

## Kudavolai System of Cholas

*Prelims - Current events of National and International importance | History of India*

### **Why in News?**

Recently, PM visited the Gangaikonda Cholapuram, highlighted that Chola Empire's democratic method existed centuries before the British Magna Carta.

**Gangaikonda Cholapuram** is a Shiva temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated in Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu, built by Rajendra Chola I as his capital.

- It is a **method of voting process** in a democratic way, also known as "ballot pot" election for village assemblies.
- **Process** - The names of eligible candidates were *inscribed on palm leaves* and placed inside a pot.
- A young boy, typically chosen for his impartiality, would draw the lot in full public view.
- This randomized draw was not a game of chance but a civic ritual rooted in transparency, fairness, and collective consent.
- The process was mentioned in the ***Uttaramerur Inscriptions of Kanchipuram***.
- **Eligibility of the candidates**
  - **Possession of Land** - Candidates had to own tax-paying land.
  - **Age criteria** - Between *35 and 70 years* old.
  - **Possessing Vedic Knowledge** - He should have knowledge of Vedic texts or administration.
  - **No crime records** - He should not have no record of crime or domestic abuse.
- **Disqualification criteria**
  - Debt defaulters, alcoholics, and close relatives of sitting members were disqualified.
  - Misappropriation of funds or dereliction of duty could lead to disqualification from future office.
- **Dismissal** - Epigraphia Indica details the dismissal of a treasury officer over embezzlement, followed by a fine.

## Administration of Cholas

- The Chola administration was a well-organized and efficient system, characterized by a ***strong central government and a significant degree of local autonomy.***
- The empire was divided into
  - Provinces (Mandalams),
  - Districts (Valanadus and Kottams) and
  - Villages (Naduns).
- **Local Self-Government** - It has two foundational units
  - The Sabha for Brahmin settlements and
  - The Ur for non-Brahmin villages.
- **Powers of local government** - These were not symbolic councils but elected bodies with real powers over revenue, irrigation, temple management, and even justice.
  - Accountability was embedded. Annual audits were mandatory.
- **Decentralised administrative systems** - By empowering merchant guilds such as the Manigramam and Ayyavole, and sustaining local assemblies, the Cholas expanded both trade and legitimacy.
- **Egalitarian Society** - The Chola system was far from egalitarian in the modern sense. It excluded women, labourers, and landless groups.
- **Strategic competence** - The Military Campaigns of Rajendra Chola, the Cholas were masters of strategic signaling through naval conquests.

## Reference

[The Indian Express | Gangaikonda Cholapuram & Kudavolai system](#)

