

**HISTORY**  
**PRE-MODERN India**  
**ANCIENT TAMILAKAM: 1** (Video: 11)

- South India witnessed drastic change in later megalithic period – 300 BCE
- Emergence of **Chera – Chola – Pandya Kingdoms: Moovendars**. They had – 3 important port cities & 3 capitals.
- By 400 BCE **traders, Jainas, Buddhist** and others came into contact with South India.
- Utharapatha (North India) & Dakshinapatha (Deccan, South India, Krishna -Godavari region)
- As a result of **trade contact**, south India become strengthened.
- The people of the south exposed gold, pearls, precious stones to the north.
- People of late megalithic culture came into know about rice cultivation through the trading relations with Northern people - By 200 BCE the megalithic people moved from hilly areas to fertile river areas - agriculture was practices - surplus production which led to the development of trading activities – emergence of towns.
  
- Sources that give us idea on the connection between Dakshinapatha & Utharapatha:
  - The earlier **Sangam text**- are familiar with the **Ganges, the Son, Pataliputra (the capital of Magadha)**.
  - The **Ashokan inscription mentions – Chola, Pandya, Keralaputhras and Satyaputras (not identified) and Tamraparnis (people of Sri Lanka)**. Iron technology & trade relations contributed to the formation of 3 states by forest clearance cultivation.

**TRADE WITH ROMAN EMPIRE**

- Trade between the **coastal parts of South India and the Roman empire**, especially Egypt.
- **Tyndis, Muziris kaveripattinam** – major port centres which had trade with Romans.
- The first phase of urbanism in south India is generally associated with the period c.300 BCE – 300CE.
- Roman sources mention many towns and cities.
- Sangam poems describe the **urban centres** of early historical south India like kaveripattinam/ Puhar.

**MAJOR CITIES**

**Vanji/ Kuravur/ Karur**

- The **capital of Chera** near Tiruchirappalli.
- Almost 11 **Sangam poets** came from this place.
- **Centre of crafts & trade** – made **jewellery**.
- Pieces of **Roman amphorae** – Roman artifacts.
- **Roman coins** have been found in larger quantities at other places – **Vellavur**.
- The discovery of **hundreds of copper coins** with **Chera symbols** such as the **bow and arrow**, as well as **several silver portraits coins**, indicate that a Chera mint may have been located here. (Pandya - fish)

## E ▶ ENTRI

### Muziris

- Another main port in the [Chera](#).
- *The Periplus* speaks of [cargo – laden ships landing here from Arabia and Egypt](#).
- Pliny on the other hand states that - due to [the danger of pirates](#), ships had to anchor some distance away. (Existence of pirates indicate the progress of trading activities)
- The *Vienna Papyrus* – records an agreement concerning the [transportation of goods between 2 merchants – one based on Alexandria & the other in Muchiri](#).

### Madurai

- The [capital of Pandya kingdom](#).
- Description of Madurai in the *Maduraikkanchi*, which is a part of *Pathupattu* - a large, [grand city, enclosed by the walls on three sides and Vaigai rivers on the fourth](#).
- There is mention of its palaces, temples, large houses and two markets.
- Literary sources describe Madurai as a major [centre of crafts](#) such as the making of [gold ornaments, ivory work, inlay work, chank cutting, bangle making](#).
- There are references to its traders' selling pearls and precious stones.
- The *Arthashastra* mention Madurai as a [centre of fine cotton textiles](#).
- [Coins](#) were excavated.
- *Alagarmalai inscription* – [Tamil Brahmi script – donations / endowments on temples and charity works of merchants](#) are been referred. (Indication of wealthy traders)

### Korkai

- Important [Pandya port](#).
- Celebrated for its [pearls](#) in Sangam poems and Greek accounts near Tirunelveli.
- *The Arthashastra* – refers to the [pearl fisheries](#) of Pandya country.
- There were [potsherds inscribed with the Brahmi letters](#) belonging to c.200 BCE – 200 CE

### Uraiyur

- [Capital of the early Cholas](#) – Tiruchirappalli.
- Sangam poems describe it as a [great fortified city with magnificent buildings](#).
- It is interesting to note that the poems also mention [burial grounds full of stones](#) on its outskirts a description strongly reminiscent of megaliths.
- The [fine textiles](#) of Uraiyur are mention in Tamil and [Greco – Roman texts](#).

### Kaveripattinam

- Puhar/ Pumpuhar / Kaverippumpattinam – premier chola port.
- Classical accounts refer – as *Khaveris / Camara*.
- An entire Sangam collection – *the Pattinappalai* – devoted to a description of this place.
- There are references to its [two bustling markets](#) laid out between the two sectors of the city, [guarded by officers of the king](#), as to its [inhabitants who spoke different languages](#). Kaveripattinam as a flourished center.
- Excavation at this site shows the [development in 300 BCE](#).
- From a [small village port](#) with a simple [dockyard](#) made of [wood and poles](#) to a large city.

## ENTRI

### Vanagiri

- Remains of an **artificial channel** that drew water from the Kaveri into a **reservoir** for irrigation purposes probably built in the early centuries.
- There are large number of megalithic sites in the Krishna and Kaveri valleys especially along the major trade routes.

### Kodumanal

- On the bank of **river Kaveri**.
- It can be identified with the ancient city of Kodumanal, famed in Sangam texts for **gem and jewellery** work.
- It is a **habitation cum burial site** and dates from the 300BCE TO 300 CE.
- **Two Tamil Brahmi inscriptions from Mangulam** near Madurai mention the **merchant guilds / nikama of Vellarai**.
- One of these indicates that members of this guild collectively contributed towards carving of stone beds for Jaina ascetics in one of the caves. The **high status** enjoyed by members of merchant guilds is indicated by the title **Kaviti** (denote merchants) given to Antai Assutan, a member of the same guild.
- **Kaviti, was an honorific title bestowed by kings on minsters, nobles, and merchants**.
- It is even more noteworthy that this guilds member seems to have been the superintendent of pearls in the Pandya administration.

## Transmarine Contacts

- Trade contact with Red Sea.
- Exported forest goods like teak, ivory.
- Since 500 BCE there is Indo – Roman trade - Plenty of **roam coin hoards**.
- **Kerala exported forest goods to Red Sea & Greco Roman world**.
- Roman coins from Kerala during the reign of Augustus 100 BCE to Constantias 400 BCE.
- Exports: **aromatics, pepper, ginger, cardamom, spices, animal skin, ivory, teak, cotton, sandal, gems**.
- Imports: **gold, silver, copper, tin, lead**.
- Main ports in Kerala: **Tyndis, Muziris, Bakare, Nelkynda**.
- Merchants worked as a **cooperation-based networks**.
- People maintained **internal economic commercial exchange within Tamilakam**.
- **R. Champaka Lakshmi** argues that - the **early historical urbanism** of the far south was **not induced by deep-rooted socio-economic** change but, was **stimulated by Indo roman trade, inter regional trade** (largely coastal trade between ganga valley, Andhra and the Tamil regions).