

SANGAM AGE

Introduction

- The period roughly between the **3rd century B.C.** and **3rd century A.D.** in South India (the area lying to the south of river Krishna and Tungabhadra) is known as Sangam Period.
- It has been named after the Sangam academies held during that period that flourished under the royal patronage of the **Pandya kings** of Madurai.
- At the sangams eminent scholars assembled and functioned as the board of censors and the choicest literature was rendered in the nature of anthologies.
- These literary works were the earliest specimens of Dravidian literature.
- According to the Tamil legends, there were **three** Sangams (Academy of Tamil poets) held in the ancient South India popularly called **Muchchangam**.
 - The **First Sangam**, is believed to be held at **Madurai**, attended by gods and legendary sages. No literary work of this Sangam is available.
 - The **Second Sangam** was held at **Kapadapuram**, only **Tolkappiyam** survives from this.
 - The **Third Sangam** was also held at **Madurai**. A few of these Tamil literary works have survived and are a useful sources to reconstruct the history of the Sangam period.

Sangam Literature: Major source giving details of Sangam Age

The Sangam literature includes Tolkappiyam, Ettutogai, Pattuppattu, Pathinenkilkanakku, and two epics named – Silappathikaram and Manimegalai .

- **Tolkappiyam** was authored by Tolkappiyar and is **considered the earliest of Tamil literary work**. Though it is a work on Tamil grammar but it also provides insights on the political and socio-economic conditions of the time.
- **Ettutogai** (Eight Anthologies) consist of eight works – Aingurunooru, Narrinai, Aganaooru, Purananooru, Kuruntogai, Kalittogai, Paripadal and Padirrupattu.
- **The Pattuppattu** (Ten Idylls) consists of ten works – Thirumurugarruppadai, Porunararruppadai, Sirupanarruppadai, Perumpanarruppadai, Mullaippattu, Nedunalvadai, Maduraikkanji, Kurinjippattu, Pattinappalai and Malaipadukadam.

- **Pathinenkilkanakku** contains eighteen works **about ethics and morals**. The most important among these works is Tirukkural authored by **Thiruvalluvar**, the tamil great poet and philosopher.
- The two epics **Silappathikaram** is written by **Elango Adigal** and **Manimegalai** by **Sittalai Sattanar**. They also provide valuable details about the Sangam society and polity.

Other Sources that give details about the Sangam Period are –

- The Greek authors like Megasthenes, Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy mentioning about commercial trade contacts between the West and South India.
- The Ashokan inscriptions mentioned about the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers to the south of Mauryan empire.
- Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga also has mention of Tamil kingdoms.

Political History Of Sangam Period

Cheras

- The Cheras ruled over large parts of modern-day Kerala.
- Vanji was the capital of the Cheras.
- Musiri and Tondi were the important seaports in this period.
- The emblem of Cheras is the ‘bow and arrow’.
- The first-century Pugalur inscriptions references to 3 generations of Chera kings.
- Senguttuvan (2nd century CE) was the prominent ruler of the Chera dynasty.
- The military achievements of Senguttuvan have been recorded in the epic Silappathikaram, which talks about his Himalayan expedition where he vanquished many rulers from northern India.
- Senguttuvan introduced in Tamil Nadu the Pattini cult or the worship of Kannagi as the ideal wife.
- He was the first to send an ambassador to China from South India.

Cholas

- The Chola kingdom of the Sangam period stretched across the modern-day Tiruchirappalli District, Tiruvarur District, Nagapattinam District, Ariyalur District, Perambalur district, Pudukkottai district, Thanjavur District in Tamil Nadu and Karaikal District.
- Initially, the capital of the Cholas was Uraiyur. Later it was shifted to Puhar (also called Poompuhar).
- King Karikala was a prominent king of the Sangam Chola dynasty.
- The insignia/emblem of the Cholas was ‘tiger’.
- Pattinappalai written by Kadiyalur Uruttirangannanar depicts his life as well as military achievements.

- Various Sangam poems mention the Battle of Venni where he defeated an alliance of the Cheras, Pandyas and 11 smaller chieftains.
- Vahaipparandalai was another important battle fought by Karikala.
- Trade and commerce prospered during his rule.
- He also constructed irrigation tanks near river Kaveri to make available water for reclaimed land from the forest for farming.

Pandyas

- The Pandyas reigned over the Southern region of modern-day Tamil Nadu.
- Madurai was the capital of Pandyas.
- Their emblem was the 'Carp'.
- King Nedunchelivan was also called Aryappadai Kadantha Nedunchelivan.
- According to mythology, the curse of the Kannagi, wife of Kovalan, burnt and destroyed Madurai.
- The socio-economic condition of the seaport of Korkai was mentioned in Maduraikkanji which was written by Mangudi Maruthanar.