

6th Social Science Lesson 4 Notes in English

4] Ancient Cities of Tamilagam



Introduction:

- Harappa and MohenjoDaro in ancient India, there were famous towns in ancient Tamilagam too.
- Madurai, Kanchi and Poempuhar are prominent among them.
- Tamil literature, accounts of foreign travellers and archaeological finds provide us information about the ancient towns of Tamilagam.

Poempuhar:

- Poempuhar is one of the oldest towns in ancient Tamilagam. This is the place where well known characters of **Silapathikaram, Kovalan and Kannagi** lived.

- It was also a port town along the Bay of Bengal. The ports were established for facilitating maritime trade.
- 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. Massathuvan 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 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 2nd century 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 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.

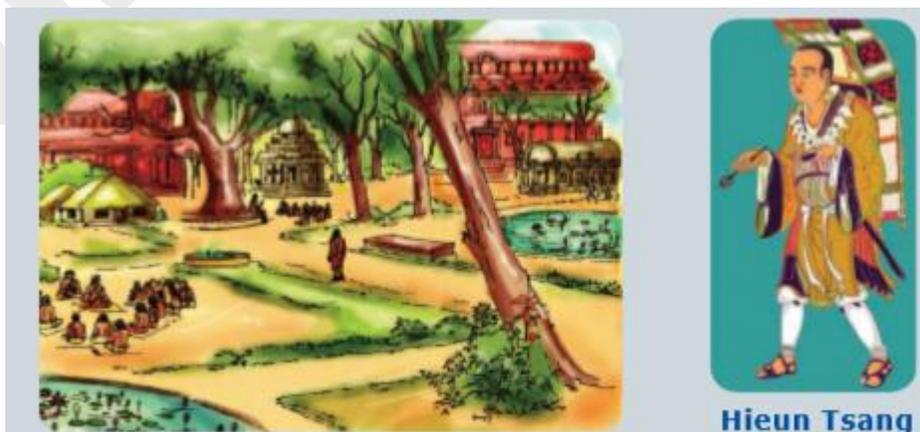
- **Forty-nine poets were associated with the last Sangam.**
- Ahil, fragrant wood, was brought from Port Thondi to Madurai.
- King Solomon of ancient Israel imported pearls from Uvari near the Pandyan port, Korkai.
- A mint of Roman coins was present at Madurai.
- The coins of other countries were also 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 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 Budh 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 temple town.
- 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 Poompuhar, Madurai and Kanchi, there were other towns too in ancient Tamilagam.
- **Korkai, Vanchi, Thondi, Uraiyyur, Musiri, Karuvur, Mamallapuram, Thanjai, Thagadoor and Kaayal** are some of them. By conducting archaeological research, more information can be gathered about these places.

More to Know:

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

Toonga 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.

Others Importance of Three ancient towns of Tamilagam:

- Poompuhar 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.

Glossary:

- Maritime Trade - trade by sea

- Foreigner - a person who comes from another country
- Blending - the mixings
- Integrity - the quality of being honest
- Legitimate prices - reasonable prices
- Antiquity - a long time ago
- Sobriquet - nick name
- Mint - A place where coins are made
- Moat - a deep and wide trench filled with water surrounding a palace