

HIS5B09-KERALA HISTORY-1
MODULE-2 IRON AGE AND EARLY HISTORIC SOCIETY
TOPIC- SANGAM LITERATURE

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- The Sangam Age is a landmark in the history of south India.
- The word 'sangam' is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word 'sangha', which means a group of persons or an association.
- Sangam Literature also known as Tamil Heroic Poetry- K .Kalasapathy
- Rajan Gurukkal- Early Tamil Anthologies
- Period- BCE 300-CE 300
- The Tamil Sangam was an academy of poets and bards who flourished in three different periods and in different places under the patronage of the Pandyan kings of the Sangam age.
- It is believed that the first Sangam was attended by gods and legendary sages, and its seat was Then Madurai.
- All the works of the first Sangam have perished.

- The seat of the second Sangam was Kapatapuram, another capital of the Sangam Pandyas.
- It was attended by several poets and produced a large mass of literature, but only Tolkappiyam (the early Tamil grammar work) has survived
- The seat of the third Sangam was the present Madurai.
- It has also produced vast literature, but only a fraction of it has survived.
- It is this fraction which constitutes the extant body of Sangam literature.
- The age of the Sangam is the age to which the Sangam literature belonged.
- The Sangam literature comprises a mine of information on political, socio-economic and cultural conditions of Tamil country around the beginning of the Christian era

- Folk songs / oral tradition of ancient Tamizhakam
- Transmitted through generation- several interpolations – consolidated around 10th C CE
- These anthologies together called as Sangam literature
- As created in different periods – reflect different social conditions
- Reflect society of ancient Tamizhakam b/w 300 BCE & 300 CE

- Also known as ‘Classical Tamil Literature’ – help to reconstruct history of ancient Tamizhakam
- This period known as ‘Sangam Age/ Classical Age of Tamizhakam’
- Sangam works, foreign accounts & archaeological sources – useful in reconstructing past
- Songs depict a separate culture of Dravidian origin
- Sangam – a assembly of scholars/ literary academy of Tamil poets

- No unanimous opinion on period & number of sangam works
- Centre – Madurai – capital of Pandya rulers
- ‘Irainar akaporul’ – Tamil commentry of 8th C CE – refer to 3 literary academies at capital of Pandya’s
- 3 sangams – Talai – Madhurai - Agastyar—works almost lost
- Idai- Kapadapuram –Tolkappiyar – only Tolkapium surviving
- Kadai- North Madhurai – Nakkirar – all works surviving
- lasted for 9,900 years- attended by 8,598 poets & patronised by 197 Pandyan kings

- Historian – Sivaraja Pillai – do not accept the existence of first 2 sangams
- Some historians doubt the existence of such academies
- Irainar Akaporul divides Sangam works in to 3 – ‘Ettutokai’, ‘Pathu Pattu’, ‘Patinenkizhkanakku’
- ‘Tolkapium’ – earliest work – by Tolkapiar- primarily a work on grammar – also refer about geography of ancient Tamizhakam
- ‘Manimekhalai’ by Chithalai Chatanar & ‘Silapatikaram’ by Ilanko Adigal– later works

- **ETTUTOKAI** – 8 literary works – narrative poems
 - **Nattinai**-The general theme of Nattinai is love and it consists of 400 stanzas, composed by 175 poets
 - **Kurumthokai**-It is a ‘short anthology’, consisting of 402 love poems.
 - **Ainkurunuru**-This ‘short five hundreds’ deals with love songs of five fold landscape
 - **Patittupattu**-The ‘ten tens’ consists of ten long poems divided into ten sections. It is a puram work praising the valour of the Chera kings. The work is valuable for reconstructing the history of the early Chera rulers.
 - **Paripatal**-It is a composition of devotional songs dedicated to deities such as Vishnu and Karthikeya.
 - **Kalithokai**-It consists of 150 stanzas with most of the songs dealing with love theme and a few songs on moral values.
 - **Akananuru**-It contains 401 stanzas of poems composed by nearly 145 poets. All the songs deal with love theme
 - **Purananuru**-It comprises of 400 heroic poems, composed by 157 poets.

- Written at different place & different periods
- Divided in to – **Akam & Puram** songs
- Akam – love, family etc– Nattinai, Kurumthokai, Ainkurunuru, Akananuru
- Puram –personal achievements & wars of the king – Purananuru, Patittupathu
- Paaripatal – mixture of both akam & puram songs
- Among the works of Ettutokai only Patittupathu deals with Kerala
- Ettutokai - very short compared to the Pathupattu

- **Pathupattu-** anthology of long poems – narrative poems
 - **Tirumurukattupadai-**A bard directs another to the abode of Lord Muruga, to acquire spiritual wealth. All the important shrines of Lord Muruga are described in this work. It was composed by Nakkirar
 - **Pourunarattupadai-**It praises the valour of the Chola king Karikala. It was composed by Muttatamakanniyar.
 - **Chirupanattupadai-**In this work, the bard directs the minstrel to the court of Nalliyakotan, a chieftain. While describing his kingdom, the work also portrays the capital cities of three major kingdoms, namely, the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas. It was written by Nattattanar.
 - **Perumponattupadai-**This arripatai is in praise of the ruler of Kanchi, written by the poet Uruttirakkannanar. Administration of the city of Kanchi and its trading activities are widely described in this work.
 - **Mullaipattu-**The shortest of ten idylls, containing 103 lines was composed by Naputtanar. This work deals with the akam concept.

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- **Maduraikanchi**-The longest of ten poems, contains 782 lines. Mankuti Marutanar praises the valour of the Pandya king Netunceliyan and describes in detail the trade, commerce and administrative aspects of the Pandya Kingdom
- **Netunalvatai**-This puram work was written by Nakkirar in praise of Netunceliyan, the Pandya ruler.
- **Kurinjipattu**-Kapilar's work deals with akam concept
- **Patinipalai**-In praise of the Chola ruler Karikala, this work was composed by Uruttirankannanar. This work deals with the trade relations between ancient Tamil country and foreign countries
- **Malaipatukatam**-Romantic & heroic activities – intertwined with descriptions of nature & life style of people-Composed by Perumkaucikanar, the work is an arrupatai, directing the fellow bard to the kingdom of Nannan

- **PATTINENKIZHKANAKKU** – anthology of 18 poems-The eighteen minor (Kilkanakku) works which are didactic in nature are later than the Melkanakku works. They show more influence of Prakrit and Sanskrit cultural traditions than the Melkanakku works. The impact of Jainism and Buddhism is also seen in these works, which mostly contain codes of conduct for kings and people. The Kilkanakku literature was composed in fourth-fifth centuries A.D., when the Tamil country was under the Kalabhra rule. The most famous among these works is Muppal or Tirukural, written by Tiruvalluvar. It deals with philosophy

1. Tirukural
2. Naladiyar
3. Kalavazhi Nirpattu
4. Kainilai
5. Iniyavainirpattu
6. Inninipattu
7. Ninmanikatikai
8. Karnirpattu
9. Aintinai Ayimpathu

10. Ninaimozhi Ayimpathu

11. Ninaimalai Nuttayimpathu

12. Thirukatukam

13. Elathi

14. Acharakovai

15. Pazhamozhi Nanuru

16. Cirupanchamulam

17. Muthumozhikanchi

18. Aintinai Elupathu

- Didactic poem – ethical & moral values

- Silapatikaram & Manimekhalai – sangam works – but content style & language treat them as later works – after spread of Jainism & Buddhism
- CHRONOLOGY – no exact date
- K.A.N.Sastri, S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, K.G Seshayer – period during first years of Christian era
- S. Vaiyapuri Pillai – divided works into 2 parts & place them at different period
 - Nattinai , Kurumtokai, Ainkurunuru, Patittupathu, Akananuru, Purananuru – first 3 centuries of Christian era – remaining works written after 5th C AD

- Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai – 4th C CE
- Kailasapathy – 3rd C CE
- Roughly b/w 300 BCE & 300 CE – based on similarities b/w Sangam & Greeco- Roman works on South India – archaeological findings
- Roman coins from Arikamedu- reference in Silapatikaram about Gajabahu(2nd C AD), Ceylonese ruler as contemporary of Cheran Senguttavan

- Sangam texts were essentially part of the oral tradition, composed by the numerous singer-poets, put together in later centuries into composite texts.
- The oral character of the texts makes the determination of the dates of composition of individual texts extremely difficult.
- However, it is generally recognized that the Tokai compilations except Paripatal and Kalittokai belong to an earlier period, and the Kilkanakku texts, along with the epics, Cilappatikaram and Manimekalai belong to a later period.
- While later texts, including Pattupattu, appear to represent a stage that has been depicted as 'early historic', the early texts appear to overlap with different stages of transition from an anterior iron age megalithic to early historic.
- Songs representing an advanced stage in social formation can be seen in the early texts also, and it can be argued that some songs in the later texts represent earlier stages of social formation.

- PATITTUPATHU – 8th book of Ettutokai
- Only work about Chera history
- Literally means ‘ten ten’
- First & last songs lost
- Extol the richness of Chera dynasty, valour of rulers, flora, fauna sea, hills etc
- Deals with 2 ruling families of Chera dynasty – Utiyan Cheralathan with Vanchi as capital & Antuvan Cheral Irumporai with Tondai as capital
- altogether 10 Chera rulers

- Each of the song has at its end a composition called ‘patikam’
– later addition
- First part of Patikam is inverse & second part in prose
colophon
- Contains parentage of king, achievements, tenure, gifts given
by king etc
- To patikams first ruler was Utiyan Cheralathan, followed by
Nedum Cheralathan – song by Kumattur Kannan
- 3rd ruler –Selkezhu Kuttavan – song by Kauthamanar

- 4th ruler – Narmudi Cheral – poet Kappiyanar
- 5th ruler – Senkuttavan – poet Paranar
- Next ruler - Adukottupattu Cheralathan – poet Nachellayar
- 7th ruler – Selvakadungo Ahiyathan – poet kapilar
- 8th – Perum Cheral Irumporai – poet Arasikizhar
- 9th – ilam Cheral Irumporai – poet Kizhar
- 10th – not known- later part lost
- Period- b/w 2nd C & 4th c CE

- Region- Tamizhakam- refer to a territory from Venkatam(Tirupati hills) to Kumari (Cape Comorin) where Tamil language was spoken
- References in Asokan inscriptions- Keralaputros, Satyaputros, Pandyas
- Greek accounts refers about Cholas & Pandyas
- Periplus of Erithrean sea- Damirike
- Ptolemy- Lymiricke

- The material culture represented by the Iron Age–Megalithic horizon bears close affinity to the one represented by early Tamil poetry.
- This is a corpus of oral poetry collected sometime after about the twelfth century CE and popularly known as ‘Sangam literature’.
- Considered formerly as constituting a single corpus called ‘Sangam literature’, the early Tamil texts are now appreciated as composed over a period of more than a millennium and belonging to different strata.
- They are essentially bardic compositions exhibiting traits of oral poetry.
- They were selected, thematically arranged and brought together at a much later date in a highly disciplined manner

- Of the various groups of anthologies, such as Eṭṭuttokai, Pattuppāṭṭu and Patineṅkīlkaṅakku, six anthologies of the first, excluding Kalittokai and Paripāṭal, are the earliest.
- They use an interesting floral symbolism in the nomenclature of what is called tiṅais, and this is standardized and theorized in the later work of poetics.
- Each of these tiṅais signifies primarily a poetic situation and context in the literature and its poetics, representing generally particular expressions of war and love.
- Of the tiṅais, a grouping of five in the love songs is of particular interest to the historian

- five tiṇais represent a division of the physiographic region of the Tamil speaking world into five different eco-zones.
- Thus, the five tiṇais of Kuṛiñci (hills and forests), Mullai (pastures and thickets), Marutam (riparian plains), Pālai (parched lands) and Neytal (costal tracts) represented clearly distinguishable geographical zones.
- People who lived in these zones lived an appropriate life close to nature—the hunters and gatherers known as Kuṛavar in Kuṛiñci worshipped Cēyōn, the war god; the pastoralists called Iṭaiyar in Mullai had their god in Māyōn; the plough agriculturists or Uḷavar of Marutam prayed to Vēntan, the rain god; the fierce robbers and fighters described as Maṛavar in Pālai propitiated the bloodthirsty Koṛṛavai; and the Paratavar fishermen of Neytal knelt before Kaṭalōln, the sea god.

- The resultant picture is of a society in which people pursued their livelihood by following different ways of production.
- Regarding the relations of production in these different eco-zones, the information is clear: the principle of organization was kinship.
- This is visible in situations of both pastoralism and agriculture.
- In such a system of production, distribution of surplus to the various factors of production is irrelevant.
- In any case, production was largely for subsistence and hardly for surplus.
- The picture provided by archaeology is complementary.
- In the megalithic horizon, which corresponds to this literature both chronologically and culturally, human settlements are sparsely distributed.

- Sites throwing up evidence of settled agriculture, though few and far between, nonetheless show continuous occupation from Neolithic levels.
- Iron is present, but the implements show a marked bias to hunting and fighting, to the point of a near-total exclusion of iron technology in agriculture.
- Artifacts such as pottery, terracotta, beads, semiprecious stones, bronze objects and so on, besides the iron implements, point to a relatively high level of craft production

- There is a solitary reference to a goldsmith.
- One of the records refers to ‘the men of the nigama’. The reference to the Sanskrit nigama and the fact that most of these labels are associated with Jain and Buddhist monks may indicate a North Indian connection for at least a section of the traders.
- It is interesting that the term used for trader in these documents is vaṇikan, derived from Sanskrit vaṇik
- The anthologies, too, refer to exchanges of the products of different tiṇais.
- That literature also makes occasional references to cāttu (Sanskrit sārtha?), translated as ‘caravans’.
- Uṛaiyūr Iḷamponvāṇikanār and Madurai Aruvaivāṇikan Iḷavēṭṭaṇār, who figure in the literature as poets, are thought to be ‘specialized traders’ in gold and textiles, respectively.

- Excavations of the port towns of Arikamedu, Alagankulam, Vasavasamudram, Korkai, Kaveripoompattanam, and recently Pattanam on the West Coast, as well as evidence from the interior sites of Karur, Uraiyur and Kotumanal have contributed substantially to our knowledge of the early historic references.
- The port towns and the interior town of Karur indicated flourishing Roman trade. Excavations at Kotumanal revealed an indigenous trading and habitation site adjacent to the beryl mines.
- Its role as a jewel manufacturing centre is established by excavations.
- Excavations at Pattanam have brought out beryl beads, showing a possible relation between Kotumanal and Pattanam.
- The other important corroborative evidence emerged through the discovery of Roman coins. Roman coins from republican to later imperial coins have been discovered in various sites from Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- Other coin hoards also include punchmarked coins and indigenous coins of Ceras, Colas and Pandyas.
- The development of exchange, trade and coinage, jewel and beadmaking appeared to indicate the growth of an advanced social life.

- The evidence of ‘Roman trade’—embodied in the Tamil songs, Greco-Roman accounts, archaeology of Roman settlements themselves and numerous hoards of Roman coins—tells a similar story.
- This was taken in the past to show that South India had reached a degree of civilization, high enough to rub shoulders with the Roman world, with the balance of trade in favour of this side.
- In discussing evidence of Roman trade, it is important to bear in mind that the items exported included pepper, ginger, cardamom, cloves and similar spices; faunal articles such as animal hides, ivory, apes and peacocks; wild wood articles such as aloe, sandal and teak; precious stones like beryl and pearl and some cotton fabrics.
- Gold and silver coins constituted the chief items of import, besides some copper, tin and arsenic.
- Significantly, a major share of the Roman coins discovered from South India come from hoards and very few from occupational levels.