

# Department of Employment and Training

## TNPSC GROUP II MAINS - UNIT II

**Course:** TNPSC Group II Mains Material

**Subject:** Tamil Society

**Topic:** Sangam Literature – Classical Tamil

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## Classical Literature

- Classical literature refers to literary works created in ancient languages with rich cultural and historical backgrounds.
- Languages with classical literature:
  - These languages have been established in various domains such as spoken language, written language, governance, judiciary, and education.
- Key features of classical literature:
  - Literary wealth, grammatical structure, vocabulary, historical background, and innovation.

### Tamil Classical Literature

- Languages like Tamil, Chinese, Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek are considered classical languages.
- Classical literature in these languages reached its full form only after acquiring a written script.
- Tamil is recognized globally as a classical language by linguistic scholars.

### Sangam Literature

- Sangam literature is considered Tamil's classical literature and dates from the 6th century BCE to the 2nd century CE.
- Sangam literature is made up of 18 works, which include:
  - **Pattu (Ten Poems)**
  - **Togai (Eight Anthologies)**
- Sangam literature preserves both the inner (personal) and outer (social) aspects of Tamil life.
- Sangam poems:
  - A total of 2,381 poems exist.
  - **Akatthinai (Inner Category):** 1,862 poems.
  - **Puraththinai (Outer Category):** 519 poems.

### Sangam Poets' Identity

- There were 473 Sangam poets and 49 female poets.
- Poets came from various social backgrounds such as kings, merchants, doctors, and ascetics.
- Notable poets include:
  - **Kanian Poongundranar**, known for his famous line "Yadum Oore Yavarum Kelir" (All towns are mine, and all people are my kin).
  - **Kapilar**, who composed 235 poems and ranked first in terms of his contributions.

### Unique Aspects of Sangam Literature

- Sangam literature stands as proof of Tamil's classical status.
- Tamil classical literature has global recognition for its rich humanistic values.

## Classical Sangam Tamil Literature

The Classical Sangam corpus is a treasure trove of Tamil literary heritage, comprising works that reflect early Tamil society, culture, ethics, and aesthetics. It includes **Tholkappiyam**, **Pathinen Melkanakku**, **Pathinen Kilkanakku**, and the **Five Epics**.

## 1. Tholkappiyam

- **Author:** Attributed to **Tholkappiyar**.
- **Significance:** It is the earliest written work on Tamil grammar.
- **Content:**
  - Covers grammar rules.
  - Describes **poetic conventions**, offering insights into the social life of ancient Tamils.

## 2. Pathinen Melkanakku (18 Major Works)

- Divided into:
  1. **Ettuthogai** (Eight Anthologies).
  2. **Pathupattu** (Ten Long Songs).

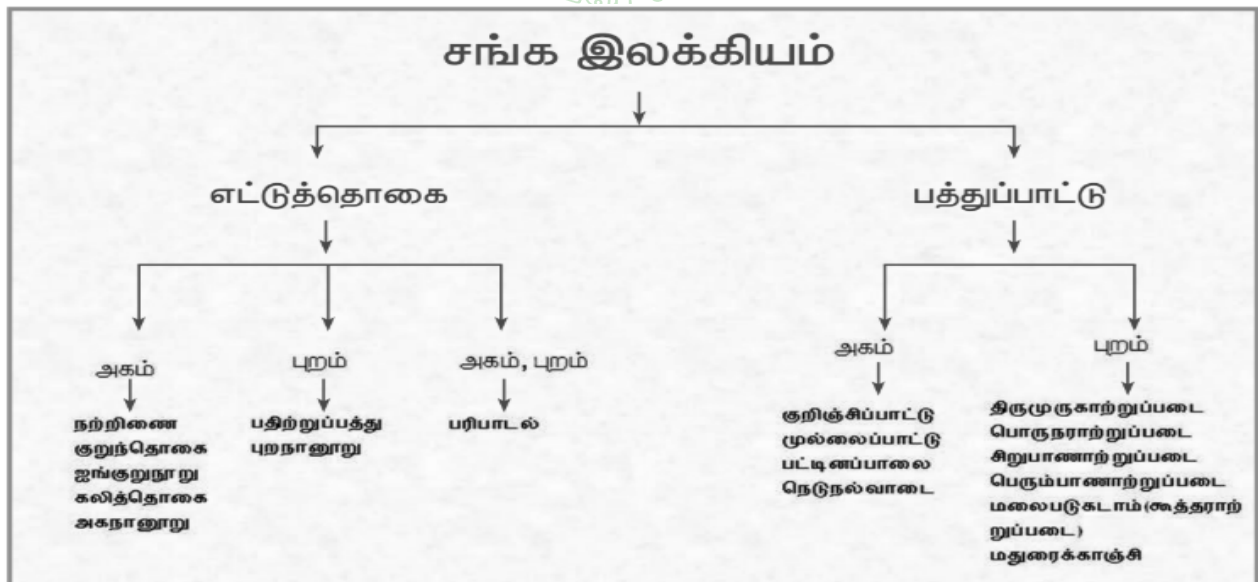
### Ettuthogai

The Ettuthogai is a collection of eight individual works that are considered foundational to Sangam literature. These are classified into **Akam (love poems)** and **Puram (heroic poems)** themes.

● <b>Akananuru</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Uruthirasanmar <b>Patron:</b> Pandiyan Ukkiraperuvaluthi.
● <b>Kurunthogai</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Pooriko. <b>Patron:</b> Pandiyan Maran Valuthi.
● <b>Purananuru</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Uruthirasanmar <b>Patron:</b> Unknown.
● <b>Natrinai</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Unknown. <b>Patron:</b> Pandiyan Maran Valuthi.
● <b>Ainkurunuru</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Kudalur Kizhar. <b>Patron:</b> Chera king Yanaikatchai Mandaran Cheral Irumporai.
● <b>Pathitruvalu</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Uruthirasanmar.

	<b>Details:</b> Each decade (pathikam) ends with information on the poet, the king, the rewards offered, and the king's reign. These details might have been added later.
• <b>Kalithogai</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Uruthirasanmar.
• <b>Paripadal</b>	<b>Compiler:</b> Uruthirasanmar.

Akam	Natrinali, Aingurunooru, Akananooru	Kurunthogai, Kalithogai,	These five anthologies focus on themes of love, relationships, and personal emotions.
Puram	Pathitruppathu, Purananooru		These anthologies deal with themes of valor, war, kingship, and external world affairs.
Mixed (Akam & Puram)	Paripadal		This anthology uniquely blends both Akam and Puram themes, showcasing a wide spectrum of human experiences and devotional elements.



2.Pathupattu includes

No.	Anthology Name	Number of Poems	Deity/Person Praised	Poet(s)
1	Thirumurugatrupadai	317	Murugan	Nakkeerar
2	Porunaratrupadai	248	Karikalan	Mudathamakanniyar
3	Sirupanatrupadai	269	Nalliyakodan	Nallur Nathathanaar
4	Perumpanatrupadai	500	Thondaiman	Kadiyalur Uruthirangananar
5	Kootharatrupadai (or Malaipadukadaam)	103	Ilanthiraiyan	Perunkousikanar
6	Nedunalvaadai	583	Nedunchezhiyan (Aryappadai)	Nakkeerar
7	Kurinjipaatu	188	Nannan	Kapilar
8	Pattinappalai	261	Karikalan	Kadiyalur Uruthirangananar
9	Maduraikanchi	782	Nedunchezhiyan (Thalaiyalanganam)	Mangudi Maruthanaar
10	Mullaipaatu	301	Kavikkalan	Nambuthanaar

These works are the earliest and most revered in Tamil classical literature.

### 3. Pathinen Kilkanakku (18 Minor Works)

- These texts focus on **ethics and morals**.
- **Thirukkural** by **Thiruvalluvar** is the most significant work in this category.
  - **Structure:** 1330 couplets (kurals).
  - **Themes:** Morality (Aram), Statecraft (Porul), and Love (Inbam).

### 4. The Five Epics (Kappiyams)

These are long narrative poems of exceptional literary quality:

1. **Silappathikaaram** by Ilango Adigal.
2. **Manimekalai** by Sathanar.
3. **Seevaka Chinthamani** by Thiruthakka Thevar.
4. **Valaiyapathi** (author unknown).
5. **Kundalakesi** by Naguthanar.

## Features of Sangam Literature

- It reflects early Tamil life, societal norms, governance, ethics, and love.
- The works are a blend of **aesthetics**, **morality**, and **practicality**, making them timeless and relevant

## Sangam Literature

Sangam literature, consisting of **Ettuthogai** (Eight Anthologies) and **Pathupattu** (Ten Idylls), represents the rich cultural and literary heritage of ancient Tamil society.

## Tholkappiyam

### Age of Tolkappiyam:

- Tolkappiyam is considered the oldest Tamil literary work.
- According to Iraiyanar Akapporul commentary, it was written during the intermediate Sangam period, around the 4th century BCE.
- It predates Ettuthogai and Pattupattu collections.

### Debate on Chronology:

- Some researchers claim Tolkappiyam was influenced by later Sanskrit texts like **Manu's Dharmashastra**, **Bharata's Natyashastra**, and **Vatsyayana's Kamasutra**.
- Contrarily, Tamil Nadu's scholars argue that Tolkappiyam's grammar and language principles predate Sanskrit influences.

### Etymology of Terms:

- Words like "Padimai" are debated; some link them to Jainism.
- The term is used to denote virtuous conduct or ascetic traits rather than specific religious associations.

### Cultural and Linguistic Significance:

- Tolkappiyam reflects the Tamil tradition's independence and richness in linguistic and cultural development.
- It stands as a foundational text for Tamil grammar and literature.

## Pathinenkeezhkanakku

The **Pathinenkeezhkanakku** refers to a collection of 18 renowned works of Tamil literature composed after the Sangam era. These works focus on ethics, inner life, and external affairs, praising virtuous living and societal values.

**Categories of Pathinenkeezhkanakku:**

1. **Aram Noolgal (Ethical Texts - 11 works):**  
These highlight the significance of virtues and moral principles.
2. **Agathurai Noolgal (Inner Life Texts - 6 works):**  
These discuss inner emotions, love, and other personal aspects.
3. **Purathurai Nool (External Affairs Text - 1 work):**  
This deals with external activities like warfare and heroism.

**List of Pathinenkeezhkanakku Works:**

These are written in **Venpa** (a classical Tamil poetic form):

- **Aram Noolgal:** Naladiyar, Nanmanikkadigai, Nanneri, Ainthinai Ezhupathu, Kadugathurai, Kovai, Pazhamozhi, Mummoolam, Inna Naru, Kanchi, Eladhi.
- **Thirukkural** is regarded as the finest ethical text among them.

**Thirukkural and Its Teachings**

The **Thirukkural** is divided into three sections:

1. **Arathuppal** (Virtue)
2. **Porutpal** (Wealth)
3. **Kamathuppal** (Love)



**Thiruvalluvar** explains life principles in simple yet profound language.

**Teachings from Thirukkural:****1. Importance of Virtue (Aram):**

Virtue guides thoughts, actions, and moral behavior.

அழுக்காறு அவாவெகுளி இன்னாச்சொல் நான்கும்  
இழுக்கா இயன்றது அறம்.  
(Aram is living without envy, greed, anger, and harsh words.)

**2. Excellence of Family Life (Illaram):**

Those who live virtuously in family life achieve greater spiritual heights.

ஆற்றின் ஒழுக்கி அறன்இழுக்கா இல்வாழ்க்கை  
நோற்பாரின் நோன்மை உடைத்து.  
(The disciplined family life without straying from virtue is superior to asceticism.)

### 3. Importance of Education:

Education refines humanity, making the entire world accessible.

யாதானும் நாடாமால் ஊராமால் என்ஒருவன்  
சாந்துணையும் கல்லாத வாறு.

(Without learning, one cannot dwell in any place with dignity.)

### 4. The Value of Wealth:

Wealth earned righteously benefits many, like a fruitful tree.

பண்புடையவரிடம் செல்வம் பயன்மரம்,  
உள்ளூர்ப் பழுத்தது போன்றது.

(Wealth in virtuous hands is like a tree laden with ripe fruit.)

Wealth in the wrong hands, however, becomes a curse.

அவ்விய நெஞ்சத்தான் ஆக்கமும் செவ்வியான்  
கேடும் நினைக்கப் படும்.

(Wealth in wicked hearts causes ruin.)

### 5. Social Equality and Justice:

Valluvar speaks against inequality and the failure to meet basic human needs.

இரந்தும் உயிர்வாழ்தல் வேண்டின் பரந்து  
கெடுக உலகுஇயற்றி யான்.

(A world where people survive by begging is unworthy of existence.)

### 6. Duties of a King (Government):

A king (or government) must ensure equitable distribution of resources, protect people, and rule justly.

வையத்துள் வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ்பவன் வான்உறையும்  
தெய்வத்துள் வைக்கப் படும்.

(A just ruler is revered in heaven as well as on earth.)

### Humanitarian Values:

Thirukkural emphasizes qualities such as love, truthfulness, gratitude, and humility as essential to life.

### A Path of Virtue (Aram):

Following virtue leads to peace and societal harmony.



அழுக்காறு அவாவெகுளி இன்னாச்சொல் நான்கும்  
இழுக்கா இயன்றது அறம்.

(Aram is devoid of envy, greed, anger, and harsh speech.)

Through its teachings, **Thirukkural** remains a timeless guide to ethical living and societal well-being.

## Teachings of Naladiyar on Wisdom and Discipline

*Naladiyar* was composed by various Jain monks and later compiled by an individual known as **Padumanar**. Many themes from *Thirukkural* are reiterated in *Naladiyar*. It emphasizes core Jain principles such as detachment from worldly pleasures, admiration for ascetic life, rejection of violence, prohibition of meat consumption, and the inevitability of karma and rebirth.

### Teachings of Naladiyar on Wisdom and Discipline

*Naladiyar* delves into the impermanence of life and material wealth, stressing that **wisdom** and **discipline** alone determine a person's worth.

#### Themes and Messages:

1. **The Necessity of Virtuous Actions:**
  - Virtuous deeds should be performed continuously, regardless of time or place.
  - A life that benefits others, like the sweetness extracted from sugarcane, is praised.
2. **Guidance on Wealth:**
  - Wealth should be earned righteously and shared generously with others.
3. **The Value of Friendship:**
  - Friendship with the learned is like enjoying "the base of sugarcane," full of sweetness and value.
  - Friendship with the unworthy is likened to "the tip of sugarcane," which is bitter and unpleasant.
4. **Learning Trumps Birth:**
  - Just as salt from barren land is valued equally with paddy from fertile fields, a person's knowledge matters more than their birth.
  - **"Even if born in a lowly place, the learned are placed in high esteem."**
5. **Avoiding Harmful Associations:**
  - It is better to face the enmity of the unwise than to endure their friendship.
  - The poem compares incurable diseases to exaggerated praise, advocating honesty over false flattery.

### Other Ethical Texts and Their Contribution to Virtue

Apart from *Naladiyar*, several other texts propagate the principles of virtue:

- **Aathichudi:** Authored by Avvaiyar, this text serves as a guide to righteous living.
- **Nannool:** A grammar text that emphasizes proper learning and virtuous practices.
- **Later Ethical Texts:** Works such as *Moothurai*, *Vetri Verkkai*, and *Neethi Venba* continue the tradition of expounding moral values.

### The Legacy of Naladiyar

1. *Naladiyar* builds a strong foundation for moral living by integrating virtues into daily life.
2. It promotes **wisdom, discipline, and ethical living** as the cornerstones of human dignity.
3. The text teaches us that intellectual and moral excellence, rather than wealth or birth, determine true greatness.

## Silappathikaram and Manimekalai

The **epics Silappathikaram and Manimekalai** hold a prominent place in Tamil classical literature, vividly portraying the cultural heritage, lifestyles, and arts of the Tamil people.

### Overview of Silappathikaram

Silappathikaram, written by Ilango Adigal, revolves around the lives of Kovalan and Kannagi, who were born into a wealthy merchant family in Poompuhar. Kovalan, a man of many arts and noble qualities, strayed from his virtuous path by engaging in an affair with Madhavi, a courtesan. This act of moral lapse led to the loss of his wealth and his eventual demise, highlighting the consequences of ethical deviations.

The epic is celebrated for its rich depiction of Tamil culture and its moral teachings. Kovalan's acknowledgment of his mistakes and his ultimate tragic fate underscore themes of justice, virtue, and the repercussions of straying from dharma (righteousness).

### Manimekalai's Connection

The daughter of Kovalan and Madhavi, **Manimekalai**, is central to the other Tamil epic bearing her name. The name "Manimekalai" itself has a significant backstory, reflecting gratitude and reverence toward a divine entity. Kovalan narrates how an ancestor was saved by a goddess named **Manimekala** during a shipwreck. In her honor, he names his daughter after this goddess, exemplifying the Tamil cultural ethos of acknowledging and repaying one's debts of gratitude.

### Themes of Morality and Justice

The ethical lapses of Kovalan, his subsequent repentance, and the catastrophic consequences form the core moral message of Silappathikaram. His infidelity and financial irresponsibility lead to the collapse of familial harmony, the loss of his life, and widespread tragedy, including the destruction of Madurai.

Through this narrative, Ilango Adigal emphasizes how an individual's moral failings can disrupt societal order.

Kannagi, Kovalan's wife, emerges as a symbol of chastity and justice. Her fiery confrontation with the Pandya king, who unjustly executed Kovalan, and her act of cursing the city of Madurai, further stress the epic's emphasis on justice and virtue.

### Historical and Linguistic Observations

Scholars have debated the timeline of these epics. Certain terms and references, such as "Bangalar" (interpreted as Bengal) and the usage of Sanskrit-origin words like **nadan**, **santhi**, and **kalivatham**, suggest a blend of Tamil and Sanskrit influences. These linguistic elements indicate cultural exchanges and support the theory that these epics might have been composed later than Sangam literature.

Additionally, the variations in the name of the Cauvery River (as "Kaveri" and "Kaviri") within the text reflect its poetic adaptation for lyrical harmony, a testament to the artistic finesse of the composer.

### Cultural Significance

Both epics serve as a bridge between ancient Sangam poetry and later Tamil literary traditions. They reflect not only the literary growth of Tamil but also the socio-cultural and religious transitions of the era, including influences from Jainism and Buddhism.

By blending historical elements, moral lessons, and cultural richness, Silappathikaram and Manimekalai remain enduring masterpieces of Tamil literature. They highlight the intricate interplay of individual ethics and societal values, making them timeless reflections of human experiences.

### Arasanidhi (Ethics of Kingship)

The concept of *Arasanidhi* (the ethics of kingship) is a prominent theme in Tamil classical literature, particularly in works like *Silappathikaram* and *Manimekalai*. It discusses the duties of kings and rulers, the importance of justice, and the role of ethics in governance and social harmony.

#### Key Points of *Arasanidhi*:

1. **"If the rain fails or the citizens err, the king is to blame."**
  - This line emphasizes that the king is held accountable for both natural calamities (like the failure of rain) and the mistakes of the people under his rule. It highlights the responsibility of rulers to maintain the welfare of the people.
2. **"The king must protect his people from hunger, illness, and other misfortunes, and should avoid actions that tarnish his reputation."**

- This concept underscores the ruler's duty to safeguard the well-being of his subjects and ensure justice, while also being cautious of actions that could negatively impact his authority.
- 3. **"The absence of royal protection leads to moral decay in society, including the erosion of discipline and virtue among women and scholars."**
  - This quote reflects the idea that without a just and ethical king, societal order collapses, leading to a breakdown in moral values and education.
- 4. **"A sinner will not be redeemed by taking a good life in exchange for a bad one."**
  - This line from *Manimekalai* reinforces the idea of moral consequences. It suggests that a person who commits sin cannot expect to be saved by doing good deeds afterward. The emphasis is on maintaining ethical conduct throughout one's life.
- 5. **The Role of the King in Justice and Ethics:**
  - In both *Silappathikaram* and *Manimekalai*, the kings are portrayed as upholding justice, ensuring that wrongdoers are punished, and maintaining societal order. They are expected to rule in a way that maintains the ethical integrity of their realm.
- 6. **"The king, who wins over himself, leads the nation on the path of righteousness, and is praised by the wise."**
  - This speaks to the idea that a king who masters his own desires and adheres to ethical principles will naturally lead his kingdom to prosperity and righteousness. He will be honored by wise individuals for his virtuous rule.
- 7. **The Importance of Ethical Leadership:**
  - Both *Silappathikaram* and *Manimekalai* stress the importance of ethical leadership, where rulers must act in accordance with dharma (righteousness) and provide for the basic needs of their people, including food, shelter, and education.
- 8. **Punishment for Immorality:**
  - *Manimekalai* introduces the concept of "punishing the immoral," with a story of a ghost who punishes those who stray from the righteous path, such as liars, thieves, and those involved in immoral acts. This illustrates the value placed on ethical conduct and the consequences for deviating from moral principles.

## Love and Virtue in Sangam Literature

Sangam literature, which includes works like *Tolkāppiyam* and *Kuruntokai*, explores the concept of love as a central theme, particularly the bond between the lover and the beloved. The poems highlight how love, when shared by both partners, leads to a deeper connection and understanding, often elevating both individuals to a higher state of existence.

1. **Tolkāppiyam on Love:**
  - *Tolkāppiyam* mentions that true love between two people is characterized by constancy and strength, representing an eternal bond. It compares love to the unyielding nature of certain elements in nature, where love is as pure and indestructible as the essence of life itself.

"மனமொத்த இருவருக்கிடையே தோன்றும் காதல், நிலைபேறு உடையதாக அமையும்"

(True love between two people is constant and enduring.)

#### Kuruntokai's Depiction of Love:

- The *Kuruntokai* poems, especially those that speak about the relationships between the *talaiṇavan* (the man) and *talaiṇavi* (the woman), depict love as a natural force that binds the two. The love that grows between them is described as pure and transformative.
- 2. செம்புலப் பெயல் நீர்போல அன்புடைய நெஞ்சங்கள் கலந்தவர்களாக இருந்துள்ளனர்"

(The lovers, with hearts full of love, are united like the scent of the lotus mingling with the wind.)

#### The Concept of Protection in Love:

- The *Kuruntokai* also highlights how the headman, like a guardian of love, protects his lover's emotions. Just as honey from the flowers is stored in an unreachable place, love is cherished and safeguarded. The metaphor of protecting love is beautifully captured in the lines:

நின்ற சொல்லர் நீடுதோன்று இனியர் என்றும் எந்தோள் பிரிவு அறியலரே,  
தாமரைத் தண்தாது ஊதி மீமிசைச் சாந்தில் தோட்டுத்தீந்தேன் போலப்  
புரைய மன்ற, புரையோர் கேண்மை"

(This verse beautifully describes the eternal nature of pure love, likening it to the sweetness of honey protected by the lotus, and the undisturbed flow of affection between the lovers.)

### Friendship - In Sangam Literature

Friendship is a bond of love that arises between individuals united by the heart. It is considered one of the most prestigious human relationships. Sangam literature, particularly works like *Natrinaṭi* and *Akananuru*, extols and records the greatness of friendship.

#### Nature of Friendship

Friendship is seen as a cause for an individual's elevation. "The bond of friendship is like the nurturing of life" (*Natrinaṭi* 72: 3), and "The soul is nurtured through true friendship" (*Akananuru* 339: 11-12). These verses highlight the immense value of friendship.

#### The Strength of Friendship

For example, "It is better to be friends with a strong and capable individual, just as it is better to form a

*bond with a lion than with a mouse*" (Puranaanuru 190: 10-12). This emphasizes the importance of strength, effort, and determination in friendship.

### The Purity of Friendship

Sangam literature holds that friendship must be genuine and pure. *"Even if one were to acquire the elixir of life, friendship devoid of truth would lead to destruction"* (Mathuraikkanchi – 196 -197). Here, the idea is conveyed that friendship tainted by deceit leads to harm, whereas true and honest friendship is the best and most valuable.

### Friendship as a Source of Life

Characters like *Athiyaman* and *Auvaiyar*, *Kopperuncholan*, and *Pari* in Sangam literature are depicted as models of great friendship. These figures shared enduring friendships, demonstrating the deep meaning and value of these relationships in life.

## The Importance of Helping Others in Sangam Literature

### 1. Helping Others as the Greatest Virtue:

- Sangam literature portrays helping others as one of the highest virtues.
- "பிறர்நோயும் தம்நோய்போல் போற்றி அறன்அறிதல் சான்றவர்க்கு எல்லாம் கடன்" (Kaliththokai 139:2-3).
- Helping others by treating their suffering as your own is highly emphasized.

### 2. Nalvetṭaṇḍi's View on True Wealth:

- According to Nalvetṭaṇḍi, true wealth lies in alleviating the suffering of others.
- "சான்றோர் செல்வம் என்பது சேர்ந்தோர் புன்கண் அஞ்சும் பண்பின் மென்கட் செல்வம்" (Nāṛṇai 210:7-9).

### 3. Perungaduṅkō's Reflection on Helping:

- "உறவினர் கெட வாழ்பவனின் பொலிவு அழியும்" (Kaliththokai 34) emphasizes that one who helps others will lead a meaningful and prosperous life.

## Truthfulness - The Importance of Truth in Sangam Literature

### 1. Truth as the Highest Virtue:

- Sangam literature consistently speaks of truthfulness as the greatest virtue.
- "பொய்யாச் செந்நா" (Purāṇḍūru 168:19) highlights the significance of speaking the truth.

### 2. The Mouth that Speaks the Truth is Sacred:

- A mouth that speaks truth is regarded as sacred and virtuous, as per the literature.

### 3. Consequences of Falsehood:

- "பொய்பொதி கொடுஞ்சொல்" (Nāṛṇai 200) illustrates the destructive nature of falsehood and stresses the importance of truth.

### 4. Even If the Name of the Earth is Known, One Must Not Speak Lies:

- "நிலம்புடை பெயர்வது ஆயினும் கூறிய சொற்புடை பெயர்தலோ இலரே" (Nārrinai 289:2-3).
- "நிலம்திறம் பெயரும் காலை ஆயினும் கிளந்த சொல்நீ பொய்ப்பு அறியலையே" (Patirrupattu 63:6-7) underscores that no matter the circumstance, one must avoid speaking lies.

#### 5. The Importance of Upholding Truth:

- Sangam literature stresses the importance of truth and warns against falsehood, promoting truthfulness as an essential virtue in life.

## Hospitality in Sangam Literature

#### 1. Hospitality as a Vital Duty:

- Hospitality is regarded as an essential duty for householders in Tamil culture. Welcoming guests without hesitation and offering them hospitality is considered a noble quality of the Tamil people.
- "அல்லில் ஆயினும் விருந்துவரின் உவக்கும் முல்லை சான்ற கற்பின் மெல் இயற் குறுமகள் உறைவின் ஊரே" (Nārrinai 142: 9-11) praises hospitality as a high virtue.

#### 2. Sharing Food with Guests:

- Even when possessing the nectar of life, one should share it with guests, instead of enjoying it alone. This is expressed through the act of grinding seeds and offering food to guests, even in times of scarcity.
- "அமிழ்தமே கிடைத்தாலும் தாம் மட்டும் உண்ணாமல் விருந்தினருக்கும் வழங்கி மகிழ்வர்" (Puraṇḍūru 333).

#### 3. Receiving Guests with Generosity:

- The poetry also mentions borrowing items, like rice, to provide for guests, demonstrating the importance of providing hospitality.
- "விருந்து கண்டு ஒளிக்கும் திருந்தா வாழ்க்கை" (Puraṇḍūru 266) — the life of one who does not practice hospitality is considered incomplete.

#### 4. Symbol of Hospitality:

- The *Tirṇai* (a raised platform at the entrance of the home) symbolizes the Tamil tradition of hospitality. It is regarded as a significant part of Tamil culture, representing the readiness to welcome guests.

## Women's Role in Sangam Literature

#### 1. Respect for Parents and Family Responsibilities:

- Women in Sangam literature are depicted as responsible for hospitality, respecting elders, and nurturing family life. A mother grieving the loss of her son is portrayed as the epitome of maternal sacrifice.



- “புலியிருந்து தங்கிச் சென்ற கற்குகைபோல, அவனை ஈன்ற வயிறு மட்டும் இங்கு உள்ளது” (Puranāṇūru 86: 2-6) — this line symbolizes a mother's deep sorrow and the sacrifice for her son, who may have perished in war.

## 2. Motherhood as a Social Duty:

- The importance of motherhood is emphasized as a societal responsibility. In Sangam culture, bringing forth children and raising them is considered an honorable and noble duty.
- “மக்கட்பேற்றையும் சமூகக் கடமையாகவே சங்க கால மகளிர் கருதினர்” (Puranāṇūru 188: 6-7) — this verse highlights that women considered childbirth and nurturing children as a sacred responsibility.

## 3. Women in Public Life:

- Women in the Sangam period also took part in public life and intellectual discourse. Figures like *Auvaīyār*, *Naṭcelḷaiyār*, and others were known for their wisdom and participation in the social, cultural, and educational spheres.
- “சங்க காலத்தில் ஒளவையார், நச்செள்ளையார், நன்முல்லையார், ஆதிமந்தியார்...” — These women poets contributed significantly to the cultural richness of the Sangam era, reflecting the empowerment of women in those times.

## Valor (Veeram):

In the Sangam age, it was essential to protect and expand the boundaries of one's land. The duty of leading battles fell on the king, who had to step forward and guide his warriors into battle. The king's responsibility was clear: to lead and ensure the safety and growth of the kingdom.

### Note:

*"The duty of leading the battle and guiding the army was the king's responsibility."*

(Purananuru 9: 1-5)

## Code of War (Arappor Murai):

Before starting a war, the king instructed that the vulnerable—such as cows, women, the sick, and those without families—should be moved to safe places. This ethical conduct in war reflects the value of safeguarding the innocent. Tamil kings adhered to this code, ensuring that war did not harm the helpless, maintaining a sense of justice and compassion even amidst conflict.

### Note:

*"Before the war began, the vulnerable were instructed to move to safer places."*

(Purananuru 9: 1-5)

## Guarding Trees (Kaaval Maram):

The Tamil kings symbolized their victories through sacred trees. A tree was dedicated as a "guard tree," representing the king's honor and victory. The act of protecting these trees became a tradition,



symbolizing both the ruler's valor and his respect for nature. If a king defeated an enemy, he would cut down the guard tree of the defeated king, marking his triumph.

**Note:**

*"It was disgraceful for a king to allow his guard tree to be cut down."*

(Purananuru 9: 1-5)

## Sangam Era Kings and Their Virtues:

### 1. Charity (Kodai):

- Kings were celebrated for their valor and generosity, often called "Vallals" (philanthropists).
- **Kadayezeu Vallals** like Aandiran gave gifts, including elephants, to visiting poets and artists.
- Kings ensured food, clothing, and shelter for poets and visitors, earning their admiration.
- Sangam literature, like *Sirupaanatruppadai*, highlights their boundless generosity.

### 2. Ethical Governance (Araneri Porul):

- Kings valued poets and scholars as ethical guides, not just as recipients of gifts.
- Poets influenced decisions such as avoiding unnecessary wars and reducing taxes.
- Governance focused on ensuring prosperity, agricultural growth, and water conservation.
- Justice and fairness were key aspects of their rule.

### 3. Righteousness and Justice (Araneri Muththirum):

- Kings upheld justice even at personal cost:
  - **Pandya King**: Sacrificed his hand to protect a poor woman's honor.
  - **Sibi King**: Offered himself to save a crow.
  - **Manuneethi Cholan**: Punished his son to ensure justice.
- Justice was impartial, extending equally to all, regardless of rank or relation.

### 4. Ethical Kingship (Araneri Kudimagal):

- Kings considered justice and ethics as the foundation of their rule.
- Ensured that everyone, including the marginalized, received fair treatment.
- Sangam literature emphasizes the king's duty to balance power with compassion and justice.

### 5. Accountability for Good Governance:

- Sangam society believed that natural calamities like drought or crop failure were due to poor governance.
- Kings were held responsible for maintaining order, prosperity, and the welfare of their subjects.

## Traditional Responsibility of Kings in Sangam Literature

Even if natural elements like rain fail, crops diminish, or unforeseen obstacles arise, it was traditionally believed that the king's failure to govern righteously was the root cause. This shows the high expectations placed on rulers to ensure justice and prosperity.

**Tamil Lines:**

மாரி பொய்ப்பினும் வாரி குன்றினும்,  
இயற்கை யல்லன செயற்கையிற் தோன்றினும்,  
காவலர்ப் பழிக்குமிக் கண்ணகன் ஞாலம்.

(Purananuru 35: 27-29)

**Translation:**

"Even if the clouds fail to bring rain, the streams dry up,  
Or unnatural calamities arise,  
The blame falls upon the ruler of this land."

## Living for Others: Insights from Sangam Literature

The Sangam Tamil people were known for their broad-mindedness and selflessness. They valued the welfare of others over their own and treated everyone as part of their extended family. This universal outlook is beautifully captured in the lines of poet Poonkundranar from **Purananuru**:

**Tamil Lines:**

யாதும் ஊரே யாவரும் கேளிர்  
(Purananuru)

**Translation:**

"Every place is my hometown, and all people are my kin."

This timeless verse transcends boundaries of time and space, continuing to resonate with universal relevance even today.

The Sangam poets emphasized righteous living through simple yet profound literary expressions rather than direct moral teachings. For instance:

**Tamil Lines:**

நல்லது செய்தல் ஆற்றீர் ஆயினும்  
அல்லது செய்தல் ஒம்புமின்.  
(Purananuru 195: 6-7)

**Translation:**

"Even if you cannot do good,  
At least avoid doing harm."

Another notable verse conveys the essence of living selflessly:

**Tamil Lines:**

உண்டால் அம்ம இவ் உலகம் – இந்திரர்  
 அமிழ்தம் இயைவது ஆயினும் இனிது எனத்  
 தமிழர் உண்டலும் இலரே முனிவுஇலர்  
 துஞ்சலும் இலர் பிறர் அஞ்சுவது அஞ்சிப்  
 புகழ்எனின், உயிரும் கொடுக்குவர் பழிஎனின்  
 உலகுடன் பெறினும் கொள்ளலர் அயர்விலர்  
 அன்னமாட்சி அனையர் ஆகித்  
 தமக்குஎன முயலா நோன்தாள்  
 பிறர்க்குஎன முயலுநர் உண்மை யானே.

(Purananuru 182)

**Translation:**

"If the world prospers with food,  
 Even the nectar of Indra would seem less sweet.  
 The righteous do not indulge when others starve,  
 They do not sleep when others suffer.  
 For honor, they would give their lives;  
 For disgrace, they would reject even the world's treasures.  
 They remain tireless and unshaken,  
 Living not for themselves but for others—  
 This is the essence of truth."

**The Sangam Age: A Golden Age of Life and Culture****1. A Period of Prosperity:**

- The Sangam age is considered a golden age for its many virtues — the virtuous conduct of its rulers and citizens, the high moral standards, and its cultural and educational achievements.
- “எவ்வழி நல்லவர் ஆடவர் அவ்வழி நல்லை வாழிய நிலனே” (Puranāṇūru 187) — This verse stresses that the prosperity of a land depends on the virtues of its rulers.

**2. Kings as Exemplars of Virtue:**

- Sangam kings are depicted as paragons of virtue — they excelled in education, bravery, generosity, friendship, and support for scholars, thereby transforming their kingdoms into centers of culture and prosperity.

**3. The Role of Kings in Social Development:**

- The kings' qualities of generosity, wisdom, and leadership were seen as essential in making their lands prosperous and culturally enriched, a key factor for the golden age of the Sangam period.

## Kamba Ramayanam

Kamba Ramayanam is an exemplary Tamil epic composed during the rise of the Chola Empire. Authored by Kamban, this masterpiece stands as a significant contribution to Tamil literature and Indian culture. It is a poetic adaptation of Valmiki's Ramayana, enriched with Tamil cultural and literary essence.

### Key Features of Kamba Ramayanam

#### 1. Celebration of Virtues:

Kamba Ramayanam introduces several characters embodying noble qualities:

- **Dasaratha:** A father who sacrifices his beloved son to uphold his promise.
- **Rama:** A dutiful son who renounces the throne to honor his father's word.
- **Bharata:** A brother who refuses to accept the throne obtained unjustly.
- **Guha:** A friend willing to risk his life for loyalty.
- **Sita:** A devoted wife who accompanies her husband in exile, embodying unwavering love and commitment.
- **Lakshmana:** A brother whose only mission is to protect Rama.
- **Hanuman:** A servant-leader ready to cross oceans and mountains to fulfill his duty.

#### 2. Glory of Ayodhya:

Kamban describes Ayodhya as a beacon of knowledge, dharma, and prosperity.

- **Education as the Foundation:** Kamban emphasizes that education leads to discipline, discipline to a virtuous life, virtue to wealth, and wealth to dharma, culminating in blissful living.
- Ayodhya is portrayed as a city where knowledge blossoms, virtues flourish, and the fruits of righteous living are abundant.

#### 3. Balanced Depiction of Ravana:

Though Ravana is the antagonist, Kamban highlights his admirable traits:

- Mastery in music and deep devotion to Lord Shiva.
- A courageous and powerful warrior who defeated celestial beings.
- Respect for dharma, as seen in his brother Kumbhakarna's integrity and son Indrajit's valor in battle.
- Ravana's downfall, however, is attributed to his unrestrained desire for Sita, an act against dharma.

## Villi Bharatham and Its Ethical Insights

**Villi Bharatham**, a Tamil rendition of the epic Mahabharata by Villiputhur, exemplifies moral and ethical teachings deeply rooted in Indian tradition. It adapts Vyasa's Sanskrit Mahabharata to Tamil culture, providing profound reflections on the consequences of actions, virtues, and vices.

### Core Ethical Themes of Villi Bharatham

**1. Triumph of Dharma:**

The central theme of Villi Bharatham is the triumph of righteousness (dharma) over unrighteousness (adharma).

- **Immoral Actions Lead to Defeat:** Acts such as jealousy, deceit, and gambling lead to failure and downfall.
- **Virtue Leads to Success:** Upholding values like truth, unity, and patience ensures ultimate victory, as demonstrated by the Pandavas.

**2. Key Message:** "Goodness prevails, and evil succumbs."**3. Jealousy and Its Consequences:**

- The envy harbored by Duryodhana against the Pandavas led him to engage in deceitful and treacherous actions.
- This reflects the Tamil saying from **Thirukkural** (168):  
*"Jealousy is like a sinner; it destroys and pushes one into ruin."*

**4. Strength in Unity:**

Despite facing severe hardships, the Pandavas upheld their unity and moral integrity.

- Born under different circumstances, the five Pandavas grew up united, embodying virtues admired by all.
- They achieved victories through Bhima's strength and Arjuna's skill but faced challenges like exile due to Duryodhana's cunning.

**5. Character Analysis of Duryodhana:**

- Villiputhurar introduces Duryodhana as a symbol of arrogance and immorality, stating:  
*"Evil incarnate, that is Duryodhana."*
- His greed and unwillingness to share the kingdom led him to deceit and betrayal, resulting in his ultimate demise.

**6. Dharma Embodied by Yudhishtira (Dharuman):**

- Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava, epitomizes patience and truth.
- Even when Krishna suggests lying to deceive Ashwatthama, Yudhishtira resists, emphasizing:  
*"Lying destroys relationships, virtue, wealth, and everlasting fame."*

**7. Universal Ethical Principles:**

Krishna's admonition to Duryodhana resonates universally:

- Neglecting the advice of wise ministers.
- Disregarding the words of elders.
- Betraying those who offer help.
- Dining in someone's home and later opposing them.

**8. These actions are condemned as eternal sources of suffering, aligning with dharma for all ages.****Ethics in War**

- Duryodhana reprimands Ashwatthama for killing the Pandavas' children, asserting:  
*"Your actions are neither heroic nor righteous; they have wiped out our lineage and tarnished dharma in the battlefield."*

**Sangam Literature:**

- **Universal Brotherhood:** Sangam poets saw no divisions of region or kinship; all were treated equally.
- **Selflessness:** Emphasis on prioritizing others' welfare over personal gain.
- **Righteous Conduct:** Even if one cannot actively do good, one must refrain from doing harm.
- **Resilience and Honor:** The people valued dignity and the well-being of others, even at great personal cost.
- **Poetic Insights:** The poets portrayed moral values not as sermons but as relatable, heartfelt literature.

**Practice Questions:**

- 1.Highlight the twin epics of later Sangam literature. ( PYQ)
- 2.How does Sangam literature emphasize the importance of hospitality in Tamil culture, and what symbolic practices or values are associated with it?
3. What were the responsibilities and ethical practices expected of Sangam era kings in ensuring valor, governance, and justice, as reflected in Sangam literature?

**Strategy for writing answers in mains exams:**

**How does Tamil literature emphasize ethical principles through its portrayal of characters, and what lessons can be derived about human values and societal roles?**

**Ethical Principles Depicted in Tamil Literature**

Tamil literature, particularly in epics and historical texts, portrays various virtues and ethical principles through the characters and their actions. These principles serve as guiding values for life and are demonstrated through the lives of characters, showing their roles in human relationships and society. Here are some key values and the characters that exemplify them:

**Motherhood and Care**

- **Madhavi, Kunti:** These characters represent the deep essence of motherhood. Their unwavering love and sacrifice for their children illustrate the importance of a mother's care and devotion in life.

**Teaching and Peace**

- **Kannagi, Sita, Panchali:** These women represent virtues of patience, perseverance, and wisdom. They demonstrate the power of character and how moral strength is tested through trials.

**Fatherly Affection**

- **Dasharatha:** As a father, Dasharatha exemplifies the deep bond of paternal love and the responsibility of nurturing and guiding his children. His relationship with his son, Rama, highlights the significance of fatherly affection in moral development.

### Patience and Integrity

- **Dharma, Rama:** These characters embody patience and integrity. Their ability to remain steadfast and uphold righteousness even in challenging circumstances teaches the value of adhering to principles, regardless of hardships.

### Friendship and Relationships

- **Kugan, Karna:** These characters reflect the importance of friendship and the bonds that hold people together through loyalty and sacrifice. The story of Karna, especially, illustrates the depth of friendship and personal integrity.

### Charity and Faith

- **Karna:** Karna also symbolizes charity and faith. His selflessness, despite personal struggles, and his unwavering commitment to helping others, epitomize the values of charity and sacrifice.

### Justice and Responsibility of Rulers

- **Pandian:** As a king, Pandian illustrates the duty of a ruler to protect and nurture his subjects while ensuring justice. His actions demonstrate the need for righteous governance that prioritizes the well-being of the people.

### Sacrifice

- **Bhishma, Bharat:** Bhishma and Bharat embody the value of sacrifice. Their selflessness for the greater good shows how true sacrifice requires deep commitment and the willingness to forgo personal desires for a higher cause.

### Evil and Corruption

- **Shakuni, Ravana, Duryodhana, Surpanakha:** These characters represent the negative aspects of human nature such as treachery, deceit, and corruption. Their actions teach the consequences of wrongdoings and the perils of deviating from ethical paths.

### Ethical Lessons through Characters:

Tamil literature often conveys moral lessons indirectly through the lives and actions of its characters. The characters' journeys, struggles, and decisions provide implicit teachings that help readers understand deeper ethical values. These stories, with their complex characters, offer lasting impressions on people's minds, guiding them toward ethical living.

**Conclusion:**

Tamil literature, through its epics and stories, teaches essential ethical principles like justice, charity, integrity, friendship, sacrifice, and the battle between good and evil. These timeless values, embodied by its characters, continue to resonate with readers and provide enduring lessons for ethical living in society.

