



The Sangam Age: Kingdoms and The Social and Economic Conditions



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EXERCISES

Question 1.

Name the oldest language of South India. OR Name the oldest Dravidian language.

Answer:

Tamil.

Question 2.

What is known as Sangam literature?

Answer:

The word 'Sangam' means 'Assembly'. According to early tradition, three Sangams or Assemblies of literary men were held at Madurai, the center of great literary activity in the Tamil Country. It is generally accepted that these assemblies lasted from about first century BC to the fifth century AD. Many poets, scholars and bards who gathered there, produced a large volume of excellent Tamil poetry. These literary compositions were collected and compiled into books called the Sangam literature.

Question 3.

Name any two literary sources to reconstruct history of the Sangam age.

Answer:

There is no clear evidence regarding the literary works of the first Sangam. 'Tolkappiyam', written by Tolkappiyar, a disciple of Agastya, is a standard treatise on grammar and it belongs historically to the Second Sangam. Tiruvalluvar, the famous Tamil poet who attended the Third Sangam, wrote 'KuraP'. The literary works of the third Sangam constituted the most important part of the Sangam literature and they are the main source of information about the life and traditions of the Tamil people.

Question 4.

Who were 'Tirukurral' ?

Answer:

Tiruvalluvar.

Question 5.

Mention any two archaeological sources to reconstruct history of the Sangam age.

Answer:

1. The Megaliths,
2. Inscriptions in the Brahmi script.





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Question 6.

Why are graves of people in the megalithic phase in South India's history called 'Megalithis'?

Answer:

The megalithic culture is mostly known for its burials. The unplanned portions of the peninsula were inhabited by people, whose graves are called 'megaliths', because they were encircled by big pieces of stone.

Question 7.

How do Megaliths suggest that people of Southern India in those times had become familiar with iron?

Answer:

The megaliths contain not only skeletons of people who were buried. Iron tools, arrows, pottery and fragments of rice and other grains have been found, besides the skeletons of the persons buried in these graves. Arrow heads, spearheads and sickles, all made of iron, do show the transition from Copper and Bronze Age Culture to the Iron Age.

Question 8.

Why did Arundhati, a character in Sanskrit literature, become a model for South Indian Women in the Sangam age?

Answer:

Arundhati, for instance, had become a model for women in the South, because she personified the ideal of Chastity.

Question 9.

Name the two agricultural products during the Sangam Age.

Answer:

The two agricultural products during the Sangam Age were jack-fruit, pepper and turmeric.

Question 10.

Name the two prominent ports on India's Western Coast during the Sangam age.

Answer:

The ports of Nelcynda (Kottayam) and Naura (Canhanore) were among the most prominent ports on India's Western Coast.

Question 11.

Name the two deities worshiped by people in the Sangam age.

Answer:

Vishnu and Murugan.





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Question 12.

Name the two items of trade referred to in the Tamil literature of the Sangam age.

Answer:

The Tamil literature refers to items of trade like spices, sandalwood, pearls, sea products, semi-precious stones and textiles of various types.

Question 13.

Mention the two views held by scholars regarding the origin of the Dravidians.

Answer:

Scholars hold various theories regarding the origin of the Dravidians. Some are of the view that they were foreigners, probably belonging to the Mediterranean race, who entered through the north-western passes and settled in India, about the beginning of the Neolithic Age. Other scholars believe that they were the original inhabitants of India.

Question 14.

Name any two famous epics of Tamil literature.

Answer:

'Silappadikaram' and 'Manimekalai' are two famous epics of Tamil literature.

Question 15.

How does the inscription of Kharvela, the ruler of Kalinga, enable us to reconstruct history of the Sangam age?

Answer:

The Inscription of Kharvela (the ruler of Kalinga) says he "destroyed a Confederacy of Tamil states (Tramirdesh Sanghatam)." The same Inscription records that Kharvela brought hundreds of pearls from Pandya kingdom to Kalinga. He also brought horses, elephants, jewels and rubies to his kingdom.

Question 16.

Hero-stone reminds us of an important event. What is the event?

Answer:

Some Tamil poems affirm that there is only one God worthy of being worshiped. The God is the Hero-Stone recalling the fall of a brave warrior on the battle field. A stone was fixed at the place where some big warrior fell dead. Since he died, he became a martyr. Death in battle was held to lead the soldier straight to heaven. The hero-stone gave strength to the people in general and the soldiers in particular.

Question 17.

Mention any two Chera rulers whose names figure in the Sangam literature.

Answer:

Udaiyanjeral (who flourished during the second century AD), Nedunjeral and Senguttuvan.





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Question 18.

Who was the greatest among the earliest Chola kings?

Answer:

Karikal was the greatest among their earliest Chola kings.

Question 19.

What did the Chera region produce in large quantities in the Sangam age?

Answer:

The Chera region was well-known for its buffaloes, jack- fruit, pepper and turmeric.

STRUCTURED QUESTIONS

Question 1.

There are many literary sources to reconstruct history of the Sangam age. In this context explain the literary importance of Tirukurral.

Answer:

Tirukurral: It was written by Tiruvalluvar. It consist of 1330 couplets, dealing with three main topics namely— Aram (Dharma), Porul (Artha) and libam (Kama). It is considered a sacred book by the Tamils and has been translated into many Indian and European languages.

Question 2.

How can the Megaliths help us to reconstruct events of the Sangam age ?

Answer:

Megaliths:

The megalithic culture is mostly known for its burials. The upland portions of the peninsula were inhabited by people, whose graves are called 'Megaliths', because they were encircled by big pieces of stone.

Question 3.

Describe the social conditions that Sangam literature depicts with reference to:

(a) The Castes

(b) The Ruling Class and the Class of Warriors

Answer:

(a)

The Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas appear as regular castes or Varnas in the Sangam texts. An ideal king was one who never caused an injury to the Brahmins. Many Brahmins were celebrated poets, and as such they were handsomely rewarded by the rulers. Karikal is said to have given one poet 1,600,000 gold coins, but we consider this comment exaggerated. Besides gold, the Brahmins got cash and land grants from the king and noble families.

(b)

The ruling class was called 'arasar'. The members of this class had marriage relations with the 'Vellalas', the propertied people owning the bulk of the land. War body and

income from trade and agricultural produce enabled the king to maintain professional warriors. The occasions for war were many. According to the Sangam poets, the refusal





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(b)

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income from trade and agricultural produce enabled the king to maintain professional warriors. The occasions for war were many. According to the Sangam poets, the refusal of one king to give his daughter in marriage to another was a frequent cause of war. In Sangam poetry 'heroes are glorified' and wars and cattle raids very often mentioned.

Question 4.

Describe the social conditions that Sangam literature suggests with reference to:

- (a) Institution of Marriage
- (b) Position of Women

Answer:

(a)

The 'Tolkappiyam', written by Tolkappiyar, states that marriage was an important religious ceremony, accompanied by many rituals. Naturally, the Aryan culture had now much impact on the institution of marriage. Earlier the Tamils had a relatively simple conception of marriage. They regarded it as "the natural coming together of men and women, mainly due to their physical difference."

(b)

The joint family system characterised the society. Few women got good education, their status in society was not equal to that of men. They did not have the right to inherit property. There were ascetics also among women, following the Jain and the Buddhist tradition. The worship of Kannagi or Pattini suggests that the vow of chastity was regarded as the greatest of feminine virtues. In fact, the images of Pattini Devi were being preserved and worshiped by Tamils in their temples until very recently.





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Question 5.

The Sangam literature gives a complete and true picture of economic conditions of the age. Describe economic life of the people with reference to:

(a) Agriculture (b) Trade

Answer:

(a)

Agriculture was the main occupation of a large section of the people. Land was held by individuals as well as by the state. The land was fertile and there was plenty of grain, meat and fish. The Chola Country was watered by the river Kaveri. About this country there was a saying that "the space in which an elephant did lie down produced enough grain to feed seven persons." The Chera region was well-known for its buffaloes, jack-fruit, pepper and turmeric. The rich did not plough the land themselves. They hired laborers, called pariyars, for this job. The pariyars belonged to the lowest social class and skinned dead animals also.

(b)

The rulers had big income from trade transactions also. A large number of crafts and occupations are referred in Sangam literature. The epic 'Manimekalai' was written by a grain merchant of Madurai. The Tamil literature refers to items of trade like spices, sandalwood, pearls, sea products, semi-precious stones and textiles of various types. We also have the information that foreigners (yavanas) visited the coastal towns for trade. Metal lamps in different shapes and bottles of wine figure prominently among the articles of trade brought to India by the foreigners.

Question 6.

With reference to economic conditions during the Sangam Age, explain the following:

(a) Significance of Occupational Guilds

(b) Socio-economic Inequalities in the Sangam Age.

Answer:

(a)

Guilds had become an important institution in the economy of the Sangam age. The guilds defined rules of work and controlled the quality and prices of the finished product. The guilds also functioned as bankers and financiers. Guilds also carried out welfare activities and services of many kinds.

(b)

The Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas appear as regular castes or Varnas in the Sangam texts. An ideal king was one who never caused an injury to the Brahmins. Many Brahmins were celebrated poets, and as such they were handsomely rewarded by the rulers. Karikela is said to have given one poet 1,600,000 gold coins, but we consider this comment exaggerated. Besides gold, the Brahmins got cash and land grants from the king and noble families.

