

Ancient Tamil Nadu History

The practice of burial of the dead in the urns, the worship of the Sun and the Mother Goddess explains the links between the Tamils and Sumerians. As there is no general calendar for the entire India it is very difficult to calculate the Royal rule historic period and fix the historic events of the long and hoary past of India. It was only after the advent of the Europeans rule, the use the Christian era came into effect and the period was calculated. The History of Tamil Nadu prior of the world, the language and the conditions of society at that time.

Pre Historic age in Tamil Nadu

The origin of human race on the planet earth took place several thousands of years ago. The early history of human beings is called the pre-historic age, Written records are not available for the pre-Historic period. However, the pre-historic people had left many things such as pieces of pottery, stone and metal tools, simple drawings, bones and skeletons. These materials provide some clue to know the history of the pre-historic period. Material remains belonging to the pre-historic period have also been unearthed in many places of Tamil Nadu.

The period between the genesis of the world and the dawn of civilization is the Paleolithic period. The Period before the Sangam age is called pre-historic period. The archaeological excavations such as urns, skeletons, (fossils) and the evidences from the language, civilization and the anthropology are the tools to understand the pre-historic period.

The pre-historic period in Tamil Nadu may be classified into

1. Old Stone Age
2. New Stone Age
3. Metal Age
4. Megalithic Age

Old Stone Age

The first stage of human life is called the Old Stone Age. The people of this period used crude and rough stone implements for hunting the animals. These implements were made of quartzite or hard rock. Therefore, this period is named as the Old Stone Age. The implements of this period are found in several parts of Tamil Nadu. Robert Bruce Foote had first discovered the Old Stone Age implements at Pallavaram near

Chennai. Later, similar discoveries were made in the districts of Kanchipuram, Vellore and Thiruvallur.

Simple hand axes and pieces of stone tools were found in the valley of river Koratalayar near Chennai and in Vada Madurai. Thus it is clearly evident that the Old Stone Age people lived in different parts of Tamil Nadu. It is generally believed that the Old Stone Age lasted up to B.C. 10.000.

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Old Stone Age Life Style:

The Old Stone Age people led a nomadic life wandering in search of food. Therefore, they are called as food gatherers. Fruits, vegetables, roots and animal flesh constitute their chief food. They had no idea of cultivation. They did not know the art of making pottery. They took shelter in caves in order to protect themselves from wild animals as well as from harsh climates.

Old Stone Age Dress

In the beginning, the Old Stone Age people did not wear any dress. Subsequently, they began to use animal skins, leaves and barks to cover their bodies. In this way they protected themselves from bitter cold and burning heat.

Old Stone Age Fire:

The Old Stone Age people produced fire by rubbing two flint stones. They used fire to scare away animals and also to roast the flesh of animals to eat. They also used fire to warm themselves during the cold weather.

Old Stone Age Paintings:

We find paintings in the caves in which the Old Stone Age people lived. The most popular among them are the paintings, which portray the hunting of animals like elephant, bear, and deer.

Old Stone Age Beliefs:

The Old Stone Age people had no idea of God or religion. They did not know how to dispose off the dead and therefore, they left the dead bodies as a prey to animals and birds.

New Stone Age

The New Stone Age followed the Old Stone Age. It is to be noted that the transition from Old Stone Age to New Stone Age was only gradual. The New Stone Age people had improved their life in all respects. The life in the New Stone Age was not only more progressive than that of the Old Stone Age hut also varied. The New Stone Age people used trap rock instead of hard rock to make their stone implements Their stone weapons and tools were also more polished and sharpened They began to lead a settled life instead of wandering from place to place. These people abandoned caves and began to build clay huts and thatched houses for living. The New Stone Age people lived and worked in groups. It is important to know that this kind of group-life had subsequently led to the formation of villages.

The most important features of the New Stone Age include the beginning of agriculture domestication of animals and pottery 'flaking, In short, the New Stone Age witnessed an all round development in the human life. This development indicates the, gradual evolution of human life in different stages. It had also resulted in enormous changes in human life. It took a long period for those changes to happen.

Agriculture

In the New Stone Age, people had learnt the art of cultivation. Therefore, they began to live in the river valleys since agriculture had become their

primary occupation. They produced rice, millet, Vegetable and fruits. It is to be noted that the food gatherers of the Old Stone Age had become the food producers in the New Stone Age.

Domestication of Animals

During the New Stone Age, people started domesticating animals such as dog, sheep, cow and buffalo, Dog was helpful to them while going for hunting. Other animals such as cattle were used for transportation and also as food.

Wheel and Pottery

The discovery of wheel was a remarkable event in the life of man. The New Stone Age people used wheels to carry goods from one place to another. They also used the wheel for making pottery. In Tamil Nadu, the New Stone Age potteries have been discovered in the districts of Tirunelveli, Salem, Pudukottai and Tiruchirapalli. Burial urn, water pots, lamps and other vessels of this period have also been found in these places.

Dress and Ornaments

The New Stone Age people knew the art of weaving. In Tamil Nadu, cotton was grown in plenty and it was used for weaving clothes. Cotton clothes were widely used by the New Stone Age people. Later, they developed the art of dyeing the clothes and wore colored clothes. The New Stone Age people used ornaments like necklace, beads and bangles. These ornaments were made of shells and bones.

Belief

The custom of burial developed during the New Stone Age. Burial have been unearthed in several parts of Tamil Nadu.

Metal Age

Copper was the first known metal to man. In North India, the Copper Age followed the Stone Age. In the South, iron was discovered and used by man. Iron implements have been found along with stone implements in Perumbudhur near Chennai so, it may be said that the Iron Age followed the Stone Age in Tamil Nadu.

During the Metal Age, agriculture had improved much, iron implements were efficiently used for cultivation Paddy was extensively cultivated Later, irrigation System had also improved there was a general progress and development in the life of the people during the Metal Age.

Megalithic Age

The word megalith refers to the burial monument. The people who lived during the last stages of the New Stone Age began to follow the megalithic system of burial, According to this system, the dead body was put in a black and red pot along with iron implements and the pot was buried. A circular tomb using big stone slabs was built upon the place of burial. This is called megalith. Such megaliths have been found in the districts of Kanchipuram, Vellore, Thiruvannamalai , Cuddalore, Tiruchirappalli and Pudukottai.

Another system of burial was known as urn burials. Urns without circular megalithic tombs have been discovered at Adhichanallur in Tirunelveli district. Bronze articles and iron implements are found in these urns. The discovery of trident or Vel in some of these urns suggests that these people worshipped Lord Muruga, the famous God of the Tamil people.

Several utensils made of bronze have been found in Adhichanallur. The hook or alagu, which is still used in religious ceremonies, has been found here. Hence, it may be said that the use of hooks in religious ceremonies was prevalent right from the megalithic period.

Sangam Age in Tamil Kingdoms

The history of the Tamil country becomes clear only from the Sangam period. The word Sangam means an association. Here, it refers to the Tamil Sangam, an association of Tamil poets, which flourished in ancient Tamil Nadu. These Tamil poets had composed the Sangam literature. The period in which these literatures were composed is called the Sangam Age in the history of Tamil Nadu. During this age there were three Tamil Kingdoms, namely the Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms in the Tamil country. They were popularly known as Moovendar.

Sangam literatures are the major historic sources of Sangam period. We do not have enough stone inscriptions about this age. Mangulam inscription talks about Pandyan of Sangam period. The Roman coins found at Aruganmedu (Arikkammedu), works of the Romans and Greek authors like Pliny and Ptolemy, the Greek book "Periplus of Erythraean

sea “, confirm the trade links of ancient Tamils as explained in Sangam literature. The Pandiya Coins pertaining to the period between 2nd Century BC and 2nd Century AD with rectangular shapes were found with fish emblem on one side and bull or elephant figure on the other side. These showed us the economic conditions of Sangam period. The twin epics, (Silappathikaram and Manimegalai) were the documents about Sangam period and served as indicators of Post-Sangam transition period towards decline.

Sources

The historical sources for the Sangam Age may classified into

1. Literary Sources
2. . Archaeological sources and
3. Foreign Accounts.

Sangam Age Sources

Literary Sources

The Sangam literature chiefly consists of Tholkappiyam, Ettuthogal and Pathuppattu. These works provide valuable information to know the history of the Sangam Age. Among these Tholkappiyam was the earliest.

During the post-Sangam period, the Pathinen Kilkanakku or the Eighteen Works was composed. The twin epics - Silappathigaram and Manimegalai - also belonged to the post- Sangam period. All these literature help us to know the society, economy and culture of the ancient Tamils.

Archaeological

The archaeological sources for the sangam period are limited. They may be classified into

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|-----|-------------|-----------|
| (a) | | Epigraphy |
| (b) | Excavations | and |
| (c) | Coins. | |

Epigraphy

Epigraphical information for the Sangam period is scanty. The Asokan Edicts refer to the Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms. The Hathikumba Inscriptions of the Kalinga king , Kharavela also mentions the three Tamil

Kingdoms. The Kalugumalai inscriptions help us to know about ancient Tamil scripts called Tamil Brahms. The Tirukkovalur inscriptions refer to the local chieftains and the tragic end of the Tamil Poet, Kapilar. The inscriptions at Thirupparankundrum mention the gift of cave beds to the Jam monks. The inscriptions found at Arnattar hills, near Pugalur belonged to the First Century A.D. and these inscriptions furnish information regarding the Chera kings.

Excavations

Several monuments of this period have been brought to light by the excavations conducted at various places in Tamil Nadu. Robert Bruce Foote conducted excavations at Adhichanallur where he had found a large number of articles made of iron, bronze and gold. They depict the life of the ancient Tamils. Dubreuil and Mortimer Wheeler also made excavations at Arikamedu near Pondicherry. Roman pottery, glass howls, gems and coins have been found there. These findings confirm the commercial contacts between the Roman Empire and Tamil country during the Sangam Age. A Buddhist Vihara was found at Kilaivur near kaveripoompattinam. It belonged to the post-Sangam period. Other Important sites of excavations are Uraiyur, Kanchipuram and Kodumanal. The under-water archaeology has also developed recently and excavations have been made under the sea near Poompuhar. A shipwreck has been found there. These findings focus much light on the history of the Sangam period.

Coins

The study of coins is called numismatics, We get useful historical information from the study of ancient coins. The Tamil Kings of the Sangam period issued gold and silver coins but they are not found in large numbers. However, Roman coins made of gold and silver are found all over Tamil Nadu. These coins further confirm the trade relations between Tamil country and Rome during the Sangam Age.

Foreign Accounts

In addition to the Sangam literature, foreign literary accounts remain useful sources for the study of the Sangam Age. Greek and Roman writers had mentioned about the society and economy of the Sangam Tamils in their accounts. Megasthenes in his book Indica also referred to the three Tamil Kingdoms. Other authors such as Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy provide valuable information regarding the Sangam Age. The Ceylonese books - Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa - help us to fix the date of the Sangam.

Chronology of the Sangam Age

Chronology means the arranging of the historical events on the basis of the date of happenings. It remains very difficult to find out the exact date of the Sangam period. There are different opinions in fixing the date of the Sangam. It is believed that there existed three Sangams. The First Sangam had flourished at Then Madurai and the Second Sangam at Kapadapuram. Since these two places were eroded into the Indian Ocean, the Pandyan kings had established the Third Sangam at Madurai. Many scholars did not believe the existence of Three Sangams. However, the Sangam literature, which we possess now, might have been composed during the period of the Third Sangam. Hence, the Sangam Age that we come to know denotes only the Third Sangam. Based on the literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources, it is established by scholars that the Sangam Age flourished from Third Century B.C. to Third Century A.D.

Chera Kingdom in Sangam Age

The Chera kings of the Sangam Age were known by many titles such as Vanavar, Villavar and Malaiyar. There were two important lines of Chera Kings. The first one started from Odiyan Cheralathan and the second from Irumporai. The kings belonging to these two lines ruled the Chera kingdom. Their capital was Vanji and their chief port Thondi, Their symbol in the flag was bow and arrow.

Cheran Senguttuvan was the most popular king of the Sangam Cheras. The Sangam works, Padhithrupaththu and Ahananuru provide a lot of information about him. The Tamil Epic Silappathigaram also tells about his military achievements. Senguttuvan led an expedition up to the Himalayas. He crossed the river Ganges and defeated his enemies, He reached the Himalayas and hoisted the Chera flag. He brought stones from there and built a temple in memory of Kannagi. His brother Elango Adigal composed Silappathigaram.

Padirrupattu and other Sangam literature give a long list of Chera kings. The most popular among them were Cheralathan, Peruncheral Irumporai and Kanaikkal Irumporai. The territory of the Sangam Cheras mostly comprises the present Kerala state.

Chola Kings in Sangam Age

The Chola kingdom is referred to in the Sangam literature as Chonadu, Kaveri Nadu, Kaveri Soozh Nadu, Neer Nadu, and Punal Nadu. These names indicate the rich water resources of the Chola country. The river Kaveri has flown through the Chola kingdom and made its soil fertile. The capital of the Sangam Cholas was Uraiyr. Their second capital was Kaveripoompattinam. It was also the chief port of the Sangam Cholas. Their symbol was tiger. The Sangam literature also mentions a number of Chola kings. They had surnames like Kill, Valavan, Senni and Cholan. The kingdom of the Sangam Cholas comprises the present Tanjore and Tiruchirappalli districts.

The most popular among the Sangam Cholas was Karikalan. Both the Sangam works, Pattinappalai and Porunaruatruppadi give information about Karikalan. Even in his young age, he proved his extraordinary ability of settling the disputes in his kingdom. He was also a great warrior. He defeated the Chera and Pandya kings at Venni. In another battle Karikalan defeated a confederacy of nine princes. He extended his kingdom beyond Kanchipuram in the North.

Karikalan had also become popular for the development activities in his kingdom. He had encouraged the growth oil agriculture as well as commerce. He had built the dam called Kallanai across the river Kaveri to tame that river and the water was used for irrigation. Karikalan had also fortified the port-city Kaverippumpattinam or Puhar and made it as his capital. It flourished as a great emporium of trade. Merchants from foreign countries visited Puhar. Karikalan was generous towards Tamil poets and patronized them. Porunarnatruppadi gives details about his munificence.

A long line of Chola monarchs succeeded Karikalan and, Nalamkilli, Killivalavan and Kopperumcholan were the most, famous among them. Kochenganan was the last in the line of th Sangem Cholas.

Cholas of Sangam Period

Who are Cholas?

The Tamils who ruled the banks of River Kaveri were of Cholas ancestry. The availability of plenty and the rich food in their empire, gave the name Chola to them as per Tamil Etymology.

The names Killi Valalvan, Chembiyan and Chenni Denoted Cholas. They belonged to peasantry, fertile land and the valiant chieftains. Some would say the name Chembiyan meant that they were successors of Sibi.

Prehistoric Cholas

The information on pre historic period came from Puranic mixed historical sources. Silapathikaram and Manimekalai recorded the names of the kings such as Kanthan, Kakanthan and Sembiam. The King who saved the dove from the suffering and the King who removed the suffering of the cow and its calf who mentioned (Manu and Sibi without referring to their names) in Silambu.

Chola Kings of Kadai Sangam Period

Karikal Valavan (325 – 250 BC)

In Agam and Puram Poets like Mamoolanar, Nakkeerar, Paranar, Vennikuyathiyar and Kazhathalaiyar and poet Mudathama Kanniyar in Porunaratrupadai and poet Uruthiran Kannanar in Pattinapalai wrote poems on Karikal Valavan.

It is said that there were two or three kings in the name of Karikal Valavan. But K.K. Pillai opined that there was only one king in this name. The Poets wrote the actions of a King attributing to his successor and the naming of the kings with their forefathers resulted in this confusion on the number of kings with the same name.

Many poets of Sangam wrote poems on him. According to one lyric the king mentioned in Agam and Puram poems and the king mentioned in Atrupadai belonged to a later period and there were two kings. There is one more view that the kings referred to in Agam and Puram and Pattinapalai were three different kings. The later period works like Silambu, Kalingathuparani and Moovarulla said that there was only one king in that name, Karikalan. As the poet Mammallans pertained to 400BC, he should have been connected to earlier period.

He ascended the throne at an early age. He built the banks of River Kauveri. In the copper plates and the inscriptions the Telugu Cholas claimed to be his successors.

The last stanza of Prounatrupadai describes the great escape of Karikalan with burnt leg, from the burning prison on account of the conspiracy of the enemies in the royal family.

His other names were Karikal Peruvalathan and Thirumavalavan. His escape from the prison was well documented in the anthology Pattinapalai (220 – 227) and Porunatrupadai (131-138). His maternal uncle helped him in his escape (Pazhamozhi Seyyul – 239). Having

overcome the confusion created by his enemies within at the young age and become the King, he defeated the combined opposition from Pandiyan, Chera and 11 Velirs at Paranthalai. Out of the defeated Velirs in the battle of Venni, 9 Velirs attacked him at Vahaiparantalai and faced defeat. (Agam 125)

Pattinapaalai further described the defeat of Oliyar and Aravaalar and his hands. On his march to north he reached the Himalayas and engraved the Tiger emblem before his return. Silambu describes his return journey through the countries Vajram, Maghad and Avanthi and their gift presented to him.

Mr. Ragava Iyengar noted that the place the Tiger emblem engraved was in the Himalayan Range between Sikkim and Bhutan. In these areas even today the mountain range is called Chola Range and Chola Pass. Karikalan won Eelam and brought prisoners to build the Grand Anaicut. – Maha Vamsam and Deepa Vamsam.

The Copper plates of Thiruvallangadu and Ray country's Telugu Chola recorded the Grand Anaicut built by Karikalan.

Peruvirar Killi

He had a title "Verphradakai Peruvirar Killi". Poets Paranar and Kazhathalayar wrote Poems (Puram 62,63, 368) Mourning the deaths of the king Chera Imayvaramban, Kudako Neduncheralathan and Peruvir Killi at Thiruporpuram war.

Elanjhetchenni

Poet Oonpothi Pasungudaiyar wrote poems on him and he had a title "Serupazhi Erintha Elanjhetchenni". Cheraman Pammalur Erintha Cholan Neithalanganal Elanjhetchenni is his another title with his name. (Puram 203). He might have won Chera's Pamalur.

The Poem Purananooru (10) Calls his "Neithalanganal Nediyo" and his capital was Pujar. But Elanjhetchenni's Capital might have been Woraiyur.

Perunthirumavalavan (200 – 180BC)

He had friendship with Pandiyan Velliambalathu Thunjiya Peruvazhuthi. The poet Kaveripoompattinathu Karikannanar blessed their friendship and co-existence. For unknown reasons and reasons and irritated the delay in giving gifts by the king, the poet Chonattu Erichaloor Maadalan Madurai Kumaranar wrote about the greatness of poets instead of the king.

Killivalavan (200 -180BC)

Dr. G. U. Pope considered that this King was the same Kurappalli Thunjiya Killivalavan. 18 poets wrote poems on him. Poet Alathur Kizhar (Puram 36) advised him not to go on war with a coward when he besieged Karuvaor King's fort. The fort was closed and never opened, the king remaining inside. The Chola removed the siege on the advice of the poet. Karuvaor King felt ashamed and faced defeat and Napasaliayar (Puram 39) wrote that Cholan won the war.

Poet nakkeeran (Agam 205, 346) wrote about his victories against Kosar King of Tulu country and Pandiya's Chieftain Pazhaiyan Maran. Poet Kovur Kizhar protected the greatness and virtue of Chola besides the lives of the children of Malayaman Thirumudikhari from death.

Nalangilli (180 – 160BC)

Poet(Puram 72) eulogize him as a king waging war against northern countries and a king who could gift Vanji and Madurai too to Viraliyars, the women artists.

The strength of his forces are amply described in Puram – 225. On account of a dispute over Woraiyur he went on war with his cousin Nedungilli who ruled Aavoor. Nalangilli took over Woraiyur after winning Nedungilli who kept himself inside the fort locking the doors of the fort. He died Elavanthigai (Puram 61). Nobody knew who killed Kaariyatra Thunjiya Nedungilli. But K.A. Neelaganta Sastri said it was Nalangilli who killed him.

Koprunj Cholan (160-130BC)

The poet king wrote 4 poems in Kurunthogai and 3 in Purananooru. His poems and the poems on him did not reveal his political history but spoke about the greatness of the culture and civilization. When his children wanted the share in ruling the Kingdom and confronted him, he also started preparing for the war in the interest of his people. On heeding the advice of Pulatrur Eyitriyanar (Puram 213), the Chola King abandoned the war to avoid the history that he fought against his own kins.

Further to avoid the history that his sons fought him he decided to die by facing the customary North. (Fasting into death). In the poem Puranaanooru (215) the poet King wrote that even though his friend Pisiranthaiyar whom he never met earlier did not come when he was a king he was sure that he would come during the time of distress.

Hence he made a request to reserve a place for him by his side to join him in his death. As per his wish Pisiranthaiyar came from Pandiya country to join his friend and the King in death. The friendship between the King and his friend was so strong even without seeing each other, Pisiranthaiyar was prepared to spare his life for a friend.

The poet king Koperunchozhan in the poem Kurunthogai (129) wrote on the greatness of friendship. Parimel Azhagar said “like Koperunchozan and Pisiranthaiyar if the feelings merge that would result in the friendship sharing their lives for each other in death as well”.

Rajasooyam Vetta Perunarkilli (160-130BC)

He performed the “Rajasooyam”, usually performed by an emperor who defeated other kings without challenge. With the help of valiant forces of four types he won many a battle (Puram 16, 377). Joining Thervan Malayan, he won Chera King Mantharaj Cheral Erumborai because of differences. He was a friend of Kanaper Eyil Kadantha Ukkira Peruvazhuthi.

Senganan (100-30 BC)

He won Chera Kanayakhalirumporai at the battle of Thiruporpuram and imprisoned him in Kuduvayilkottam prison. The insult of delay in giving water to Chera resulted in his death. The efforts of Poigaiyar to get the release of Chera king is described in his poem “Kalavazhi Naarpathu” in praise of the Chola king. Vikrama Cholan Ula praised the Chola King.

Cholan Senganan with the assistance of Perumbutsenai, the lieutenant of Chieftain Pazhaiyan fought a war with Chera Nannan. Kaniyan, Otrai, Athi, Gangan and Katti were at the side of Chera. He fought ferociously and won the war in the battle of Kazhumalam after he had lost his chieftain Pazhaiyan. (Agam 44).

Thirumangai Azhwar tells us of his victory over the king Vilanthaival. Periya Thirumozhi tells the construction of 70 Siva temples by Kochenganan.

Appar wrote about his previous birth as a spider. The stories on him were found in the copper plates of Thiruvaalangaadu, Kalingathupuram, Vikrama Sozha Tulaa, Thiruthondar Anthaathi and Periyaparanar. The spider with the help of its web protected the God of Thiruvanayakoil from the falling dry leaves etc., an elephant which worshipped the God destroyed the web. The spider entered the trunk of the elephant upon

which both died. The same spider was born as Sanganaan in its next birth – Periyapuramam.

He might belong to 4th or 5th century BC as the saint poet Thirumangai Azhwar wrote on him. But K.A.N. Sastri said the Sangam period Sarganaan was different from that of Senganaan referred to by Azhwar.

Cholas of Sangam Decline Period

Valavan Killi (70 – 120AD)

He was the son of Manakilli and brother of Narsonai. Nine members of his cousins opposed his ascendancy to royalty. His brother-in-law Cheran Senguttuvan defeated them at narivayil and made Killi the King. During his reign Manimekalai went Jawa (Indonesia) to preach Buddhism.

At that time she built a Buddha Vihar with the help of the sculptors from Chola Kingdom at Porpatham (Perumbatham) and even today it exists. Manimekalai described his as Killivalavan, Thodukazhar Killi, Nedumudi Killi, Maavan Killi, Vadiverkilli and Volverkilli. Accirdubg to some of the King referred to by Silambu and Manikekalai was different from each other.

His wife was from the clan of Marali born in Pana Royalty by name Seerthi. Her son was Uthayakumaran. His younger brother Elankilli defeated the Chera and Pandiya at Kariyar.

The story of his love marriage with Peelivalai and their son's death by drowning in the sea, besides the tragic end of Kaveripoompattinam submerging into the sea are told by Manimekalai.

Pandyan Kingdom In Sangam

The most ancient people of Tamil Country were called Pandiyar and now known as Pandiyars. Their emblem was fish and hence it is said that they hailed from the fishermen community of the land of Neithal. Some would say they were the descendants of Pandiyar dynasty of Northern side. But the Mahabharata and earlier Ramayana also referred to the virtuous rule of Chera, Chola and Pandiya dynasty of Tamil country and hence could not be the descendants of Pandiya dynasty. Pliny and Megasthenese said that they were the descendants of Pandeya daughter of Heracles. Based on various mythologies and epics researchers arrived at their conclusions. It is believed they were the descendants of Goddess

Meenakshi and hence Gowriyar. But Pandiyars were the original and ancient Tamils of Kumari continent.

The extent of the Pandyan kingdom during the Sangam Age comprised the present districts of Madurai, Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram. The Pandyan kings were known as Maran, Valudhi and Chezhiyan. Their Capital was Madurai and their chief port was Korkai. Their symbol was fish. The Pandyan kings earned name and fame for their patronage to the Tamil Sangam. It can be said that their capital Madurai had also remained the capital of Tamil language and literature.

The Sangam literature provides a long list of Pandyan kings. Some of them had become most popular. Mudhukudumi Peruvazhthi performed many sacrifices to celebrate his victories. Therefore, he was given the title Palyagasalai. Another Pandyan king Bootha Pandiyan was a great warrior and also a patron of Tamil poets. His wife Perungoppendu was a poetess. It is referred that she committed self at the death of her husband. Ariyappadaikadantha Nedunchezhiyan was also a famous Pandyan ruler. He gave death sentence to the hero of Silappathigaram, Kovalan, by mistake, for which he gave his life when he came to know the truth. Another important ruler was Thalaiyalanganathu Nedunchezhiyan. He defeated the combined forces of Chera, Chola and other local chieftains at a place called Thalaiyalanganam. He also patronized a number of Tamil poets including Mangudi Maruthanar. The Pandyan rule disappeared along with that of the Cheras and Cholas in the Third century A.D. The Kariakalan occupied the Tamil country for another three centuries.

Prehistoric Pandiyar

The King with mythological and historical background belonging to the period prior to Kadai sangam (3000BC) whose period could not be ascertained were the prehistoric Pandiyars.

Nediyon

The later period kings' inclination to link them with God, saints or as the descendants of Aryan race also resulted in the confusion in Tamils history. That was the reason why K.A. Neelaganta Sastry in his book on the History of South India stated "Aryanisation". So, K.A. Neelaganta Sastri said that Prehistoric Pandiyars appear to be mythological kings rather than historical. At a later period the early period kings were mixed with mythology and hence the confusion.

In the Velvikudi and Chinnnamanoor copper plates the name Nediyan was recorded and later in Thiruvilayadal Puranam as a mythological king. He was called, “Vadivalamba Nindra Pandiyan” Nilantharu Thiruvir Pandiyan and Pandiyan Makeerthi. As he ruled for a longer period he was called “Nediyan”.

The king’s names, “Vadivalamba nindra Pandian”, was “Adi Alamba Nindra Pandiyan” and “Nilanthara Thiruvir Pandiyan” were derived from the fact that he gave his land in the north when Kumari Continent submerged into the sea. Makeerthi was the name he got as he was called by the Northerners “Sathyavrathan” and “Sahyamuni”. Nachinarikiniyar exaggerated that he ruled for 2500 years.

Tholkappiyam was completed and published in his assembly. Purananooru said that he engineered the river “Pahruli” and celebrated the festival for the Sea God. He reigned during 400BC when the sea rise engulfed Kumari continent.

Pal(Yaga) Salai Mudhukudumi Peruvazhuthi (350-300BC)

He won many battles. Madurai Kanji called him “Palsalai Mudhukudumi” and this name came from the fact he arranged free feeding centres for the poor. By practice and usage the name would have changed as ‘Palyagasalai’. The anthology Purananooru by Karikizhar, Nettiimaiyar, and Nedum Palliyathanar are in praise of him. The Chief Priest who completed the Yaga was given the village Velvikudi by the king. The Velvikudi Copper Plates stated the name “Kol-yanai Palavotti Kooda Mannar Kuzham Thavirtha Palyagasalai Mudhukudumi Peruvazhuthi alias Pandiyadhirasan” for Ukkira Peruvazhuthi whose reign was 130 – 100 BC.

Kadai Sangam Period Pandiyar

Mudathirumaran (300 – 240BC)

Irayanar Kalaviyal Urai said that the king shifted the capital to Manalur after the sea disappearance of Kapadapuram deep into the sea. When Manalur met engulfed same fate he shifted to ‘Then Madurai’. He established Kadai Sangam there. Two poems written by him were in Natrinai.

Pandiyan Ariya Padai Kadantha Nedunchezhiyan (250 -200BC)

He wrote this poem in praise of the greatness of education.

Pandiyan Arivudainambi (200 – 150BC)

He wrote about the value of having children. The poet king wrote four poems in Natrinai (15), Kurunthogai (230), Agam(28) and Puram (188). He was a contemporary to Pisirantaiyar and Koperuncholan.

Bootha Pandiyan (150-140BC)

His poems were found both in Agam and Puram. The Poet-King wrote Poem, (Puram 71) on his friendship, love and governance. Mavan the head Maiyal Town, Anthai the head of Eyil, Anthuvanathan, Aatha Azhisi, Eyakkan were some of his friends. The intense love for his wife made her die by plunging into husband's pyre. (Puram 246, 247)

Nedunchezhiyan (140 -130BC)

Madurai Kanji praised him as Thalayalanganathu Seruvenra Nedunchezhiyan. Nedunalvadai and Mullaipattu were written on him during his period. He became a king in his younger days. Both Cheran Mantharanjeral Erumporai and Kopperu Narkilli joined the five Velirs viz., Thithiyan, Ezhini, Erumaiyuran, Erungo and Venman to fight him at Thalayalanganam and he won ultimately.

Cheran Mantharanjeral Erumporai was imprisoned (Puram19, 23) and the enemies were driven upto Woraiyur Vanji (Puram 57,78) Velir's Mizhalai Kootram and Muthoor Kootram were taken over and made as part of Pandiya Kingdom. (Puram – 24)

As per the Copper plates of Chinnamanoor in his royal assembly there was a group of Poets headed by Mangudi Marudhanar.

Ukkira Peruvazhuthi – II (130 – 100BC)

He was considered the son of Thalaiyalanganathu Seruvendra Nedunchezhiyan. He was Vengai Marban at Kana Pereyil (Kalaiyarkoil). (Puram 21) His friends were Cheran Mari Vengo and Cholan Rajasooyam vetta Perunarkilli. (Puram 367). Thirukkural was completed and published in his royal assembly. He edited Agananooru with the help of Rudrasanmar son of Madurai Uppoorikudi Kizhar.

Elamperu Vazhuthi (100 -50 BC)

He might have died in the naval war or during his swimming in the sea.

The poem by him reveals the excellent human culture at that time itself. In praise of Thirumal he wrote a poem (Paripadal – 15). In as much as Paripadal relates to a later period he might belong to the later kings of Kadai (last) Sangam.

Pandiyars during the Decline of Sangam Period

Pandiya Nedunchezhan 70 – 120AD

He was the same king who died instantly on throne itself on realizing the error in his judgment by passing a death sentence on the case presented by Kannagi. He won the war against the Aryans of the north – Silambu. This was the reason why Kanaga – Vijaya insulted the Tamils.

Nanmaran (120 – 130AD)

He ruled as a prince with the name Vetrivelchezhan at Korkai. He became king after the death of Nedunchezhan.

Other Pandias

Many kings of Pandiya Kingdom were not traceable for want of period wise order and their period as well.

The Tamil Literature introduces:

1. Velli Ambalathu Thunjiya Peruvazhudhi
2. Koodakara Thunjiya Maran Vazhuthi
3. Elavanthigai Palli Thunjiya Nanmaran
4. Pannadu Thantha Pandiayan Maran Vazhudhi
5. Nambi Nedunchezhan

Local Chieftains

Apart from the three Tamil kingdoms, a number of local chieftains ruled in different parts of Tamil Nadu. They were known as Velirs. The Sangam literature furnishes lot of information about them. The most famous among the Velirs were called Seven Patrons or Kadaiyelu Vallalgal. They were Pari, Ori, Malayan, Elini, Pegan, Aay, and Nalli.

The local chieftains had extended patronage to the Tamil poets like Kabilar,, Avvaiyar, Nallathanar and Perunchithirana. In turn, these poets hailed them for their generosity. They had also extended their help to resolve any disputes between the rulers. For example, Avvaiyar played the

role of a diplomat in the court of Adhiyaman. Another Sangam poet, Kapilar had taken care of Pari's daughter's after his death. These local chieftains made generous donations to the poets, bards and their consorts. Like the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers, the local chieftains had also played a significant role in the political, social and cultural domains during the Sangam Age.

Social Life in Sangam Age

In the Sangam Age, the Tamil people had a common language and culture. But, they lived in five different natural landscapes. These natural landscapes or geographical regions were known as Thinais. The five Thinais referred to in the Sangam literature were Kurinji, Mullai, Marudham, Neydal and Palai, Each Thinais was geographically distinct from the other. Moreover, each of these regions had reflected their own social characteristics.

Kurinji

The Kurinji Thinais refers to the hilly region. The people in this region were called Vettuvar and Kuravar. Hunting was their primary occupation. They also cultivated fruits and vegetables and gathered honey. They worshipped Murugan or Seyon.

Mullai

It is a forest tract with green pastures. The people of this region domesticated animals. The people of the Mullai region were called as Kovalar or Ayar. Being shepherds, they produced dairy products like milk, curd and ghee. Their chief deity was Thirumal or Mayon

Marudham

The region Marudham refers to fertile and cultivable lands. Most of the people in this region were called as Vellalars because they practiced agriculture. They cultivated paddy, sugar cane and a variety of fruits like mango, plantain and Jackfruit. Irrigation methods were also known to them. Their chief deity was Indra or the rain God.

Neydal

Neydal was the coastal region. The people of this region known as Parathavar or Meenavar. Fishing was their natural occupation. They were also famous sailors. A few people of this region produced and sold salt. They were called as Umanar. The God of the Neydal region was Varunan or the God of the sea.

Palai

The term Palai refers to the desert region. But, there was no desert in the Tamil country. Therefore, it could be said that whenever there was drought due to failure of rains, that region was called as Palai. The people of this region were called as Maravar or Kalvar. They were forced to live as robbers due to poverty. Maravar were also known for their heroism. These people worshipped the Goddess Kotravai or Kali.

We have already studied about the pre society in the Tamil country. The Sangam age was the continuation of the pre-historic period. As in the pre-historic period, the life of the people in the Sangam age had remained simple and natural. The Sangam Tamils had chosen their occupation according to their natural environment. Although they lived in five different regions, there was a close interaction between them. This interaction had resulted in the development of a common language and culture in the Tamil country.

Status of Women in Sangam Age

The Sangam literature describes the position of women in ancient Tamil society. In the Sangam Age, women were treated with special consideration. The natural feminine qualities such as Achcham, Madam and Naanam were insisted in the Sangam literature. Their most important virtue was chastity. The heroine of Silappathigaram, 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. The concept of love had been elaborately discussed in Agananuru.

Women treated their husbands as equivalent to God 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, some women from the royal family indulged in the practice of Sati. According to the Sangam literature, a woman had to play different roles in the family such as a dutiful wife, responsible mother and an ideal hostess to guests. Women's

education was also insisted during the Sangam Age. We come to know a few women poets like Avvaiyar, Kakkai Padiniyar and Nachchellaiyar, whose verses are found in the Sangam literature. Sangam women were also known for their courage. However, from the post-Sangam period, there was a decline in the status of women.

ECONOMY, RELIGION AND CULTURE OF THE SANGAM AGE

The Sangam Age in Tamil country is significant and unique for its social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Tamils. There was an all round development during this period. The Sangam literatures as well as the archaeological findings reveal these developments.

Social Divisions

The Tamil society during the Sangam period was broadly divided into several groups. In the beginning of the Sangam Age, the Tamil society was not organized on the basis of the Vedic caste system, namely Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Sudras. However, the earliest of the Sangam literature, Tolkappiyam refers to the four divisions prevalent in the Sangam society namely, Anthanar, Arasar, Vaislyar and Vellalar, it may be said that this classification roughly corresponds to the Vedic Social division.

Another Sangam work, Purananuru mentions the names of ancient Tamil tribes such as Thudiyar, Pannan, and Kadamban. These divisions indicate the complex social structure prevalent in the Sangam Age.

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. The Sangam literature describes how hosts had always been waiting to welcome guests.

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.

The Sangam literature refers to a variety of ornaments worn by both men and women. They were made of gold, silver, pearls and precious stones. Poor people used ornaments made of shells and beads.

Economic Life

Generally, the Tamil society had enjoyed an affluent economy during the Sangam Age. Agriculture, industry, trade and commerce made the Sangam Tamils almost self-sufficient. Exports were also made to the other parts of the world.

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.

Occupation

Weaving and spinning were the most important crafts of the Sangam period. Uraiyur and Madurai were the main centers 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 practiced their respective occupations. Fishing and hunting had also remained as important occupation during this period.

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 neighbors. For example, the people of Kurinji region exchanged honey with the people of Neydal region for getting fish and salt. Likewise, the Mullai people gave their milk products to Marudham people to get rice from them.

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 Pattinappalai refers to their existence at Puhar. Goods from distant places were brought to these markets. The expansion of trade led to the growth of towns. Moreover, export of goods to other countries had increased. (It will be described in the next chapter).

Religion

We have already referred to the five Gods worshipped in the five different regions. In addition to these Gods, the Sangam Tamils worshipped their ancestors. They erected memorial stones called as Nadukal, They were also known as Hero Stones or Veerakkal. Such stones were erected in memory of those who died in battles. The Sangam people had also worshipped the natural objects. For example, the Sun. Moon.. Earth, rivers and mountains became their objects of worship. Neem tree was considered sacred.

Cultural Life

The Sangam Tamils enjoyed a high degree of cultural life. Their interests in education, literature, music, dance, drama and festivals have been described in the Sangam literature.

Education and Literature

Education was common for all, men and women, rich and poor and for different communities. Parents attached importance to the education of their children. The Purananooru describes that it is the duty of the father to make his children learned. The bulk of the Sangam literature written by about 500 poets indicates the importance given to education. The poets of the Sangam period played vital role in the social and culture life of the people.

Recreation

The people of the Sangam Age had spent their time in excellent ways of recreations. Poetry, music, dance and drama were significant. The Sangam poets made the kings as well as the people through rendering beautiful verses. The bards made merry in the king's courts. The rulers and nobles patronized them with liberal donations. Hunting was another important recreation. The young and energetic took part in duels, while the old played indoor games like dice. Women and girl children had their own games to play and evinced much interest in swimming.

Fine Arts

The Sangam Tamils had also established their greatness in fine arts. They developed the concept of Muthamizh iyal, Isai and Naatakam. The Paanars or bards were experts in music. They moved from place to place, singing bards in praise of kings and local chieftains. Later, the Tamils developed musical notes or swarams. The musical tune was known as Pann. Several musical instruments were also used. Shells, drums, flute and lutes were famous instruments. Karikalan had been hailed as Ezhisai Vallavan. The art of dancing was encouraged during the Sangam period. Attam and Koothu were performed during festivals. Tholkaappiyam refers to Naatakam or Drama. The art of painting was also known to the Sangam Tamils. They celebrated several festivals. Kaarthigai, Onam and Indra festival were some of them. The Indra festival had been celebrated annually at Puhar. The dance and music had its religious connotation from the earliest times.

THE GREEK AND ROMAN CONTACTS WITH ANCIENT TAMIL COUNTRY

The Sangam Age in Tamil country is significant and unique for its social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Tamils. There was an all round development during this period. The Sangam literatures as well as the archaeological findings reveal these developments. From the very early times, Tamil country had carried on an extensive trade with foreign countries. The Greeks and Romans had commercial contacts with the Tamil country from about the Third century B.C. These trade relations had lasted throughout the Sangam period. We have plenty of sources to study the maritime activities during the Sangam Age.

Literary Sources

The Sangam literature refers to the Greeks and Romans as Yavanas. The Sangam poems describe the trading activities of Greek and Roman merchants in the Tamil country. They mention the important seaports and also about the exports and imports. Similarly, the Greek and Roman writers of that period mention the details of the commercial contacts between their countries and South India. Particularly, the writers like Pliny, Ptolemy, Plutarch and the author of the Periplus had described the condition of trade in the First and Second centuries A.D.

Archaeological Sources

The archaeological evidences have further supplemented literary sources relating to the foreign trade, The Arikamedu excavations remain as the important evidence for the Greek and Roman trade in the Tamil country. The place Arikamedu, near Pondicherry had remained an important centre of trade for Greeks and Romans, The Greek writers had referred to this place as Poduke, There was a great Roman Factory at Arikamedu. Many articles such as coins, porcelain, jars and tubs for the purpose of dyeing clothes have also been found there. Further, Roman coins, pottery and other articles have been found in other parts of Tamil Nadu. Excavations have also been conducted at Puhar, Kanchipuram, Alagankulam, Madurai, Kodumanal and other places. Greek and Roman coins and other articles have been found in these places confirming the foreign trade during the Sangam Age.

Coins

Plenty of Roman coins have been found all over Tamil Nadu, particularly in the coastal areas. From these coins we come to know that the Roman emperors like Augustus Caesar, Tiberius and Nero had issued them. Since they lived in the First and Second centuries A.D., it may be said that the Sangam Tamils had trade relations with the Roman Empire.

Greeks

The Greeks were the first to enter into trade contacts with the Tamil region in about Third century B.C. The Greeks had adopted and mentioned several Tamil names for the commodities that were available in the Tamil country. For example, they had adopted the Tamil word Ansi (rice) and mentioned it as Oriza in the Greek language. The Greeks had paid much attention on the West coast. The seaport Musiri had remained their important trading centre. The Greeks provided an important link between Tamil country and the West, via Egypt.

Romans

After the Greeks, the Romans began to arrive in the Tamil country. The Pandyan kingdom was the first to get the benefit of the Roman trade. The Romans had employed the Tamil merchants to buy and sell goods in the local market. They had also served in the Pandyan army. In the First and Second centuries A.D., both the Greeks and Romans expanded their trade in the Tamil country. After that period, there was a gradual decline in the overseas trade. The confusion in the Roman Empire and the collapse

of the Sangam age in the Third century A.D. put an end to the Greek and Roman contacts with the Tamil country.

Exports and Imports

The Tamil country exported a variety of goods to Greece and Rome during the Sangam Age. The most important of them were spices like pepper, cardamom, cloves and ginger. The other items of export include sandal paste, flowers, scents, aromatic wood like Ahil, ivory, pearls, corals, medicinal plants, banana and rice. There was also a great demand in the west for the cotton clothes manufactured in the Tamil country. The Sangam literature reveals that fine varieties of clothes had been exported to the West. Further, varieties of beads, diamonds, sapphire, topaz, emerald, tortoise shells were bought by the Romans, The pearls of the Pandyan kingdom and the cotton clothes of Uraiyur had been largely exported.

The imports into the Tamil country had almost remained less than its exports. The imported goods include sweet wine, gold coins and ornaments, glass, copper and other articles. The horses for the Pandyan and other kingdoms of South India were brought in ships from foreign countries.

Sea-ports

The development of overseas trade was made easy by the seaports situated on the coasts of the Tamil country. There were several seaports in the Tamil country during the Sangam period. The most important seaports on the eastern coast were Mamallapuram, Poduke, Puhar Poraiyaru, Korkai and Kumari. The Sangam literature, Pattinappalai provides the details of the Puhar harbour and its activities. The port-town Korkai had remained famous for its pearls. It was the primary port of the Pandyan kingdom. On the West coast, Musiri and Thondi were the two important seaports. Warehouses for storing the goods were built along the coasts. The chief ports had their lighthouses, which were called in the Tamil literature as Kalangarai Ilangu Sudar. Facilities were also made in the seaports for repairing the ships. The arrival and stay of foreign merchants in port towns were common during the Sangam period. People from various countries had also lived in port towns and this paved the way for the development of cosmopolitan civic system in these towns. Thus, throughout the Sangam period, the Tamil country had maintained commercial and other contacts with Greece and Rome.

Administration during the Sangam Age

The Sangam literature provides details regarding the administration during the Sangam Age. Monarchy was the system of government during this period. The king called as Vendan, Ko and Iral. The local chieftains were known as Velirs. The law of succession was practiced and the eldest son had enjoyed the right to succeed his father.

King and His Duties

During the Sangam period, the powers of the king were unlimited. He was considered as the representative of God. The term Irai signifies this theory. At the same time, the king was responsible for the welfare of the people. He was the protector of the law. In his Court the king met the people, heard their grievances and delivered justice. According to the Sangam verses, the rulers of the Sangam Age like Karikalan. Manu Needhi Cholan and Porkai Pandyan were known for their impartiality in delivering justice.

Officials

In the Sangam Age, there were two councils to assist the king in his day-to-day administration. They were known as Iymperumkuzhu (Committee of the great five) and Enperayam (Council of the great eight). There were also other officials to run the administration efficiently.

Army

The King's army consisted of four divisions, namely, infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots. Swords, spears, bows and arrows were some of the weapons used by the soldiers. The forts in the capital cities had been highly protected by moats and trenches.

Revenue

Land revenue and custom duties were the chief sources of income to the government. One sixth of the total produce was collected as land tax. Tolls were also collected. The local chieftains paid tributes and gifts to the king and this income constituted significant part of the government revenue.

Local Administration

Each kingdom in the Sangam Age was divided into many administrative divisions. These divisions were called as Mandalam, Nadu, Valanadu and Koottram. The council of elders looked after the administration of the villages during the Sangam period. These councils were called as

Manram, Podiyil, Avai and Ambalam. Thus the Sangam administration had been efficiently organized. The later Cholas and Pandyas had followed some of its features.

THE POST SANGAM PERIOD THE KALABHRAS

The Sangam Age came to an end during the middle of the Third century A.D. The closing years of the Sangam Age was called the post-Sangam period. Then the Kalabhras captured the Tamil country from the Chera, Chola and Pandyan rulers.

Tamil country during the post-Sangam period

There were indications of the declining trends in the Tamil society even during the post-Sangam period. The North Indian religions, namely Buddhism and Jainism began to spread in the Tamil region. The traditional religious beliefs of the Tamil people gave way to the new religious ideas.

There was also a declining trend in the social life of the Tamil people. Social ethics began to decline during this period. The Tamil literature of this period reflected the ethical and moral ideas with a view to reform the society. The post-Sangam literature consists of the twin-epics - Silappathikaram and Manimekalai and also Pathinen Keezhkanakku.

The impulse of these works was oriented towards reforming the society. For example, morality in political and social life had been strictly insisted in the poems of Thirukkural, Inna Narpathu, Iniyavai Narpathu and Naladiyar. But finally, the Kalabhra rule had put an end to the classic age of the Sangam.

The Kalabhras Sources

The Kalabhras had occupied the Tamil country from the middle of the Third century A.D. to the end of the Sixth century A.D. We have very few sources to study the history of the Kalabhras. This is one of the reasons to call this period as Dark Age. The literary sources for this period include Tamil Navalar Charithai, Yapperumkalam and Periyapuranam. The Velvikkudi and Dalavaipuram copper plates also mention about the Kalabhras. The inscriptions at Thiruppugazhur and Vaikunda Perumal temple in Kanchipuram also refer to the Kalabhra rule.

Kalabhra Origin

There is no clear evidence about the origin of the Kalabhras. The popular belief was that the Kalabhras remained subordinates to the Gangas and Kadambas of the Kannada region. Later, they might have migrated into the Tamil country.

Kalabhra rule

We have little information about the Kalabhra rule in the Tamil country. The Tamil grammar Yapperunkalam refers to a Kalabhra king, namely Achutha Kalappalan. It appeared that he ruled the Tamil country from Uraiyur. He had also patronized the Tamil poets. A Buddhist scholar namely Buddhadatta lived in his kingdom. According to traditions, he imprisoned the Chera, Chola and Pandyan rulers. He had extended patronage to Buddhism and Buddhist monasteries.

By the end of the Sixth century A.D. the Pandyan ruler Kadungon had liberated the southern part of the Tamil country from the Kalabhras. By the same period, the Pallava king, Simhavishnu had captured Tondaimandala and Cholamandalam from the Kalabhras. Thus, the Kalabhra rule in Tamil country came to an end due to the ascendancy of the Pandyas and Pallavas.

Society under the Kalabhras

We can find a lot of difference between the society and culture of the Sangam Age and those of the Kalabhra rule. There was a political chaos during the Kalabhra rule. The secular outlook of the Sangam period gave way to the religious outlook of the Kalabhras. Both Buddhism and Jainism became dominant religions during the Kalabhra period. Particularly, the Jain monks had preached Jainism in the Tamil country. They were patronized by the Kalabhra rulers. At the same time, efforts were made to remove the evils from the society. The Tamil Siddhars like Thirumoolar had preached their philosophical ideas. Morals and ethics had been preached through education and literature.

Education and Literature

The Kalabhra rule in the Tamil country had witnessed the growth of education and literature. Sanskrit and Prakrit languages had been introduced in the Tamil region. This had resulted in the development of a new script called Vattezhththu. The Tamil literature had also taken new forms, and the Tamil grammar had also undergone a few changes during

this period. Many works under Pathineen Keezhkanakku were composed during this period. Epics like Seevaka Chinthamani and Kundalakesi were written. Nigandus were also composed during the Kalabhra period.

The Buddhist and Jain monks had contributed much to the growth of education. The Buddhist educational institutions were called Ghatikas. Scholars like Buddhadatta, Buddhaghosha and Bodhidharma lived during this period. The Jain Palli had remained important educational centers during the Kalabhra rule. The Jain Palli (School) at Thirupathirippuliyur remained an important educational centre during this period. Sarva Nandhi and Vajra Nandhi were the two great Jain scholars, who lived in this period.

During the end of the Kalabhra rule, the religion Saivism began to emerge as a great religion. Some of the Kalabhra rulers had embraced Saivism. However, it was only after the end of the Kalabhra rule, the Bakthi-cult flourished in the Tamil country through which both Saivism and Vaishnavism began to flourish.

PANDYAN EMPIRE

The Pandyas are one among the great Moovendars of the Tamil country. The Pandyas who ruled Tamil country during the sangam period, are called sangam Pandyas. After defeating the kalabhras the Pandya rulers ruled between 550 AD to 950 AD. They were called as first Pandyas. After the fall of the great pallavas and the cholas once again the Pandyas ruled the Tamil country from 1190 AD to 1310 AD. They were called as second Pandyas. Totally the Pandyas ruled the Tamil country three times for about 460 years. Madurai was the capital of the Pandyas. Fish was the royal emblem of the Pandyas.

We have studied that in the post-Sangam period, the Kalabhras had occupied the Tamil country. The Pandyan rulers were reduced to the position of local chieftains. The period of Kalabhras had lasted for about three centuries. The Pandyan ruler Kadungon played an active role in eliminating the Kalabhras. He restored the Pandyan rule in the Tamil region by the end of the Sixth Century A.D. was considered as the founder of the first Pandyan Empire.

The first Pandyan Empire continued till the beginning of the Tenth Century A.D. The Cholas defeated the Pandyan ruler, Rajasimha II. Later, Veerapandya (A.D. 946-966), the last ruler of the first Pandyan Empire had been defeated and killed by Adhithya Chola. It was the end of the first Pandyan Empire .

Pandyan Kings

Kadungon (A. D. 575 - 600) was succeeded by Maravarman Avani Sulamani (A. D. 600-625). He was given the title Sadayavarman. The copper plates refer him as Friend of Truth. The next ruler of the Pandyan Empire was Chezhiyan Sendhan (A.D. 625-640). He was also called Vaanavan. This title indicates his success against the Cheras. He had also assumed other titles like Maaran Sendhan and Vendar Vendan. He was responsible for the carving of a cave temple at Malaiyidaikkurichi in Tirunelveli District.

Maravarman Arikesari (A. D. 640-670)

Maravarman Arikesari was the most famous king of the first Pandyan Empire. He had assumed the title Parangusan. He was also widely known as Koon Pandyan. The Periyapuram hails him as Nhiraseer Nedumaran. He invaded the Pallava kingdom and defeated the Pallavas at Nelveli after which he assumed the title Nelveli Nedumaran. He was an ardent devotee of Saivism. He was also the contemporary of the Saiva Saint, Thirugnanasambandar, who converted him from Jainism to Saivism.

Kochadayan Ranadhira A. D. 670-710)

Kochadayan Ranadhira had waged aggressive wars against the Cheras and Cholas and defeated them. He had assumed titles like Mannar Mannan, Vanavan Sembian, Madura Karunatakan and Kongar Koman. During his rule, the Saiva saint, Sundaramoorthi Nayanar visited Madurai.

Religion under Pandiya Empire

After the decline of the Kalabhra rule, Hinduism was once again revived and Buddhism and Jainism began to decline. The Pandyan kings had patronized Vaishnavism, Saivism and Jainism.

The Nayanmars had preached Saivism while the Aiwars preached Vaishnavism. They had spread the spirit of Bakthi among the people. The spread of Bakthi cult inculcated religious feelings and service mindedness among the people. These qualities had taken deep roots in the Tamil society.

The Saivaite Saints, namely Thirugnana-sambandar and Manickavasagar had lived in the Pandya country and propagated Saivism. Similarly the Vaishnavite Saints, Nammalwar, Perialwar and Andal had preached

Vaishnavism in the Pandyan kingdom. The Pandya kings generally followed religious tolerance. They had made liberal donations and gifts to the Jain monks and to their educational institutions.

Rock-cut Temples

We have studied the rock cut cave temples of the Pallava period. The Pandyan kings had also carved several rock cut cave temples in their kingdom. More than fifty cave temples have been found in different parts of the Pandyan Empire. The most important of them are found in Malaiyadikkurichi, Anaimalai, Thirupparankundram and Tiruchi. These caves were dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Brabma.

Stone Temples

These temples were built of Stones and bricks. They are very simple in their style. Each temple consists of a Garbagraha, Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa. The stone temples of the Pandyas were found at Kovilpatti, Thiruppathur and Madurai.

Sculptures

The Pandyan period bad also witnessed the development of sculptures. The sculptures of Siva, Subramanya, Ganesha, Brahmma and Durga are found on the walls of the rock-cut caves. The Thirupparankundram temple contains wonderful sculptures and they provide evidence for the growth of sculptures in the Pandyan kingdom. They knew the technique of bronze casting. Bronzes are kept in temples as Utsavamurthy.

Paintings

The trace of the Pandyan paintings can be seen in the Chittannavasal cave temples. The ceilings and pillars bear the painted figures. The technique is known as fresco. The paintings represent the dancing girls, the king and queen, plants and animals. The paintings of Chittannavasal are compared with those found at Ajantha caves. The contribution of the Pandyan rulers for the Tamil art and architecture is commendable.

Sources for the History of the Pallavas

The sources for the history of the Pallavas may be classified as native and foreign sources. The native sources may further be classified as literary and archaeological sources.

The literary sources for the study of Pallavas include both Tamil and Sanskrit literature. They provide a lot of information about the Pallavas.

Tamil Literature

The Tamil literature consisted of the songs composed by Azhalvars and Nayanmars. They had lived during the Pallava period. The compositions of Azhalvars are known as Nalayira Divya Prabhandam. The songs of Nayanmars are compiled into Panniru Thirumurais. These works describe the social and religious life of the people during the Pallava rule. The Periyapuram written by Sekizhar is also another important literary source for this period.

Sanskrit Literature

The Sanskrit works Avani Sundari Katha written by Dandin and Loga Vibagam written by Sarva Nandi provide a lot of information about the importance of Simhavishnu and his rule, The famous Pallava monarch Mahendravarman I himself wrote the Mathavilasa Prakasanam in Sanskrit language. It provides information regarding the social and religious condition during the Pallava period.

Archaeological Sources

Copper plates, inscriptions, monuments and coins remain the important archaeological sources: for the study of the Pallavas. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta mentions about the Pallava king Vishnu Gopa. The Aihole Inscription of the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II gives details about the Pallava Chalukya conflict. The Kenthoor Stone Carving of Keethivarman also belonged to the Pallava period Apart from these popular inscriptions, there exist hundreds of Pallava inscriptions throughout South India. They depict the military achievements of the Pallava kings. These inscriptions also explain the social and economic conditions of the Pallava period.

The copper plates of the Pallava period remain useful historical sources. The Kuram Copper Plates issued by Parameshwaravarman and the Velurpalayam copper plates of Nandivarman III record their military achievements. The temples, sculptures and other monuments of the Pallava period also provide valuable historical information. The coins of

the Pallava period remain important sources to study the economic conditions of this period.

Foreign Sources

The foreign sources for the Pallava period include the Sri Lankan books, namely, Deepavamsa and Mahavamsa. These books are written in Pali language. They describe about the relationship between the Pallava kings Narasimhavarman I and the Sri Lankan king Manavarman. The Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang had visited the Pallava kingdom and his travel accounts are known as Siyuki. He had given a detailed account of the capital city of the Pallavas, Kanchipuram. He also mentioned about the Buddhist Viharas in Kanchi and described the social and economic conditions of the Pallava kingdom.

Pallava Origin of the Pallavas History

The period of Pallava rule is an important chapter in the history of Tamil Nadu. After defeating the Kalabhras, Pallavas established their rule in the Tamil country. Their rule had extended from Sixth century A.D. to Ninth century A.D. The core of the Pallava kingdom was known as Thondai Mandalam. It extended from the river Krishna in the North to the river Palar in the South.

The Pallava rule was significant in many respects. There was religious revival as well as literary growth. An excellent administrative structure had existed under the Pallava rule. The Pallavas had also effected important changes in the sphere of art and architecture.

Origin of the Pallavas

Kanchipuram one of the seven best cities of India, was the capital of Pallavas. Kanchi was under Pallavas rule from 3rd to 9th century AD. Vincent Arthur Smith opined in 1st edition of 'History of India', that Pallavas were the Pahlava of Persian origin and in the third edition of his book, he concluded they were South Indians.

There are many theories regarding the origin of the Pallavas. Some scholars consider that the Pallavas were foreigners. According to this theory, the Pallavas were the descendants of the Persians who invaded North India. But many scholars do not accept this theory.

The theory that the Tamil country had been the original home of the Pallavas is based on the story of Thondaiman Ilanthiraiyan. He was considered to be a descendent of the Chola-Naga tribes. However, the Tamil origin for the Pallavas has been ruled out on many counts.

It is generally considered that the Pallavas had migrated to the Tamil country from North India. While in North India, they served under the Mauryas. After the decline of the Mauryas, the Pallavas migrated to the Andhra region. Before coming to the Tamil Country, they stayed in the Andhra region for some time and served under the Satavahanas. Subsequently, they established the Pallava kingdom in Thondaimandalam by overthrowing the Kalabhras.

They were the descendants of Thondaiman Elanthiraiyan. However let us also examine the views of other historians. A researcher by name rice said that Pallavas were the descendants of Pahlavas who migrated to and lived in the North Western India.

Suvisahan Pahlavan a minister of the Andhra Emperor Rudradaman ruled during 150AD and his descendants took over the southern part of Andhra Empire at its decline. Virakurchavarman who married the daughter of a Naga, the ruler of South-Western states of Andhra Empire. The copper plates of Pallava described him as the first Pallava king.

Dr.Venkaiyar is of the view that the West Persian word "Panthiyas" changed to Pahlava and then as Pallava.

A painting of Nandhivarman II wearing a crown with the shape of an elephant head is found in Kanchi Vaigunta Perumal temple. The same type of crown is engraved in the coin of Indo-Bactrian King Demetria's. Hence Venkata Subbaiyar felt that Pallavas were Pahlavas only.

The Nasik inscriptions of Andhra Queen Gautami Bala Sri while telling the victory of her son Gautamiputra Sri Satakarni, recorded the defeat of Sakas, Pallavas and Yavanas who fled the battle field. Pallavas who came towards south could have been prevented by Gautamiputra Sri Satakarni the Andhra King who conquered them.

Pallavas being the feudatories of the empire of Andhra for some time, they might have created an independent Kingdom after the fall of the Andhra Empire.

The word 'Pahlava' does not find place in the inscriptions of Pallavas. Inasmuch as the state of Scythian Warrior is found in Nagarjunakonda, Iksha Vahus are not treated as Scythians. Rajasekaran lived during the

10th century AD wrote in his book Bhuvanagoshā that the Pahlavas lived beyond the river Indus and the Pallavas of South India belonged to different and distinct tribes.

A Sri Lankan researcher Rajanayagam tells us that the Manipallavam near Sri Lanka is the place of origin of Pallavas. The Chola king Killivalavan referred to in 'Manimekalai', that he married Peelivalai, daughter of Naga King Valaivanan of Manipallavam. Their son was Elanthiraiyan. Elanthiraiyan who lived at Manipallavam with his mother sailed to Tahmizhagam to meet his father in a ship which sank in the sea and he reached the shore floating on the waves. A creeper called Thondai was found encircled in his leg, hence he was called Thondaiman Elanthiraiyan. His descendants were named Pallavas as they came from Manipallavam Island.

Pallavas belonged to Thondaimandalam, who were subjects of Satavahanas Rule doing service to them (Thondu) and hence called Thondaiyar. That name later was Sanskritised as Pahlava. Krishnaswamy Iyer stated that the Thalavanur inscriptions indicated the wearing of the garland made of Thondai by Mahenravarma Pallavan.

K.P. Jayaswal opined that Pallavas were a sect amongst Vakatakas. Even in early inscriptions there is no mention of North Indian connection and hence not acceptable point.

Pallavas of later period were the descendants of the Kurumbar Tribes. Kurumbar means shepherds and cowherds and 'Pal avar' (milk-man) might have changed as Pallavar.

Manimekalai refers to Athonda Chakravarthi who defeated Kurumbar and conquered their land, named it as "Thonda Mandalam".

The ancestors of Marathas were of Aryan origin and for Pallava too and hence usage of Maratha's Prakrit language by Pallavas – C.V. Vairya.

D.C. Sirayan opines that even though later Pallavas were treated as Kshatriyas, they might have been of Brahminical origin earlier.

H.Krishna Sastri says that the first Pallava was born to Asvathama son of Dhrona a Brahmin and Naga Kannigai, a Dravidian for whom a bed was made of creeper, (Padarkodi) and hence he was called Pallavan.

K.A. Neelakanta Sastri is of the view that Pallavam in Prakrit and Sanskrit meant "Thondaikodi" and hence they got this title as Pallava.

As per Mahavamsa of Srilanka Pallavas hailed from Pallavabogam to Thamizhagam; Pallavabogam may pertain to parts of Andhra. According to A.M. Paramasivanandam, early Pallava inscriptions were found in Andhra.

Mythology mixed up with history on royal tradition might not be correct to conclude that Pallavas belong to Aryan race.

Pallavas, feudatories of Satavahanas, became independent after the fall of Satavahanas. Prakrit language copper plates confirm their rule from Kanchi to Krishna in the north. Prof R. Sathiyathaiyar tells us that their association with Satavahanas made them the patrons of Prakrit-sanskrit languages.

Rawlinson feels that after their rise in the estuaries of Krishna and Gothavari, Pallavas invaded Tamil Nadu and established their rule (350AD) conquering Kanchi, with the help of Kallar, Maravar and Kurumber.

Rajasimhan's Vayalur inscriptions describe the lineage of Pallava next to Asvathama and earlier to Ashoka while fixing Ashoka's ancestry. Hence Pallava dynasty existed prior to Ashoka and a family from cross marriage who were subjects of Andhra Empire became independent. Under this influence they adopted Prakrit language and accepted the local language later. – V.Ponnusami Pillai

The inscriptions after 8th century AD contain different names like, Kadavan, Kadavarkon and Kaduvetti as the Pallavas developed the country reclaiming to forests.

The origin of the Pallavas could not be ascertained as Puranic stories were mixed in the history. In spite of the researches with conclusions made, some are of the view that their origin was from North

Pallava Dynasty and Kingdom

Early Pallavas (250-340 AD)

Those who released copper plates in Prakrit language were called Early Pallavas.

Bappadevan (250-275AD)

Bappadevan was the leader of Brahmins. Stiff opposition from farmers and the public arose against the Bappadevan rule as he Patronised Brahmins, Vedhas and Prakrit. A story on the war between Emperor Thondaiman and his cousin Viswavesu was referred to by Col. Mckenzy and he might be the first Pallava king Bappadevan.

Prakrit copper plate described that Bappadevan donated 1 lac ploughs etc to please the people and establish peace. During Bapadevan period the Pallava country's southern border was upto Palar River.

Sivaskandavarman (275-300AD)

The Maidavelou plate released at Kanji by him when he was the crown prince sent to his leader at Dhanyakataka. The donation of a village Viriparam to two Brahmins was inscribed in the plate. The Hiragathgalli plate was released after his ascending the throne as emperor. He was called, Maharajathirarjan, Dharmarajan and he performed as Asvamedha Yaga. Sivaskandavarman waged a war on Kalabhras and conquered Kanchi Establishing the border upto Pennar River on the South; upto River Krishna on the north; extending the Pallava Kingdom.

Sivaskanda Varma's father could not be identified. He might be Bappa devan. N. Subramanian considers Simhavarman who created Manji inscriptions, like his father.

Others

Gunabadeya plate was released by Charudevi, wife of Buddhavarman. The donations she gave to Perumal temple was inscribed on it. We also come to know that they had a son by name Puthyantran. We do not know whether he was the son of Sivaskandavarman. From their names, Buddhavarman and Buthyantran, it is understood that they were the followers of Buddhism.

Medieval Pallavas (340 to 575AD)

As the Medieval Pallava plates were in Sanskrit, it was considered that they had no connections with early Pallavas. Rajasimhan in his Vayalur inscriptions referred to his ancestor as Medieval Pallava Kings. Prakrit language was improved and developed as Sanskrit. During 4th century AD, Sanskrit became the language used for the propagation of Vaidika Philosophy.

Medieval Pallavas did not appear to have released to copper plates from Kanchi. They were excavated from the Telugu towns like, Dhasanapuram, Menmadura, Royakotta, Santhalur, Udhayendram and Uruvappalli. The experts in Sanskrit verified the copper plates and assessed their period as 340 – 575BC.

Kumaravishnu (340-350AD)

The Harisena inscriptions at Allahabad tells us, during the middle of 4th century AD Samudhragupta invaded the south and defeated 12kings. In the defeated list of the kings, the names of Kanji Vishnugopan and Palakada Ukrasena were found. As Kalabarthri was described as 'Kudumba Thalaimani' and 'Lakshmipathi' in the copper plates, Krishna Sastri considers that he was having the name Kumaravishnu.

Buddhyangran was the last king of early Pallava dynasty and Kalabarthri or Kumaravishnu was the great king among the Middle Pallava. The period of Kumaravishnu's reign and that of the invasion of Sumudraragupta were same. Therefore Dr. Rajamanickam, says that the names, Kumaravishnu and Vishnugopan found in Allahabad inscriptions refer to the same king.

Samudragupt fought Vishnugopan at a place outside north of Kanchi but not entered Kanchi. Ukrasenan was a feudatory under Vishnugopan – K.A. Neelakanta Sastri. Vishnugopan and the Later Pallava Kings released their copper plates from the Telugu Towns as their northern border was up to Krishna.

In this Thalagunta inscriptions, Kadamba king Kaguthavarman mentioned the establishment of Kadamba kingdom by Mayurasarman, after the defeat of Vishnugopan by Samudragupta.

Shandhashya (Skandhavarman) (350-375D)

Velurpalayam plates released by Skandavarman III mention the marriage of the great Pallava King Virakurchavarman with the daughter of Skandanagan, the king of Nagas and he got Kundala country as gift.

The same plate also recorded the retrieval of Kadika (Kanchi) by Skandashya, son of Virakurcha from the King Sathyasen. He also donated lands to Thirukazhukundram temple. Prithvisenan I of Vakataka dynasty attacked Pallava and occupied Kanchi Making have retrieved Kanchi from Sathyasen who ruled it and beyond its north for some time.

Kumaravishnu (375-425AD)

Velur Palayam plate describe that Kumaravishnu who became a king after Skandashya retrieved Kanchi, but it was not mentioned from whom he retrieved. He might he retrieved from Vakataka. But K.K. Pillai contends that he retrieved from Cholas only as Kanchi was with the Cholas after the invasion of Samudragupta. This contention was refuted by some, as the prince, Vishnugopavarman, son of Kumaravishnu ruled having Palakadava as his capital. Dr. Circar holds that Uruvapalli plates were released from there.

Skandavarman – II (425 – 475AD)

West Ganga King Madhavan – II in his Penukonda plates stated that he and his father Harivarman ascended the throne with the help of Skandavarman, son of Simhavarman. Kadamba King Kaguthavarman might have prevented Harivarman from ascending the throne.

Kadamba King Mirugesavarman (Grandson of Kagusthavarman) a comtemporary of Gangan King Madhava – II invaded him. Halis plates stated that he defeated Gangan king and Pallavas were afraid of him. Madhavan II was again made king by Skandavarman son of Simhavarman – I by defeating Kandamba King.

Buddhavarman (475 -500 AD)

Velur Palayam plates stated that Buddhavarman was like a fire for Chola's vast army. He defeated and drove Kalabhras and Cholas when they invaded Kanji.

VishnuGopavarman (500 -525AD)

Ravivarman, son of Mirugesvarman defeated the king of Kanchi, says Halsi plates. Vishnugopavarman was the king of Kanchi during the reign of Ravivarman.

Nandhivarman (525-550AD)

Velur Palayam Plates proves that with the blessings of Lord Shiva he defeated King of Nagas. The Naga king defeated by Nandhivarman might be Chalukya King Jayasimhan or Ranadeera.

Simha Varman III (500 – 575)

Vellur palaya plates say that Simha Varman III was son of Simha Varman. Simhavarman III became King after Nandhivarman I. Gangas copper plate tells us the donation of lands to Samanars (Jains) by his wife. He was the worshipper of Shiva. He was Iyyadigal Kadavarkon and wrote poem on the sacred place.

The Medieval Pallava period was calculated on the basis of Jain book by name Loga Vipaha written in the principle of the formation of the Universe.

Simhavishnu

Mahendravarman I

Narasimhavarman I

Simhavishnu (A.D. 575-610)

Simha Vishnu was the founder of Pallava Dynasty. He was very Brave and conquered with lot of kings and extended with Pallava Dynasty. He extended his kingdom to a dynasty.

Information on Simhavishnu was scanty prior to the publication of the history of Kanchi Pallavas by Professor Gopalan. If we examine and analysis the Plates of Kasakudi, Velurpalayam and Kuram, it became clear that Simhavishnu was the son of Simha Varman III who was the last king of Medieval Pallavas and that he had a younger brother Beema Varman by name.

It is learnt from Avanti Sundarikatha that Durvineethan the King of Ganga, Vishnu Vardhanan, the Eastern Chalukya, Pulikesi II of Western Chalukya and Manavarnamn Avani Choolamani the Pandiya King, were his contemporaries. Hence the reign of Simhavishnu was A.D. 575-610.

Simhavishnu was a great soldier. He had the title Avani Simhan. Mehandravarman, his son eulogized him as a mountain that supported the world of Pallava Dynasty; one who had all the luxurious items; one had conquered many countries; an equal to Lord Indira in Valour; an equal to Lord Kubera in wealth and as a King of Kings in his treatise Mathavilasa Prakasanam.

The plate of Velur Palayam says that he captured the Cholanadu. The plate of Kasakudi says that Simhavishnu appeared in the world like a lion and conquered Kalabhras, Mazhavar, Cholar and Pandiyar. The plate of Kanjanur near Kumbakonam has the name Simhavishnu Saturvati Mangalam.

The cave temple of Sithannavasal near Pudukottai belongs to Mahendravarman I and there is no evidence of his wars in South India. Hence his father Simhavishnu during his reign must have won the Cholanadu upto Pudukottai.

Avanthi Sundarikatha and the plates of Kasakudi say that he removed the final enmity from Katravar koottam which according to Rajamanickam was only Kanjipuram (the History of Pallavas). Since Simhavishnu was a valiant king, he and his descendants were called the great Pallavas.

Simhavishnu was a pious king. His name indicates that he was a Vaishnavite. The plate of Udayendram refers to him as "Bakthi Araditha Vishnu". (One who worshipped Vishnu)

Avanthi Sundari Katha says that Baravi, the great epic poet who rendered the epic Krartharjuniam was under the patronage of Simhavishnu at Kanchipuram for some time.

Mahendravarman I- A.D. 600-630

Simhavishnu was succeeded by his son Mahendravarman I. In the beginning of his life, Mahendravarman I was a follower of Jainism, Later, he embraced Saivism due to the influence of the Saivaite Saint Tirunavukkarasar, who is also known as Appar. This is testified by Periyapuramam.

This is confirmed by the inscriptions of Trichy Rockfort temple. It is learnt from Mathavilasa Prakasanam, a treatise by Mahendravarman that religions such as Buddhisam, Kapalikas and Pasupatham wer followed during his reign. He destroyed the Samana Palli (Jain School) at Tirupathiripuliyur and expelled Samanas (Jains) from his country.

Mahendravarman revied Saivism (worshippers of Siva). He introduced the innovation of cave temples carved out of rocks. He was a master of arts in its various forms. He beautified his country and fostered the culture of the Tamils.

Wars

The Paliava-Chaiukya conflict had begun during the period of Mahendravarman I. The Chalukyan king Pulakesin II marched against the Pallavas and defeated Mahendravarman. Subsequently, Mahendravarman I chased his enemy and defeated the Chalukyan army at Pullalur. He had also defeated the Western Ganga ruler Durvinitha.

The inscription of Aihole says that Pulikesi II attacked the Pallava king, captured Vengi and made his brother Vishnuvardan, the king of Vengi who had been already ruling with Nsik (Asalapuram) as his capital.

The same inscription says that when the forces of Pulikesi II invaded Kanji from the north, the king did not face the enemy and hid himself inside the fort of Kanji like a coward. But the Kasakdi plate of the Pallavas says that Mahendran destroyed his enemies at Pullalur.

It is the custom of kings to hide their defeats but to record and highlight their victories only. Durvinedan, the Ganga King, refers to the war of Pullalur in his inscriptions. It is understood so that Durvinedan joined Pulikesi II and fought against Mahendravarman. Though Mahendran lost his northern part, he continued to rule as an emperor. His empire had spread from Venkata hills in the north to the Cauvery in the south. There were many feudatories under him.

Titles

Mahendravarman I had 26 titles. The titles Sathrumallan and Kalagapriyan show his military genius. His generosity was known from the title Gunabhara. Other titles such as Avanipajanan, Lalithanguran, Purushothaman, Sathyasanthan, Vichithra chithra, Narendran, Sethakari, Potharaiyan, Mahapidugu, Nayaparan, Vikraman, Mathavilasan, Anithyaragan, Sangeeranasathi, Alupthakaman and Nirabeshan are the some of them.

Art and Literature

Mahendravarman I had evinced much interest in art and architecture. He introduced a new technique in the temple architecture. He carved out temples from huge rocks without using bricks, wood and mortar. It is considered to be an innovation in the field of South Indian art and architecture. Therefore, he was called as Vichitrachitha. These temples are known as rock-cut temples or cave temples. His rock-cut temples are found in several places in South India including Mandagapattu, Mamandur, Mahendravadi, Vallam, Pallavaram, Thirukkazhukunram and

Tiruchi.

We can find the Pallava paintings at Chittannavasai. The music inscription at Kudumiyanmalai reveals Mahendravarman's skill in music. He was an expert in playing Veena known as Parivathini. Mahendravarman I was also a great scholar in the Sanskrit language. He wrote the satirical drama Mattavilasa Prahasanam in Sanskrit.

The cave temple at Mandagapattu was the first of its kind in rock architecture. The inscriptions of Mandagapattu temple in South Arcot says that Mahendravarman, built an 'everlasting temple for the everlasting God' sans stone, wood, metal and lime. He carved cave temples out of rocks for Thirumal at Mamandur, Mahendravadi, Singavaram and Namakkal.

He built cave temples for lord Siva at Seeyamangalam, Pallavarma, Vaoam, Dalavanur, Thiruvathigai, Thirukazhukundram and Tiruchirappalli. A cave temple for trinity of the Hindu Gods at Mandagappattu and a temple for the Samanas (Jains) at Annavasal. The cave temples at Vijayawada, Mogalrajapuram, Undavalli, Bairavakonda, Keezh Mavilangai and Melacheri are his creations only.

Mahendravarman built the Aadhivaragar temple at Mamallapuram. On the northern side of the temple, in the Pallava Grantha letters "Sri Simhavishnu Bothathi Rajan" is inscribed. At the bottom of the inscription the figure of Simhavishnu and those of his two wives are seen.

Just opposite, the figure of Mahendravarman and those of his wives are seen and also inscribed the name "Sri Mahendra Bothathi Rajan". Mahendravarman who erected many cave temples, erected Dharmaraja Mandapam and Kodikal Mandapam at Mamallapuram, Since he built many temples, he got the title "Sethakari" i.e., builder of temples.

He created places like Mahendravadi in his name. He created lakes at Mahendravadi, Mamandur and Dalavanur and developed agriculture.

Mahendravarman was interested in painting and sculpture. We could understand his ability in painting from his title 'Sithrakara Puli' i.e., a tiger of paintings. The painting of the cave temple of Sithanna Vasal is of his period.

He invented thalam a musical instrument and the raga Sangeerana Sathi. The inscription of Kudumiyanmalai explained the music of his time.

Mahendravarman wrote in Sanskrit Mathavilasa Prakasanam, a satire and a drama Bhagavatha Joogiyam. He was hailed as Vichithra Sittan as he patronized music, dance, sculpture, painting and drama.

Narasimhavarman I (A.D 630 -668)

Narasimhavarman I was the son and successor of Mahendravarman I. He had surpassed his father in all respects. His military achievements as well as his contribution to the art and architecture are commendable.

Narasimhavarman I Wars

The copper plate of Kooram say that he defeated often Chera, Chola, Pandiya and the Kalabharas. He fought many wars and he wrote the word, "Victory" on the back of Pulikesi as the fled from the battles of Pariyalam, Manimangalam and Sooramaram.

Vaathapi Kondan

The Pailava-Chalukya conflict had continued during this period Narasimhavarman I had defeated the Chalukyan ruler Pulakesin II at Manimangalam. Then, he marched with his army towards the Chalukyan kingdom. The commander in chief of the Pallava army was Paranjothi. Pulakesin II was defeated and killed in the battle. The Chalukyan capital Vaathapi was set to fire and destroyed. After this victory, Narasimhavarman I had assumed the title Vaathapi Kondan.

The copper plates of Udayendram and Velur Palayam speak of his victory of Badami in A.D. 642. The inscription of Thirukazhukundram celebrates him as the one who captured Badami. Periyapuram says that Paranjothi, the army chief of Narasimhan, captured and destroyed Badami.

Expeditions to Ceylon

Narasimhavarman I had sent two expeditions to Ceylon and helped his friend Manavarman to get back his kingdom. Mahavamsa of Sri Lanka, says that Manavarman, the Prince of Sri Lanka, was driven away by his foe Attathathan and Manavarman took refuge under Narashimhavarman and helped him in the war of Badami. It adds that Narasimhavarman sent his forces to Sri Lanka and conquered Attathathan for the second time and coroneted Manavarman. The copper plate of Kasakudi compared the Sri Lanka victory of narasimhan to that of Rama in Sri Lanka.

Vikramadithan, the son of Pulikesi II says in his Kurnool copper plate that he was defeated by his tree foes i.e., Narasimhan, a close kin and the king of North Pallavandau, Manavarman, and Hiranyavarman. The statue of Badami Ganapathy was brought by Narasimhan after defeating Badami. The victory inscription of Narasimhan is on the rear wall of the temple of Mallikarjuna Devar at Badami which is in a dilapidated condition.

The copper plate of Chinnamanur says that Nedumaran, the Pandiya King, defeated narasimhavarman, the Pallava King at a place called Sankaramangai. But the Kooram plates claim that king Narasimhan conquered the Pandiya King. It is possible that when the Pallava forces invaded Badami, the Pandiya King defeated the border forces of Pallava King at Sankaramangai. But Narasimhan sent Paranjothi, his army chief to Badami and he with a huge force must have conquered the Pandiya King Nedumaran and his allies.

There was a battle for power between Adhithavarman and Vikiramadithan the sons of Pulikesi II, the latter sought the help of his maternal grandfather, Durivnedhan, the king of Ganga. It seems Adhithavarman beseeched the help of Narasimhavarman who might have sent his force and Durvinedah defeated that force. The inscription of Nagari says that Durvinedhan defeated Kuduvetti of Kanji, who was feared as the Ravanan of Kanji and crowned Jayasimhavarman his grandson by his daughter as the king of Chalukya country.

Periyapuram says that Paranjothi, Narasimhavarman's army chief, gave up warfare and became a saivite saint and was called Siruthondar. Nilakanta Sastri and T.V. Mahalingam say that Siruthondar was contemporary of Paramesvaravarman but this view is not acceptable.

Visit of Hiuen Tsang

During the reign of Narasimhavarman I. the Chinese traveler Hiuen-Tsang visited the Pallava capital Kanchi in 640 A.D. He had stayed there for some time and studied in the Buddhist Kadigai. He had given detailed information regarding the greatness of Kanchi in his travelogue. Hiuen Tsang has praised Kanji in his treatise Siyuki Kanchi that the city had spread out 20 miles towards the sea. He also noted that many ships sailed to Sri Lanka.

Appar and Sambandar refer to the famine of Pallavanadu. According to Huan-Tsuang, Narasimhan was tolerant and all regions equally. He further stated that both Buddhist and Samana (Jain) monasteries existed at Kanchipuram but Buddhism was in Shambles and on its decline in

Pandiy Nadu. Narasimhavarman carved cave temples for Lord Siva and Thirumal.

Narasimhavarman I had assumed many titles such as Mamallan, Sribharan, Srimehan, Srinithi and Vadhya Vidyatharan.

Art and Architecture

Narasimhavarman I had continued and improved the work of his father in the sphere of art and architecture. His monolithic temples, rock-cut mandapas and portrait sculptures at Mamallapuram speak the glory of the Pallava art and architecture.

Narasimhavarman, like his father Mahendravarman carved cave temples. The temples he built are more beautiful than his father's. The cave temple at Kudumiyamalai and the Perumal temple at Thirumaiyam near Pudukottai were carved by him.

Narasimhan had the title Mamallan. Since he beautified Kadalmalai it came to be known as Mamallapuram. The Mahishasura Mandabam and the hall for the trinity Gods was built at Mamallapuram by him. The temples he carved out on separate rocks later came to be called the cars of Pandavas. He carved the puranic stories on the rocks. The story of Kannan holding Govardhanagiri as an umbrella and the scene of the Ganga with the penance of Arjuna are the excellent among the sculptures.

Among the forts of Narasimhavarman, the one at Pallavaram near Lalgudi and the other at Kanji were the best ones. He was conferred with the titles such as Mamallan, Sriparan, Srimohan, Srinidhi, Ranajayan, Adhyanthakaman, Ameyamayan and the conqueror of Badami (Badami Kodan). Pulikesi II, Vikkramadityan, Durvinedhan, the king of Ganga and Nedumaran were his contemporaries.

Narasimhan ruled approximately for 40 years successfully and efficiently. He continued his father's services to all the temple though he followed Saivism, as he was tolerant to other religions as well.

End of the Pallava Rule

Narasimhavarman I was succeeded by Mahendravarman II, Parameshwaravarman I, Narasimhavarman ii (Rajasimha) and others. Later, the Beemavarman line of the Pallavas had ruled Kanchi. The most important of them were Nandhivarman, Daudhivarman, Nirupathungan and Aparajithan.

THE PALLAVA ADMINISTRATION

A well-organized administration had existed in the Pallava kingdom. We get a lot of information from the literature and inscriptions to know the various aspects of the Pallava administration. The Pallava kings had introduced several administrative institutions in the Tamil country. Mostly, they had adopted the Mauryan system of administration and suitably modified it. It can be said that generally there was peace and order in the Pallava kingdom due to their efficient administrative system.

Administrative Divisions

The Pallavas had a vast empire. It had extended up to the Nellore district in the North and up to the river South Pennar in the South. On the west, it had extended up to the Western Ghats and on the east up to the Bay of Bengal. It was very difficult to have administrative control over such a vast empire. Therefore, the Pallavas had divided the empire into several administrative units. They were called as Mandalam, Kottam, Nadu and Ur. These administrative divisions may be compared with the modern administrative units, namely province, district, taluk and village.

Mandalam

The biggest unit of the Pallava Empire was Mandalam or Rashtra. It had remained almost an autonomous unit. The Pallava king had appointed a prince or Yuvaraja as the governor of a Mandalam. This was done to have direct central control over the provinces.

Kottam

Each Mandalam was divided into several Kottams or Vishayas. The number of Kottams varied according to the size of the Mandalam. For example, the Thondai Mandalam was divided into twenty-four Kottams. Officials were appointed by the king to administer each Kottam.

Nadu

The next administrative unit was called Nadu. It was bigger than Oor or Village. There were several villages in each Nadu. A council called Naattar was in charge of the administration of Nadu.

Oor

The Oor or village was the smallest unit of the Pallava administration. It was also under the control of the village committees called Sabhas, The village Sabha remained almost autonomous in looking after the day-to-day administration of the village.

Central Government in Pallava

Monarchy

The Pallavas had followed the system of monarchy. The king was the head of the kingdom. Hereditary succession to the throne had been in practice. Normally, the eldest son would be the next ruler. The Pallava kings had considered themselves as the representatives of God. They had assumed many titles like Maharaja, Maharajathi Raja and Dharma Rajathiraja. These titles indicate the imperial power of the Pallava kings. The Pallava kings had also claimed a divine origin.

Council of Ministers

There was an efficient Council of Ministers in the Pallava kingdom. The Ministers were known as Amatyas. They were given titles such as Uthamaseelan, Brahmarajan and Peraraiyan. The Minister carried out the orders of the king. They had also rendered their co-operation and service to the king in all matters of administration. Besides the Council of Ministers, there were many officials to look after each department of the Pallava administration.

Judiciary

There were three types of courts in the Pallava kingdom. The highest judicial organization was called Dharmasena. The king acted as its head. The courts in the towns were known as Adikarnas. The village courts were called as Karnas. The village Sabhas also acted as courts in settling the civil disputes in the villages. Punishments were not cruel and harsh. Fines were also imposed along with punishment.

Army

The Pallavas had possessed a strong and big army. There were four divisions in the army. They were infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots. The cavalry played a vital role in the wars. The Pallavas also had a Navy.

We have already noted that Narasimhavarman I had sent two naval expeditions to Sri Lanka.

Revenue

Land tax was the main source of income to the government. There were also other taxes. The copperplates and inscriptions of the Pallavas mention eighteen kinds of taxes. The number of lakes, tanks, wells, rivers and trees were counted for the purposes of taxation. Taxes were known by different names such as Kaanam, Irai, Paatam, and Poochi. For example, the term Kusakaanam refers to the tax on potters and Than Irai to the tax on weavers. Taxes were also levied on oil-pressers, toddy-tapers, washer men, goldsmiths and cattle-breeders. The chief items of expenditure of the government were the royal court, public works and temple grants. An officer called as Kumaranpandaram managed the royal palace.

Local administration

The existence and the functioning of the local bodies constitute an important aspect of the Pallava administration. Already mention is made about the administrative units called Nadu and Oor. The respective committees had administered these divisions. The committee of Nadu was known as Naattar. They carried out the king's orders and looked after the administration of Nadu.

The Sabha or Committee in each Oor or Village was in charge of the village administration. The members of Oor Sabha were known as Perumakkal. Each Sabha was divided into separate committees called Vaariyams. Each Vaariyams had looked after the administration of temple, irrigation tanks and village gardens. Thus, the village administration was well organized during the Pallava rule. It can be said that the Pallavas had laid the foundation for the future expansion of village administration during the Later Cholas.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN PALLAVAS

The Pallava rule had witnessed a drastic change in the social and economic life of the people. The emergence of the Bakthi Movement had significantly changed their way of life. It was further stimulated by the temple-building activity of the Pallava kings. There was also a remarkable

growth of economy during this period. In general, there was a tremendous change in the society and culture during the Pallava rule.

Social Structure

The society under the Pailavas was chiefly divided into four, namely, Brahmins, Kshatryas, Vaisyas and Sudras. Besides the four-fold division, there were also other sub castes in the society based on their occupation.

The Brahmins occupied the first place in the society. They were the learned and the most respected in the society. They had lived in a separate place called Agraharam. They had recited Vedas and performed pooja in the temples. The Pallava kings had made extensive land grants to them. These land grants were known as Brahmadeyas. The Brahmins helped the kings in performing sacrifices. They had also enjoyed higher position in the government.

The Kshatryas had remained in the next position in the social hierarchy. Generally, they belonged to the ruling class. They had also become warriors. They also gave liberal donations to the temples and Brahmins.

Those who indulged in agriculture and trade were called as Vaisyas. They had contributed to the development of society by establishing Mutts and choultries. They also fed the poor and committed to public welfare and social progress.

The Sudras had occupied the last place in the social structure. They remained low-grade servants. The literature of the Pallava period refers to them as pulayar and chandalas. However, a few of them had become religious saints due to their devotion to God.

Status of women

The women from royal and rich families had enjoyed high status in the society. They were also given property rights. They remained pious and religious and granted liberal donations to the temples and Brahmins. Chastity was their noble virtue. However, other women in the middle and lower strata of the society had to work hard to earn their livelihood. They indulged in spinning, weaving and other similar works. There were also separate dancing girls in the society. They were employed in the temples because of their talent in music and dance.

Food, Dress and Ornaments

Rice was the staple food of the people during the Pallava period. They had also consumed milk, ghee, and curd. Generally, people wore simple dress made of cotton. The rich people were fond of wearing silk garments. The sculptures of this period indicate several types of ornaments used by the people. They include earrings, bangles, necklaces and anklets.

Education

Much importance was given to the Sanskrit education during the Pallava period. The Mutts had remained as important educational centers. The kings and nobles made land grants to them. The temples had also functioned as educational centers. The Buddhist Kadigai in Kanchipuram was a famous educational centre. The Chinese traveler Hiuen-Tsang stayed there and studied. Another Buddhist scholar Dharmapala was also an alumnus of the Kanchi Kadigai. The Jain pallis had also been functioning in Kanchi. Literature, Grammar, Astrology, Medicine and Painting were some of the important subjects taught in these institutions.

Economic Life In Pallavas

Agriculture

The Pallava rule had witnessed a drastic change in the social and economic life of the people. The emergence of the Bakthi Movement had significantly changed their way of life. It was further stimulated by the temple-building activity of the Pallava kings. There was also a remarkable growth of economy during this period. In general, there was a tremendous change in the society and culture during the Pallava rule.

The creation of the Brahmadeya villages had started during the Pallava period. The Brahmins began to settle in these villages and they were exempted from paying taxes. The lands denoted to the temples were called as Devadhan. The number of villages had increased during the Pallava rule. Arid lands were reclaimed and cultivated. The Pallava kings had cut several irrigation tanks. For example, Mahendravarman I cut the Mamandur tank. It was called Chithra Mega Tadakam. A number of such tanks were constructed during the Pallava period and they facilitated to the growth of agriculture. In turn, the economy flourished.

Crafts

The crafts of the Pallava period include weaving, stone cutting, pottery, carpentry, ivory works, etc. Cotton clothes were exported to China, Babylonia and Egypt. Kanchipuram had remained an important centre for silk weaving.

Internal Trade

The increase in production and the expanding economy under the Pallavas led to the growth of trade and commerce. Both internal and external trade flourished during this period. There was a remarkable growth in the internal trade. The regular markets had gradually become urban centers. Various commodities were brought from villages to these markets for sale. There were excellent highways to transport goods from one place to another. The capital city, Kanchipuram had remained an important trading centre. The merchants of the Pallava period had to obtain license to keep shops and they were also asked to pay taxes. The barter system of trade was generally prevalent. Later, the Pallavas had issued gold and silver coins, which had resulted in the expansion of commerce. The merchants had also formed their own organizations called Manigramam.

Foreign Trade

We have already studied about the overseas commerce between South India and the West during the Sangam period. It had declined after the Sangam Age. During the Pallava rule trade with foreign countries had been revived. Spices, cotton textiles, precious stones and medicinal plants were exported to the countries like Java, Sumatra, Kadaram, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, China and Burma. The foreign merchants were known as Nanadesi. Mamallapuram, Vasavasamudram and Mylapore were the important seaports of the Pallavas.

Weights and Measures

Lands were measured with the units called Uzhavu, Nivarthanam or Pattiga. The term Hala also refers to a unit of land. Plough was used for measuring the land.

Paddy and rice were measured by Chudunazhhi. The other units such as Videli, Vidugu and Uzhakku were also used for measurement. Pidi was the smallest unit. The units such as Azhakku, Uzhakku, Uri and Nazhi were used to measure items like milk, ghee and oil. Gold was measured by the units called Kazhanju and Manjaadi.

Religion Under the Pallavas

We have studied that during the post-Sangam period, Buddhism and Jainism began to spread into the Tamil country. They became popular during the Kalabhra rule. After the establishment of the Pallava rule, both Saivism and Vaishnavism had been revived. The Pallava kings had patronized both these religions. They had built temples and made land grants to them. Hence both these religions flourished during the Pallava period. The spread of the Bakthi Movement had provided further stimulus to them.

Bakthi Movement

The Bakthi Movement, which had spread in South India during Sixth and Seventh centuries A.D., made a tremendous impact in the social and cultural life of the people. The term, Bakthi means Devotion to God. True Bakthi was considered as more valuable than mere rites and rituals. During the Pallava period Alwars and Nayanmars preached the cult of Bakthi among the people. There was no caste disparity in the Bakthi Movement. Even those who belonged to low-caste had also become Bakthi Saints. For example, Nandhanaar, Kaalathi Nayanar Thiruppaanazhalvar belonged to lower caste. Yet, they were treated and respected as saints. Therefore, all castes and communities had equally followed Bakthi or devotion to God.

There were two important aims for the Bakthi Movement. They were

1. To meet the challenges posed by Buddhism and Jainism and
2. To spread Saivism and Vaishnavism.

Saivism

The followers of Lord Siva were known as Saivaites. During the Pallava period, the Saiva saints, Nayanmars had preached Saivism. There were sixty-three Nayanmars. The most important among them were Thirunavukkarasar, Thirugnanasambandar, Sundarar, and Manickavasagar. The hymns composed by the first three were called Thevaram, Manickavasagar composed Thiruvagasam. His hymns were popular for devotional recitation. There were also women saints like Karaikkal Ammaiyar. The other important sects of Saivism were Kalamukhas and Pasupathas.

Vaishnavism

The devotees of Lord Vishnu were called Vaishnavaites. Azhavars preached Vaishnavism during the Pallava period. There were twelve Azhavars. Those who lived in the Pallava kingdom were Poigai Azhavar, Pey Azhavar, Bhudhathazhavar and Thirumangai Azhavar. The first three had composed Nanmugan Thiruvanthathi. The other Azhavars like Nammazhavar, Periazhavar and Thirumangai Azhavar also contributed to the growth of Vaishnavism. The only woman among the twelve Azhavars was Andal. She had composed Thiruppavai and Nachiyar Thirumozhi. The hymns of Alvars have been compiled into Nalayira Divya Prabandam.

Saivism and Vaishnavism had become popular among the people due to the spread of the Bakthi Movement. Azhavars and Nayanmars had composed their songs in Tamil and contributed to the growth of Tamil literature.

Culture and Literature under the Pallavas

The contribution of the Pallavas to the cultural development was significant. They had also encouraged the growth of Tamil and Sanskrit literature. The Pallavas had earned name and fame through their magnificent art and architecture. We know that Mamallapuram finds a prominent place in the tourist map of the world. Even today, their temples and sculptures stand testimony to the cultural achievements of the Pallavas.

Growth of Literature

The Pallavas had remained great patrons of both Sanskrit and Tamil languages. Their capital Kanchi had remained a great centre for Sanskrit learning. The Pallava monarch, Mahendravarman I himself wrote the Maththavilasa Prakasanam and Bagavatha Ajikkiyam in Sanskrit. Dhandin was a great Sanskrit scholar who lived during the Pallava rule. He wrote Kavyadharsha. Another Sanskrit scholar Bharavi had visited Kanchipuram during the Pallava period.

Tamil literature had also developed during this period. We have studied that the Nayanmars and Alvars had composed their hymns in Tamil. Their contribution to the growth of Tamil literature during the Pallava period was significant. Their devotional songs constitute important religious literature of the Pallava period. Another Tamil scholar, Perundevanar wrote Bharathavenba during this period. Kalladanar had

composed a grammar book called Kalladam. Another work Nandikalambakam describes the rule of Nandivarman III but we do not know its author. Thus, the Pallava rule had witnessed the growth of both Sanskrit and Tamil literature.

Art and Architecture under the Pallavas

The glory of the Pallavas still remains in their contribution to the art and architecture. They were the pioneers of South Indian art and architecture. They had introduced the stone architecture in the Tamil country. Their contributions are still extant because granite was used for building temples and carving sculptures. The Pallava architecture had evolved stage by stage from the period of Mahendravarman I.

We can broadly classify the Pallava architecture as

1. Rock-cut temples.
2. Monolithic Rathas and Sculptural Mandapas and
3. Structural temples.

Rock-cut temples

We call the Pallava rock-cut temples as Mahendravarman style. He carved temples out of the rocks and thus they were known as rock cut temples. It was really an innovation in the sphere of art because he did not use any other building materials. Therefore, he was hailed as Vichitra Chitta. In these rock cut temples, we find the sanctum sanctorum and on the walls of it beautiful sculptures. The pillars are carved in such a way that they stand on the heads of lions. The rock cut temples of Mahendravarman I are found at various places of Tamil Nadu. The most important among them are Pallavaram, Mamandur, Mahendravadi, Vallam and Thalavanur.

Monolithic Rathas

The monolithic rathas and sculptural mandapas constitute the Mamalla style of architecture. The Pallava king, Narasimhavarman I was known as Mamalla. He had converted the port of Mamallapuram as a beautiful city of art and architecture. The Monolithic rathas at Mamallapuram are now called as Pancha Pandava Rathas. Each ratha or chariot was carved out of single rock and hence the name monolithic. These rathas depict the five different forms of temple architecture.

The mandapas or halls at Mamallapuram had also belonged to the Mamalla period. Each mandapa was carved out of single rock. On the side-walls of these mandapas, beautiful sculptures depicting Puranic stories had been carved. The scene depicting the Goddess Durga's attack on Mahishasura is seen in the Mahishasura Mardhini Mandapa. Such beautiful sculptures have also been carved in Thirumoorthi and Varaha mandapas.

The most important among the Mamalla style of architecture is the Open Art Gallery. Several miniature sculptures have been carved beautifully on the wall of a big rock. The fall of the River Gange from the head of God Siva and the Arjuna's penance are notable among them. The images of deer, monkey, cat, mouse and other animals are beautifully carved on this huge rock.

Structural Temples

So far, we have studied about the rock-cut temples and sculptural mandapas. From the reign of Rajasimha, the construction of structural temples had started. These temple structures were built with the use of granite slabs. Hence, they are known as structural temples.

We can broadly classify the Pallava structural temples into

1. Rajasimha Style and
2. Nandivarman Style

The earliest among the Pallava structural temples were the Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchipuram and the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram. These temples were built by using sandstones. The Vimana or tower of the Kailasanatha temple is shaped like hilly comb. This temple is considered as the Crown of Pallava architecture. This temple is also called as Rajasimheswaram. We also find beautiful sculptures in this temple. The sculptures depicting the scenes of the satirical drama Maththavilasa Prakasanam have been engraved in this temple. The Shore temple at Mamallapuram is also filled with numerous sculptures. This temple attracts tourists from all over the world.

The successors of Rajasimha had also built several structural temples at various places. Nandivarman II had built the Vaikunda Perumal Temple at Kanchipuram. The temples built by the later Pallava rulers are found at places like Kanchipuram, Panamalai, Kooram, Thiruthani and Gudimallam

Fine Arts

The Pallava kings had also patronized fine arts. The Kudumianmalai and Thirumayam music inscriptions show their interest in music. Yaazhi, Mridhangam and Murasu were some of the musical instruments of the Pallava period. Both Mahendravarman I and Narasimhavarman I had remained experts in music. The temple sculptures of the Pallava period reveal that the art of dance was popular in those days. The paintings at Chittannavasal illustrate the nature of Pallava painting. Mahendravarman I was known as Chittirakkarapuli. He had also composed the book, Thatchina Chitram. We have already seen that he was the author of the satirical drama Maththavilasam Prakasanam. Thus, music, dance, paintings and drama were popular during the Pallava rule. In this way, the Pallavas had contributed to the growth of culture.