

# Medieval India: Tripartite Struggle and Cholas (NCERT)

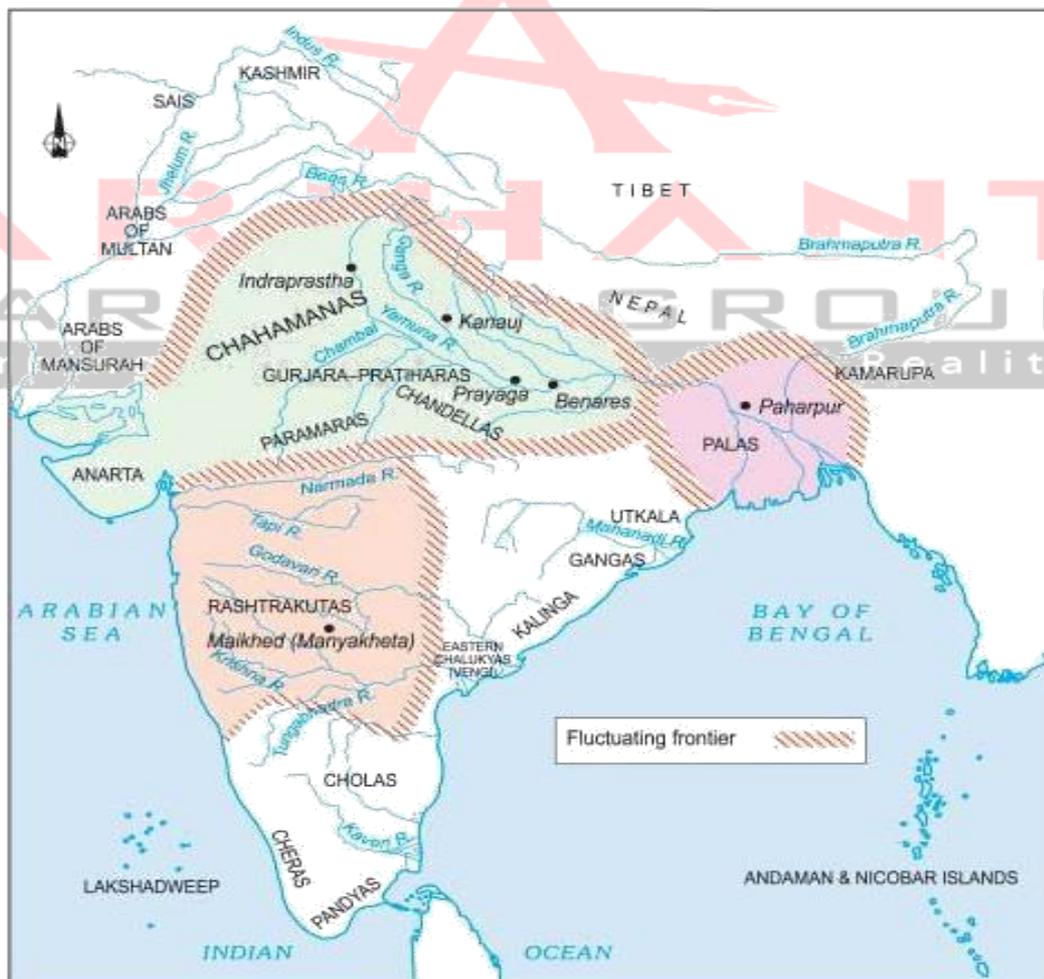
Well, we have covered the main points from NCERT text for Standard 6 History in our last 5 posts. All the 5 parts dealt with 'Ancient India'. From today, we shall see part-by-part the main points from Standard 7 NCERT History text. The objective of the next set of articles would be to present main points from 'Medieval India', in an easy to revise form. Thanks for the encouragement from readers – online and offline – we plan to do the compilation of NCERT for Modern History too. Now straight to the topics.

## NCERT History Text: Standard 7 (Medieval India Topics)

In this post we see the tripartite struggle between Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas during the medieval period. We will also learn about imperial Cholas.

The reference material for this post is NCERT History text for Class 7 (Our past -1). Only main points from the chapters are compiled below. These points might come quite handy during preparation of Prelims and Mains, to get a quick grasp of the subject.

### New Kings and Kingdoms



- Many dynasties emerged during 7th century.
- By the 7th century there were big landlords or warrior chiefs in different regions of the subcontinent.
- Existing kings often acknowledged them as their subordinates or samantas. As these samantas gained power and wealth, they declared themselves to be maha-samanta, maha- mandaleshvara (the great lord of a “circle” or region) and so on. Sometimes
- they asserted their independence from their overlords.
- Rashtrakutas in the Deccan is one such instance. Initially they were subordinate to the Chalukyas of Karnataka. In the mid-eighth century, Dantidurga, a Rashtrakuta chief, overthrew his Chalukya overlord.
- In each states, resources were obtained from the producers, that is, peasants, cattle-keepers, artisans, who were often persuaded or compelled to surrender part of what they produced.
- *Prashastis* contain details that may not be literally true. But they tell us how rulers
- wanted to depict themselves – as valiant, victorious warriors, for example. However
- author named Kalhana composed Sanskrit poems in 12th century and he was critical about the rulers and their policies.

Kanauj in the Ganga valley was a prized area. For centuries, rulers belonging to the Gurjara-Pratihara, Rashtrakuta and Pala dynasties fought for control over Kanauj.

Historians often describe it as the “**tripartite struggle**”.

- Rulers also tried to demonstrate their power and resources by building large temples.
- Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, Afghanistan [ruled 997-1030] and extended control over Central Asia, Iran and north-west parts of subcontinent used to attack these temples including Somnath of Gujarat.
- Al-Biruni, Gazni’s trusted scholar was made to write about to subcontinent he conquered. This arabic wrok Kitanb-al-Hind sought help from Sankrit scholars too.
- Chauhans /Chahamanas, who ruled over the region around Delhi and Ajmer.
- They attempted to expand their control to the west and the east, where they were opposed by the Chalukyas of Gujarat and the Gahadavalas of western Uttar Pradesh.
- The best-known Chahamanas ruler was Prithviraja III (1168-1192), who defeated an Afghan ruler named Sultan Muhammad Ghori in 1191, but lost to him the very next year, in 1192.

Also read: UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites: Names from India

### The Cholas

- Vijayalaya, who belonged to the ancient chiefly family of the Cholas from Uraiyur, captured the delta from the Muttaraiyar in the middle of the ninth century. He built the town of Thanjavur and a temple for goddess Nishumbhasudini there.
- The successors of Vijayalaya conquered neighbouring regions and the kingdom grew.
- Rajaraja I, considered the most powerful Chola ruler, became king in AD 985 and expanded the control.

Rajaraja’s son Rajendra I continued his policies and even raided the Ganga valley, Sri Lanka and countries of Southeast Asia, developing a navy for these expeditions.

- The big temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikonda- cholapuram, built by Rajaraja and Rajendra.
- Chola temples often became the nuclei of settlements which grew around them. And these temples were not only places of worship; they were the hub of economic, social and cultural life as well.
- Many of the achievements of the Cholas were made possible through new developments in agriculture.
- Settlements of peasants, known as *ur*, became prosperous with the spread of irrigation agriculture. Groups of such villages formed larger units called *nadu*.
- The village council and the *nadu* had several administrative functions including dispensing justice and collecting taxes.

Rich peasants of the *Vellala* caste exercised considerable control over the affairs of the *nadu* under the supervision of the central Chola govt.

