

# Unit 4

## Ancient Cities of Tamilagam



### Learning Objectives

- To learn about the greatness of the towns of ancient Tamilagam
- To know about Poompuhar, Madurai and Kanchi
- To understand the ancient kingdoms of Tamilagam
- To gain knowledge about the crafts, markets, manufactures, maritime trade, education and water management in ancient Tamilagam



[It is a Government Higher Secondary School. Reciprocating the greetings of the students of VI Std, the Social Science Teacher signals them to get seated]

**Teacher:** Wow! You look pretty in your new dress, Tamilini.

**Students:** Ma'm, today is her birthday.

**Teacher:** Wish you a happy birthday Tamilini. Many more happy returns of the day.

**Tamilini:** Thank you, ma'm.

**Teacher:** Ok children. Shall we start today's class from Tamilini's birthday.

**Students:** How come ma'm? What is the connection between Tamilini's birthday and today's class?



**Teacher:** There is. I shall come to that later. Let us stand up and wish her first.

**Students:** Happy birthday, Tamil.

**Tamilini:** Thank you all.

**Teacher:** Tamil, Is Chennai your home town?

**Tamilini:** No ma'm. My home town is Kadavur near Karur.

**Teacher:** Good. Do you have the habit of visiting your home town?

**Tamilini:** Yes ma'm. Every summer I visit my home town.

**Teacher:** Excellent! Can you tell me the difference between Kadavur and Chennai?

**Tamilini:** Kadavur is a village. Chennai is a city.

**Teacher:** Excellent!

**Teacher:** Can you tell what were the earliest planned cities of ancient India?

**Students:** Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, ma'm.

**Teacher:** Yes. Very good children. Today we are going to study about the ancient towns of Tamilagam. They are Poompuhar, Madurai, Kanchi. Shall we start?

**Students:** Ok ma'm.

**Teacher:** See we have started today's lesson with Tamilini's birthday.

**Students:** Yes mam.



Mesopotamian civilisation is the earliest civilisation in the world. It is 6500 years old.

**Teacher:** Like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in ancient India, there were famous towns in ancient Tamilagam too. Madurai, Kanchi and Poompuhar are prominent among them.

Tamil literature, accounts of foreign travellers and archaeological finds provide us information about the ancient towns of Tamilagam.

## Poompuhar

Poompuhar is one of the oldest towns in ancient Tamilagam. This is the place where well known characters of Silappathikaram, Kovalan and Kannagi lived. It was also a port town along the Bay of Bengal. The ports were established for facilitating maritime trade. Even in times past, countries began to export their surplus products and import the scarce commodities by sea. Poompuhar is one such historic port that emerged in the wake of increasing maritime trade. It is a coastal town near the present-day Mayiladuthurai and is located where the river Cauvery drains into the sea.

## Poompuhar Port

Poompuhar was also known by names such as Puhar and Kaveripoompattinam. It served as the port of the early Chola kingdom. One of the popular Sangam Literature, *Pattinappaalai* and Tamil epics, *Silappathikaram* and *Manimegalai*, have references to the brisk sea-borne trade that took place in the port city, Puhar.



*Silappathikaram*, in particular, speaks about the greatness of Poompuhar.





The lead female character of *Silappathikaram* is Kannagi. Her father is Maanaigan. Sea traders are known by the name Maanaigan. The male character Kovalan's father is Maasathuvan. Maasathuvan means a big trader. It is clear from the text that Poompuhar was a place where big traders and sea traders had settled down.

Numerous merchants from foreign countries such as Greece and Rome landed at Poompuhar. Due to busy and continuous trade, many of them stayed on indefinitely in Poompuhar. There are evidences of foreigner's settlements in the town. People speaking many languages inhabited Poompuhar in its glorious days. As loading and unloading of ships took some months, the foreign traders began to interact with the local people during that period. This enabled the natives to learn foreign languages for communication. Similarly, the foreigners also learnt Tamil to communicate with the natives. This contact facilitated not only exchange of goods but also languages and ideas resulting in cultural blending.

The traders of Poompuhar were known for their honesty and integrity. They sold

goods at legitimate prices. *Pattinappaalai* states that "selling any commodity at a higher price was considered bad".

The author of *Pattinappaalai*, Kadiyalur Uruttirangannanar, belonged to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (BCE). This is indicative of Puhar's antiquity. Horses were imported by sea. Pepper was procured through the land route. Gold that came from Vadamalai was polished and exported to the overseas countries. Sandal from Western Ghats, pearls from southern sea, corals from eastern sea and food items from Eelam were imported.

Poompuhar had been built differently from other towns. Each social group had a separate settlement. Streets were broad and straight, dotted with well-designed houses. There was also a dockyard.

We can learn about the life of the people of Puhar by reading *Pattinappaalai* and "Puhar Kandam" of *Silappathikaram*.

Puhar was a busy port upto 200 AD (CE). It might have been either washed away by sea or destroyed by big shore waves. The remains of that destruction can still be seen in the present Poompuhar town.



## Madurai

Madurai has been one of the oldest cities in India. Its antiquity can be understood from the sobriquet "Sangam Valartha Nagaram" it has earned.

Pandyas, the Cholas and later the Kalabras ruled Madurai in the ancient period. During medieval times, later Cholas and later Pandyas followed by the Nayaks ruled this historic town. This has resulted in cultural blending. Trade flourished and evidence for this has been unearthed in archaeological excavation done in Keezhadi near Madurai.

Madurai is proudly associated with tamil sangam (academies), which worked for the promotion of Tamil language. Forty-nine poets were associated with the



last Sangam. Ahil, fragrant wood, was brought from Port Thondi to Madurai. King Solomon of ancient Israel imported pearls from Uvari near the Pandyan port, Korkai.

A mint of Roman coins was present at Madurai. The coins of other countries were also minted at Madurai, which is a proof for the glory of Madurai.

The fame of Madurai is attested by the accounts of the Greek historian Megasthenese. Chanakya, Chandragupta's minister, makes a mention of Madurai in his book, *Arthashastra*.

In the moat around the town, tunnels had been constructed in such a way that even elephants could comfortably enter.

## Kanchi

A place of learning is called school. Several schools were established in great numbers for the first time in Kancheepuram. Jains studied in *Jainapalli*, and Buddhists studied in Viharas.

The greatness of Kanchi as an educational centre can be understood from the fact that the Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang who studied at Nalanda

### Thoonga Nagaram



Madurai had Naalangadi and Allangadi.

Naalangadi – Day Market.

Allangadi – Evening Market.

Madurai is known as Thoonga Nagaram (the city that never sleeps). Madurai was a safe place where women purchased things from Allangadi without any fear.



**Hieun Tsang**



University visited Kanchi 'Kadigai' to pursue his further studies.

Poet Kalidasa says, "Kanchi is the best of the towns". Tamil poet saint Thirunavukarasar praises Kanchi as "Kalviyil Karaiillatha Kanchi".

Hieun Tsang remarked that Kanchi can be counted as one among the seven sacred places like Bodh Gaya and Sanchi. Kanchi is the oldest town in Thondai Nadu. Scholars like Dharmabalar, Jothibalar, Sumathi and Bodhi Dharmar were born in Kanchi.

Kanchi is also known as the temples city. The famous temple of great architectural beauty, Kailasanathar temple, was built by later Pallava king Rajasimha at Kanchi. During the Pallava period, a large number of cave temples were built. The Buddhist monk Manimegalai spent the last part of her life at Kanchi speaks highly of that town.

Water management played an important role in the agrarian society

of those times. Hundreds of lakes were created for storing water around the town of Kanchi. These lakes were well connected with canals. During the later period, Kanchi came to be known as the district of lakes. Water management skills of the ancient Tamils can be understood from the construction of Kallanai in the Chola country and the lakes and canals in Kanchi.

Apart from Poompohar, Madurai and Kanchi, there were other towns too in ancient Tamilagam. Korkai, Vanchi, Thondi, Uraiyur, Musiri, Karuvur, Mamallapuram, Thanjai, Thagadoor and Kaayal are some of them. By conducting archaeological research, more information can be gathered about these places.

Thank you students. With this, we shall complete this lesson now.

- Poompohar was a port.
- Madurai was a trading town.
- Kanchi was an educational centre.



*Tamil sayings represent the uniqueness of each ancient Tamil kingdom*

- Chola Nadu - sorudaithu (rice in abundance).
- Pandya Nadu - muthudaithu (pearls in abundance).
- Chera Nadu - vezhamudaithu (elephants in abundance).
- Thondai Nadu - Saandrorudaithu (scholars in abundance)

- Chera Nadu** - Comprised Malayalam-speaking regions and Tamil districts of Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Karur, Kanniyakumari and Some parts of present Kerala.
- Chola Nadu** - Present-day Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagai, Trichy and Pudukkottai districts.
- Pandya Nadu** - Erstwhile composite Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai, Thuthukkudi and Tirunelveli districts
- Thondai Nadu** - Present-day Kancheepuram, Dharmapuri, Tiruvallur, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore and northern parts of Villupuram districts.

## Summary

- ❖ Madurai, Kanchi and Poompuhar are famous towns in ancient Tamilagam.
- ❖ We know about the life of the people of Poompuhar by reading Silappathikaram and Pattinappaalai.
- ❖ Madurai is associated with three sangams.
- ❖ Kanchi was an educational centre. Many great scholars were associated with it.
- ❖ Kanchi known as a city of temples, was also known for water management.

## A-Z GLOSSARY

1	Maritime Trade	-	trade by sea
2	Foreigner	-	a person who comes from another country
3	Blending	-	the mixings
4	Integrity	-	the quality of being honest
5	Legitimate prices	-	reasonable prices
6	Antiquity	-	a long time ago
7	Sobriquet	-	nick name
8	Mint	-	A place where coins are made
9	Moat	-	a deep and wide trench filled with water surrounding a palace



## Exercises

### I. Choose the correct answer



- Which of the following region has a city more than 6500 years old?
  - Iraq
  - Indus Valley
  - Tamilagam
  - Thondaimandalam
- Which one of the following is a Tamil city?
  - Iraq
  - Harappa
  - Mohenjo-Daro
  - Kancheepuram
- Which city is not related to the Bay of Bengal?
  - Poompuhar
  - Thondi
  - Korkai
  - Kancheepuram
- Water management system of Tamils are known from
  - Kallanai
  - Tanks in Kancheepuram
  - Prakirama Pandyan Tank
  - River Cauvery

a. is correct    b. is correct  
c. is correct    d. a and b are correct
- Which is not the oldest city among the following ones?
  - Madurai
  - Kancheepuram
  - Poompuhar
  - Chennai

- Which city is related to Keezhadi excavation?
  - Madurai
  - Kancheepuram
  - Poompuhar
  - Harappa

### II. Tick the appropriate answer. Match the Statement with the Reason

- Statement:* Goods were imported and exported from the city Poompuhar.  
*Reason:* Bay of Bengal was suitable for trading with neighbouring countries.

  - Statement is correct, but reason is wrong.
  - Statement and its reason are correct.
  - Statement is wrong, but reason is correct.
  - Both are wrong.
- Thirunavukkarasar said "kalviyil karaiillatha". This statement refers to the city Kancheepuram.
  - Hieun Tsang said, "Kancheepuram is one among the seven-sacred places of India".
  - Kalidasa said, "Kancheepuram is the best city among the cities"
    - only a is correct
    - only b is correct
    - only c is correct
    - All are correct
- Find out the correct statement
  - Naalangadi - Night shop
  - Allangdi - Day-time shop
  - Ancient Roman coin factory was found at Poompuhar.
  - Pearls were exported from Uvari near Korkai.



4. Find out the wrong statement.
  - a. Megasthenes has mentioned Madurai in his account.
  - b. Hien Tsang came to the Tamil city of Kancheepuram.
  - c. Kovalan and Kannagi lived in Kancheepuram.
  - d. Iraq is mentioned in *Pattinapalai*.
5. Find out the correct pair
  - a. Koodal Nagar - Poompuhar
  - b. Thoonga Nagaram - Harappa
  - c. City of Education - Madurai
  - d. City of Temples - Kancheepuram
6. Find out the wrong pair
  - a. Vadamalai - Gold
  - b. Western Ghats - Sandal
  - c. Southern Sea - Pearls
  - d. Eastern Sea - Ahil

### III. Fill in the blanks

1. Kanchi Kailasanathar temple was built by \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is known as the city of temples.
3. Masathuvan means \_\_\_\_\_.

### IV. State True or False

1. Cultural relationship with the outside world developed in Poompuhar because of its trade relationship with it.
2. Women also purchased from Allangadi of Madurai without fear.
3. Many rock cut temples were made during the Pallava period.
4. Bodhi Dharmar belonged to Kancheepuram.

### V. Answer in one word

1. What do you know about the term 'export'?
2. Mention the epic and the sangam poem you read in this lesson.
3. Which is the oldest city in Thondai Nadu?
4. Point out any one difference between a village and a city.
5. Which civilisation is associated with the city Lothal?
6. Name the oldest civilization of the world

### VI. Answer the following

1. Write a brief note on ancient cities of India.
2. Mention the ancient cities of Tamil Nadu.
3. Discuss the sources available to know about Tamil cities.
4. Write about the kings who ruled Madurai.
5. Mention the other names of Madurai.
6. What is the difference between Naalangadi and Allangadi.
7. Name the scholars who were born at Kancheepuram.
8. Which is known as city of lakes? Why?

### VII. HOTS

1. Write a short note on Iraq.
2. Write a paragraph about the city Poompuhar with special reference to trade.
3. Write about the accounts given by scholars about Kanchi.
4. City of temples. Give short notes.
5. Kancheepuram was famous for education. Prove this statement.

### VIII. Student Activity

1. Make an album about Keezhadi excavations.
2. Poompuhar was famous for trading activities. Discuss.
3. Collect the pictures of Pallava temple architecture.
4. Prepare a booklet describing the famous lakes of Tamil Nadu.
5. Make a booklet about the famous cities of Tamil Nadu.
6. Go to library and find out the places of importance in your district.

### IX. Answer Grid

Poompuhar was located on which river bank? <b>Ans:</b>	Name the ancient city which had Tamil Sangam. <b>Ans:</b>	Name a Sangam literary work. <b>Ans:</b>
Which Greek historian gave accounts about the Pandya kingdom? <b>Ans:</b>	To which Tamil kingdom did the southern districts of Tamil Nadu belong to during the Sangam Age? <b>Ans:</b>	Name the Chinese traveller who stayed and studied in Nalanda University. <b>Ans:</b>
Thirunavukarasar mentioned Kanchi as _____. <b>Ans:</b>	What is the name of evening market during the Sangam Age? <b>Ans:</b>	Name the temple built by Pallava king Rajasimha at Kanchi. <b>Ans:</b>
Which district is known as the district of lakes? <b>Ans:</b>	What is trade? <b>Ans:</b>	Name a port located on the shore of Bay of Bengal. <b>Ans:</b>

### X. Life Skill

1. Make a handout that shows the importance of the place where you live.

### XI. Map Work

Mark the following places in a South India map.

- a. Chennai
- b. Madurai
- c. Kancheepuram
- d. Poompuhar
- e. Arabian Sea
- f. Bay of Bengal
- g. Indian Ocean

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