

= South India =

South India is the area encompassing the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh , Karnataka , Kerala , Tamil Nadu and Telangana as well as the union territories of Andaman and Nicobar , Lakshadweep and Puducherry , occupying 19 @. @ 31 % of India 's area (635 @, @ 780 km2 or 245 @, @ 480 sq mi) . Covering the southern part of the peninsular Deccan Plateau , South India is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east , the Arabian Sea in the west and the Indian Ocean in the south . The geography of the region is diverse with two mountain ranges - the Western and Eastern Ghats , bordering the plateau heartland . Godavari , Krishna , Kaveri , Tungabhadra and Vaigai rivers are important non @-@ perennial sources of water . Bangalore , Chennai , Hyderabad , Coimbatore and Kochi are the largest urban areas .

Majority of the people in South India speak one of the four major Dravidian languages : Telugu , Tamil , Kannada and Malayalam . During its history , a number of dynastic kingdoms ruled over parts of South India whose invasions across southern and southeastern Asia impacted the history and culture in those regions . Major dynasties that were established in South India include the Cheras , Cholas , Pandyas , Pallavas , Satavahanas , Chalukyas , Rashtrakutas and Vijayanagara . European countries entered India through Kerala and the region was colonised by Britain and other nations .

After experiencing fluctuations in the decades immediately after Indian independence , the economies of South Indian states have registered higher than national average growth over the past three decades . While South Indian states have improved in some socio @-@ economic metrics , poverty continues to affect the region much like the rest of the country , although it has considerably decreased over the years . HDI in southern states is high and the economy has undergone growth at a faster rate than most northern states . Literacy rates in southern states is higher than the national average with approximately 80 % of the population capable of reading and writing . The fertility rate in South India is 1 @. @ 9 , the lowest of all regions in India .

= = Etymology = =

South India also known as Peninsular India has been known by several other names . The term " Deccan " referring to the area covered by the Deccan Plateau that covers most of peninsular India excluding the coastal areas is an anglicised form of the word Prakrit dakkhin derived from the Sanskrit word dakshina meaning south . Carnatic derived from " Karn?d " or " Karun?d " meaning high country has also been associated with South India .

= = History = =

= = = Ancient era = = =

Carbon dating on ash mounds associated with Neolithic cultures in South India date back to 8000 BCE . Artefacts such as ground stone axes , and minor copper objects have been found in the region . Towards the beginning of 1000 BCE , iron technology spread through the region ; however , there does not appear to be a fully developed Bronze Age preceding the Iron Age in South India . The region was in the middle of a trade route that extended from Muziris to Arikamedu linking the Mediterranean and East Asia . Trade with Phoenicians , Romans , Greeks , Arabs , Syrians , Jews and Chinese began from the Sangam period (c . 3rd century BC to c . 4th century AD) . The region was part of the ancient Silk Road connecting the Asian continent in the East and the West .

Several dynasties such as the Cheras of Karuvur , the Pandyas of Madurai , the Cholas of Thanjavur , the Satavahanas of Amaravati , the Pallavas of Kanchi , the Kadambas of Banavasi , the Western Gangas of Kolar , the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta , the Chalukyas of Badami , the Hoysalas of Belur and the Kakatiyas of Orugallu ruled over the region from 6th century B.C. to 14th century A.D. The Vijayanagara Empire , founded in 14th century A.D. was the last Indian dynasty

that ruled over the region . After repeated invasions from the Sultanate of Delhi and the fall of Vijayanagara empire in 1646 , the region was ruled by Deccan Sultanates , polygars and Nayak governors of Vijayanagara empire who declared independence .

= = = Colonial era = = =

The Europeans arrived in the 15th century and by the middle of the 18th century , the French and the British were involved in a protracted struggle for military control over South India . After the defeat of Tipu Sultan in the Fourth Anglo @-@ Mysore War in 1799 and the end of the Vellore Mutiny in 1806 , the British consolidated their power over much of present @-@ day South India with the exception of French Pondichéry . The British Empire took control of the region from the British East India Company in 1857 . During the British colonial rule , the region was divided into the Madras Presidency , Hyderabad state , Mysore , Travancore , Kochi , Vizianagaram and a number of other minor princely states . The region played a major role in the Indian independence movement ; of the 72 delegates who participated in the first session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in December 1885 , 22 hailed from South India .

= = = Post Independence = = =

After the independence of India in 1947 , the region was organised into four states : Madras State , Mysore State , Hyderabad State and Travancore @-@ Cochin . The States Reorganisation Act of 1956 reorganised the states on linguistic lines resulting in the creation of the new states of Andhra Pradesh , Karnataka , Kerala and Tamil Nadu . As a result of this Act , Madras State retained its name and Kanyakumari district was added to it from the state of Travancore @-@ Cochin . The state was subsequently renamed Tamil Nadu in 1968 . Andhra Pradesh was created through the merger of Andhra State with the Telugu @-@ speaking districts of the Hyderabad State in 1956 . Kerala emerged from the merger of Malabar district and the Kasaragod taluk of South Canara districts of the Madras State with Travancore @-@ Cochin . Mysore State was re @-@ organised with the addition of districts of Bellary and South Canara (excluding Kasaragod talukNote 1) and the Kollegal taluk of Coimbatore district from the Madras State , the districts of Belgaum , Bijapur , North Canara and Dharwad from the Bombay State , the Kannada @-@ majority districts of Bidar , Raichur and Gulbarga from the Hyderabad State and the province of Coorg . Mysore State was renamed as Karnataka in 1973 . The Union territory of Puducherry was created in 1954 comprising the previous French enclaves of Pondicherry , Karaikal , Yanam and Mahé . The Laccadive Islands , which were divided between South Canara and Malabar districts of Madras State , were united and organised into the union territory of Lakshadweep . Telangana was created on 2 June 2014 by bifurcating Andhra Pradesh and it comprises ten districts of the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh .

^ Taluk is a smaller administrative division than a district

= = Geography = =

South India is a peninsula in the shape of an inverted triangle bound by the Arabian Sea on the west , by the Bay of Bengal on the east and Vindhya and Satpura ranges on the north . The Narmada river flows westwards in the depression between the Vindhya and Satpura ranges which define the northern spur of the Deccan plateau . The Western Ghats run parallel along the western coast and the narrow strip of land between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea forms the Konkan region . The Western Ghats continue south until Kanyakumari . The Eastern Ghats run parallel along the eastern coast and the strip of land between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal forms the Coromandel region . Both the ranges meet at the Nilgiri mountains . The Nilgiris run in a crescent approximately along the borders of Tamil Nadu with northern Kerala and Karnataka , encompassing the Palakkad and Wayanad hills and the Sathyamangalam ranges , extending on to the relatively low @-@ lying hills of the Eastern Ghats on the western portion of the Tamil Nadu ? Andhra Pradesh border forming the Tirupati and Annamalai hills .

The low lying coral islands of Lakshadweep are situated off the south @-@ western coast of India . The Andaman and Nicobar islands lie far off the eastern coast of India . The Palk Strait and the chain of low sandbars and islands known as Rama 's Bridge separate the region from Sri Lanka , which lies off the south @-@ eastern coast . The southernmost tip of mainland India is at Kanyakumari where the Indian Ocean meets the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea .

The Deccan plateau is the elevated region bound by the mountain ranges . The plateau rises to 100 metres (330 ft) in the north and to more than 1 kilometre (0 @.@ 62 mi) in the south , forming a raised triangle within the downward @-@ pointing triangle of the Indian subcontinent 's coastline . It also slopes gently from West to East resulting in major rivers arising in the Western Ghats and flowing east into the Bay of Bengal . The volcanic basalt beds of the Deccan were laid down in the massive Deccan Traps eruption , which occurred towards the end of the Cretaceous period between 67 and 66 million years ago . Layer after layer was formed by the volcanic activity that lasted 30 @,@ 000 years and when the volcanoes became extinct , they left a region of highlands with typically vast stretches of flat areas on top like a table . The plateau is watered by east flowing rivers Godavari , Krishna , Kaveri and Vaigai . The major tributaries include Pennar , Tungabhadra , Bhavani and Thamirabarani .

= = Climate = =

The region has a tropical climate and depends on monsoons for rainfall . According to the Köppen climate classification , it has a non @-@ arid climate with minimum mean temperatures of 18 ° C (64 ° F) . The most humid is the tropical monsoon climate characterised by moderate to high year @-@ round temperatures and seasonal heavy rainfall above 2 @,@ 000 mm (79 in) per year . The tropical climate is experienced in a strip of south @-@ western lowlands abutting the Malabar Coast , the Western Ghats and the islands of Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar are also subject to this climate .

The tropical wet and dry climate , drier than areas with a tropical monsoon climate prevails over most of inland peninsular region except for a semi arid rain shadow east of the Western Ghats . Winter and early summer are long and dry periods with temperatures averaging above 18 ° C (64 ° F) , summer is exceedingly hot with temperatures in low @-@ lying areas exceeding 50 ° C (122 ° F) and the rainy season lasts from June to September with annual rainfall averaging between 750 and 1 @,@ 500 mm (30 and 59 in) across the region . Once the dry northeast monsoon begins in September , most precipitation in India falls in Tamil Nadu , leaving other states comparatively dry . The hot semi @-@ arid climate predominates the land east of the Western Ghats and the Cardamom Hills . The region , which includes Karnataka , inland Tamil Nadu and western Andhra Pradesh , gets between 400 and 750 millimetres (15 @.@ 7 and 29 @.@ 5 in) of rainfall annually with hot summers and dry winters with temperatures around 20 ? 24 ° C (68 ? 75 ° F) . The months between March and May are hot and dry with mean monthly temperatures hover around 32 ° C (90 ° F) , with 320 millimetres (13 in) precipitation and without artificial irrigation , this region is not suitable for agriculture .

The south ? west Monsoon from June to September accounts for most of the rainfall in the region . The Arabian Sea branch of the south @-@ west monsoon hits the Western Ghats along the coastal state of Kerala and moves northwards along the Konkan coast with precipitation on coastal areas , west of the Western Ghats . The lofty Western Ghats prevent the winds from reaching the Deccan Plateau - hence the leeward region (the region that deprived of winds) receives very little rainfall . The Bay of Bengal branch of south @-@ west monsoon heads toward north east India , picking up moisture from the Bay of Bengal . The Coramandel coast does not receive much rainfall from the south @-@ west monsoon due to the shape of the land . Tamil Nadu and southeast Andhra Pradesh receive rains from the north ? east Monsoon . The north @-@ east monsoon take place from November to early March when the surface high @-@ pressure system is strongest . The North Indian Ocean tropical cyclones occur throughout the year in Bay of Bengal and Arabian sea bringing devastating winds and heavy rainfall .

= = Flora and fauna = =

There is a wide diversity of plants and animals in South India , resulting from its varied climates and geography . Deciduous forests are found along the Western Ghats while tropical dry forests and scrub lands are common in the interior Deccan plateau . The southern Western Ghats have rainforests located at high altitudes called the South Western Ghats montane rain forests and the Malabar Coast moist forests are found on the coastal plains . The Western Ghats is one of the eight hottest biodiversity hotspots in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site .

Important ecological regions of South India are the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve , located at the conjunction of the borders of Karnataka , Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the Nilgiri Hills and the Anamalai Hills in the Western Ghats . Bird sanctuaries including Vedanthangal , Ranganathittu , Kumarakom , Neelapattu and Pulicat are home to numerous migratory and local birds . Lakshadweep has been declared a bird sanctuary by the Wildlife Institute of India . Other protected ecological sites include the mangrove forests of Pichavaram in Tamil Nadu , the backwaters of Pulicat lake in Tamil Nadu and Vembanad , Ashtamudi , Paravur and Kayamkulam lakes in Kerala . The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve covers an area of 10 @, @ 500 km ² of ocean , islands and the adjoining coastline including coral reefs , salt marshes and mangroves . It is home to Endangered aquatic species including dolphins , dugongs , whales and sea cucumbers .

The region is home to one of the largest populations of endangered Indian elephant and Bengal Tiger in India . Elephant populations are found in eight fragmented sites in South India ; in northern Karnataka , along the Western Ghats , in Bhadra ? Malnad , in Brahmagiri ? Nilgiris ? Eastern Ghats , in Nilambur ? Silent Valley ? Coimbatore , in Anamalai ? Parambikulam , in Periyar ? Srivilliputhur and Agasthyamalai The region is home to one @-@ third of the tiger population and more than half of the elephant population of India . There are 14 Project Tiger reserves and 11 Project Elephant reserves in the region . Other threatened and endangered species found in the region include grizzled giant squirrel , grey slender loris , sloth bear , nilgiri tahr , nilgiri langur , lion @-@ tailed macaque , and Indian leopard .

= = Demographics = =

As per the 2011 census of India , the estimated population of South India is 252 million , around one fifth of the total population of India . The region 's total fertility rate (TFR) was less than the population replacement level of 2 @. @ 1 for all states with Kerala and Tamil Nadu having the lowest TFRs in India at 1 @. @ 7 . As a result , the proportion of the population of South India to India 's total population has declined from 1981 to 2011 . The population density of the region is approximately 463 . Scheduled Castes and Tribes form 18 % of the population of the region . Agriculture is the major employer in the region with 47 @. @ 5 % of the population is involved in agrarian activities . About 60 % of the population lives in permanent housing structures . 67 @. @ 8 % of South India has access to tap water with wells and springs forming other major sources of water supply .

After experiencing fluctuations in the decades immediately after the independence of India , the economies of South Indian states have registered growth higher than the national average over the past three decades . While South Indian states have improved in some of the socio @-@ economic metrics , poverty continues to affect the region as it does the rest of the country , although it has considerably decreased over the years . Basis the 2011 census , HDI in the southern states is high and the economy has grown at a faster rate than most northern states .

As per the 2011 census , the average literacy rate in South India is approximately 80 % , considerably higher than the Indian national average of 74 % with Kerala having the highest literacy rate of 93 @. @ 91 % . South India has the highest sex ratio with Kerala and Tamil Nadu being the top two states . The South Indian states rank amongst the top 10 in economic freedom , life expectancy , access to drinking water , house ownership and TV ownership . Poverty rate is at 19 % while that in the other Indian states is at 38 % . The per capita income is ? 19 @, @ 531 (US \$ 290) , which is more than double of the other Indian states (? 8 @, @ 951 (US \$ 130)) . Of the three

demographic related targets of the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations expected to be achieved by 2015 , Kerala and Tamil Nadu achieved the goals related to improvement of maternal health and of reducing infant mortality and child mortality by 2009 .

== Languages ==

The largest linguistic group in South India is the Dravidian family of languages , a family of approximately 73 languages The major languages spoken include Tamil , Telugu , Kannada and Malayalam . Tulu is spoken by about 1 @. @ 5 million people in coastal Kerala and Karnataka and Konkani , an Indo @-@ Aryan language , is spoken by half a million people in the Konkan coast . English is also widely spoken in urban areas of South India . Urdu is spoken by around 12 million Muslims in southern India . Tamil , Telugu , Kannada , Malayalam and Konkani are listed amongst the 22 official languages of India as per the Official Languages Act (1963) . Tamil was the first language to be granted classical language status by the Government of India in 2004 . Other major languages declared classical were Kannada (in 2008) , Telugu (in 2008) and Malayalam (in 2013)

== Religion ==

Hinduism is the major religion with about 80 % of the population adhering to it . About 11 % of the population follow Islam and 8 % follow Christianity . Evidence of prehistoric religion in South India comes from scattered Mesolithic rock paintings depicting dances and rituals in Stone Age sites such as the Kupgal petroglyphs of eastern Karnataka . Hinduism , often regarded as the oldest religion in the world , traces its roots to prehistoric times in India . The main spiritual traditions of South India include both Shaivite and Vaishnavite branches of Hinduism , although Buddhist and Jain philosophies had been influential several centuries earlier . Ayyavazhi is spread significantly across the southern parts of South India . Islam was introduced to South India in the early 7th century by Arab traders in Malabar Coast of Kerala and spread during the rule of Deccan Sultanates from 17th to 18th century and the Muslims in Kerala of Arab descent are called Jonaka Mappila . Christianity was introduced to South India by Thomas the Apostle , who visited Muziris in Kerala in 52 CE and baptised Kerala 's Jewish settlements . Kerala is also home to one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world who are supposed to have arrived in the Malabar coast during the reign of King Solomon .

== Economy ==

The economy of South India after the independence of the nation conformed to a socialist framework , with strict governmental control over private sector participation , foreign trade and foreign direct investment . Through 1960 to 1990 , the South Indian economies experienced mixed economic growth . In the 1960s , Kerala achieved above average economic growth while Andhra Pradesh 's economy declined during this period . Kerala experienced an economic decline in the 1970s while the economies of Tamil Nadu , Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka consistently exceeded national average growth rates after 1970 due to reform @-@ oriented economic policies compared to other Indian states . As of 2013 ? 14 , the total Gross domestic product of the region is ? 27 @. @ 1 trillion (US \$ 400 billion) . Tamil Nadu has the second highest GDP and is the second most industrialised state in the country after Maharashtra . As of March 2015 , there are 109 operational Special Economic Zones in South India , which is about 60 % of the country 's total .

Over 48 % of South India 's population is engaged in agriculture , which is largely dependent on seasonal monsoons . Some of the main crops cultivated in South India include paddy , sorghum , pearl millet , pulses , sugarcane , cotton , chilli and ragi . Areca , coffee , tea , rubber and spices are cultivated on the hilly regions . The staple food is rice ; the delta regions of Godavari , Krishna and Kaveri are amongst the top rice producing areas in the country . Frequent droughts have left farmers debt @-@ ridden , forcing them to sell their livestock and sometimes to commit suicide . The region

accounts for 92 % of the total Coffee production in India . South India is also a major producer of cotton , tea , rubber , turmeric , mangoes and spices . Other major agriculture related produce include silk and poultry .

The other major industry is textiles with the region being home to nearly 60 % of the fibre textile mills in India . Bangalore , Chennai , Hyderabad , Coimbatore and Thiruvananthapuram are amongst the major IT hubs of India and Bangalore is also known as the Silicon Valley of India . The growth of information technology (IT) hubs in the region have spurred economic growth and attracted foreign investments and job seekers from other parts of the country . Software exports from South India grossed over ₹ 640 billion (US \$ 9 @. @ 5 billion) in fiscal 2005 - 06 . Chennai , known as the " Detroit of Asia " , accounts for about 35 % of India 's overall automotive components and automobile output . The region supplies two @-@ thirds of India 's requirements of motors and pumps and is one of the largest exporters of jewellery , wet grinders and auto components .

Tourism contributes significantly to the GDP of the region with four states - Tamil Nadu , Karnataka , Andhra Pradesh and Telangana - among the top 10 states for tourist arrivals and accounting for more than 50 % of domestic tourist visits .

= = Subdivisions = =

South India consists of the five southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh , Telangana , Karnataka , Kerala and Tamil Nadu as well as the union territories of Puducherry , Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar . Puducherry and the five states have an elected state government each , while the Lakshadweep and Andaman islands are centrally administered by the President of India . Each sub @-@ region is further divided into districts . Each state is headed by a Governor , who is a direct appointee of the President of India , while the Chief Minister is the elected head of the state government and represents the state 's ruling party or coalition .

= = = States = = =

^ Note 1 Andhra Pradesh was divided into two states , Telangana and a residual Andhra Pradesh on 2 June 2014 . Hyderabad , located entirely within the borders of Telangana , is to serve as joint capital for both states for a period of time not exceeding ten years .

= = = Union territories = = =

= = Administration = =

South India elects 132 members to the Lok Sabha accounting for roughly one @-@ fourth of the total strength . The region has an allocation of 58 seats in Rajya Sabha out of the total 245 . Each state is headed by a Governor , who is a direct appointee of the President of India ; the Chief Minister is the elected head of the state government and represents the ruling party or coalition . Tamil Nadu , Kerala and Puducherry follow unicameral legislature while Andhra Pradesh , Karnataka and Telangana follow bicameral legislature .

State legislatures elect members for terms of five years . States with bicameral legislatures have an upper house (Legislative Council) with members not more than one @-@ third the size of the Assembly . Governors may suspend or dissolve assemblies and can administer when no party is able to form a government . Each state is organised into a number of districts , which are further subdivided into revenue divisions and taluks (or tehsils) for administration . Local bodies govern respective cities , towns and villages with each electing a mayor , municipal chairman and panchayat chairman respectively to head the same .

= = Politics = =

Politics in South India is characterised by a mix of regional and national political parties . Justice Party and Swaraj Party were the two major parties in the erstwhile Madras Presidency . The Justice Party eventually lost the 1937 elections to the Indian National Congress and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari became the Chief Minister of the Madras Presidency . During the 1920s and 1930s , the Self @-@ Respect Movement movement emerged in the Madras Presidency spearheaded by Theagaroya Chetty and E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker (commonly known as Periyar) . In 1944 Periyar , who had started the Self @-@ Respect Movement transformed the party into a social organisation , renaming the party Dravidar Kazhagam , and withdrew from electoral politics . The initial aim was the secession of Dravida Nadu from the rest of India on independence . After Independence , C. N. Annadurai , a follower of Periyar formed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in 1948 . The Anti @-@ Hindi agitations of Tamil Nadu led to the rise of Dravidian parties which formed its first government in 1967 in Tamil Nadu . In 1972 , a split in the DMK resulted in the formation of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam led by M. G. Ramachandran . Dravidian parties continue to dominate Tamil Nadu electoral politics ; the national parties usually aligned as junior partners to the major Dravidian parties , AIADMK and DMK .

Indian National Congress dominated the political scene in Tamil Nadu in 1950s and 1960s under the leadership of K. Kamaraj , who led the party after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and ensured the selection of Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi . Congress continues to be a major party in Andhra Pradesh , Karnataka and Kerala . The party ruled with minimal opposition for 30 years in Andhra Pradesh before the formation of Telugu Desam Party by Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao in 1982 . Two prominent party systems in Kerala are the United Democratic Front , led by the Indian National Congress and the Left Democratic Front , led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) . For the past fifty years , these two coalitions have been alternately in power and E. M. S. Namboodiripad , the first elected chief minister of Kerala in 1957 is credited as the leader of the first democratically elected communist government in the world . Bharatiya Janata Party and Janata Dal are significant parties in Karnataka .

C. Rajagopalachari , the first Indian Governor General of India post independence , was from South India . The region has produced six Indian Presidents namely Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan , V. V. Giri , Neelam Sanjiva Reddy , R. Venkataraman , K. R. Narayanan and APJ Abdul Kalam . Prime Ministers P. V. Narasimha Rao and H. D. Deve Gowda were from the region .

= = Culture and heritage = =

= = = Clothing = = =

South Indian women traditionally wear a sari , a garment that consists of a drape varying from 5 yards (4 @.@ 6 m) to 9 yards (8 @.@ 2 m) in length and 2 feet (0 @.@ 61 m) to 4 feet (1 @.@ 2 m) in breadth that is typically wrapped around the waist , with one end draped over the shoulder , baring the midriff . Ancient Tamil poetry such as the Silappadhikaram describes women in exquisite drapery or sari . The sari is to be wrapped around the waist , with the loose end of the drape to be worn over the shoulder , baring the midriff as according to Indian philosophy , the navel is considered as the source of life and creativity . Madisar is a typical style worn by Brahmin ladies from Tamil Nadu . Women wear colourful silk sarees on special occasions such as marriages .

The men wear a dhoti , a 4 @.@ 5 metres (15 ft) long , white rectangular piece of non @-@ stitched cloth often bordered in brightly coloured stripes . It is usually wrapped around the waist and the legs and knotted at the waist . A colourful lungi with typical batik patterns is the most common form of male attire in the countryside . People in urban areas generally wear tailored clothing and western dress is popular in urban areas . Western @-@ style school uniforms are worn by both boys and girls in schools even in rural areas .

= = = Cuisine = = =

Rice is the staple diet , while fish is an integral component of coastal South Indian meals . Coconut and spices are used extensively in South Indian cuisine . The region has a rich cuisine involving both traditional non @-@ vegetarian and vegetarian dishes comprising rice , legumes and lentils . Its distinct aroma and flavour is achieved by the blending of flavourings and spices including curry leaves , mustard seeds , coriander , ginger , garlic , chili , pepper , cinnamon , cloves , green cardamom , cumin , nutmeg , coconut and rosewater . The traditional way of eating a meal involves being seated on the floor , having the food served on a banana leaf and using clean fingers of the right hand to take the food into the mouth . After the meal , the fingers are washed ; the easily degradable banana leaf is discarded or becomes fodder for cattle . Eating on banana leaves is a custom thousands of years old , imparts a unique flavor to the food and is considered healthy . Idli , dosa , uthappam , appam , pongal and paniyaram are popular dishes for breakfast . Rice is served with sambar , rasam and poriyal for lunch . Andhra cuisine is characterised by pickles and spicy curries . Chettinad cuisine is famous for non @-@ vegetarian items and Hyderabadi cuisine is popular for its biryani .

= = = Arts = = =

The traditional music of South India is known as Carnatic music , which includes rhythmic and structured music by composers like Purandara Dasa , Kanaka Dasa , Tyagayya , Annamacharya , Bhakta Ramadasu , Muthuswami Dikshitar , Shyama Shastri , Kshetrappa , Mysore Vasudevachar and Swathi Thirunal . The main instrument that is used in South Indian Hindu temples is the nadaswaram , a reed instrument played along with thavil , a type of drum instrument to create an ensemble . The motion picture industry has emerged as an important platform in South India over the years , portraying the cultural changes , trends , aspirations and developments experienced by its people . South India is home to several distinct dance forms such as Bharatanatyam , Kathakali , Kerala Nattam , Koodiyattam , Kuchipudi , Margamkali , Mohiniaattam , Oppana , Ottamthullal , Theyyam , Vilasini Natyam and Yakshagana . The dance , clothing and sculptures of South India exemplify the beauty of the body and motherhood .

= = = Cinema = = =

Films in regional languages are prevalent ; this includes Kannada cinema (Karnataka) , Malayalam cinema (Kerala) , Tamil cinema (Tamil Nadu) and Telugu cinema (Andhra Pradesh) . The first silent film in South India , Keechaka Vadham , was made by R. Nataraja Mudaliar in 1916 . In South India , the first Tamil talkie , Kalidas , was released on 31 October 1931 , barely seven months after India 's first talking picture Alam Ara Mudaliar also established South India 's first film studio in Madras . Swamikannu Vincent built the first cinema of South India in Coimbatore and introduced the concept of " tent cinema " , the first of whose kind was established in Madras and was known as " Edison 's Grand Cinemamegaphone " . Filmmakers K Balachandrar , Balu Mahendra , Bharathiraja and Mani Ratnam in Tamil cinema , Adoor Gopalakrishnan , Shaji N. Karun , John Abraham and G. Aravindan in Malayalam cinema , and K. N. T. Sastry and B. Narsing Rao in Telugu cinema produced realistic parallel cinema throughout the 1970s , Cinema has also exerted its influence on politics ; prominent film personalities like C N Annadurai , M G Ramachandran , M Karunanidhi , N. T. Rama Rao and Jayalalithaa have become Chief Ministers . As of 2014 , South Indian film industry contribute to 53 % of the total films produced in India .

= = = Literature = = =

South India has an independent literary tradition dating back over 2500 years ago . The first known literature of South India is the poetic Sangam literature , written in Tamil 2500 to 2100 years ago . The literature was composed in three successive poetic assemblies known as Tamil Sangams that were held in the ancient times on a now vanished continent far to the south of India . This literature includes the oldest grammar treatise Tholkappiyam and epics Silappatikaram and Manimekalai

written in Tamil . References to Kannada literature appear from fourth century CE . Telugu literature adopted a form of Prakrit which in course of development became the immediate ancestor of Telugu . Distinct Malayalam literature came later in the 13th century .

= = = Architecture = = =

South India has two distinct styles of rock architecture , the Dravidian style of Tamil Nadu and the Vesara style of Karnataka . The temples considered of porches or mantapas preceding the door leading to the sanctum , gate @-@ pyramids or gopurams , which are the principal features in the quadrangular enclosures that surround the more notable temples and pillared halls used for many purposes and are the invariable accompaniments of these temples . Besides these , a South Indian temple typically has a tank called the Kalyani or Pushkarni . The gopuram is a monumental tower , usually ornate at the entrance of any temple in Southern India . This forms a prominent feature of koils , Hindu temples of the Dravidian style . They are topped by the kalasam , a spherical stone finial , and function as gateways through the walls that surround the temple complex . The origins of the gopuram can be traced back to early structures of the Pallavas and by the twelfth century , under the Pandya rulers , these gateways became a dominant feature of a temple 's outer appearance , eventually overshadowing the inner sanctuary which became obscured from view by the colossal size of the gopuram .

= = Transport = =

= = = Road = = =

South India has an extensive road network with 20 @,@ 573 km (12 @,@ 783 mi) of National Highways and 46 @,@ 813 km (29 @,@ 088 mi) of State Highways . The Golden Quadrilateral connects Chennai in the region with Mumbai via Bangalore and Kolkata via Vishakapatnam . Bus services are provided by state run transport corporations namely Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation , Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation , Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation , Telangana State Road Transport Corporation , Kerala State Road Transport Corporation and Puducherry Road Transport Corporation .

= = = Rail = = =

The Great Southern India Railway Company was founded in England in 1853 and registered in 1859 . Construction of track in Madras Presidency began in 1859 and the 80 miles (130 km) link from Trichinopoly to Negapatnam was opened in 1861 . The Carnatic Railway Company was founded in 1864 and opened a Madras @-@ Arakkonam @-@ Conjeevaram line in 1865 . The Great Southern India Railway was subsequently merged with the Carnatic Railway in 1874 to form the South Indian Railway Company . In 1880 , the Great Indian Peninsula Railway established by the British , built a railway network radiating inward from Madras . In 1879 , the Madras Railway constructed a railway line from Royapuram to Bangalore and the Maharaja of Mysore established Mysore State Railway to carryout extension from Bangalore to Mysore . Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway was founded on 1 January 1908 by merging the Madras Railway and the Southern Mahratta Railway .

On 14 April 1951 , the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway , the South Indian Railway and the Mysore State Railway were merged to form the Southern Railway , the first zone of Indian Railways . The South Central zone was created on 2 October 1966 as the ninth zone of Indian Railways and the South Western zone was created on 1 April 2003 . Most of the region is covered by the three zones with small portions of coasts covered by East Coast Railway and Konkan Railway . Metro rail is operated by Namma Metro in Bangalore , Chennai Metro in Chennai and Hyderabad Metro in Hyderabad . Chennai MRTS provides suburban rail services in Chennai and was the first elevated

railway line in India . The Nilgiri Mountain Railway is a UNESCO World Heritage site .

= = = Air = = =

In March 1930 , a discussion initiated by pilot G. Vlasto led to the founding of Madras Flying Club which became a pioneer in pilot training South India . On 15 October 1932 , Indian aviator J. R. D. Tata flew a Puss Moth aircraft carrying mail from Karachi to Bombay (currently Mumbai) and the aircraft continued to Madras (currently Chennai) piloted by Neville Vincent , a former Royal Air Force pilot and friend of Tata .

There are 9 international airports , 2 customs airports , 15 domestic airports and 11 air bases in South India . Chennai airport serves as the regional headquarters of the Airports Authority of India for the southern region of India comprising the states of Andhra Pradesh , Karnataka , Kerala , Tamil Nadu and Telangana and the union territories of Puducherry and Lakshadweep . Bangalore , Chennai , Hyderabad and Kochi are amongst the top 10 busiest airports in the country .

The Southern Air Command of Indian Air Force is headquartered at Thiruvananthapuram and the Training Command is headquartered at Bangalore . The Indian Air Force operates eleven air bases in Southern India including two in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands . The Indian Navy operates airbases at Kochi , Arakkonam , Uchipuli , Vizag , Campbell Bay and Diglipur in the region .

^ Restricted international airport

= = = Water = = =

A total of 89 ports are situated along the coast : Tamil Nadu (15) , Karnataka (10) , Kerala (17) , Andhra Pradesh (12) , Lakshadweep (10) , Pondicherry (2) and Andaman & Nicobar (23) . Major ports include Chennai , Visakhapatnam , Mangalore , Tuticorin , Ennore and Kochi .

The Kerala backwaters are a network of interconnected canals , rivers , lakes and inlets , a labyrinthine system formed by more than 900 km of waterways . In the midst of this landscape , there are a number of towns and cities , which serve as the starting and end points of transportation services and backwater cruises .

The Eastern Naval Command and Southern Naval Command of the Indian Navy are headquartered at Visakhapatnam and Kochi respectively . Indian Navy has its major operational bases in Visakhapatnam , Chennai , Kochi , Karwar and Kavaratti in the region .