to be the most important work which consisted of 1200 paintings. Indian colours such as **peacock blue, Indian red** began to be used.
- Akbar **patronised Tansen of Gwalior** who composed many ragas. It is believed that he could bring rain and fire through singing the ragas Megh Malhar and Deepak, respectively.
- The **Persian language became widespread in the Mughal empire** by the time of Akbar's reign. **Abul Fazl was a great scholar and historian of his period.** He set a style of prose writing and it was followed for many generations. Many historical works were written during this period. They include **Ain-i-Akbari and Akbarnama by Abul Fazl.** The **translation of Mahabharata into the Persian language was done under the supervision of Abul Faizi** (brother of Abul Fazl). **Urfi and Naziri** were the other two leading Persian poets. From the time of Akbar, Hindi poets were attached to the Mughal court. The most famous Hindi poet was **Tulsidas**, who wrote the Hindi version of the Ramayana – the Ramacharitmanas.

◆ PRELIMS FACT FATEHPUR SIKRI

Built by Akbar from about 1571, **Fatehpur Sikri** was the Mughal capital for roughly ten years, until the court moved to **Lahore in 1585**. The Jama Masjid (1571–72) was among its first buildings. In its courtyard stands the white-marble tomb of **Shaikh Salim Chishti**, the Sufi saint after whom Prince Salim (Jahangir) was named. Fatehpur Sikri is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1986).

◆ PRELIMS FACT MAKTAB KHANA TRANSLATIONS

Akbar set up the **Maktab Khana**, a translation bureau, at Fatehpur Sikri. Its best-known work is the **Razmnama**, the Persian Mahabharata (1584–86): Naqib Khan prepared the draft with Badauni and others, Faizi polished it, and Abul Fazl wrote the preface. Badauni also translated the Ramayana. The Persian **Yoga Vasistha** of **Nizamuddin Panipati** also belongs to the late sixteenth century, that is, to Akbar's reign.

08 Evaluation

- Akbar left a rich legacy both for the Mughal Empire as well as the Indian subcontinent in general. He firmly **entrenched the authority of the Mughal Empire** in India and beyond, after it had been threatened by the Afghans during his father's reign, establishing its military and diplomatic superiority. His diplomatic policies were based on **mutual coexistence and companionship** that turned even the Hindu rulers into his allies.

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- His ingenious reforms in political and military administration provided the Empire with long needed **stability**. During his reign, **the nature of the state changed to a secular and liberal one, with emphasis on cultural integration.** He was a visionary, and his religious doctrine, **Din-i-ilahi**, with its secular orientation and faith in reason, had held in it the promise of a modern India. It can be as well stated that Akbar was born to rule, with a rightful claim to be among the greatest monarch known to history.

Akbar's Conquests

PROVINCE	RULER
Malwa	Baz Bahadur
Chunar	Afghan
Merata	Jaimal
Gondwana (Garh Katanga)	Rani Durgawati (regent of Bir Narayan)
Chittor	Rana Uday Singh
Ranthambor	Surjan Hada
Kalinjar	Ram Chandra
Marwar	Chandrasena, Kalyanmal, Raj Singh, Rawal Harirai
Gujarat	Muzaffar Shah III
Bengal-Bihar	Daud Khan Karrani
Haldighati	Rana Pratap
Kabul	Mirza Hakim
Kashmir	Yusuf Khan and Yakub Khan
Sindh	Jani Beg Mirza
Orissa	Kutul Khan and Nisar Khan
Khandesh	Ali Khan
Baluchistan	Yusufzai Tribes
Kandhar	Muzaffar Husain Mirza
Ahmednagar	Chand Bibi (regent of Bahadur Shah)
Asirgarh	Miran Bahadur Khan

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Akbar's Navratnas

- **Nine of the courtiers** were known as Akbar's navratnas (**nine jewels**).
  - **Abul Fazl**
    - He authored **Akbarnama** and Ain-i-Akbari.
    - He led the Mughal army in its war in Deccan.
    - On the orders of Prince Salim, he was killed by Bir Singh Bundela.
  - **Faizi**
    - He was a great Persian poet.
    - **Brother of Abul Fazl.**
    - Under his supervision, the Mahabharata was translated into the Persian language.
    - He also translated Lilavati (a work on mathematics) into Persian.
  - **Tansen**
    - He served as a great musician in the court of **king Ramachandra** who titled him **"Tansen"**. He was born as Tanna Mishra.
    - Akbar gave him the title of **"Mian".**
    - It is believed that he could bring fire and rain through singing the ragas Deepak and Megh Malhar respectively.
  - **Raja Birbal**
    - His original name was Mahesh Das.
    - Akbar gave him the title of **"Raja" and "Birbal".**
    - He died on the northwest frontier fighting the Yusufzais.
  - **Raja Todar Mal**
    - He was the head of the revenue system. He introduced standard weights and measures.
    - He had earlier worked under Sher Shah Suri.
    - Akbar honoured him with the title of **"Diwan-i-Ashraf"**.
  - **Raja Man Singh**
    - One of the trusted generals of Akbar.
  - **Fakir Aziao Din**
    - He was one of the chief advisors of Akbar.
    - He was a Sufi mystic.
  - **Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan**
    - Son of Bairam Khan.
    - He was a great poet. He translated Baburnama into Persian.
  - **Mirza Aziz Koka**
    - Also known as Khan-i-Azam or Kokaltash.
    - Foster brother of Akbar.
    - He was also appointed Subedar of Gujarat.

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PRELIMS TRAP AKBARNAMA, AIN AND BADAUNI

- **Ain-i-Akbari** is not a separate work: it is the third and final volume of Abul Fazl's **Akbarnama**, arranged in five books and completed in the 1590s.
- **Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh** of **Badauni** (completed 1595) is a frank and critical account of Akbar's religious views. It was kept secret in Akbar's lifetime and became known only under Jahangir.

Prelims Quick Revision

- **Kalanaur (1556)**: 13-year-old Akbar enthroned by Bairam Khan, who became his regent.
- **Second Battle of Panipat (5 November 1556)**: Hemu, Adil Shah Sur's general titled Vikramaditya, defeated.
- **Malwa**: Baz Bahadur of Mandu, linked with Rani Roopmati, ousted; Malwa annexed in 1562.
- **Garh-Katanga**: Rani Durgavati died resisting Asaf Khan in 1564.
- **Chittor (1567–68)**: defended by Jaimal and Patta; Haldighati (1576) fought against Rana Pratap.
- **Gujarat (1572–73)**: Akbar saw the sea at Cambay; Buland Darwaza commemorates the victory.
- **Dahsala (1580)**: revenue on ten-year average produce and prices; one-third as state share; Todar Mal.
- **Land classes**: polaj, parati, chachar and banjar, by continuity of cultivation.
- **Mansab**: zat (personal rank) and sawar (cavalry); dagh, chehra and the 10-20 rule.
- **Jagirs**: tankha (transferable), watan (hereditary), mashrut (conditional), altamgha (family towns).
- **Mir Bakshi**: head of the military department and of intelligence; Mir Saman ran the imperial household.
- **Pilgrim tax and jizya**: abolished in 1563 and 1564.
- **Ibadat Khana (1575)**: hall at Fatehpur Sikri for debates among scholars of all faiths.
- **Sulh-i-kul**: peace with all; Tauhid-i-Ilahi (1582), a voluntary Sufi-type order.
- **Navratnas**: include Abul Fazl, Faizi, Tansen, Birbal, Todar Mal, Man Singh and Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan.

Previous Year Questions

2022 "Yogavasistha" was translated into Persian by Nizamuddin Panipati during the reign of:

(a) Akbar (b) Humayun (c) Shahjahan (d) Aurangzeb

Answer: (a). Nizamuddin Panipati translated the Yogavasistha into Persian in 1597, under Akbar and with Prince Salim's patronage, as part of Akbar's translation programme.

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2019 With reference to Mian Tansen, which one of the following statements is not correct?

a Tansen was the title given to him by Emperor Akbar

b Tansen composed Dhrupads on Hindu gods and goddesses.

c Tansen composed songs on his patrons.

d Tansen invented many Ragas.

Answer: (a). Tradition credits Raja Vikramajit of Gwalior, not Akbar, with the title 'Tansen'; Tansen did compose dhrupads on deities and patrons and created ragas such as Darbari Kanada.

2018 With reference to the cultural history of India, consider the following statements :
1. White marble was used in making Buland Darwaza and Khankah at Fatehpur Sikri.
2. Red sandstone and marble were used in making Bara Imambara and Rumi Darwaza at Lucknow.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

a 1 only | b 2 only | c Both 1 and 2 | d Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (d). The official key treats both as wrong: Buland Darwaza and the khanqah are chiefly red sandstone, and Lucknow's Bara Imambara and Rumi Darwaza are of brick and lime plaster.

2014 Ibadat Khana at Fatehpur Sikri was

a the mosque for the use of Royal Family

b Akbar's private prayer chamber

c the hall in which Akbar held discussions with scholars of various religions

d the room in which the nobles belonging to different religions gathered to discuss religious affairs

Answer: (c). Akbar built the Ibadat Khana at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575 for religious debates, first among Muslim divines and later with Hindu, Jain, Zoroastrian and Christian scholars.

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