

Short-Answer Questions**1. What is the period of the Sangam Age?**

Ans. The period of Sangam Age is from 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD.

2. The Sangam Age covers the period of which South Indian Tamil dynasties?

Ans. The Sangam Age covers the period of the Cheras, Pandyas and the Cholas.

3. Grammatical treatise like Tolkappiyam helps us in which way as a source of the Sangam Age?

Ans. Tolkappiyam helps us to know about classification of habitats, animals, plants and human beings. It also describes about human emotion and interaction.

4. What is a Megalith?

Ans. Megaliths are big stones which are found dug in the earth in a circular form.

5. Why were herostones installed?

Ans. The herostones were installed for the heroes who sacrificed their lives to the cause of safeguarding the villages and their culture. Most of the herostones have inscriptions containing details about the heroes.

6. Into how many divisions was the Tamil society divided?

Ans. Tamil society was divided into four divisions in the Sangam society namely Anthanar, Arasar, Vaisiyar and Vellalar

7. What was the status of women in the ancient Tamil society?

Ans. In the ancient Tamil society women were treated with special consideration. Their most important virtue was chastity. The women were given freedom to choose their life partners. Women treated their husbands as equivalent to God. They were not permitted to remarry and inherit property.

8. What formed the staple food of the ancient Tamil people?

Ans. Rice was the staple food during the Sangam period.

9. Give one food habit of the ancient Tamils.

Ans. The food habits varied among the people according to their economic status. The rich had their feasts every day, while the poor took simple food. chewing betel leaves was most common among the people.

10. Name the famous ports of the Sangam Age.

Ans. Selaiyur in the Pandya country, Bandar in Chera country, ports of Naura (Cannanore), Tyndia (Ponnai) and Muziris (Cranganore) were the famous ports of the Sangam Age.

11. Name one centre of cotton trade.

Ans. Madurai.

12. Name the products exported during the Sangam Age.

Ans. Commodities such as pepper, ginger, cardamom, etc. were exported.

Structured Eassay-Type Questions

1. How are the following literary works of the Sangam Age important to us?

(a) Tirukkural (b) Poems (c) Grammar (d) Epics

Ans. (a) Tirukkural: It is a classic composition consisting of 1330 Tamil couplets. It was authored by Thiruvalluvar, a Tamil poet who is said to have lived any time between the 2nd and 6th century A.D. Tirukkural is an important composition of the Tamil Sangam period which throws a good deal of light on various aspects of life of the ancient Tamils.

Tirukkural's 1330 couplets are arranged into 3 main sections and 133 chapters. Each chapter has a specific subject varying from ruling a country to ploughing a piece of land. This important Tamil composition has been translated into various other languages.

(b) **Other Tamil poems :** The Sangam literature varying from almost 3rd century B.C. to 3rd century A.D. was composed by 473 poets including Thiruvalluvar, the

author of Tirukkural. All these poems composed during the Sangam period are important in their own way. They deal with every aspect of Tamil life during this period of about 1000 years or even more. From their study we come to know about love, war, governance, bereavement and joys of the Tamil people. They give a true picture of the social, economic and cultural life of the people.

- (c) **Grammar:** Even the grammatical works have proved useful in making an idea of the evolvement of the Tamil language well as forming an idea of the literary and cultural aspects of the Tamil society. For instance an early grammatical treatise like the '**Tolkappiyam**' not only gives the inflection and syntax of words and sentences but also includes classification of habitats, animals, plants and human being. The discussion of human emotion and interaction is particularly significant.
- (d) **Epics:** Poems connected by virtue of content that forms a unity having elements of poetry, music and drama are regarded as 'kavyas' or epic in Tamil. There are five great epics of the Tamil literature - **Silappadikaram, Manimegalai, Civaka Cintamani, Valayapathi** and **Kundlakesi**. The first is a non- religious work, the second and third are Buddhist religious works while the 4th and the 5th are Jain religious books. These epics give an important information about the Buddhist and the Jains and the common people of Tamil land. Some of them contain a very beautiful description of natural scenery.

2. How are the following archaeological sources helpful to us in forming an idea of the ancient Tamil society and culture?

- (a) Megaliths (b) Herostones (c) Inscriptions

Ans. (a) Megaliths: Experts say the burial grounds existed in the Tamil country from time immemorial. Many such burial grounds have been found in different parts of the Tamil country held by the Cheras, Pandyas and the Chola dynasties. In some burial grounds megaliths

or big stones are found dug in the earth in a circular form. Some of these stones have even inscriptions engraved on them. These inscriptions help us a lot in forming an idea of different aspects of the social life of the people during the Sangam Age.

- (b) **Herostones:** The herostones were erected for the heroes who sacrificed their lives to the cause of safeguarding the villages and their culture. In the process of reclamation of forest land some of them would have encountered dangers from wild animals and lost their lives. For such brave persons the hero stones were planted. Most of the herostones have inscriptions inscribed on them. Not only the names of the heroes, their families and areas have been mentioned but many other details are also inscribed. Such a practice of erecting the herostones continued from the 4th century B.C. even upto the 16th century A.D.
- (c) **Inscriptions:** Inscriptions inscribed on stones and copper plates have been found in thousands in the Tamil land. Some of them were inscribed by common people to honour their heroes who gave up their lives for their betterment. But most of the inscriptions belong to the Chera, Pandya and the Chola rulers. With the migration of the Brahman Community from the north to the south the number of these inscriptions became manifold because each and every ruler, even those of the Pallava dynasty, gave land grants to the brahman saints and kept the record in the temples in the form of inscriptions. These inscriptions throw a good deal of light on all aspects of the lives of the Tamil people.

3. Give a pen-picture of the Tamil society during the Sangam Age concerning the following points :

- (a) The Social Division (b) Status of Women
- (c) Dress and Ornaments (d) Food and Hospitality

Ans. Society During The Sangam Age : The Sangam literature is a veritable goldmine of information regarding the social life of the early Tamils.

- (a) **The Social Divisions:** During the Sangam period the Tamil Society was divided into several groups. In the beginning of the Sangam Age, the Tamil society was not organised on the basis of the Vedic caste system, namely Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. However, the earliest of the Sangam literature, Tolkappiyam refers to the four divisions prevalent in the Sangam Society namely, Anthanar, Arasar, Vaisiyar and Vellalar. It may be said that this classification roughly corresponds to the Vedic social division.
- (b) **Status of Women:** In the Sangam Age, women were treated with special consideration. Their most important virtue was chastity. The heroine of Silappadikaram, Kannagi had been hailed for her chastity and worshipped by the people. The women were given freedom to choose their life partners during the Sangam period. They were not permitted to remarry and inherit property. Sati or the custom of self-immolation at the death of one's husband was not generally prevalent during this period. However, women from the royal family indulged in the practice of Sati.
- (c) **Dress and Ornaments:** The Sangam Tamils paid more attention to their dress. It varied according to their status. The rich wore silk and fine cotton garments. The middle class people generally wore two pieces of clothes made of cotton. Women paid much attention to their hairstyle. They used flowers like Jasmine to decorate their plaits and tufts. Both men and women used perfumes made of sandal and flowers.
- (d) **Food and Hospitality:** Rice was the staple food during the Sangam period. The food habits varied among the people according to their economic status. The rich had their feasts every day, while the poor took simple food. Chewing betel leaves was most common among the people. Offering betel leaves to guests had become a social formality. Hospitality was a special virtue of the Sangam Tamils.

4. Throw some light on the economic life of the ancient Tamil people concerning the following points :

- (a) Agriculture (b) Industries (c) Trade and Commerce

Ans. Economic Life

- (a) **Agriculture:** The chief occupation of the people was agriculture. Paddy was the main crop. Millet, grams and sugarcane were also cultivated. Irrigation through rivers, tanks and wells was used for cultivation.
- (b) **Industry:** Weaving and spinning were the most important crafts of the Sangam period. Uraiyur and Madurai were the main centres for the manufacture of cotton fabrics. The weavers produced and exported fine cotton clothes. The word Kalingam refers to very nice garments. The Sangam literature refers to clothes, which were thinner than steam. Silk clothes were also produced in the Tamil country. Other craftsmen like the carpenter, blacksmith, goldsmith and potter had practised their respective occupations. Fishing and hunting had also remained an important occupation during this period.
- (c) **Trade and Commerce:** In the beginning of the Sangam Age, the barter system of trade was followed. Generally, the people exchanged their commodities with their neighbours. For example, the people of Kurinji region exchanged honey with the people of Neydal region for getting fish and salt. Later, when they began to use coins, trade picked up rapidly. Local markets came up and they were known as Angadis. Both Day Market (Nalangadi) and Evening Bazaar (Allangadi) existed in port towns. The expansion of trade led to the growth of towns. Moreover, export of goods to other countries had increased. Foreign trade with Rome brought in a large amount of Roman currency in gold and silver.