

**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 **roman 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).