

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

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Subject : Tamil Society

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Director,
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Evolution of Tamil Civilization and Political History

Pre-Vedic and Early Dravidian Civilization

- The **Dravidian Civilization** thrived in **Pre-Vedic India** with its nucleus in the **Indus Valley**.
- With the arrival of the **Aryans**, the Dravidian nucleus shifted to **Peninsular India**. **Tamil language** and culture emerged as the oldest surviving elements of the Dravidian civilization.
- Ancient Pali and Sanskrit literature use the terms **Dramila** and **Dravida** to refer to both **Tamil** and the **Southern regions**, distinguishing them from the **Sanskritized Aryavarta (Northern India)**.

Antiquity of Tamil Language and Literature

- Tamil is one of the **world's oldest surviving languages**, with at least **2,500 years of continuous history**, as noted by Sangam poets like **Mamulanar**, who lived during the era of the **Nandas and Mauryas (4th century BCE)**.
- Tamil's **classical status** is attributed to its **antiquity, versatility, and distinctiveness**.
- Unlike Sanskrit, Tamil has evolved organically and remains a **popular living language**, akin to **Chinese** in its longevity.

Phases of Tamil Nadu's Political History (500 BCE to 1300 CE)

1. Sangam Age (3rd Century BCE – 3rd Century CE)

- **Political Landscape:**
 - Tamil Nadu was divided between the **Three Crowned Monarchs** (Chera, Chola, and Pandya) and **petty chieftains** (Velirs).
 - Prominent chieftains included **Aay of Podigai hills**, **Adhiyaman of Kudhirai hills**, and **Paari of Parambu hills**.
- **Monarchs and Patrons:**
 - Scholars and poets flourished under royal patronage.
 - Notable rulers:
 - **Cheran Senguttuvan**: Associated with the Silappathikaram story.
 - **Karikala Cholan**: Renowned for irrigation projects like the **Grand Anicut (Kallanai)**.
 - **Ariyapadai Kadantha Nedunchezhan**: Also a distinguished poet.
- **Wars and Conflicts:**
 - Frequent wars with **Sinhalese, Kadambas, Yavanas**, and **Aryas**.

2. Kalabhra Age (3rd Century CE – 6th Century CE)

- The **Kalabhras** disrupted the Tamil kingdoms, temporarily halting the dominance of the Chera, Chola, and Pandya rulers.
- **Cultural Continuity:** Despite political upheaval, Tamil literary activities continued.
 - Jain monk **Vajranandhi** founded the **Dravida Sangha** at Madurai.
- Prominent Kalabhra ruler: **Achyuta Vikrantha**, who ruled from **Uraiur**.

3. Age of Tamil Empires (6th Century CE – 13th Century CE)

a) Pallava Rule

- Pallavas emerged in **North Tamil Nadu**, with **Simha Vishnu**, **Mahendravarman I**, and **Narasimhavarman I** (Mamallan) as notable rulers.
- Achievements:
 - Overcame challenges from **Chalukyas**, **Rashtrakutas**, and **Gangas**.
 - Patronized **Saivism** and **Vaishnavism**, building architectural marvels like those in **Mahabalipuram**.

b) Pandya Rule

- Pandyas of **Madurai** unified the south and patronized the **Bhakti movement**, fostering Saiva and Vaishnava traditions.

c) Chola Empire Revival

- Revived under **Vijayalaya** and **Aditya Chola** in the 9th century.
- Achievements of prominent Cholas:
 - **Parantaka I:** Expanded the Chola domain.
 - **Rajaraja I:** Consolidated the Chola Empire and built the **Brihadeeswarar Temple**.
 - **Rajendra Chola I:** Extended influence to Southeast Asia and brought water from the **Ganges** to Tamil Nadu (Gangaikonda Cholapuram).

The Sangam Age

The **Sangam Age** refers to an era in Tamil history marked by the composition of classical Tamil literature. The term "**Sangam**" signifies an association or assembly of poets who received patronage from the Pandya kings in Madurai. This period is significant for its rich cultural, social, and literary contributions to ancient Tamil society.

Sources of the Sangam Age

1. Inscriptions

- **Hathigumpha Inscription** (King Karavela, Kalinga).
- **Ashokan Edicts II and XIII.**
- Inscriptions from Mangulam, Alagarmalai, Kilavalavu (Madurai region).
- **Pugalur Inscription** (near Karur).

2. Copper Plates

- **Velvikudi** and **Chinnamanur** copper plates.

3. Coins

- Issued by the Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas, and Sangam Age chieftains.
- **Roman coins**, evidence of trade links.

4. Megalithic Monuments

- **Burials** and **Hero stones**, providing insights into societal practices.

5. Excavated Materials

- Sites: Adichanallur, Arikamedu, Kodumanal, Puhar, Korkai, Alagankulam, Uraiyur.

6. Literary Sources

- **Tolkappiyam**: A work on Tamil grammar reflecting Tamil culture.
- **Ettuthogai** (Eight Anthologies) and **Pathupattu** (Ten Idylls).
- **Pathinan Keezhkanakku**: Collection of eighteen poetic works.
- Prominent works: **Pattinapalai**, **Maduraikanji**, **Silapathikaram**, and **Manimegalai**.

7. Foreign Notices

- **Periplus of the Erythrean Sea**, **Pliny's Natural History**, **Ptolemy's Geography**, **Megasthenes's Indica**.
- Chronicles like **Rajavali**, **Mahavamsa**, and **Dipavamsa**.

Tholkappiyam

- Reflects the grammar, culture, and sophistication of Tamil language during the Sangam Age.

Global Recognition of Tamil

- George L. Hart, a Tamil scholar, emphasizes that Tamil is as old as Latin and evolved as an independent linguistic tradition, uninfluenced by other languages.

Time Span and Geographical Extent of the Sangam Age


- **Time Period**: The Sangam Age spans from the **3rd century BCE** to approximately the **3rd century CE**.
- **Geographical Boundaries**: The region of **Tamizhagam** extended from **Vengadam** (modern Tirupati hill) in the north to **Kanyakumari** (Cape Comorin) in the south.

Characteristics of the Age

1. **Era:**
 - Corresponds to the **Iron Age**, characterized by advancements in metallurgy and the use of iron tools.
2. **Culture:**
 - Predominantly **Megalithic**, evidenced by burials and hero stones, indicating a society deeply rooted in tradition and valor.
3. **Political System:**
 - Operated under a **monarchical polity**, where kings ruled their domains with centralized authority.
4. **Ruling Dynasties:**
 - The **Chera**, **Chola**, and **Pandya** dynasties were the primary monarchs of Tamizhagam, collectively referred to as the **Muvendars** (Three Great Kings).

Social Formation in Tamil Eco-zones (Sangam Era)

The **Sangam poems** provide a vivid understanding of the **social structure** and **cultural life** of Tamilakam during the Sangam age. The **Ainthinai** concept divided Tamilakam into **five landscapes (eco-regions)**, each with distinct



Eco-region (<i>thinai</i>)	Landscape	Occupation	People	Deity
Kurinji	Hilly region	Hunting /gathering	Kuravar/kurathiyar	Murugan
Mullai	Forest region	Herding	Aayar/aaichiyar	Maayon
Marutham	Riverine track (plains)	Agriculture	Uzhavan/uzhathiyar	Indiran
Neithal	Coastal region	Fishing/saltmaking	Parathavar/ nulathiyar	Varunan
Palai	Parched land	Heroic deeds	Maravar/Marathiyar	Kotravai

characteristics influenced by its environment, people, and cultural practices.

Tamil Polity in the Sangam Age

1. **Three Levels of Rulers**
 - **Kizhar**: Village chiefs or tribal leaders who governed small territories known as *nadu*.
 - **Velir**: Regional chieftains who controlled hilly and forested areas between the fertile territories of the Muvendars (three great kings).




- **Vendar:** Sovereign rulers of the Chera, Chola, and Pandya kingdoms who controlled larger and fertile territories.

2. Characteristics of the Vendar

- Subjugated Velirs and other tribal chiefs.
- Mobilized their own armies and gained support from Velir chiefs.
- Adopted prestigious titles like *Kadungo*, *Imayavaramban*, *Vanavaramban*, and *Peruvazhuthi*.
- Patronized bards and poets to glorify their rule and territory.

3. The Muvendars (Three Great Kings)

- **Cheras:**
 - Ruled over central and northern Kerala, Kongu region, and parts of Tamil Nadu.
 - Key rulers: Senguttuvan, Udayan Cheralathan, Cheral Irumporai.
 - Prominent contributions: Pattini cult (Senguttuvan) and coinage.
- **Cholas:**
 - Controlled the Kaveri delta region (*Cholamandalam*).
 - Key rulers: Karikalan, Ilanchetsenni, Kochengannan.
 - Contributions: Kallanai (stone dam) for irrigation, flourishing trade through Puhar port.
- **Pandyas:**
 - Ruled over southern Tamil Nadu.
 - Key rulers: Nedunchezhiyan, MudukudumiPeruvazhuthi.
 - Contributions: Pearl fishing in Korkai, patronage of Tamil poets, coinage with elephant and fish symbols.

Muvendar	Garland	Port	Capital	Symbols
Cheras	Palmyra flower	Muziri / Tondi	Vanchi / Karur	 Bow and arrow
Cholas	Fig (Athi) flower	Puhar	Uraiyr / Puhar	 Tiger
Pandyas	Margosa (neem) flower	Korkai	Madurai	 Two Fish

4. Political Dynamics

- Warfare among Vendar and Velir for territorial expansion and resource control.
- Cooperation among Velir chiefs to resist the dominance of Vendar.

1. Notable Chiefs and Patrons (Velir)

- The *Kadaiyeyzhu Vallalgal* (Seven Patrons): Pari, Kari, Ori, Pegan, Ay, Adiyaman, Nalli.
- Renowned for their patronage of poets and generosity.

2. Debate on Political Organization

- **State Society View:**
 - Evidence of social stratification and territorial associations.
 - Organized taxation and resource mobilization (e.g., port taxes in Kaveripattinam).
- **Pre-State Chiefdom View:**
 - Lack of structured stratification and territorial permanence.
 - Frequent warfare hindered surplus production and stable state formation.

3. Cultural and Economic Significance

- Strong maritime trade links (Puhar, Musiri, Alagankulam).
- Rich cultural heritage showcased in Sangam literature and inscriptions.

Sangam Polity: Court, Administration, and Army

The Court

Arasavai:

The king's court was called Arasavai, where the king sat on a ceremonial throne known as Ariyanai.

The court was attended by officials, distinguished visitors, and court poets.

Duties of the King:

The king performed five key duties, known as Thanaithalaivan:

- Encouraging learning.
- Performing rituals.
- Presenting gifts.
- Protecting the people.

2. Ambassadors:

- Kings employed **ambassadors** who played vital roles in diplomacy.

3. Weapons and Warfare:

- Common weapons: **Sword, Kedayam (shield),**

Tomaram (lance/missile), spears, bows, and arrows.

- **Paddaikottil:** The armory where weapons were stored.
- Forts were protected by deep **moats** and **trenches**.
- **War Drum:** Worshipped as a deity, symbolizing martial significance.



Law and Justice

1. Judicial System:

- The king was the **final authority for appeals**.
- In capitals, justice was dispensed in a court called **Avai**, and in villages, at the **Mandram**.

2. Punishments:

- Severe and strict, including:
 - Execution (for theft).
 - Beheading, mutilation, or torture for other crimes.
 - Imprisonment or fines.

Local Administration

1. Territorial Divisions:

- **Mandalam**: The entire kingdom.
- **Nadu**: Subdivision of Mandalam.
- **Kurram**: Further division of Nadu.

2. Villages:

- **Ur**: The term for village, classified as:
 - **Perur**: Big village.
 - **Sirur**: Small village.
 - **Mudur**: Old village (based on population, size, and antiquity).

3. Coastal and Harbour Towns:

- **Pattinam**: Coastal town.
- **Puhar**: Harbour town.

4. Prominent Towns:

- **Puhar, Uraiyur, Korkai, Madurai, Muziri, Vanji (Karur), Kanchi**.

5. Administrative Committees:

- **Aimperunguzhu**: Five-member committee.
- **Enberaayam**: Eight-member group

Army Divisions:

The king's army, called Padai, had four divisions:

- Infantry.
- Cavalry.
- Elephants.
- Chariot force.

The army was commanded by a chief, ensuring efficient military organization.

Society and Economy in the Sangam Age

Society

- Wars by the **Vendar** (rulers) aimed to expand their territories, leading to **social disparities**.
- **Slavery and captivity**: War captives were used in cult centers; there are references to **slaves**.

Social Structure

1. Tinai-Based Classification:

Society was organized based on the five ecological zones (Tinais) described in the **Tolkappiyam**:

- **Kurinji** (Hilly regions): Home to hunters (**Kuravar** or **Vedar**).
- **Mullai** (Pastoral slopes): Occupied by shepherds (**Idayar**).
- **Marudham** (Fertile plains): Inhabited by farmers (**Uzhavar**).
- **Neidal** (Coastal regions): Populated by fishermen and salt merchants (**Minavar** or **Parathavar**).
- **Paalai** (Desert regions): Associated with the nomadic and warrior groups (**Kallar**).

2. Absence of Caste and Varna:

- Birth-based caste systems were not prevalent; classifications were functional and region-based.
- Ethical literature such as **Naladiyar** and **Thirukkural** stressed virtue over rituals or faith.

● Emergence of Caste:

- The Pallavas introduced the Varna-based caste system, granting Brahmins the highest status.
- Landless laborers were marginalized, leading to untouchability.

● Valangai and Edangai Clashes:

- During the Chola era, these caste-based divisions created social tensions.

Role of Women:

- Women actively participated in economic activities and were recognized as poets.
- Love marriages were socially accepted, and chastity was valued.
- Instances of sati were rare and largely limited to royal families.

Social Divisions in Urban Areas:

- **Arasar** (Princes), **Athamar** (Wise men), **Vanikar** (Traders), and **Vellalar** (Farmers).
- Other groups included **Panar** (Bards), **Viraliyar** (Dancers), **Kuyavar** (Potters), **Umanar** (Salt merchants), **Vannar** (Washermen), and weavers.

Economy

1. Craft Production:

- **Artifacts and crafts:** Bronze vessels, beads, gold works, textiles, shell bangles, glassware, iron tools, and pottery.
- Major craft centers: **Arikamedu, Uraiyur, Kanchipuram, Kaviripattinam, Madurai, Korkai, and Pattanam.**
- **Markets:**
 - **Nalangadi** (morning markets) and **Allangadi** (evening markets) in cities like Puhar and Madurai facilitated trade.
 - Goods were exchanged, including crafted items and raw materials.

2. Trade Practices:

- **Local and long-distance trade:**
 - **Barter system** was prevalent, but **coins**, especially **Roman bullion**, were also in circulation.
 - Trade-related terms in **Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions** include **vanikan** (merchant), **chattan**, and **nigama** (guilds).
 - **Salt merchants** (umanar) traveled with their families; **chattu** referred to mobile merchants.
 - **Local and International Trade:**
 1. Evidence of trade with **Rome, Greece, Egypt, China, Southeast Asia, and Sri Lanka.**
 2. Ports like **Muziris, Tondi, and Korkai** facilitated overseas trade.
 - **Exports:** Salt, pepper, pearls, ivory, silk, spices, diamonds, muslin, sandalwood.
 - **Imports:** Topaz, tin, glass, horses, and other luxury items.

3. Maritime Trade:

- Tamil Nadu's coastal location enabled thriving **maritime trade.**
- **Major ports:** **Muziris (Musiri), Tondi, and Korkai.**
- **Muziris (first emporium):** Described by Roman writer **Pliny the Elder** as India's premier shopping hub, it even hosted a **temple of Augustus** and a Roman colony.

4. Overseas Trade:

- Tamil merchants traded with **Greece, Rome, Egypt, China, Southeast Asia, and Sri Lanka.**
- **Evidence:** Roman amphorae, coins, and glassware have been discovered in archaeological sites.

5. Special Commodities:

- **Malabar Black Pepper:** Found in the mummy of Pharaoh Ramses II, emphasizing its global significance.
- **Silk trade:** Valued highly in the Roman Empire; Emperor **Aurelian** equated its worth to gold.

Infrastructure:

- Ports had **warehouses** for storage and **lighthouses** called **Kalangaraillangu Sudar** to guide ships.
- Caravans transported goods inland via **oxen-driven carts**.

Economic Practices and Eco-Zone-Based Activities**1. Mixed Economy:**

- Agriculture, pastoralism, trade, hunting-gathering, fishing, and money exchange were practiced based on eco-zones.
- **Thinai Concept:** Activities aligned with landscapes (Kurunji – mountainous; Mullai – forest; Marutham – agricultural plains; Neithal – coastal; Palai – arid).

2. Agricultural Production:

- **Main Crops:** Paddy, sugarcane, and millets.
- **Farming Types:**
 - Wetland farming (riverine and tank-irrigated areas) for paddy.
 - Dryland farming for millets.
- **Rice Varieties:** Sennel (red rice), Vennel (white rice), and Aivananel.
- Archaeological evidence: Rice grains found in burial urns (Adichanallur and Porunthal).
- Shifting cultivation (Punam) in forest areas.

3. Pastoralism:

- Nomadic livelihoods focused on rearing cattle, sheep, and goats.

Industries and Crafts**1. Craft Specialization:**

- Artisans produced commodities for domestic and trade purposes, leading to urbanization.

2. Pottery:

- Practiced widely, with types including black ware, russet-coated painted ware, and black and red ware.

3. Iron Smelting:

- Iron was smelted in traditional furnaces.
- Evidence from Kodumanal and Guttur.
- Used for tools (agriculture) and weapons (warfare).
- **Examples:** Iron swords from Puducherry.

4. Stone and Gold Ornaments:

- **Materials:** Clay, terracotta, iron (for the poor), precious stones, copper, and gold (for the wealthy).
- **Gold Sources:** Roman gold coins and smelting evidence (e.g., Pattanam).
- Gold ornaments found in Suttukeni, Adichanallur, Kodumanal, and Keezhadi.

5.Glass Beads:

- Manufactured by melting silica and shaping into beads.
- Evidence: Arikamedu and Kudikkadu.

6.Pearl and Shell Crafts:

- Pearl fishery in Pamban.
- Conch shells crafted into bangles (evidence in Sangam sites and literature).

7.Textiles:

- Cotton thread production (spindle whorls found at Kodumanal).
- Fine textiles such as "Kalingam" mentioned in Periplus.

Trade and Exchange**Monetary and Barter Systems:**

- Barter was prevalent, though Roman coins were used as bullion.
- Archaeological finds, such as Roman amphorae and gold coins in **Coimbatore**, affirm the lucrative foreign trade.
- Ports featured warehouses and lighthouses (**Kalangaraillangu Sudar**).

Merchants and Guilds:

- **Vanikan:** Merchant class.
- **Nigama:** Merchant guilds.
- Specialized merchants: Gold, cloth, and salt.
- **Salt Merchants (Umanars):** Transported goods via bullock carts.

Transport and Trade Routes:

- **Land:** Bullock carts for goods.
- **Water:** Crafts and vessels like Kalam, Pahri, Odam, Toni, Teppam, and Navai linked Tamilagam to distant regions.

Religious Beliefs

1. Primary Deities:

- **Seyon (Murugan):** The principal deity of the Sangam Tamils, associated with the Kurinji (hilly) landscape.
- **Other Deities:** Worship included Mayon (Vishnu), Sivan, Indiran, Varunan, and Kotravai (a war goddess).
- **Landscape-Based Worship:**
 - **Murugan** in Kurinji (hills).
 - **Thirumal (Vishnu)** in Mullai (pastoral slopes).
 - **Indiran** in Marudham (fertile plains).
 - **Varunan** in Neithal (coastal regions).
 - **Kotravai** in Paalai (deserts).

2. Hero Worship and Natukkal (Hero Stones):

Hero stones were erected to honor warriors who sacrificed their lives in battles. These stones were revered, highlighting a tradition of ancestor and hero worship.

3. Faith Systems:

- The belief system was diverse, including **animism**, **ancestor worship**, and reverence for natural forces.
- The concept of **Anangu** reflects animistic traditions.
- Offerings of flowers, grains, and animals were common in religious rituals.

4. Influence of Jainism and Buddhism:

- Both religions coexisted with local traditions.
- Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions in caves provide evidence of Jain influence.
- Buddhism, though less pervasive, was practiced in specific centers.

5. Vedic Influences:

- Yagnas were performed but remained limited to certain kings and did not gain widespread popularity among common people.

6. Bhakti Movement:

- During the Pallava period, the Bhakti movement gained momentum.
- Nayanmars (Shaiva saints) and Alvars (Vaishnava saints) opposed Jainism and Buddhism, popularizing devotion to Shiva and Vishnu.

7. Ethical and Philosophical Literature: Works like **Naladiyar** and **Thirukkural** emphasized ethical conduct over ritualistic practices, opposing caste-based discrimination.

Worship and Rituals in Ancient Tamilagam

Ancient Tamil society was known for its religious tolerance and diversity, reflecting the belief that "Love is God." Worship practices were deeply connected to nature, deities of various landscapes, and the cycles of life and death.

Shiva Worship

Shiva was highly revered and addressed with epithets like *Mukkanan* (three-faced) and *Malai Aninthavan* (one adorned with mountains).

Temples and Worship

- Temples, known as *Niyaman*, *Kottam*, and *Nagaram*, were made of perishable materials and served as centers of devotion.
- Festivals like the *Karthigai* and *Thai festival* celebrated specific deities.
- Rituals such as flower offerings, grain sacrifices, and animal offerings (e.g., goats for Murugan) were prevalent.

Rituals (Veriyattu)

- **Veriyattu:** An ecstatic ritual for Murugan, marked by fervent devotion and sacrifices.

Death Rituals

- **Burial and Cremation:** Practiced based on community and family traditions, with burial grounds called *Emaperungadu*.
- **Sati:** Rarely practiced, but instances like Bhoothapandiyan's wife attempting *Sati* are noted.
- **Funeral Rituals:** Included lamentation (*Pulambal*), chest-beating, and the use of the *Parai* drum.
- **Post-Death Obligations** (*Thenpulathar Kadan*): Considered sacred duties for the deceased's heirs, akin to *Pind Daan* in northern traditions.

Influence of Buddhism and Jainism

- **Buddhism and Jainism** gained footholds in Tamil society during the Sangam age.
- Jain caves with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions and references to Buddhist rituals indicate their presence.

Status of Women During the Sangam Age

The Sangam Age reflects a society where women enjoyed considerable freedom, respect, and significant roles in various aspects of life. The following aspects highlight their status:

1. Marriage and Family Life

- **Marriage Rituals:** Unlike Aryan traditions, Sangam marriages did not include rituals like circumambulation or sacred threads. The essence of marriage was love, as emphasized in works like *Kurunthogai*.
- **Emotional Bond:** Sangam literature portrays deep emotional connections between spouses, emphasizing mutual respect and companionship.
- **Family Harmony:** Women played a pivotal role in maintaining happiness and harmony within the family.
- **Chastity (Karpu):** Chastity was upheld as a vital virtue, integral to a woman's dignity and ethical life.

2. Education and Literary Contributions

- Women were well-versed in grammar, literature, and the arts.
- Female poets like **Aadhi Mandiyyar** and **Nappasalaiyar** made notable contributions to Tamil literature.
- **Peyanaar Padiniyar**, a woman scholar, authored works on metrical grammar, showcasing intellectual achievements by women.

3. Moral and Ethical Virtues

- Women were symbols of moral strength, with chastity and fidelity celebrated as ideals.
- **Silappathikaram** highlights this through Kannaki's unwavering loyalty to her husband despite hardships.
- During periods of separation, women practiced austerity, refraining from adornments, reflecting their high moral standards.

4. Social and Recreational Activities

- Women actively participated in social and cultural events.
- Recreational activities included games with flowers, garlands, and toys, showcasing their vibrant and active lifestyle.

5. Hospitality

- Hospitality was a revered virtue in Sangam society. Women ensured that guests were warmly welcomed and served, reflecting their gracious nature.
- Sharing meals with guests was considered a moral duty, often led by women.

6. Bravery

- Sangam women exhibited immense courage, both in personal life and in the context of war.
- For instance, **Ottu Masiathiyar** recounts a mother's pride in her son's bravery and sacrifice in battle.

8. Sati and Alternative Practices

- **Sati (Udankattal Yeruthal):** While not widespread, some women chose to perform Sati as a mark of devotion, as in the case of **Koperundevi**, wife of King Nedunchezhiyan.
- **Alternatives:** Widows often adopted an ascetic lifestyle, refraining from adornments and leading a life of austerity.

9. Notable Female Figures

- **Koperundevi:** Known for her act of Sati, symbolizing loyalty to her husband.
- **Perunadevi:** Her life exemplifies the deep emotional bonds in marriage during the Sangam Age.

10. Esteemed Role in Society

- Women were highly respected for their roles as mothers, wives, scholars, and contributors to Tamil literature.
- Equal property rights for sons and daughters further reflected the gender equity prevalent during this era.

Women as the Pillars of Ancient Tamil Society

In ancient Tamil society, women held a central and influential position, contributing significantly to social, cultural, and economic spheres. Their leadership and multifaceted roles were vital to the progress and prosperity of their communities.

- **Leaders in Society**
 - Women were the primary leaders before the establishment of individual property, family structures, and formal governance.
 - They ensured community welfare and harmony, reducing competition and conflict.
 - Their intelligence, organizational skills, and societal contributions were highly valued, as reflected in texts like *Mullaipattu* and *Akananuru*.
- **Custodians of Culture and Heritage**
 - Women preserved cultural and civil heritage, passing traditions to future generations.
 - They shaped societal values and ensured moral stability and continuity.
 - Sangam literature, particularly from the *Mutukudi* ethnic group, highlights the honor and respect accorded to women for their cultural roles.
- **Economic and Practical Roles**
 - Women were integral to the economy, contributing through agriculture, food gathering and storage, and traditional medicine.

- They ensured food security by engaging in farming and effective methods of food collection and preservation.
- Women maintained societal health with traditional knowledge of herbs and remedies.
- Figures like **Semmudu Bendir** and **Semmudu Sevilyar** from *Nedunalvada* exemplify the leadership and intelligence of women in economic practices.
- **Religious and Cultural Significance**
 - Women led important religious and cultural ceremonies, including marriage rituals and prayers for community welfare.
 - Their involvement in spiritual practices was believed to bring prosperity and harmony to the community.
 - Texts like *Mullaipattu* and *Akananuru* emphasize the importance of women in ensuring the community's well-being.
- **Reverence for Wisdom and Age**
 - Elderly women were revered for their wisdom and experience, often serving as guides and advisors to the community.
 - Literary figures like **Auvaiyar** epitomize the intellectual and cultural influence of women.
 - Auvaiyar's works highlight the leadership and respect women earned for their wisdom.
- **Community and Social Contributions**
 - Women served as messengers, fortune-tellers, and leaders of communal rituals.
 - Their efforts were essential in fostering social harmony and ensuring the welfare of their communities.

Traditional Tamil Games: Cultural Significance and Historical Heritage

Traditional Tamil games are a vibrant reflection of the Tamil people's life, valor, and community spirit. Rooted in history and folklore, these games go beyond mere entertainment, offering insights into Tamil culture, values, and daily life. The games range from physical competitions that showcase strength and strategy to indoor games that challenge the mind.

Sports and games in Tamil tradition are considered acts that bring happiness, referred to as "Uvagai." These games foster qualities like mindfulness, goal orientation, self-esteem, group cohesion, and overall well-being.

.Types of Heroic Sports

Heroic sports are categorized based on interaction:

Eruthaluvuthal (Bull-taming):

Practiced by the Mullai region's people, this sport involves taming bulls with sharp horns. Sangam literature, such as *Kalithogai*, describes it as a test of heroism, where successful tamers were admired and often chosen by women for marriage.

Evolution of Jallikattu: The tradition of tying a coin-bag to the bull's horns emerged later, naming the sport "Jallikattu." It was a festival activity, emphasizing physical fitness and community participation.

Silambattam (Martial Art): A form of combat training using bamboo sticks.

Pulivedam: A strategic sport resembling hunting.

Punaladuthal (Riverbank Games) :Men and women engaged in playful and social activities on riverbanks, as described in *Agapadal*.

Hunting : Regarded as both a sport and a hobby, hunting was enjoyed by men, especially in the Marutham region.

- *Parathaiyar* (warrior assistants) often accompanied kings on hunts..

Kuthithu Manal Kollal (Leaping Over Sand Dunes) : This involved feats of agility and strength, emphasizing physical prowess.

Outdoor Games and Their Cultural Relevance

- **Jallikattu:** Known as the traditional bull-taming sport of Tamil Nadu, Jallikattu highlights the bravery and agility of participants. This game, celebrated during Pongal festivities, symbolizes the close relationship between humans and animals in Tamil agrarian society. It serves as a tribute to Tamil valor and their love for native breeds like the Kangayam bulls.
- **Kabaddi:** Originating in Tamil Nadu, Kabaddi is a team sport that emphasizes agility, strength, and quick decision-making. The sport not only nurtures physical fitness but also builds teamwork and strategy among players.
- **Uriyadi:** Played during Krishna Jayanthi, Uriyadi involves breaking a clay pot hung at a height while blindfolded. This game symbolizes the playful mischief of Lord Krishna and showcases the unity and joy of Tamil festivals.
- **Silambam:** The traditional martial art of Tamil Nadu, Silambam, involves the skillful use of bamboo sticks. Beyond its entertainment value, Silambam was historically a means of self-defense and a representation of Tamil valor and discipline.

Indoor Games and Their Intellectual Depth

- **Pallanguzhi:** Played using a wooden board with pits and cowrie shells or tamarind seeds, Pallanguzhi enhances mathematical skills and strategic thinking.

- **Aadu Puli Aattam:** This game of strategy and cunning pits goats against tigers. Symbolizing the eternal battle between good and evil, it teaches players to anticipate moves and outwit opponents.
- **Paramapadham:** The Tamil version of Snakes and Ladders, Paramapadham conveys moral lessons. The ladders represent virtues leading to progress, while snakes signify vices that result in setbacks, emphasizing the moral fabric of Tamil society.

Games of Strength and Valor

- **Vazhukku Maram (Slippery Pole Climbing):** A test of physical endurance and determination, this game involves climbing a greased pole to reach a prize at the top. It exemplifies persistence and camaraderie as participants cheer each other on.
- **Goli (Marbles):** Played by children, Goli enhances precision, concentration, and hand-eye coordination. It reflects the simplicity of childhood and the joy derived from community interaction.
- **Kusti (Wrestling):** Traditional wrestling matches demonstrate physical strength and tactical skills. Often accompanied by folk songs and festivities, Kusti represents the spirit of competition and communal unity.
- **Ilavatta Kal (Stone-Lifting Game):** This traditional game is believed to have originated as a challenge to win a bride in ancient times. Over time, it became a sport to demonstrate physical prowess. The game is typically played during village festivals in public spaces, where participants lift a stone, known as the "Ilavattakkal," above their heads and then place it down. The individual who successfully performs this feat is considered the winner.



Festivals of Ancient Tamil Society

Festivals of Five Landscapes (Aindhina Vizha)

During the Sangam era, Tamil Nadu was divided into five landscapes (Aindhina) based on geography and lifestyle: **Kurinji, Mullai, Marudham, Neithal, and Palai**. Each had unique deities and festivals.

1. Kurinji (Mountainous region)

- **Deity:** Seyon (Murugan).
- **Festival:** Velan Veriyattam.
 - Celebrated to cure diseases and invoke Murugan's blessings.

- Involved wearing garlands of flowers, holding spears, and performing ecstatic dances, symbolizing the deity's possession.
- Venue: "Veriyaadukalam," marked by a rooster flag.

2. Mullai (Forest region)

- **Deity:** Maayon (Vishnu).
- **Festival:** Aichiyar Kuravai (Shepherd's dance).
 - Celebrated by pastoral communities to protect cattle.
 - Involved dances and worship of the neem tree as the divine mother.

3. Marudham (Agricultural region)

- **Deity:** Indra.
- **Festival:** Indra Vizha.
 - A grand festival to remove famine, disease, and enmity.
 - Lasted 28 days with elaborate decorations and rituals.
 - Held in cities like Puhar and Madurai.

4. Neithal (Coastal region)

- **Deity:** Varunan (God of water).
- **Festivals:** Munneer Vizha, Navai Vizha.
 - Celebrated for prosperity in fishing and safe navigation.
 - Offerings included pearls and conch shells.

5. Palai (Arid region)

- **Deity:** Kottravai (Fierce goddess).
- **Festival:** Worship of Kottravai.
 - Celebrated with processions and offerings during tribal gatherings.
 - Music instruments like drums, horns, and flutes were used.

நடுகல் வழிபாடு (Nadugal Worship):

- An ancient Tamil worship tradition based on valor.
- Involved burying the weapons and belongings of a warrior who died in battle before burying the body.
- A stone (நடுகல்) was erected at the burial site with the warrior's name, valor, and achievements inscribed on it.

- Annual festivals were held to worship the warrior's valor.
- This practice is linked to the worship of local guardian deities in rural villages.

பத்தினி வழிபாடு (Pathini Worship):

- Refers to the worship of the goddess Kannagi, based on the **Silappathikaram** epic.
- Kannagi, a central character in Tamil history, avenged her husband's wrongful death by destroying the city of Madurai.
- In the Tamil tradition, Kanniaki is revered as a symbol of feminine strength and devotion.

கண்ணகி கோயில் (Kanniaki Temple):

- **Kanniaki**, born in Chola Nadu, worshipped as a goddess in Chera Nadu.
- Her story is depicted in **Silappathikaram**, where she fights for justice and avenges her husband's death.
- Revered as a "pathini" or divine consort, she is worshipped annually in certain regions.

பாவை நோன்பு (Pavai Vratam):

- A ritual fasting observed by women during the Tamil month of Margazhi (December-January).
- Women sing **Thiruppavai** by Andal and **Thiruvempavai** by Manickavachakar to seek blessings for prosperity, health, and well-being.
- The ritual is meant to ensure good harvests, the prosperity of livestock, and overall health of the community.
- Participants follow strict discipline: waking early, fasting, avoiding adornments, and performing charitable acts.
- It emphasizes devotion, self-discipline, and community welfare.

Arts of Music in Sangam Age

Concept of Muthamizh:

- The Sangam people developed the concept of **Muthamizh**, which refers to the three components of Tamil culture: **Iyal** (literature), **Isai** (music), and **Naatakam** (drama). These three elements together formed the foundation of the cultural identity of the Tamil people during this period.
- Music is defined as the creation of sound by proper modulation, called "**இசை**" (Isai).
- The term "**இசை**" is based on "**ஒசை**" (sound), and it originates from the seven sounds produced by seven different nerves.

Seven Types of Music:

- The seven types of music are: குரல் (voice), துத்தம் (trumpet sound), கைக்கிளை (clapping), உழை (whistle), இளி (throat sound), விளரி (sound of laughter), and தாரம் (stringed instrument).
- Among these, தாரம் is considered the foundation of musical development.

Types of Musical Notes:

- ஆரோசை (ascending note) and அமரோசை (descending note) are terms for upward and downward musical scales, also known as ஆரோகணம் (ascending scale) and அவரோகணம் (descending scale) in modern terms.

Musical Instruments:

- Musical instruments are categorized into four types:
 - தோல்கருவிகள் (skin instruments): Instruments made from skin, such as பறை (drum), பேரிகை, and மத்தளம் (large drum).
 - துளைக்கருவிகள் (wind instruments): Instruments like குழல் (flute), made from bamboo or wood.
 - நரம்புக்கருவிகள் (string instruments): Instruments like விலயாழ் (bowed instrument), made from materials like wood and animal fibers.
 - கஞ்சக்கருவிகள் (percussion instruments): Instruments such as படகம் (small percussion drum).

Examples of Instruments:

- குழல் (flute) is an ancient wind instrument.
- விலயாழ் (string instrument) is made by attaching strings to a bent wooden bow.
- பறை (drum) is one of the skin instruments, which has been in use since ancient times.

Historical References:

- வள்ளுவர் refers to the uniqueness of குழல் and யாழ் as ancient musical instruments.
- சேக்கிழார் explains how different musical notes ascend or descend in musical patterns.

Instruments and Their Role:

- Instruments like மத்தளம் (drum) are frequently used in music performances.
- The use of இடைக்கருவி (intermediate instruments) like the சலிகை during music performances adds rhythm.

Cultural Significance:

- The mention of instruments and performances in Tamil literature and epigraphy, such as the references to இராசராசேச்சுரக் கோயில் where musicians played உடுக்கை (drums) and கெட்டிமேளம் (musical instruments), highlights the cultural and historical importance of music in Tamil traditions.

Music Texts and Music Instruments

1. Music Texts:

- The works **Muthunaarai** and **Mudhugurugu** are mentioned in the **Iraiyanar Kalaviyalurai**.
- These texts also refer to works like **Chitr Isai** and **Per Isai**.
- **Perunaarai**, **Perungurugu**, **Panjapaaratheeyam**, and **Indirakaaliyam** are also mentioned by **Adiyaarku Nallaar**.
- The text **Isai Nunukkam** was composed by **Sayandhan**, a Pandya prince.
- The **Yaapparunkalakkaarikai Uraippayiram** mentions the text **Kuloththungan Isainool**.
- Although many music-related texts are found, **Panchamarabu**, written by **Arivanaar**, is the only one available to us, and it was published by **P. Sundaresan** with explanations.

2. Music Pillars (Isai Thoonkal):

- Music pillars are found in places like **Tirunelveli**, **Alwar Tirunagari**, **Senbaganallur**, **Madurai**, **Thadikkombu**, **Alagar Kovil**, **Krishnapuram**, **Tenkasi**, **Kutralam**, **Suceendram**, and **Kalakkadu** in Tamil Nadu.

3. Musicians:

- **Paanar** (male musician) and **Paadini** (female musician) were skilled in both singing and playing musical instruments.
- They were categorized as **Isaippaanaar**, **Yaalpaanar**, and **Mandaippaanaar**.
- Musicians were also classified based on the instruments they played, such as **Thulaik Karuvi** (wind instrument players), **Thol Karuvi** (percussion instrument players), **Narambuk Karuvi** (string instrument players), and **Kanthathaal Paaduvaar** (singers).

4. Sangam Literature and Music:

- During the Sangam period, music was classified based on land types. For example:
 - **Kurunji** land used **Kurunjippan**,
 - **Mullai** land used **Saadhaari**,
 - **Paalaa** used **Panchurappan**,
 - **Neithal** used **Sevvaazhippan**,
 - **Marutham** used **Maruthappan**.

5.Silambu and Music:

- In **Silambu**, various musicians and their roles are highlighted, such as **Isai Aasriyan** (music master), **Madhthalam Isaiykkum** (percussion instrument master), **Thannumai Aasriyan** (wind instrument master), and **Veynguzhal** (flute player).
- **Music Movements** were categorized into **Mudhal Nadai**, **Vaaram**, **Koodai**, and **Thiral**:
 - **Mudhal Nadai**: Slow-moving music.
 - **Vaaram**: A moderate pace.
 - **Koodai**: Music with lyrical and musical richness.
 - **Thiral**: Fast-paced music.

Ezhisai Vallavan (Master of Seven Notes):

- **Karikalan** was renowned as a master of the seven musical notes (**Ezhisai Vallavan**), signifying his deep understanding and mastery of music.

Sculpture in the Sangam Age

1. Nadukal (Memorial Stones):

- **Nadukal** (memorial stones) were significant in Sangam culture and were used to honor warriors who died in battle or those who sacrificed their lives for the people. These stones were engraved with the names and heroic deeds of these warriors. They were also known as **Veerakkal** (hero stones) or **Ninaivukkal** (memorial stones).
- Early references to **Nadukal** can be found in works like **Tolkaappiyam**, **Akananuru**, and **Purananuru**.

2. Development of Sculpture:

- Initially, the **Nadukal** were used for worship, but over time, the tradition evolved into sculpting statues of warriors. This later expanded to include the carving of deities. Thus, the art of carving sculptures in stone began to grow, marking the transition from simple memorial stones to detailed representations of heroes and gods.

3. Materials and Techniques:

- During the Sangam period, **clay sculptures** (called **Kathirai Eduppu** or **Urvaram**) of animals and humans were created during festival times and worshipped.

4. Wooden Sculptures:

- **Wooden sculptures** were also created during the Sangam period, as can be inferred from **Paripaadal** literature. Excavations at sites like **Korkai**, **Arikkamedu**, and **Urayur** have revealed **burnt clay figures** and sculptures from the era.

5. Buddhist Influence:

- From the 3rd to the 10th century CE, **Buddhism** and **Jainism** spread in Tamil Nadu. Initially, Buddhists worshipped with symbols like the **footprints of the Buddha** and the **Dharma Chakra**. Over time, statues of **Buddha** were created for worship.
- Similarly, in Jainism, figures of **Tirthankaras** and **Arhats** were sculpted and venerated.

6. Role of Sculptors:

- Sculptors were known as **Mannittālar** (Earth sculptors). This term is mentioned in **Manimekalai** (28:37), referring to the profession of sculpting in the Sangam period.

7. Cultural Context:

- Sculptures, especially those related to **religious deities** and **heroes**, played an important role in the worship practices of the time. People gathered during festivals to admire and honor these sculptures, as described in the **Manimekalai** epic, where people rejoiced in seeing **clay sculptures** during the **Indra festival**.

Practice Questions:

1. How were festivals in ancient Tamil society connected to the five landscapes (Aindhinai), and what were the unique characteristics and rituals of these festivals?
2. How do traditional Tamil games reflect the cultural values, historical heritage, and community spirit of Tamil society?
3. What were the key features of craft production, trade practices, and maritime trade in ancient Tamil society, and how did they contribute to its economic prosperity?