Regional History (History of Tirunelveli)

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December - 2025

Unit – I

Geographical and Historical Overview: Location, Topography, and Climate, Early History and Significance of Name Nellai, Settlement patterns, Boundaries – Cultural Heritage: Archeological Evidences, overview of cultural practices and traditions, Significant River and natural Resources, The role of the Tamirabarani River in the region's development

Objectives
- Tirunelveli (Nellai) lies in southern Tamil Nadu,
- The name *Nellai* denotes its ancient agrarian character,
- The region has rich archaeological remains and living cultural traditions
- The Tamirabarani River is the lifeline of Tirunelveli,

The District of Tinnevelly occupies the eastern half of the extreme southern end of the Indian peninsula and lies between 8°5′ and 9°45′ North Latitude and 77°20′ and 78°20′ East Longitude. It is roughly triangular in shape, bounded by the Western Ghats on the west and the sea on the east and south, while Madura District lies to the north. Covering an area of about 5,176 square miles, the district includes a wide variety of physical features such as black cotton plains, sandy coastal tracts, red gravel soils, rocky ridges, and undulating terrain. The Western Ghats form a prominent natural boundary, rising to heights of over 6,000 feet and supporting rich forests with valuable timber, cardamoms, honey, and other forest produce. Numerous rivers originate in these mountains, irrigating tanks and channel-fed lands before flowing eastward into the sea. Geologically, the district is based on ancient gneiss rock, overlaid by quartz-rich red soils, kunkur limestone, and coastal sandstone formations. The coastal sandstone ridges form the famous Tinnevelly Pearl Banks and the distinctive "Teri tracts," composed of blown sand, making Tinnevelly a miniature representation of the diverse physical features of the Madras Presidency.

The Tinnevelly district shows remarkable physical diversity shaped by wind, soil, rivers, and human activity. Along the coastal sandstone ridges, strong monsoon winds from the south, south-east, and later the north-east carry vast quantities of red sand, forming deep drifting deposits that often bury fertile lands and settlements. Though efforts to reclaim these sandy "Teri tracts" through planting palmyra, trees, and grass have succeeded only where groundwater is available, most areas remain desert-like, suitable mainly for palmyra cultivation. The district's soils are broadly classified into red

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loam and sand near the Western Ghats, sandy coastal soils near the sea, extensive black cotton plains in the north, and extremely fertile river alluvium along the Tamrapurni and Chittar rivers.

The Tamrapurni is the chief river of the district, rising in the forested Western Ghats and flowing eastward for about 70 miles before reaching the sea. It is almost perennial and supports intensive irrigation through eight masonry anicuts, canals, and numerous tanks, enabling double-crop rice cultivation over a rich alluvial belt. Other rivers such as the Chittar, Vaigai, Numbiar, and Hanamanadi are smaller and seasonal, feeding irrigation mainly through tanks and surface drainage. The plains of Tinnevelly are dotted with hundreds of tanks that store monsoon waters and rarely allow excess flow to reach the sea.

Agriculturally, the river valleys produce two rich rice harvests annually, while the coastal sandy belt is dominated by palmyra palms, yielding jaggery and sugar. The red soil tracts near the hills support cholum, cumbu, and gram, and the black cotton plains yield cotton, millets, pulses, chillies, and tobacco, especially with well irrigation. Settlement patterns follow water availability, with major towns like Tinnevelly and Palamcottah along the river, irrigation centres at the foot of the Ghats, and trade towns such as Virudupati and Sivakasi in the cotton plains.

Tuticorin is the principal seaport and commercial centre, connected by rail and road to the interior, while Tinnevelly town serves as the hub of transport and administration. Trade expanded steadily during the nineteenth century, with exports of cotton and palmyra products and rising imports of manufactured goods. The district is historically famous for its pearl and chank fisheries off the coast near Tuticorin, both government monopolies, though pearl fisheries have been irregular due to the migratory nature of oysters. Overall, Tinnevelly presents a balanced picture of geographical variety, irrigation-based agriculture, trade, and coastal resources.

The climate of Tinnevelly is distinctive due to the combined influence of the south-west and north-east monsoons, resulting in light rainfall and generally equable temperatures. The hot season lasts from February to June, with temperatures rarely exceeding 95°F, while the cold months of December and January are mild, with temperatures seldom falling below 77°F. The mean annual temperature ranges between

80°F and 90°F. The south-west monsoon begins in June on the Travancore side of the Western Ghats and brings little direct rainfall to Tinnevelly, though it cools the climate and supplies steady river flow for the first rice crop. The north-east monsoon, from October to January, provides the chief rainfall, often heavy and sometimes destructive, supplying tanks and rivers and supporting the second rice crop and dry cultivation. The average annual rainfall is about 35 inches, most of it received during the north-east monsoon.

Administratively, the Tinnevelly district is divided into nine taluks for revenue and magisterial purposes. Taluks along the western side and foot of the Western Ghats include Srivilliputtur, Sankaranainarkoil, Tenkasi, Ambasamudram, and Nanguneri, while the eastern coastal taluks are Ootapidaram, Tenkarai, and Nanguneri. Satur and Tinnevelly taluks lie in the central plains. Each taluk is administered by a Tahsildar-cum-Sub-Magistrate, with additional judicial and revenue officers in important centres such as Tuticorin, Palamcottah, Virudupati, and Ettiapuram. Civil jurisdiction is organised through Sub-Judges and Munsif courts distributed across the district.

The District Magistrate and Collector is stationed at Tinnevelly, assisted by Sub-Collectors, Deputy Collectors, and Assistant Collectors located at key administrative centres such as Tuticorin, Satur, and Shermadevy. Police administration is divided between Palamcottah and Tuticorin. Tuticorin also serves as the headquarters for sea customs and the supervision of the pearl and chank fisheries. Thus, the district administration reflects a well-organised system adapted to Tinnevelly's geographical, climatic, and economic conditions.

Tinnevelly has undergone a marked transformation in its physical appearance during the last century, mainly due to the large-scale clearing of forests and jungles to expand cultivation under British rule. Once well wooded, especially near the foot of the Western Ghats, the district has become predominantly open and cultivated land, with palmyra palms as the chief surviving tree cover. Though even palmyra groves have declined, agriculture has expanded greatly, particularly the highly developed system of double-crop rice cultivation supported by the almost perennial Tamrapurni and Chittar rivers. A comprehensive irrigation network of anicuts, channels, and tanks—believed to

date from the fifteenth century—continues to be the backbone of the district's prosperity by efficiently storing and distributing water.

Alongside wet cultivation, increasing attention has been given to dry land farming. The black cotton plains of northern and north-eastern Tinnevelly yield extensive crops of cotton, cholum, and gram during the rainy season, while red soils and even poorer tracts are cultivated periodically. Garden cultivation using wells—producing tobacco, chillies, plantains, and vegetables—is rapidly expanding, providing employment and adding patches of greenery to an otherwise dry landscape during summer. While the district appears barren and desert-like in April and May, it is transformed after the north-east monsoon into a fertile and active agricultural region, dotted with tanks, channels, and green fields.

The Western Ghats form a natural barrier on the west and act as a vital reservoir, absorbing heavy rainfall and releasing water gradually to the plains. They also supply valuable timber and pasture and dominate the district's scenery. The sea borders the eastern and southern sides, serving both as a natural boundary and as a major route of commerce, historically famous for pearl fisheries and continuing to support trade and prosperity. The climate, though hot, is relatively equable and moderated by sea breezes along the coast, while Courtallam enjoys a particularly pleasant climate during the monsoon months.

Health conditions in Tinnevelly are generally good, though fevers, cholera, and smallpox have been the main causes of mortality. Fevers are common near the hills during the hot season, while cholera periodically checks population growth. Smallpox has declined with the gradual acceptance of vaccination over traditional practices. Overall, Tinnevelly presents a region shaped by intensive agriculture, effective water management, distinctive geography, and a climate that, though warm, supports sustained economic and social life.

General:

Tirunelveli District was formed in the year 1790 by the East India Company, later came under the direct control of the British Crown Queen Victoria. The name Tirunelveli has been composed from the three Tamil words i.e. 'Thiru – Nel – Veli' meaning Sacred Paddy Hedge. With effect from 20.10.1986 the district was bifurcated and new Tuticorin

District was formed.On acquisition from the Nawab of Arcot in1801, the British named it as Tinnevelly district though their headquarters was first located in Palayamkottai the adjacent town, where they had their military headquarters during their operations against the Palayakarars. Two reasons may be attributed for naming it after Tirunelveli. One is because, it was and is the chief town of the district and the other is that it was already called as Tirunelveli Seemai under the Nayaks and Nawabs. Both Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai grew as the twin towns of the district.. Tirunelveli district is a gift of God, as it has four land structures Kurunchi (Hills and Mountains), Mullai (Forest and allied land), Marutham (cultivable fields), Neithal (The Sea and allied land). 56 KM long sea shore is also available in the district. One more Gift for this district is the perennial river Tamiraparani which feeds the district and supplying drinking water for three districts.

Location and Geographical Area:

Tirunelveli District is having a geographical area of 6759 sq.kms, in the Southeastern portion of Tamil Nadu is triangular in shape. It lies between 8°.05' and 9°.30' of the Northern latitude and 77°.05' and 78°.25' of Eastern longitude. Lifeline of the district is TamiraparaniRiver which feeds the district and quenches the thirst of residents.

TOPOGRAPHY

The district is located in the southern part of Tamil Nadu and surrounded by Virudhunagar District on the north, Western Ghats on the West, Kanniyakumari District on the south, Tuticorin District and bay of Bengal on the East.

Sl.No	Type of Soil	Name of the Blocks	Suitable Crops
	Alluvium Soil	Ambasamaudram,Cheranmahadevi, Pappakkudi, Kadayam, Manur, Palayamkottai	Paddy, Plantain, Black Gram etc
	Red Soil	Rathapuram,Valliyur,Nanguneri, Alangulam, Kadayanallur	Plantain, Horticulture Crops
	Black Soi	Kuruvikulam& part of Sonkarankovil	Cotton and Pulses
	Red Sandy Loam	Sankarankovil,Melaneelithanallur, Vasudevanallur east	Millets,Pulses, Lemon, Flowers and Vegetables
	Red Loam	Kalakkad, Pavoorchatram, Tenkasi, Shenkottai, Vasudevanallur west	Coconut, Horticulture Crops, Paddy, Vegetables

Climate and Rainfall

The climate of Tirunelveli is said to be equable. The maximum temperature is 39.4°C in the month of May and minimum is 21.7°C in the month of January. From about the middle of February temperature increases steadily. In Maywhich is usually the hottest month in the interior, the mean daily maximum temperature is 39.4°C. The weather is quite hot in April, May and June. Sometimes reaches 42.5°C with the onset of the southwest monsoon by the end of May or beginning of June, there is some drop in temperature. By about the middle of October, both day and night temperatures decrease are appreciable. The period from November to January is the coolest part of the year with the mean daily maximum temperature of about 30 to 31°C in the interior parts. The mean daily minimum temperature in these months is about 22 to 23°C. The mean daily maximum temperature ranges from 30 to 35°C. And the mean daily minimum temperature ranges from 22 to 27°C. The rainfall in Tirunelveli District ranges from 383.11mm to 1332.60mm. The average actual rainfall is around 953.41mm.

The earliest dawn of the history of Tirunelveli is shrouded in a mist of conjecture and speculation, and in the uncertainty arising from the scarcity of reliable evidence. Who the prehistoric inhabitants of this land were, what their customs were, and what kind of life they lived still remain questions subject to guesswork and risky assumptions. However, a large number of burial urns excavated from Adichanallur, Sayarpuram, and several scattered sites throughout the district provide us with a faint idea about these prehistoric settlers. They were either indigenous people or migrants from some northern region, as the burial urns, along with the pottery, iron and bronze implements, and gold ornaments found in them, closely resemble those unearthed in other parts of the country.

It is believed that these people belonged to a dwarf race whose physical stature diminished over generations, and that they were buried alive in these urns along with the tools, implements, and ornaments they used during their lifetime. Whether this strange race became extinct, was exterminated by later arrivals, or merged with their successors cannot be stated with certainty. This is because their peculiar burial customs have remained completely unknown to the people of this land throughout the long course of history.

The early historical period of this district begins with the advent of the Pandyas. There is abundant evidence in stone inscriptions, temple wall records, early Tamil poetry and literature, and in the accounts left behind by foreign travelers and writers. These sources enable us to reconstruct the history of this land, its people, and its rulers with a high degree of confidence and reliability.

However, who the Pandyas were and from where they came remain matters of speculation. According to one tradition, the ancestors of the Pandyas, Cheras, and Cholas were three brothers who lived at Korkai. Korkai was a prosperous coastal city that carried on extensive trade with the outside world. Over time, it lost all its former glory and has now dwindled into an obscure little village, located about four miles from the mouth of the Tamraparni River, in the present Srivaikuntam taluk.

In course of time, the three brothers separated. The Cholas moved northwards and established a kingdom in the regions corresponding to the present-day Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli districts. The Cheras moved westwards and founded a kingdom comprising the present Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar regions. The Pandyas remained in their original homeland and ruled the region around present-day Madurai.

Early History

Another account would have it that the Pandyas originally came from the north and claimed deacent from Pandu, the father of the Pandavas, the heroes of the great Sanskrit epic, the Mahabaratha.

Whatever their origin was, the Pandya dominion stretched over Madura and Tirunelveli when Pandya power was at its ebb and over a vast portion of India and the whole of Ceylon when it was at its zenith. So Thirunelveli did not have an independent history of its own until the Pandyan power faded, its history being linked up with that of Madura which was the capital of the Pandyas. It was all along only a province of the Pandyan kingdom.

The Pandyas were a long line of able rulers, one writer estimating their number to be more than one hundred and fifty. All of them were not equally great, strong or wise and Pandya rule had its ups and downs. Until the twelfth century, the Pandya rulers were not such as to leave their mark on the history and progress of the land. In the sixth and seventh centuries they were brought, for brief periods under the control of the Pallavas,

then the Chalukyas and finally, an unknown tribe known as the Kalabras. In the 8th century a succession of able chiefs rose up, and restored the independence of their Kingdom by inflicting crushing defeats on their enemies, as is mentioned in some of the contemporary Tamil works. But this period of glorious and unrestrained Pandyan suzerainty was brought to an end in the tenth century when the Cholas became a great force in the country. Some of the great Cholas such as Rajaraja Rajendra and others were great enough to extend their rule over a great part of south India and so brought the Pandyas under their control. The Pandya kingdom was treated as a province of the Chola empire and given the name of Rajaraja-Pandya-Nadu and some of the governors who were appointed to rule over this province were named Chola-Pandys; but it should not be suppos-ed that the Pandyas submitted willingly or quietly to the rule of their rivals. They made several abortive revolts which were put down with ruthlessness。

The decline of the Chola power in the twelfth century turned out to the advantage of the Pandyas who were not slow in aval ing themselves of it. Thus the close of the twelfth century may be regarded as a turning point in the history of the Pandyas. The period between this and the beginning of the sixteenth cen tury was the most glorious of the Pandyas, and a long line of able rulers, thirty in number, controlled the destiny of the Pand-yan Kingdom with remarkable ability. Some of them were very ambitious and had sufficient strength to realize their ambitions. Then the Pandys kingdom ranged unbroken over the whole coun-try lying between Gape Comorin in the south and Nellore in the north. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya the first, began an sgressive polley of conquest and annexation. His successor Vira Pandya (1252-12679) was a mightier conqueror than his predecessor and his conquests extended right up to the Ganges and China. Maravarman Kulasekara (1258-13087 and Jatavarman Sundara Pandyn the second (1275-12907) were rulers of considerable power and ability so as to impress themselves on their contem-porary neighbouring rulers. These two are mentioned by some Mohammedan historians and Marco Polo, who is supposed to have visited the coast of Tirunelveli in 1292.

Whatever were the vicissitudes of the Pandyas, of course. the change of fortune of the rulers would not let uninjured the life of the people. Under the Pandyas or their temporary over-lords, the Pandyan kingdom was famed throughout the world for the very high level of civilization and culture of its people, for the glory and splendour of its court,

for its magnificent temples and tanks, for its wealth, ornaments and luxury. There was a considerable volume of trade passing between the Pandyan coun-try and China in the east and Rome, Greece and Arabia in the west. Large quantities of rice, sandals and peacock feathers. teak, sugar, ginger and spices were exported to other lands in exchange for gold and silver and other products of the latter. The huge trade flowed through two great ports, Kayalpatnam and Punnsikayal which have to-day dwindled into obscurity and insignificance. The Pandyan rulers were noted for their personal but benign rule and they were extraordinarily religious and con-siderate for the welfare of their subjects as is evidenced in the innumerable splendid temples, tanks, choultries, roads and avenues of shade-giving trees. Though they were autocrats they submit-ted to the laws laid down in the Shastras and as a rule, did not hesitate to accept the interpretations of the laws as given by the wise men of the land, even when these went against their hearts. Of course, there were exceptions, but the exceptions were fewer than they might have been. It is no wonder that under such a rule, the people were prosperous and contented and rose to a very high level of civilization and culture. Art and learning re ceived an uncommon measure of encouragement and it may be said that the golden period of Tamil literature, sculpture and architecture was reached under the Pandyas. In the greatness of their power, the Pandyas sent embassies to Rome, China and Arabis.

The later Pandyas feil on evil lays as their distant ancestors had done in the ninth and tenth centuries, on account of internal dissensions and the incursions of the Muhammadans. It is said that it was at the instance of a Pandyan applicant at delhi, Alleudin Khilji, sent his general, Malik Kafur, who sweeping down as far as Rameswaram, reduced all the Hindu Kingdoms on his way. Malik Kafur's example was imitated by Allaudin's successors on the throne of Delhi, who not contented with con-quering Madura and Trichinopoly, established a line of Muham madan kings over the Pandyan territory that Issted for nearly fifty years.

In the middle of the 14th century, a new Hindu power srose in Vijayanagar, which, for two centuries following, stemmed the tide of Muhammadan advance in the south. The intervention of the Emperors of Vijayanager in the affairs of the Southern Kingdom resulted in the replacement of the Muhammadan rulers of Madura by the descendants of the Pandyas. From this time on up to the end of the 16th century, the

Pandyas were the nominal rulers of the Pandyan Kingdom. The Governors of the Vijayanagar Empire were their over-lords to whom they paid tribute for protection and non-interference. However, the Pandyas were not left undisturbed by their neighbours; especial-ly the Chera Kings of Travancore took advantage of the weak-ness of the Pandyas and succeeded in wresting a large slice of our present Thirunelveli District from Pandyan control. The rise of Chera power aroused the jealousy of the Vijayanagar rulers and they sent down a series of expeditions in order to curb them. By the middle of the 16th century the Cheras declined and became feudatories of Vijayanagar. The last of these expeditions was that under Nagama Nayakam who, after succeeding in establish-ing order in Madura, set himself up on the throne, and began to rule independent of his suzerain at Vijayanagar. The Emperor was incensed beyond measure and he sent Nagama's son Viswa-natha with a large force, to reconquer Madura and to subjugate his rebellious father Viswanatha carried out his trust in such a remarkable manner by defeating his own father and taking him prisoner to his Emperor that the Istter, as a testimony of his gratification, conferred on Viswanatha and his successors in per-petuity the governorship of the Pandya Kingdom. Visvanaths, after a time, deposed the feeble Pandyan ruler and established himself on the throne of Madura. This marks the beginning of the Nayak rule at Madura which lasted up to the middle of the 18th century, but the Nayaks never called themselves independ-ent sovereigns and both when Vijayanagar was in power and after its annihilation at Talaikota they regarded themselves as "Karthakkals" or "lieutenants" of their Vijayanagar overlords. The ushering of Nayak power in the history of Madura or the earlier contact but weer Vijayanagar and Madura may be considered to mark the beginning of the coming into existence of the Poliger chiefs some of whom proved later on hard nuts to crack when the Britishers attempted to subdue Thirunelveli.

Originally, these chiefs were appointed by the rulers of Madura as Wardens or heads of armed camps with civil, criminal and revenue jurisdiction over their areas. It was their duty to maintain order in the outlying portions of the Kingdom and to render help to their rulers, when they were called upon to do so. In exchange for having exclusive authority over the revenue of the regions they were placed in control of, they paid an annual lump sum tribute, When the rulers of Madura declined in power, and

confusion and anarchy reigned in the land before the advent of the British, these chiefs became independent. Most of these wardenships survive in the present day zemindaries of Ettiya-puram, Sivagiri, Singampatti. Talaivankottai, Azhagapuri, Urkad Sorandi, Kadambur, Maniyachi, Veerakeralampudur, which are all in the Thirunelveli District and many others to be found in the Ramnad, Madura and Trichinopoly districts. The Nayak rulers of Madura were 14 in number of whom two were women. Their reign was, as a rule, marked by internal dissensions and external aggression on the part of the Mohammedans, the Marathas and Kings of Travancore. However, they managed to fill the land with temples and magnificent palaces and to open new roads and irrigation works. Of them, three deserve special mention. Viswanaths, the founder of the Nayak dynasty, was a very able ruler, and he consolidated his power in Madura by the annexation of Trichinopoly and other places. It was he, who built the fort at Trichinopoly and dug a deep most around it. He had a very able general, in Ariyandha Mudaljar, who was more or less a king-maker at that time; for, he after battle of Talnikota in 1565, confirmed the governors of Madura, Tanjore and Mysore as the rulers of those territories. The thousand-pillared mandapam in the big temple at Madura, the fort at Palamcottah, which is now in ruins and many irrigation works throughout the Pandyan territory, are ascribed to him. He is said to have rebuilt the town of Tirunelveli. The polygars paid him adulation as to their patron saint. The next Nayak ruler of note, Thirumalai Servai Naykan, (1623-1659) was "the most powerful ruler and the best known to us of this dynasty." His reign was character-ized by futile as well as successful wars with his neighbours and the rebellions of some of his powerful polygars, such as the Sethu pathi of Ramnad and the chief of Ettayapuram. But he found time to erect several magnificent public buildings and to add to the glory of the temple at Madura, One Jesuit writer of the day records, "His reign was rendered illustrious by works of truly Royal magnificence.

Among these, are the pagodas of Madura, several public buildings and above all the royal palace whose colossal propor-tions and astonishing boldness, recall the ancient monuments of Thebes." The splendid palace of Thirumalai which still stands in Madura and whose splendour and staggering proportions are the wonder of every visitor, Indian and foreign, and the Vandi-yoor Tank which is said to have been formed by the digging

up of the earth at that place for making the palace, are the undying monuments of the great builder.

The next ruler of eminence, was Mangammal (1689-1704) who ruled Madura as the regent of her young son. She opened many roads and avenues and buiit choultries for the use of pilgrims and travellers. Some of the roads were named after her and they still are in a good condition and keep her name alive.

The last of the Nayaks was Meenakshi who succeeded her husband Vijayaranga Chokkanatha in 1731. She came into con-flict with the father of her adopted son, who advanced a claim to the throne. Both of them sought the aid of the Mohammadans. By that time the Mohammedan rule came to be firmly established in South India. The Nawab of Arcot, who was subordinate to the Nizam of Hyderabad who was the South Indian representa-tive of the Moghul Emperor at Delhi, exercised real sway up to the Coleroon, The Mohammedans received money from both parties and deceived both. Then the Marathas were invited to interest themselves in the affairs of Madura. As a result, the Mohammedans became involved with Marathes in a tussle which went on for a long time with varying fortunes.

But by 1749 two new powers appeared on the stage of South India who were destined to affect the coupe of history of our land profoundly. They were the English and the French merchants who had established themselves in Madras and Pondicherry respectively. They took sides on behalf of the rival claimants to the throne of Arcot. But long before this, two centuries previously, in 1532, the Portuguese first set foot on the coast of Thirunelveli. They were the earliest Europeans to come into touch with the Pandyan dominion. They were follow-ed by the Dutch who ousted their rivals from the commerce of the country and took possession of Tutieprin and some other coastal towns. But beyond interesting themselves in the rich trade of the land they took no serious part in the changing for-tunes of the rulers of Madura. The struggle between the English and the French ended after a series of ups and downs in the ascendancy of the English and the elimination of the French influence from the fortunes of the South Indian Kingdoms. Muhammed Alj, who was enthroned at Arcot, by his English supporters became the ruler of the whole of the Carnatic and Madura and Thirunelveli. A small expedition was sent by him to Thirunelveli to enforce the allegiance of the Polygars who assumed

independence, after the central authority at Madura was extinguished. There were thirtyone "Palayams" ("armed camps") in Thirunelveli, Some of them such as at Panchalan-kurichi and Nelkattanseval and Chockampatti, were very power-ful and the other polygars, naturally ranged themselves under their leadership. The subjugation of all the polygars was a long and difficult task and was brought about by force, by threats, and by successfully playing upon the jealousies and rivalries of the polygars themselves. Muhammad Yusuf, a capable commander in whom the Company at Madras had great confidence was entrusted with this onerous and dangerous responsibility. He was aided by many English captains and he succeeded in his mission. The attempt of the British to conquer the polygars and the resistance of the latter constitute a tangled tale of heroism, treachery and ruthless severity and destruction. The heroic resistance of Katta Bomma Nayakan and Oomaiyan, time after time, even though his strongholds were captured and he and his men were driven out to wander at large, runs like a bright red lightning through this sordid tale. The final conquest of him and his adherents was accomplished only after he and many of them were hanged and his stronghold at Panchalankurichi was razed to the ground. It may be that the struggle of Katta Bomman was a rébellion against superior might and that he was no better than a marauder preying upon the surrounding villages. But his patriotism, his love of independence and his indomitable determination to preserve his freedom against all odds are worthy virtues even in a rebel taswhich meet respect is due from all lovers of the glorious and the great. The British servants of the Company showed their indignation and revenge against the polyzar by razing the fort at Panchalankurichi, hanging its chief and by confiscation his estate, but the soil at Panchalan kurichi is still impregnated with the heroism of its chief. For folklore has it that even to-day a fox or a hare pursued by hounds. and running for its life will turn against its persecutors as soon as it steps upon the dust of Panchalankurichi.

The next task of the Company, who were all the while acting as the agents of the Nawab of Arcot, was the establishment of a strong administration in the district and the collection of its revenue. In respect of the lattor, a trial was made by handing over the district to some agents for the lump payment of a fixed amount. This plan did not work satisfactorily, for the district came under two controls, one that of the de jure ruler of Arcot and the other, that of the Company and its servants Secondly, the Nawab regularly

defaulted in making his payments to the Company to which he had committed himself for the help ren-dered by them.

So, in 1801, an agreement was made between the Nawab and the Company according to which" the sole and exclusive admini-stration of the civil and military governments of all the terri-tories and dependencies of the Carnatic were handed over to the Company in perpetuity." Lushington was appointed as the first collector of the Thirunelveli district under the new dispensation. A week after assuming power he wrote to his masters at Madras that the "Province of Tinnevelly has been brought without the smallest disturbance under the Company's authority. By the energy and justice of Government the rebellions here have been subdued; the oppressed have been upheld and exalted; the obedient have been liberally rewarded; and the extinction of a divided authority has restored the fairest province of the Carnatic from an acknowledged state of anarchy and confusion to a state of subordination and prosperity." The progress of the district under its British masters has been steady and definite. Given peace and order and protection from the oppression of the power-ful, the people had plenty of leisure to look after themselves. organize, create and build up trade and prosperity. To-day, the Thirunelveli district is ranked as one of the richest districts of the Province of Madras.

The history of Firunelveli, which has been very briefly touched in this article, is of the same character as the history of the rest of India. From beginning to end, the chiefs and rulers stood divided and disorganized and failed to sink their differences and come together even in the face of a formidable foreign foe or invader. Oftentimes they played the role of Count Julian and invited foreign invasions. So the later history of Tirunelveli, as does that of the rest of India, points out that disunity and mutual jealousy are always sure of terrible punistinents and in the enslave-ment of the whole land. But the glorious period of the early and middle Pandyas, when arts flourished, trade prospered and people were happy, may be looked back with pride, not only by the children of this district but also by all Indians who care for every-thing noble and admirable in India.

Significance of Name Nellai

Etymology The Sthalapurna says, four Vedas were requested to the Lord Siva, we want to became the bamboo trees and Lord Siva come under the shadow feet of these tress Lord Siva accepted their request and he became himself lord Siva Idol and kept

under bamboo trees and Lord Siva come under the Shadow feet of these trees Lord Siva accepted their request and he became himself the Lord Siva Idol and kept under bamboo trees. As per the Nellaiappar temple Sthalapurana, one day Ramakon the milk vendor of the Manappadai ruler Muluthumkonda Raman knocked down by the stone on his way when he was carrying the Milk on his head he fell down the Milk put was broken. Then he cut down the stone with his axe. Suddenly bloodshed down one the stone. Ramakon immediately ran to the palace and inform the matter to the King Muluthumkonda Ramakon. King rushed to the spot and worshipped the Lord, the Lord Siva appeared in the form of Lingam the Lord in the place is called as Vendavalarnthalingam. As per tradition Muluthumkonda Raman constructed Venuvananather temple at Tirunelveli.

Tirunelveli Nellaiappar temple Sthalapurana mentioned the genesis of the name Tirunelveli. It said that, a devotee of Siva name Vedasarma, he went to take bath in the river Thamiraparani, on that day he spread out the paddy to dry under the sun, and went for his ablutions in river Thamiraparani. He requested to the Lord through prayer for rain because that year Tirunelveli region was suffered by the famine. Vedasarma's request was accepted and when he was bathing, a thunder storm broke out and it rained heavily. He saw the wonderful miracle on the rainy day. Rain fall was around the paddy. The paddy did not get soaked and did not get even a single drop of rain at the paddy. Sunlight was covered the spreading paddy. So according to the Tirunelveli sthalapurana, the place was called Tirunelveli as the lord of the town hedged by the paddy for Tirunelveli means "sacred hedged paddy". Though, as said in the Purana, the paddy was hedged by rain in course of time it was called as "sacred paddy hudge.

The sthalapurana says that the earlier name of Tirunelveli was "Venuvanam" where lord Siva married. His consort Gowri other names of Tirunelveli according to sthalapurana are Thirumoorthipuram Tharanisaram. Skalasithi, Ibapuri, Venuvanam, Nelveli, Nellore sadiveli, Salivadi, SaliNayar Bhirama Viruthapuram and Tharugavanagam. The author of the Puranic works equates Tirunelveli to that of Kanchipuram in sacredness and calis it as Thenkanchi. Other shortened names to refer Tirunelveli are Nellai, Nellaiyempathy and Nellaiyembalam.

The area now comprising the Tirunelveli region formed the Part of Pandya country. Kadungon (575 – 600) was the Pandya ruler. Who had Madurai from the

Clutches of the Kalabhras. He was succeeded by Maravarmam Avanisulamani (600 – 620). Sezhiyansendan (620 to 642 A.D.) was son and successor of Avani Sulamani one of his inscription found in Malaiyadi Kurichi. Arikesarimaravarman (641 – 670 A.D.) was the contemparar of Saiva saint Thiruganasambandar. He was converted to Hindu religion from Jain religion by Thirugana Sambandar then he was called as NinraseerNedumaran. The name of the Village Arikesarinallur situated near Veravanallur was named by him as ArikessariNallur. During his rule ThiruGanasambandar visited Tirunelveli and he had versified Nellai appear temple. Fourth regnal year 950 A.D. inscription of Virapandya found on the west wall of the small shrine in Nellaiappar temple. Fifteenth regnal year 961 A.D. inscription of Virapandya found on the west wall of the Mulamahalingar shrine mentioned Tirunelveli as Kilvembunadu. Later Cholas and later Pandyas inscriptions were found on the walls of the Nellaiappar temple.

When the Pandya country came under the imperial Cholas. It was known as RajaRajavalanadu since 991 A.D. It became RajaRajamandalam in 1012 A.D. and was rechristened as RajaRajapandianadu since 1022 A.D. The Country was sub-divided into Vallanadus and the area now Tirunelveli district. Compraised the Mudikondachola Valanadu. The Valanadu was divided into many Nadus and Kurrams. As evidenced from the inscriptions Tirunelveli was mentioned as Kilvembunadu. During from the later Pandya Empire to the Vijayanagar period, there are changed the administrative setup and the Local self-government. Ravivarman the rule of Venadu instituted Revivarma Sathurvedimangalam at Tirunelveli and settled the Brahmins in Agrahara to do the Pujas in Nellaiappar temple.

During the time of Visvanatha Nayak (1529 – 1564) of Madurai, Tirunelveli became headquarter of Southern Province and was called as Tirunelveli seenai As per the Madura manuscript Ariyanathamudaliyar the Dalavay of Visvanatha Nayak of Madurai was solely responsible for the formation of town. On acquisition from the Nawab of Arcot in 1801. The British named it as Tinnevelly.

In the beginning, Tirunelveli region was called as Then Pandya nagaram, (southern city of Pandya country) because Madurai was the capital of Pandya, it located northern side from Tirunelveli. Tirunelveli city developed around Sri Nellaiappar, Gandhimathi amman temple. Now a day's this temple is located the center part of

Tirunelveli District. The general dimensions of the whole enclosure of the temple are 850 feet by 756 feet. The main entrance of the temple faces the eastern side with Rajagopura.

The four sides of the god's temple immediately within the outer walls are flanked by raised corridors surmounted by runs of pillars. In the South Eastern corner of this circuit or prakara, is a small shrine containing a Sivalinga, which is popularly known by the name of Anavaradhakhan. In explanation of this curious Muhammadan suffix. It is said that a wife of one of the Nawabs fell sick one day and consulted the Brahmanas of the place as to how she might be cured. The Brahmanas prescribed some rites to be performed at the Nawabs expense in the temple. The Nawab consented and his wife not only regained her health but soon after presented the ruler with a male child. The boy was given the name Anavaradhakhan and the shrine was built in the corner of the temple. With an opening in the outer wall so that the Muslim King and his son might without offence worship the god within. In the Southern Prakara are a number of life Statues of the Nayak rulers carved in one block with the pillars which support the roof of the mandapa. Following the prakara round to the North West corner one comes to the shrine of the god subramanya, where the god and his Vahana, a peacock are sculptured from one block of stone. The mandapa in the north east corner disfigured now by streaks of road and yellow paint offers a good example of the stone carving which imitates the wood work of beams and rafters. Guarding the entrance to the next enclosure and forming each a pillar are four gigantic stone figures recelling the type met with at Tenkasi. The gateway leads into the manimandapa within this again is the dark narrow enclosure in which the god Venuvaneswarar is placed. In the north east corner of the first or outer prakara is a second lingam and it is the God, Nellaiyappar, Lord of Paddy who gives his name to the temple and is regarded as its presiding deity. The traditional belief that this God formed the centre of an original and smaller temple is probable enough for his enclosure, lying same feet below the general level of the temple is now walled in by buildings. Which ignore the position due to this God and must therefore be of later construction them the shrine itself. An inscription of Sundarapandya refers to the deity of the temple under the two names "Vrihivriteswara "Lord of the Paddy hedge and Venuvaneswara, Lord of the bamboo forest is related in the Sthalapurana to explain the

origin of the latter God. Vishnu in the person of Padmanabhaswami has a shrine beside that of the "Lord of the bamboo forest"

From the Precincts of the god the temple of the Goddess is entered through the Sangilimandapa supported on Pillars carved into figures or sculptures of Yalis. Pachaivadivel Kasiviswanatha, Hanuman, Arjuna and Bhima. This mandapa was constructed by the Vadamalaiappapillai the Governor of Tirunelveli and a great devotee of Siva during the ThirumalaiNayak period in 1647 A.D. Kumaran temple is located in the western side of this Sangili mandapa. Besides the mandapa on the left as one enters is the thamarai tank of stone surrounded by a pillared cloister. On the other side of the mandapa is a well-kept pleasure garden in which both the God and Goddess are placed during the six weeks of the Vasantha festival in the months of May and June. This garden had been designed by ThiruvenkadaKrishnamudaliar in 1756 A.D. A Square Vasanthamandapa with hundred pillars is found in the mids of this garden. This Vasanthamandapa is proud of having the statues of Lord Siva with water dripping from the head of sage Agasthiya and other sages which serve as examples for the excellence of work manship of the architect. Discourses on Saivism and other Philosophical talks take place in this mandapa.

In the Southern corridor of the Nellaiyappar temple, the flagstaff Mound shed and Granary rooms are situated. The Pillars in this corridor have beautifully carved structures of the Nayak rulers till the days of Vadamalaiyappapillai. On the southwest of this corridor is the Thiruppanimandapa, where during the Ani Festival the deities would be seated on sixth and seventh days of the celeberation. To the North of this mandapa Arumuganainar temple is situated. The noteworthy feature of this temple is peacock Vahana, Valli and Deivayanai have been carved out wonderfully. The temple elephant is accommodated in the Northern corridor of temple. Western corridor possesses one of the beautiful images of Lord Ganesa. The Eastern corridor is decorated with the most attractive status of Nandhi, Pavalakkodi, Alli, Manmathan, Rathi, Kuravam and Kurathi. In the Somavaramandapa or Navarathiri mandapa, Navarathiri festival and Karthigai somavara festival are celeberated every year. The stone rafters and stone replicas of this mandapa are very intricately designed. The images of Vanniadisattanar and Bairavar and

a sacrificial alter are found to the west of this mandapa and to the north of this is the Navagraha Mandapa.

Before entering into Swamy Nellaiyapper temple Nandhi and Flagstaff are situated. Which was built in 1155 A.D. The sculptures of Virabhadra, Arjuna, Karna, God Vinayagar and Lord Murugan create an ever lasting impression in the minds of be holders. In the Southern side of Nandhimandapa images of sixty three Nayenmars and Sekkilar found. It is said that SivanthappaNayak is solely responsible for this temple in 1654 A.D. Next to Nandhimandapa is image of Suryadevar has been installed. The Musical Pillars that attracts the attention of everyone through their marvel and wonderful music note are in the Manimandapa. These clusters of musical pillars are unique and this place is suitable for performing dance. The main purpose of the installation of musical pillars carved out of monolithic resonant system is to amplify the sound by the bell at the centre of the chamber. The Symbolic figure of a temple dancer or devadasi and an announcer with conch standing. Just behind her depicted at the bottom of cluster of forty eight pillars in the South East corner of the Manimandapa and the figure of dancing devadasi provide the evidence to the theory that this cluster of Musical Pillar has been used as an instrument for playing Jatis for dance programme. This Manimandapa along with musical pillar was constructed by the Pandya ruler Nindrasir Nedumaran during the seventh century A.D. There is sanctuary of Venuvananathar infront of the Manimandapa. It is in this sanctuary that Lord Venuvananathar blessed Muluthumkanda Ramakone. In this place there are twenty one platforms and these twenty one platforms started growing due to the great devotion of Ramakone. Because of this Nellaiyappar is also called as Mahalingam or Suyambulingam27 . Pallikondaperumal shrine was constructed during the reign of RajaRaja I28. Pallikonda Perumal or Lord Govindha in reclining posture adore the southern direction of the Suyambulinga. Valampuripillaiyar, Chandrasekharar are found at the entrance of the Suyambulinga sanctum and images of Dakshinamoorthy, Lord Siva in the guise of Bikshandar and Chandeswar are found around the sanctum. If one Proceeds further he can come across a Lingam at a lower level and this said to be the moolavigraha of this temple. It is also called as Pitlingam and also as Thirumoolanather. In the South corridor of the Venuvananathar temple there are images of four Saivasaints.

Santhanachariya, Sapthamathas sixty three Nayanmars. Pollapillaiyar and Ravana with Kailasaparvatha in his hands.

Ganthimathi Ambal temple is also built here is above 850 feet in length of 756 feet width or breath and adorned an enterence by Gopura. Besides conducting religious discourses and teaching Kolattam, to girls, teaching of Tirumurai to devotees also take place in this mandapa. Unjal fes1 tival which is celebrated here after the Tirukkalayanam of Swami Nellaiyappar and Gandhimathi Ambal in the month of Aipasi and hence this mandapa is called Unjal mandapa. Beutifully adorned Gandhimathi Ambal gives dharsan to millions of her devotees during laksha deepa and bhadra deepa festival from this mandapa only. This mandapa was a gift from Serakulam piraviperumalpillai a staunch devotee who built the Thaipoosa mandapa on the left bank of river Thamiraparani near Sulochanamudaliyar Bridge. To the north of Unjal mandapa the sacred tank with a flight of steps on its four sides. This temple has another tank called Karuman tank. Another beautiful structure of this Ambal temple is the Thirukalyanamandapa or marriage hall which is 520 feet in length and 63 feet in width, in the month of Aipasi, Sengel festival on Panguni Uttiram take place every year.

Background, origin and meaning of Nellai:

The name "Nellai" is a place name, referring to the city of Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, India. The name "Tirunelveli" is derived from Tamil, where "Tiru" means sacred or respected, "Nel" means paddy or rice, and "Veli" means fence or boundary. Thus, Tirunelveli roughly translates to "sacred paddy fence," referring to a legend where Lord Shiva protected paddy fields with a fence. As a given name, "Nellai" would likely be used as a reference to this place, possibly indicating the person's origin or a connection to the region.

Several notable individuals are associated with Tirunelveli, including freedom fighter V. O. Chidambaram Pillai (1872-1936), who launched the first Indian shipping company against British rule, and Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), a renowned poet and writer who played a significant role in the Indian independence movement. Their contributions to the nation have cemented Tirunelveli's place in history.

Origin and meaning of the Nellai last name

The surname Nellai has its roots in the Tamil language and culture, primarily associated with the southern part of India, particularly the region of Tamil Nadu. The name is believed to be derived from the town of Nellai (or Nellaithurai), which is known for its rich agricultural heritage, particularly rice cultivation. Historically, surnames in this region often reflected geographical features, occupations, or social roles, and Nellai likely signifies a connection to the land and its agricultural practices. Over time, individuals bearing this surname may have been involved in farming, trade, or local governance, contributing to the socio-economic fabric of their communities. Culturally, the surname Nellai may exhibit variations in spelling and pronunciation across different regions and languages, particularly as Tamil-speaking populations migrated or interacted with other linguistic groups. While the core meaning remains tied to its geographical origins, the surname may take on different connotations in various contexts, reflecting local customs or historical narratives. The spread of the surname has been influenced by migration patterns, trade routes, and the movement of Tamil communities both within India and abroad, particularly to countries like Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Singapore. Prominent figures associated with the surname Nellai may include local leaders, scholars, or artists who have made significant contributions to their communities or fields. While specific historical figures may not be widely documented, the surname carries a sense of pride and identity among those who bear it, often linked to the cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu. The recognition of the Nellai surname within certain communities is often tied to its agricultural roots and the enduring legacy of the region's history, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of its people over generations.

Settlement patterns

The settlement pattern of Tirunelveli district has been shaped by a combination of physical factors such as rivers, soil, climate, relief, and water availability, as well as human factors like agriculture, irrigation, trade, transport, and administration. From ancient times, human habitation in the district has closely followed the distribution of water resources, especially rivers, tanks, and wells. As a result, settlements are not

uniformly distributed but show a clear relationship with fertile river valleys, irrigated tracts, coastal zones, and transport routes.

The most prominent settlement pattern in Tirunelveli district is the **river-based settlement**, particularly along the Tamiraparani River and its tributaries such as the Chittar. The Tamiraparani valley supports dense and continuous settlements because of its almost perennial water supply and fertile alluvial soil. Villages and towns such as Tirunelveli, Palayamkottai, Ambasamudram, Srivaikuntam, and several others developed along the river banks. These settlements are characterized by intensive wet cultivation, double-crop rice farming, high population density, and compact village layouts. Historically, this river valley became the cultural, economic, and political heart of the district.

Another important settlement pattern is found **at the foot of the Western Ghats**, where numerous streams descend from the mountains. Settlements such as Tenkasi, Courtallam, Alwarkurichi, Kalkad, and Tirukkarungudi owe their growth to mountain-fed streams that provide water for irrigation. These settlements developed as agricultural centres with rice cultivation in valley floors and dry crops on surrounding red soils. The pleasant climate and availability of forest resources also supported population concentration in these areas.

The **tank-based settlement pattern** is a distinctive feature of Tirunelveli district. Across the red sandy plains and black cotton tracts, villages are often located near tanks that store monsoon rainwater. In many cases, a village exists for every major tank, and settlements are rarely found far away from a water source. These tank-centred villages support both wet and dry cultivation and play a vital role during the north-east monsoon. The dense network of tanks reflects the traditional water management system and explains the spread of rural settlements across otherwise dry landscapes.

The **black cotton plains of northern and north-eastern Tirunelveli** exhibit a different settlement pattern. Here, settlements are more widely spaced and are often larger villages or market towns such as Virudhunagar, Sivakasi, Satur, and Srivilliputtur. These settlements developed along ancient trade routes and later along modern transport corridors. Agriculture in these areas depends mainly on seasonal rainfall and wells, with crops such as cotton, cholam, cumbu, and pulses. During the dry season, the landscape

appears sparsely inhabited, but during the cultivation season, these settlements become centres of intense agricultural activity.

In the **coastal belt**, settlement density is comparatively low due to sandy soils, strong winds, and limited agricultural potential. However, fishing and maritime trade have given rise to important coastal settlements such as Tuticorin (Thoothukudi), Kulasekarapattinam, and Kayalpatnam. Tuticorin, in particular, emerged as a major port town due to its harbour facilities, pearl and chank fisheries, salt production, and later railway connectivity. Coastal settlements are thus more oriented towards trade, fishing, and industry rather than agriculture.

Urban settlement patterns in Tirunelveli district developed mainly due to **administrative, military, commercial, and transport functions**. Tirunelveli town emerged as the district headquarters and administrative centre, while Palayamkottai gained importance as a military cantonment and educational hub. Tuticorin developed as a port town and industrial centre. These urban settlements show nucleated growth, better infrastructure, and higher population density compared to surrounding rural areas.

Transport routes have played a crucial role in shaping settlement patterns. Major roads and railway lines connecting Tirunelveli with Madurai, Tuticorin, Travancore, and other regions encouraged the growth of towns and roadside villages. Settlements located at junctions and nodal points expanded into market centres and commercial towns, serving surrounding agricultural hinterlands.

Overall, the settlement pattern of Tirunelveli district presents a **mixed and regionally differentiated structure**, ranging from dense river-valley settlements and tank-based villages to dispersed dry-land habitations and coastal trading towns. The distribution of settlements clearly reflects the district's dependence on water resources, traditional irrigation systems, and the adaptation of human habitation to varied physical and economic conditions. Thus, Tirunelveli offers a classic example of how geography and human activity together shape settlement patterns over time.

Drainage of Irrigation Pattern

Irrigation is the artificial application of water to soil for the purpose of crop cultivation. As the timing and amount of rainfall are not adequate to meet the moisture requirement of cultivation, irrigation is essential to raise crops and meet the need for food

and fiber. In areas where the rainfall is plentiful and well distributed over the year there will be year round production. Indeed, rainfall in certain areas will be very scanty as well as uncertain. This is so in Tirunelveli district. The irrigation system in Tirunelveli district consists of rivers like Tamirabarani, Manimuttaru, Pachaiyaru, Nambiyaru, and Chittaru which originating from Western Ghats and running across the gentle slopes of the mid lands and confluence in Bay of Bengal. The River Tamirabarani is the main source of irrigation which also provides drinking water facilities to a number of places in the district, as well. Pabanasam, Manimuttar and Chervalar are the major reservoirs in the district. Gadana Nathi, Ramanathi, Karuppanathi, Gundaru, Adavi Nainar Koil, Vadakku Pachaiyaru, Kodumudiyaru, and Nambiyaru are the minor reservoirs in the district. Besides these rivers and reservoirs the other different sources of irrigation prevailing in the district are canal, tank and well.

Land Utilisation Profile of the District

Of the total of 6,82,300 hectares area in Tirunelveli district, about 79,668 (11.7%) hectares are wet lands well suited for the cultivation of paddy and other crops which need adequate water supply, while others are not useful for agricultural purposes. Nearly 3,58,151 (52.5%) hectares is dry land with no irrigation facilities for agriculture, although soil condition is moderate for growing crops, so that it mat be used to grow drought resistant plants which offer firewood. A block of waste lands which about 39,274 (5.7%) hectares is proclaimed to be not useful for growing crops, because of lack of enough water, poor soil, and undesired topographic conditions. Approximately 57,676 (8.5%) hectares is unassessed wasteland where soil condition is fair while water supply scarcity prevails for several months, so that it is used for agriculture only when rainfall is high. Yet, another 1, 22,055 (17.8%) hectares is occupied by forests which are declared to be reserves as forest resources for liontailed monkeys, rich in deciduous and evergreen plants. Poromboke - common lands, covers about 25,456 (3.8%) hectares, which may be used to create social forests although water is scarce. Fig 4.1 Land use land cover map of Tirunelveli District (after National Natural Resource Management system, ISRO, 2014). In 2002 as per NRSA data (Bhuvan, Govt. of India), shows that 29% of the total area of urban centers used for residential purposes while in rural centers only 14% of areas used

for this purposes. The area of agricultural lands and open spaces gets reduced every year in the district owing to the rapid conversion in these areas for residential purposes.

Forest:

The total area of the forest of the district is 1,22,055 ha of which 81700 ha is set apart for Tiger reserves of Mundanthurai and Kalakadu. The entire forest of the district stretches along the Western ghats. Various types of forests from luxuriant tropical wet evergreen forests to southern thorn scrub forests occur in the district. Owing to its diverse geographical factors,the forests in the district are technically classified as southern hill top tropical evergreen forests, west coast tropical evergreen forests, southern moist mixed deciduous forests, ochlandra reed forests, carnatic umbrella thorn forests, southern Euphorbia scrub and southern thorn scrub.

The forest areas in the district are mostly in the ghat region on the western part of the district.The ghat regions are under the influence of the southwest monsoon and have thick forest. The forest is of light dry deciduous forest growth in the lower slopes and dense masses of short trees from an elevation of 1000 to 4000 feet height. At high peak region of the ghats, evergreen forest with very tall trees are found.Teakwood, blackwood, rosewood etc are the most important among them. Honey, wax, mango, cashew,palmyrah, cane, pepper, tamarind, bamboo etc are the important forest products in the district.

Tiger Reserve Forest with an extent of 817 sq.kms in Ambasamudram Taluk is established which is known as 'Kalakad-Mudanthurai Tiger Reserve'. This Tiger Reserve Forest is extremely rich and diverse in nature, ranging from wet evergreen forest, mixed deciduous forest, dry teak forests to forests and thorny bushes in many places. The animals found in this Reserve forests are Tiger, Leopard, Jungle, Cat, Civet, Hyena, Jackal, Elephant, Guar, Sambar, Mouse, Deer, Nilgris Talir the lion-tailed monkeys etc.

Agriculture

The major crop cultivated in the district is paddy. Other crops like cumbu, cholam, kuthiraivali and ragi are cultivated as dry land crops in the district. Cotton is cultivated in Sankarankoil. Sugarcane is being raised in Sivagiri and Tenkasi taluks. Banana and vegetables are grown in the river belt areas of Ambasamudram, Tenkasi and Tirunelveli taluks. Manimuthar main canal and Papanasam reservoir are the irrigation

source for the cultivation of different crops. There is a Farmers Training centre at Palayankottai run with the aid of Danish International Development Agency. Rice Research Station in Urkad near Ambasamudram and a parasite breeding centre for coconut at Tenkasi play a crucial role for the development of the farmers in the district.

Soil:

The soil condition of the district may be grouped into two main varieties namely red loam soil and black soil. The black soil is of a higher value compared to the red loam soil and the black soil of the Tamirabarani River Valley overlies a stiff yellow colour. The red loam found in Tenkasi, Shenkottai, Sivagiri, and Radhapuram Taluks. The black soil is found in Sankarankoil, Palayamkottai, and Tirunelveli Taluks. The other soils like lateritic, sandy coastal alluvial soil and red-sand soil are not found much in the district. In the south-east coast, the soil is deep, loose and red loam surfaced by sand with its depth varying from a few inches to 20 feet.

Minerals and Mining

Khondolites and the Charnockites with Pyroxene granulites and the associated migmatitic/ rocks are the two major groups of rocks found in the district. Limestones occur within the genesis and are found around Tirunelveli and Ambasamudram. Pink coloured granites, pegmatites and quartz veins are also found to occur within the above mentioned rocks. Tertiary formations consisting of calcareous sand stones and limestones are also exposed all along the coastal area overlying the Charnockites and genissic rocks particularly around Koondankulam Rocks probably connected with the Deccan trap activity occur as thin veins and dykes within the genissic rocks around Koondankulam. The crystalline limestone deposit located around Tirunelveli is the main mineral supplied to M/s. India Cements at Thalaiyuthu with a capacity of 3000 tonnes per day. Large reserves of limestones of the crystalline, sedimentary and tafaccous types amounting to 59 million tonnes are found in Nanguneri, Ambasamudram, Sankarankoil and Tenkasi taluks. Limenite and associated minerals occur in Nanguneri taluk and garnet sands occur widely in Radhapuram taluk.

Surface Water

Tirunelveli district enjoys the benefit of the early showers of south west monsoon and of the later rains of the north-east monsoon. The district is chiefly irrigated by rivers

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rising in Western ghats. The dams and anaicuts constructed on Tamiraparani and Manimuthar rivers serve both agriculture and power generation. The total rain fall, though is light, averaging about 814.8 mm per annum, is generally well distributed. The Tamiraparani river affords perennial irrigation to a fairly large area on which two crops are normally raised. Several tanks and wells form part of the other sources of irrigation.

The Tamiraparani is a symbol of Tamil culture and civilization and an identity of the far south of India. In Tamil and Sanskrit literature of earlier times, the Pandyas were referred to as the rulers of the land where the Tamiraparani flowed. Tamiraparani is the chief river of the district which has a large network of tributaries which include the Peyar, Ullar, Karaiyar, Servalar, Pampar, Manimuthar, Varahanathi, Ramanathi, Jambunathi, Gadananathi, Kallar, Karunaiyar, Pachaiyar, Chittar, Gundar, Aintharuviar, Hanumanathi, Karuppanathi and Aluthakanniar. The two rivers of the district which are not linked with Tamiraparani are the Nambiar and the Hanumanathi of Nanguneri taluk.

Climate:

The district, in general experiences tropical climate with minor changes. The normal temperature varies between 24.4°C and 27.1°C at mean minimum, whereas the hottest climate experiences from March to May with mercury reaching 38.5°C at the highest. The climate is comparatively cool during the months from November to February. The average rainfall during 2005-06 is 917.86 mm and the number of rainy days varies from 98 to 110 in a year. The relative humidity, in general around the year is between 55 and 65% in most parts of the district, except during the north-east monsoon season when it is over 65%. However, the coastal areas will be comparatively more humid.

Boundaries

Tirunelveli district occupies a significant geographical position in the extreme southern part of the Indian peninsula. Its boundaries are clearly defined by a combination of natural features such as mountains and seas, as well as administrative borders with neighbouring districts and states. These boundaries have played an important role in shaping the district's history, economy, settlement patterns, and cultural interactions.

On the **western side**, Tirunelveli district is bounded by the lofty **Western Ghats**. This mountain range forms a strong natural barrier separating Tirunelveli from the

regions of **Travancore (present-day Kerala)**. The Western Ghats not only act as a physical boundary but also influence the district's climate, rainfall, vegetation, and river systems. Numerous mountain passes connect Tirunelveli with Kerala, facilitating limited trade and movement while still maintaining a distinct regional identity.

The **eastern boundary** of Tirunelveli is marked by the **Bay of Bengal**. The long coastline has historically connected the district with maritime trade routes, pearl and chank fisheries, and overseas commerce. Ports such as Tuticorin (Thoothukudi) developed along this boundary, enabling Tirunelveli to interact with Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and European trading powers. The eastern sea boundary is a natural, undisputed frontier that has greatly influenced the district's economic growth.

To the **southern side**, Tirunelveli is bounded by the **Indian Ocean**, near **Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari)**. This boundary marks the meeting point of land and sea and gives the district strategic and geographical importance. The southern coastal boundary has historically been associated with fishing, salt production, coastal trade, and cultural exchange. It also provides a natural demarcation separating Tirunelveli from the lands further south.

On the **northern side**, Tirunelveli district is bounded by the **Madura (Madurai) district**. Unlike the western and eastern boundaries, the northern boundary is not marked by a natural feature such as a river or mountain. Instead, it is an administrative boundary drawn roughly along an east–west line passing near important towns such as Virudhunagar (historically Virudupati). This boundary has facilitated agricultural, commercial, and cultural interactions between Tirunelveli and the Madurai region.

The boundaries of Tirunelveli together form a **roughly triangular shape**, with the Western Ghats on the west, the sea on the east and south, and the Madurai district on the north. This geographical enclosure has given the district a distinct character, making it almost a miniature representation of the Madras Presidency in terms of physical features. The natural boundaries have provided protection, while the open northern boundary has enabled interaction with the Tamil hinterland.

Cultural Heritage

Tirunelveli district possesses a rich and continuous cultural heritage that reflects the ancient Tamil civilization, deeply rooted religious traditions, vibrant folk practices,

classical arts, and a long historical association with the Pandya, Chola, Nayak, and later colonial periods. The cultural life of Tirunelveli has evolved over centuries, blending Sangam-age traditions with medieval temple culture and modern social reform movements. The district is widely regarded as one of the cultural heartlands of southern Tamil Nadu due to its strong adherence to Tamil language, Saiva-Vaishnava traditions, and age-old customs.

Religion forms the core of Tirunelveli's cultural heritage, with temples playing a central role in social, economic, and artistic life. The Nellaiappar–Kanthimathi Amman Temple at Tirunelveli stands as a magnificent example of Dravidian temple architecture, renowned for its towering gopurams, musical pillars, spacious mandapams, and intricate sculptures. Temples such as Sankaranarayanar Temple at Sankarankovil, Krishnapuram Venkatachalapathi Temple, and Courtallam temples highlight the synthesis of Saivism and Vaishnavism and demonstrate the district's spiritual tolerance and unity. These temples function not only as places of worship but also as centers for education, music, dance, festivals, and charity.

Temple festivals are an important aspect of Tirunelveli's cultural heritage and reflect the collective participation of the people. Grand festivals like Brahmotsavam, Chariot festivals (Ther Thiruvizha), Aani and Aadi festivals, and Karthigai Deepam attract devotees from across Tamil Nadu. The float festival (Theppam) and temple processions accompanied by traditional music such as nadaswaram and thavil reinforce community bonding and preserve ancient ritual practices. These festivals also promote traditional arts, crafts, and local economy.

Tirunelveli has made notable contributions to Tamil literature and scholarship. The district has produced several poets, scholars, and religious thinkers who enriched Tamil language and devotional literature. Saiva saints and scholars associated with Tirunelveli contributed to Thevaram traditions and temple inscriptions that preserve historical, social, and cultural information. The strong presence of Tamil mutts and educational institutions helped preserve classical Tamil grammar, literature, and philosophy.

Music and dance occupy a respected position in the cultural heritage of Tirunelveli. Carnatic music flourished under temple patronage, with devotional

compositions forming a significant part of religious ceremonies. Bharatanatyam performances during temple festivals and cultural events keep classical dance traditions alive. Alongside classical forms, folk arts such as Karagattam, Kummi, Kolattam, Oyilattam, and Villupattu are widely practiced during village festivals and social occasions, reflecting the agrarian lifestyle and oral traditions of the people.

Folk beliefs, customs, and rituals form another vital dimension of Tirunelveli's cultural heritage. Village deities like Sudalai Madan, Esakki Amman, and Mutharamman are worshipped with unique rituals involving folk music, dance, and dramatic performances. These practices highlight the deep connection between nature, agriculture, and spirituality. Rituals connected with rain, harvest, and protection of villages continue to be observed, preserving indigenous belief systems.

The cultural heritage of Tirunelveli is also expressed through its traditional occupations and crafts. Handloom weaving, palm-leaf products, brass and metal works, and temple-related crafts such as sculpture and stone carving have been practiced for generations. The district's traditional cuisine, including the famous Tirunelveli halwa, reflects regional tastes and cultural identity, often linked with temple festivals and social gatherings.

Social reform movements also form part of Tirunelveli's cultural legacy. The district played a role in promoting education, social equality, and religious harmony during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The coexistence of Hindu temples, Christian churches, and Muslim mosques illustrates a long tradition of communal harmony and shared cultural spaces.

In conclusion, the cultural heritage of Tirunelveli district is a rich tapestry woven from religion, literature, arts, festivals, folk traditions, crafts, and social values. Its temples stand as symbols of architectural excellence, while its festivals and folk practices preserve living traditions passed down through generations. The district continues to maintain its cultural identity while adapting to modern influences, making Tirunelveli an important center of Tamil cultural heritage.

Archeological Evidences

The Tirunelveli district occupies a significant place in the archaeological history of Tamil Nadu, as it provides continuous evidence of human occupation from prehistoric

times to the medieval period. Archaeological findings in the region reveal the evolution of early human settlements, megalithic culture, early historic trade, temple-based society, and administrative systems under various dynasties. The district's geographical features, such as river valleys, fertile plains, and foothills of the Western Ghats, created favorable conditions for early habitation, which is reflected in the abundance of archaeological remains.

Prehistoric evidence in Tirunelveli is found mainly in the form of stone tools and habitation sites belonging to the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic periods. Archaeological surveys have identified crude stone implements such as hand axes, scrapers, and flakes made of quartz and chert in riverbeds and hill slopes. These tools indicate the presence of early hunter-gatherer communities who depended on forest resources and river systems. The gradual transition from hunting-gathering to food production is evident from polished stone tools and traces of early agricultural activity in certain parts of the district.

Megalithic remains form one of the most important categories of archaeological evidence in Tirunelveli. Numerous burial sites consisting of dolmens, cairn circles, cists, urn burials, and stone circles have been discovered in regions such as Cheranmahadevi, Palayamkottai, Nanguneri, and Sankarankovil areas. These megalithic monuments reflect complex burial practices and belief systems associated with life after death. The presence of iron implements, black-and-red ware pottery, beads, and weapons inside burial sites indicates the use of iron technology and the emergence of organized communities during the Iron Age.

Early historic archaeological evidence in Tirunelveli reveals the district's integration into the Sangam-age Tamil society. Excavations and surface findings have yielded pottery, brick structures, coins, and inscriptions that indicate urbanization, trade, and political organization. The discovery of Roman coins in and around the district suggests active trade relations with the Roman world through nearby ports on the Tamil coast. These findings confirm Tirunelveli's role as a hinterland region supplying agricultural and forest produce for long-distance trade.

Inscriptions constitute a major source of archaeological evidence for reconstructing the history of Tirunelveli. Numerous stone inscriptions found on temple walls, hero stones

(nadukal), and copper plates belong to the Pandya, Chola, Vijayanagara, and Nayak periods. These inscriptions provide valuable information on land grants, irrigation management, temple administration, taxation, social structure, and religious practices. Hero stones found in rural areas commemorate warriors who sacrificed their lives in cattle raids or battles, reflecting the martial culture of early Tamil society.

Temple archaeology offers rich evidence of Tirunelveli's medieval cultural and architectural development. Temples such as the Nellaiappar–Kanthimathi Amman Temple, Sankaranarayanar Temple at Sankarankovil, and Krishnapuram Temple showcase advanced Dravidian architectural styles with gopurams, mandapams, sculptural panels, and inscriptions. Structural remains, iconography, and temple layouts reveal the growth of temple-centered economic and social life, where temples functioned as landowners, employers, and centers of learning.

Archaeological evidence related to irrigation and water management highlights the advanced engineering skills of the people of Tirunelveli. Ancient tanks, canals, sluices, and anicuts found across the district demonstrate organized efforts to control river water for agriculture. Inscriptions often mention the construction and maintenance of irrigation works by kings, local chieftains, and temple authorities, indicating the importance of collective responsibility in sustaining agrarian life.

Numismatic evidence from Tirunelveli further strengthens the archaeological record. Coins belonging to the Pandyas, Cholas, Vijayanagara rulers, Nayaks, and later European powers have been discovered in different parts of the district. These coins provide insights into economic conditions, trade networks, political authority, and monetary systems. The circulation of foreign coins also reflects Tirunelveli's participation in regional and international commerce.

The presence of ancient habitations, forts, roads, and market centers reveals Tirunelveli's strategic and administrative importance. Archaeological traces of old fortifications and settlement mounds suggest organized governance and defense mechanisms. Road networks connected interior regions with coastal ports and temple towns, facilitating trade and cultural exchange.

In conclusion, the archaeological evidence of Tirunelveli district presents a comprehensive picture of its historical development from prehistoric times to the

medieval era. Stone tools, megalithic burials, inscriptions, temples, irrigation works, coins, and settlement remains together highlight the district's cultural continuity, technological advancement, and socio-economic complexity. These archaeological findings confirm Tirunelveli's vital role in the broader history of Tamil Nadu and South India.

Cultural practices and Traditions

Tirunelveli district possesses a rich and vibrant cultural heritage shaped by its long historical continuity, fertile river systems, temple-centered society, and interaction between agrarian, pastoral, and trading communities. The cultural practices of the district reflect a harmonious blend of ancient Tamil traditions, religious beliefs, folk customs, and regional identities. These traditions have evolved over centuries under the influence of the Pandyas, Cholas, Nayaks, and later colonial interactions, while still preserving their indigenous character.

Religion plays a central role in shaping the cultural life of Tirunelveli. Hinduism forms the dominant religious tradition, with Shaivism and Vaishnavism deeply rooted in the region. Major temples such as the Nellaiappar–Kanthimathi Amman Temple, Sankaranarayanar Temple at Sankarankovil, and various Murugan and Amman temples act as cultural nuclei. Daily rituals, festivals, temple music, and processions are integral to community life, reinforcing social cohesion and religious identity. Temples also function as centers of learning, art, charity, and economic activity.

Temple festivals constitute an important cultural practice in Tirunelveli. Annual festivals such as Brahmotsavam, Ther Thiruvizha (chariot festivals), Kalyana Utsavam, and float festivals draw large public participation. These festivals are marked by ritual performances, chanting of hymns, devotional music, and dramatic enactments from epics and puranas. The chariot festivals, in particular, symbolize collective devotion and communal effort, as people from all sections of society participate in pulling the temple cars.

Folk religious practices and village deities form another significant aspect of Tirunelveli's cultural tradition. Worship of guardian deities such as Ayyanar, Karuppasamy, Sudalaimadan, and various Amman deities reflects ancient belief systems connected with protection, fertility, and ancestral spirits. These deities are often

worshipped through non-Brahmanical rituals, animal sacrifices in earlier times, and folk ceremonies conducted by village priests. Such practices highlight the coexistence of classical and folk religious traditions.

Agrarian customs and seasonal rituals play a vital role in the cultural life of Tirunelveli, as agriculture has historically been the main occupation of the people. Festivals like Pongal celebrate the agrarian cycle and express gratitude to nature, cattle, and the sun. Rituals associated with sowing, harvesting, and irrigation reflect the close relationship between the people and the Tamiraparani River. These customs reinforce communal cooperation and respect for natural resources.

Marriage customs in Tirunelveli reflect traditional Tamil values combined with local variations. Hindu marriages are conducted according to caste and community-specific rituals, emphasizing family ties, social obligations, and religious sanctity. Practices such as arranged marriages, ritual gifts, community feasts, and ceremonial music continue to be significant. At the same time, modern influences have introduced changes such as simplified ceremonies and legal registration, showing cultural adaptability.

Dress and adornment form an important component of cultural identity in Tirunelveli. Traditional attire such as veshti, angavastram, and sarees are commonly worn during religious ceremonies and festivals. Women traditionally adorn themselves with gold jewelry, which also serves as a symbol of social status and economic security. The district has been historically known for its skilled artisans and traditional craftsmanship, especially in metalwork and temple ornaments.

Folk arts and performing traditions of Tirunelveli represent the creative expression of the rural populace. Art forms such as Karagattam, Kummi, Oyilattam, Villupattu, and Therukoothu are performed during festivals, temple functions, and social gatherings. These performances combine music, dance, storytelling, and social commentary, preserving oral traditions and transmitting cultural values across generations.

Food culture in Tirunelveli reflects both simplicity and ritual significance. Rice-based meals, accompanied by vegetables, pulses, and traditional preparations, form the staple diet. Special dishes are prepared during festivals and rituals, and food offerings to

deities play an important role in religious observance. Communal feasting during festivals and life-cycle ceremonies reinforces social bonds and collective identity.

Social customs and community life in Tirunelveli have traditionally been governed by caste, kinship, and village institutions. Village assemblies, temple committees, and caste councils played a role in regulating social behavior and resolving disputes. Although these structures have evolved over time, they continue to influence social interactions and cultural norms, alongside modern democratic institutions.

The role of the Tamirabarani River

In this chapter describes about the Tamirabarani river system. The origin of the river and its tributaries are explained in the chapter. There are a number of sub anaicuts apart from the main dam Srivaikuntam. The different channels connected with the sub anaicuts are also brought out in the chapter. The Pushkaram festival takes places on twelve major holy rivers corresponding to the Hindu Zodiac signs during the transit of Guru Bhagavan from one Rasi to another. Accordingly Guru Bhagavan moves from Tula to Vrichika Rasi during October 12 and dwell in the same rasi for 12 days until October 23. Lakhs of devotees from across the state would take part in the event.

Meaning and Origin of the Name Tamirabarani

In Sanskrit 'tamra' means either "copper" or "red", and the second half of the word is identified variously with parna, "a leaf" or "a tree" and varna, "colour". Hence it is called as "The copper coloured river" or "the river of the red leaves". Tamirabarani river originates from the peak of the Periya Pothigai hills of the Western Ghats above Papanasam in the Ambasamudram taluk. Prior to the bifurcation of the Tirunelveli district Tamirabarani was the only major river in Tamil Nadu which had its source and end in the same district. After bifurcation, the river traverses the two districts Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi before joining the Gulf of Mannar in the Bay of Bengal at Punnaikayal near Thoothukudi.

These rivers join the Tamirabarani and enrich its course before it reaches the plains. The first tributary which enriches the water of the Tamirabarani in the plains on the right side is the Manimutharuu. Then comes the Gadananathi, which joins the Tamirabarani at Tiruppudaimaruthur. Before the Gadananathi's entry into the Tamirabarani, the Gadananathi is joined by the rivers Kallar, Karunaiyar and Veeranathi

or Varahanathi which joins the river Gadananathi about 1.5 km north east of Kila Ambur. The river Pachaiyar is another tributary which joins the Tamirabarani near Tharuvai village in Palayamkottai Taluk. One of the important and affluent tributaries of the Tamirabarani is the Chitranathi which arises in the Courtalam hills and receives supply from the rivers Gundar, Hanumanathi and Karuppanathi. The Chithar empties itself into the Tamirabarani in Sivalapperi village.

The Tamirabarani rises on a noble conical mountain called Pothigai, more commonly called Pothiyam or Pothiya-ma-malai, the meaning of which is probably "a place of concealment", as will be explained below. Locally it is called Periya Pothigai or the great Pothigai, to distinguish it from a smaller mountain adjoining it called Aindu-talai Pothigai, the Pothigai with the five heads. This mountain is the highest in the Tirunelveli range of ghats, being 6,800 feet in height, and is regarded by native poets as the distinguishing mountain of the Pandyas, one of the titles of the Pandya King being "Lord of Pothiyam". This mountain stands back nearly ten miles from the rest of the mountains of the range, so that the Tamirabarani which takes its rise upon it drains a considerable extent of mountain country before it emerges into the plains.

Thamirabarani River Basin Drainage

Tamiraparani and its tributaries originate at the eastern slope of Western Ghats ridge connecting Aduppkkal Mottai, Agasthiyamalai and Chemmunji Mottai etc., at an altitude of 1869 m (6132 ft.). More than 12 (Twelve) tributaries join the river as it runs down, of which Servalar, Manimuthar, Gadana nadhi, Pachaiar and Chittar can be termed as major ones. Tamiraparani after travelling a distance of 22 km from its origin is jointed by its tributary Servalar. The Manimuthar originates from the Mukkuttukal and confluence with Tamiraparani at its 36th km. The tributary Gadana nadhi joins Tamiraparani on its left at the 43rd km. The river flows through Cheranmahadevi Town and takes in the next tributary (viz.) pachayaru on its right. Tamiraparani thereafter winds it way through Tirunelveli and at a distance of 73 km from its origin, its tributary Chittar confluence with it near Sivlapperi. From this point, the river flow southwards and then eastwards and at its 96th km, the Srivaikundam anicut spans across the river, Then the river Tamiraparani, after traversing another 30 km drains into the Gulf of Mannar, just south of the village, Palayakayal .

Course of Tamirabarani River

It is in the Western Ghats that all the rivers of the district take their rise. Tamirabarani, the chief river of the district, drains an area of about 1,750 miles and from its source in the Periya Pothigi to its mouth in the Gulf of Mannar is 7l5 miles long. Possessing in the ghats alone a catchment area of 200 miles, it enjoys the full benefit of both the monsoons, and its bed is never dry. For some miles the stream flows with a rapid current through a densely wooded valley, till it precipitates itself over a ledge of rock about 100 feet high, thence, by a succession of rapid falls, amounting in the aggregate to 100 feet it reaches, after receiving the Peyar and Ullar on its left, over which the water falls in the magnificent cascade. At the foot of this fall the river is joined on the right by the Pambar, which rises in the Singampatti Zamindari, and a mile and a half further down, at the lowest end of the Kattalaimalai estate, the Karaiyar flows in on the left

From Papanasam eastward to its mouth at Punnaikayal on the Gulf of Mannar, a course of about 60 miles, the fall of the river gradually decreases from an average of about six feet a mile, in the Ambasamudram taluk, to less than half that figure after the Srivaikuntam taluk is reached. Its general depth, in times of normal flood, diminishes from 15 feet, in Ambasamudram, to 6 feet, below the Srivaikuntam anaicut, as the breath of its bed increases from about 300 feet, in the Ambasamudram taluk, to more than a quarter of a mile, below Alwarthirunagari, some 12 miles from the sea.

Tamirabarani System

Tamirabarani would be an important river in any district and in Tirunelveli its importance is enhanced by the contrast presented by the lands it irrigates to those situated near it but beyond its influence. Of all the rivers south of Madras that have their source in the Western Ghats, the Tamirabarani and the Cauvery alone obtain the full benefit of the south-west monsoon; and, though insignificant as regards its length and the area of its catchment basin, the Tamirabarani is for its size probably the most valuable river in the presidency.

On 94 percent of the area which it irrigates two crops are raised in all good years, and the richest lands, for instance, those lying on the upper reaches of the Kannadiyan, Kodagan and Palaiyan channels, produce annually over two tons of rice on acre. Many of them bear a double crop assessment of Rs. 2280 an acre, a rate unknown elsewhere in the

presidency. Under the seven upper anaicuts remissions are very rare, and even during the famine of 1876-1877 the Tamirabarani gave a bountiful supply.

As paddy growing land the valley derives much of its fertility from its subsoil of stiff yellow clay, which effectually preventing all soakage, keeps the water, vegetable matter and manure in suspension near the surface. The surface soil is mostly a light black loam, the exceptions being chiefly in eastern parts of the Tiruchendur and Srivaikuntam taluks, where sand predominates. Eight anaicuts span the river, all of which, except the lowest, at Srivaikuntam, are ancient works; but as to when and by whom they were built, nothing unfortunately is known.

The "Tamirabarani system" is as a rule included in the irrigation supplied by a number of tributaries, chiefly the Ramanadhi, Gatananadhi, Koraiyar and Jambunadhi, which join the main river within the Ambasamudram taluk. From the eight anaicuts named above water is conveyed to the fields, either by the direct means of channels or through tanks. Under the first two anaicuts almost all the irrigation is direct, and under the middle anaicuts, the fourth to the sixth, small tanks, most of which require several fillings in a season, are used to irrigate about an equal extent with channels. In the Marudur and Srivaikuntam areas channels account for only one-third of the irrigation; tanks become more capacious, and a few of them, if once filled, can hold enough water to bring a crop to maturity.

Anaicuts on Tamirabarani

There are eight anaicuts on the Tamirabarani, seven of which were constructed before the arrival of the English in Tirunelveli. They are :

1. The Kodaimelalagiyan Anaicut or Talaiyanai Anaicut and channels north and south sides.
2. The Nadhiyunni Anaicut and channel or north side.
3. The Kannadiyan Anaicut and channel or south side.
4. The Ariyanayakapuram Anaicut and channel or north side.
5. The Palavur Anaicut and channel or south side.
6. The Suttamalli Anaicut and channel or north side.
7. The Marudur Anaicut with channel, on both sides of the river. There are also four channels without anaicuts for supplying tanks in high freshes, all below Marudur.

Kodaimelalagiyan Anaicut or Talaiyanai Anaicut

The highest of these is rather a dam than an anaicut. It is called, however, by the natives as Talaiyanai, the head or first anaicut. The river after descending the Papanasam falls passes through a narrow gorge, which is partially blocked up by huge boulders and a reef of rock. In the rock holes have been cut in which posts, for the most part of palmyra trees, have been inserted, and against these cross bars with brushwood have been placed. Water is thus supplied for the channels. It has, however, two good channels, one on the north ten miles long, and the other to the south, six miles, ending in tanks.

Nadhiyunni Anaicut

A few miles above Ambasamudram is the next anaicut called, the Nadhiyunni, which raises the level of the river. Like most ancient works of its class, it stands, as do the next six anaicuts below it, at an ablique angle to the course of the river. Built on rock, it gives off one channel only, on the left bank of the river, which irrigates the villages of Kila Ambasamudram, Mela Ambasamudram, Brahmadesam, Urkad and Sattapattu. The length of the anaicut proper is 468 feet, though it is difficult to distinguish where the anaicut ends. The channel is about twelve miles long, and revenue derived from it about Rs. 12,968 from 1,119 acres of land.

Kannadiyan Anaicut

The next barrier, about a mile and a half away is the Kannadiyan Anaicut, just below the junction of the Manimutharuu with the Tamirabarani. It was rebuilt by Captain Horsley in 1842 and has lately undergone extensive repair. It is a carefully built cut-stone work, nine feet high with a top width of six feet and is supported on a foundation of solid rock, The channel takes off from the right or southern bank of the river. Its length is twenty-two miles, and the land so good under it that at Cheranmahadevi, the residence of the Sub-Collector, the land sells at Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,000 an acre. Revenue on 9,574 acres is Rs. 1,79,812.

Self-Assessment Questions
1. Briefly describe the location, topography, and climate of Tirunelveli.
2. Explain the historical origin and significance of the name "Nellai."
3. Write a short note on the early history of Tirunelveli region.
4. Discuss the settlement patterns in Tirunelveli with reference to geography.
5. Examine the boundaries and regional importance of Tirunelveli district.
6. Highlight the archaeological evidences found in the Tirunelveli region.
7. Give an overview of the cultural practices and traditions of Tirunelveli.
8. Describe the cultural heritage of Nellai with special reference to temples.
9. Explain the significant rivers and natural resources of Tirunelveli.
10. Assess the role of the Tamirabarani River in the development of Tirunelveli.

Early political History: the role of Chera, Chola, and Pandya – Medieval Kingdoms, Pandya and Nayaks rule – Architectural and Cultural Contributions: Temples and other monuments.

Objectives
- Early Rule: Chera, Chola, and Pandya dynasties ruled Tirunelveli.
- Medieval Period: Pandyas and Nayaks governed the region.
- Architecture: Temples and gopurams were built.
- Culture: Temples fostered art and festivals.

Contribution of the Early Cheras

The Early Cheras were one of the foremost ruling dynasties of ancient Tamilakam, flourishing mainly during the Sangam Age. Though their core territory lay in the western regions of Tamil Nadu and present-day Kerala, their political influence extended into the southern districts, including the Tirunelveli region. Tirunelveli occupied an important frontier position between the Chera and Pandya realms, and the Cheras exercised authority over the region at various times through conquest, alliances, and indirect administration. Sangam literature, inscriptions, and later historical traditions reveal that the Cheras played a notable role in shaping the political and administrative evolution of Tirunelveli.

Chera Rulers and Their Influence in Tirunelveli

The Early Chera rulers, popularly known as the *Vanavaramban* Cheras, were powerful monarchs who ruled with military strength and diplomatic skill. Kings such as **Uthiyan Cheralathan**, **Nedum Cheralathan**, **Palyanai Sel Kelu Kuttuvan**, and **Senguttuvan (the Red Chera)** expanded Chera influence beyond their western heartland. Tirunelveli, being strategically located along trade routes connecting the west coast with the pearl fisheries of the east, attracted the attention of Chera rulers. These kings undertook military expeditions into the southern territories to check Pandya dominance and to secure commercial interests.

Uthiyan Cheralathan, one of the earliest Chera rulers, is known from Sangam texts for his military campaigns and generosity. His control over southern routes

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indirectly affected Tirunelveli, which served as a passage between inland and coastal regions. Later rulers like Nedum Cheralathan strengthened Chera authority by subduing rival chiefs in border regions. Sangam poems describe Chera victories over Pandya forces, suggesting that Tirunelveli frequently came under Chera military pressure or influence.

Senguttuvan, the most celebrated Chera ruler, further consolidated Chera power. Though his main achievements were in the west, his campaigns against rival Tamil kings helped extend Chera prestige into southern Tamilakam. Tirunelveli, during his reign, functioned as a frontier region where Chera authority was asserted through military officers and loyal chieftains rather than permanent royal presence. Thus, Chera rulers played a decisive role in determining the political status of Tirunelveli during the Sangam Age.

Nature of Chera Administration in Tirunelveli

The administrative system of the Early Cheras was largely **monarchical**, with the king serving as the supreme authority. However, in distant regions like Tirunelveli, administration was mostly **decentralized and indirect**. The Chera kings governed the region through subordinate chiefs, local chieftains (*Velirs*), and military governors. This method allowed the Cheras to maintain control without disrupting local traditions and social structures.

The Tirunelveli region was divided into territorial units such as *nadus* and *urs*, which were administered by local officials under Chera supervision. Village assemblies played a significant role in managing local affairs, including land distribution, irrigation maintenance, and tax collection. The Cheras respected local autonomy, allowing village institutions to function effectively, provided they acknowledged Chera sovereignty and paid tribute.

Revenue administration formed a key aspect of Chera governance in Tirunelveli. Land revenue constituted the principal source of income, and agricultural lands along the Tamiraparani river were carefully assessed. Taxes were collected in kind, especially paddy, and also in the form of forest produce and trade goods. The Chera administration ensured that revenue collection was systematic yet flexible, taking into account local ecological conditions.

Military Administration and Frontier Control

Military administration was crucial in Tirunelveli due to its frontier character. The Cheras stationed military officers and garrisons in key locations to safeguard trade routes and maintain law and order. The region served as a buffer zone against Pandya expansion, and Chera armies frequently passed through Tirunelveli during southern campaigns. War elephants, infantry, and local militia formed the backbone of Chera military power.

Military officials were entrusted with both defense and civil responsibilities. They supervised revenue collection, protected merchants, and enforced royal authority. This dual role strengthened Chera control over Tirunelveli without necessitating a large permanent administrative structure. The presence of military commanders ensured political stability and prevented rebellion by local chiefs.

Judicial and Administrative Practices

Justice under the Cheras was administered according to customary laws and royal edicts. In Tirunelveli, village elders and assemblies handled minor disputes, while serious cases were referred to royal officers. The Chera king was regarded as the ultimate dispenser of justice, symbolizing *aram* (righteous rule). Administrative decisions emphasized fairness, social harmony, and moral governance, as reflected in Sangam literature.

Officials were expected to uphold ethical conduct and protect the interests of subjects. Abuse of power was discouraged, and rulers were praised for benevolence and generosity. This ethical framework contributed to political legitimacy and popular acceptance of Chera authority in Tirunelveli.

Relationship with Local Chieftains

A significant administrative feature of Chera rule in Tirunelveli was their relationship with local chieftains. The Cheras followed a policy of **conciliation rather than direct annexation**. Local chiefs retained authority over their territories but acknowledged Chera supremacy and provided military and economic support when required. This system minimized resistance and ensured administrative efficiency.

Through marriage alliances, honors, and gifts, the Chera rulers secured the loyalty of regional elites. This cooperative administrative model allowed Tirunelveli to remain politically stable even during periods of inter-dynastic conflict.

The Chola Occupation of the Pandya Country

The occupation of the entire Pandya country by the Cholas is a well-established historical fact, though it finds no mention in the Madura Purana or in the traditional Pandya king lists. This omission cannot be explained by chronology, since the last Pandya ruler named in the lists, Kubja or Sundara Pandya, lived nearly two centuries after the beginning of Chola rule under Rajendra Chola, who ascended the throne in A.D. 1064. The silence of the Puranic tradition therefore reflects its unhistorical and mythological character rather than the absence of Chola domination.

Epigraphical evidence clearly proves that Rajendra Chola ruled over the Pandya country. Numerous inscriptions dating from his reign have been found throughout Tinnevelly and even at Kottar in South Travancore, then considered part of the Pandya territory. In some inscriptions he is styled "Rajendra Chola-Pandyan," indicating the union of Chola and Pandya sovereignty. Since Rajendra's inscriptions record victories over Ahava-Malla of the Chalukya dynasty but do not mention any conquest of the Pandyas, it is likely that the Pandya country came under Chola rule through submission or succession rather than violent annexation.

Despite the abundance of inscriptions, the memory of Chola rule has completely faded from popular tradition in the Pandya country. Rajendra Chola is believed to have ruled for an exceptionally long period, possibly up to forty-nine years. His successor Kulotunga Chola ascended the throne in the early 12th century A.D., and inscriptions record a reign extending over four decades. The rulers who followed—Karikala Chola, Vira Chola, and Vikrama Chola—are often described as Chola-Pandyas, indicating continued Chola authority over Pandya lands.

The date of important cultural figures such as the poet Kambar can also be fixed through this chronology. References to Ramanuja, whose activities are firmly dated by inscriptions to the early 12th century A.D., prove that Kambar could not have lived in A.D. 886 as claimed by later tradition. Thus, epigraphical evidence not only establishes

Chola political domination over the Pandya country but also provides a reliable framework for South Indian political and cultural history.

The Chola–Pandya Dynasty

The Chola–Pandya period represents a complex phase in South Indian history marked by overlapping claims of sovereignty by the old Pandya line, the Cholas, and the Chola–Pandyas. According to Dr. Burnell's epigraphical researches at Tanjore, supported by evidence from Tinnevelly and Madura inscriptions, these dynasties often co-existed as rival powers, each being portrayed as supreme by its own supporters. Such rivalry explains the discrepancies found in traditional records and inscriptions.

Rajendra Chola stands out as the most important ruler of this period. Inscriptions refer to him under various names and titles such as Vira Chola, Kulotunga Chola (I), Rajarajendra Chola, Rajaraja Chola, Narendra Chola, and Rajarajanarendra Chola, while his royal title was Ko(p)parakesari Varma. Dr. Burnell conclusively establishes that all these names refer to a single ruler, Rajendra Chola, whose reign extended for forty-nine years from A.D. 1064 to 1113. His abhisheka took place in A.D. 1079, and he is credited with restoring Tanjore, which had earlier suffered devastation due to Chalukya invasions.

Rajendra Chola was a great patron of Brahmanism and Saivism, yet he showed religious tolerance, as evidenced by his support to Buddhist scholars like Buddhamitra, who named his Tamil grammar *Viracholiyam* after him. Rajendra is also said to have installed his brother Sundara Pandya-Chola on the throne of Madura, probably as a regent. Sundara Pandya-Chola, whose original name was Gangaikkonda Chola, is known from inscriptions and has left his name preserved in places such as Gangaikondan in Tinnevelly.

According to Dr. Burnell, Rajendra Chola was succeeded by Vikrama Chola, who ruled for about fifteen years, followed by Kulotunga Chola II, whose name frequently appears in Tinnevelly inscriptions. However, Chalukya inscriptions suggest that Kulotunga Chola directly succeeded Rajendra Chola, indicating some uncertainty in the exact succession. Despite such differences, epigraphically evidence firmly establishes the political dominance of the Chola–Pandyas in the Pandya country during the late 11th and early 12th centuries A.D.

Early political History

Tirunelveli is one of the oldest Territorial Dominion in the state of Tamilnadu. It has a very rich historical background that goes up to 3,000 years. Tirunelveli is one of the region which has a rich culture, tradition and historical sites, temples which attracts tourism all over the year. It is a city that lies on the banks of river Thamirabarani. Tirunelveli is the second headquarters of Pandya dynasty. Pandya dynasty was one of the three illustrious Tamil dynasties. The other two dynasty are Cheras and Cholas. Tirunelveli is believed to be ruled at different time by early Pandya, cheras, the mediaeval Chola and later Cholas, and later pandyas. Tirunelveli remained under the control of the Chola until the early 13th century, 2nd Pandiyan Empire was established with Madurai as its capital. Almost every Temple has reference to the Pandya dynasty inscriptions on the walls of temples or depiction of pandya symbol on the coins.

Tirunelveli had different names in different times based on the rulers. The district was call tenpadiyanadu during pandiyans. The Chola dynasty name it as Mudikonda Chola Mandalam. Madurai Naik call it as Tirunelveli Seemai. The Pandya dynasty in the region States to several centuries before the Christian Era from inscriptions by Ashoka (304 to 233 BCE) and mention in the mahavamsa the brihat Samhita and the writings of megasthenes (350-290 CE) the province came under the Chola ruler Rajendra Chola 1 in 1064 CE but there has been a confusion whether conquered the region or it was given voluntarily. Tirunelveli region remained under the control of Cholas until 13th century. The Nellaiappar Temple is one of the popular work of Pandyas in tirunelveli. It was a royal shrine of Pandyas in 13th and 14th Century. City also benefited from the dams and canals build with royal patronage at that time.

After the death of Kulasekara Pandiya, Tirunelveli region came under the rule of Vijayanagara rulers and maravar chieftians, they are also called as palayakars or poligars during 16th Centuary. Tirunelveli was a subsidiary capital of Madurai Nayak. Under Vishvantha Nayak, the city was rebuilt in 1560. Then After a century, Nayak rule ended in 1736 and the region was captured by Chanda Sahib, Arcot Nawab and Mohammad Yusaf Khan in mid Century.

An Archaeological survey in tirunelveli that shows a temple built during pandya dynasty

You can hear the *saptha swarangal* (the seven basic notes) come like a wave as it were from the stone pieces.

The region was popularly identified as Nellai Cheemai (cheemai meaning - developed foreign town). After the Polygar Wars which witnessed the unfortunate defeat of Veerapandiya Kattabomman (dauntless 18th century polygar), Tirunelveli was acquired from the Nawabs of the Carnatic by the British and the Britishers named it as Tinnevelly.

Chera

The **Chera dynasty**, one of the three crowned kings (*Muvendars*) of ancient Tamilakam, played a significant role in the political, economic, and cultural history of the **Tirunelveli region**. Though Tirunelveli was primarily associated with the **Pandya kingdom**, the Cheras exercised influence over parts of this region at various times due to its **strategic location**, rich natural resources, and importance in inland and maritime trade. Sangam literature, inscriptions, and later historical traditions indicate that the Cheras were not merely peripheral players but active participants in shaping the region's history.

Geographically, Tirunelveli lay close to the **western ghats and mountain passes** that connected the Pandya country with the Chera heartland in **Malabar (Kerala)**. These passes, such as the **Aryankavu and Shencottah gaps**, were vital trade routes. Control over Tirunelveli enabled the Cheras to access the **pearl fisheries of the east coast**, agricultural produce of the Tamraparni basin, and commercial routes linking the **Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal**. Hence, the Cheras repeatedly attempted to assert authority or influence in this region.

Politically, Sangam texts suggest frequent **wars and alliances** among the Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas. The Tirunelveli region often became a **contested zone** between the Cheras and the Pandyas. Chera rulers like **Uthiyan Cheralathan** and **Senguttuvan Chera** are believed to have led military campaigns that reached deep into Pandya territory. Though long-term Chera rule over Tirunelveli was rare, **temporary occupation and military presence** strengthened Chera prestige and limited Pandya dominance.

The **Tamraparni River basin**, the agricultural heart of Tirunelveli, attracted Chera interest because of its **fertility and irrigation potential**. Chera interventions likely

influenced land administration and agrarian practices. The Cheras were known for encouraging **wet cultivation**, tank irrigation, and village settlements. Their influence may have contributed to the development of irrigation structures and agrarian expansion in parts of Tirunelveli, particularly in regions closer to the western hills.

Economically, the Cheras played a crucial role in **trade networks** that passed through Tirunelveli. The region served as a **link between inland trade routes and coastal ports** such as Korkai and nearby harbours. Chera merchants and guilds were involved in the trade of **pepper, pearls, chanks, ivory, spices, and textiles**. Roman trade, attested by coin finds and literary references, indirectly benefited Tirunelveli through Chera-controlled western ports like **Muziris**, which were connected to the Pandya east coast through inland routes.

Culturally, Chera influence is visible in the **spread of Sangam culture** in Tirunelveli. Sangam poems reflect shared traditions of heroism, patronage of poets, and Tamil social values across Chera and Pandya territories. The Cheras were patrons of Tamil poets, and their cultural ideals influenced the courts and chieftains of Tirunelveli. The region thus became part of a **common Tamil cultural sphere**, rather than remaining isolated under Pandya control.

Religion also provides evidence of Chera influence. During the early historic period, the Cheras supported **hero worship**, **Murugan cults**, and later **Buddhism and Jainism**. Tirunelveli, with its caves and hill shrines, shows traces of early Jain and Buddhist presence, which may have been encouraged by Chera rulers and merchants moving through the region. This contributed to the **religious diversity** of Tirunelveli.

In the later historic period, especially after the decline of the Sangam Cheras, Chera influence persisted through **local chieftains and feudatories** who maintained ties with Kerala. Even during Pandya resurgence, Tirunelveli remained a **zone of interaction** rather than rigid political separation. Chera customs, trade connections, and familial alliances continued to shape regional society.

In conclusion, although Tirunelveli was fundamentally a **Pandya region**, the **Chera role was significant and multidimensional**. Through military expeditions, control of trade routes, cultural exchange, agrarian influence, and religious patronage, the Cheras contributed meaningfully to the historical development of Tirunelveli. The region

stands as a testament to the **interconnected political and cultural life of ancient Tamilakam**, where boundaries were fluid and power was shared, contested, and negotiated among the three great Tamil dynasties.

Contribution of the Early Cholas in the Tirunelveli Region

The beginnings of the early history of the area cannot be traced with much preciSIOn. It appear'> that the empire of Asoka, the Gre:1t Mauryan Emperor. extended as far as Ponoaiyar or Gadilam in South Arcot District and most likely included the area covered b} the modern Pondichcrry region. Mamulanar, a Sangam poet, says that the Mauryas led a warlike expedition to the south to subjugate the chieftain of Mohur (identifiable with the place of the same name in South Arcot District) when the Kosar were not able to conquer him. This is indireclly confirmed by the Tibetan historian Taranath who refers to Bindusara·s conquest of the Deccan and South Tndia lying between the two seas. Asoka in his inscriptions makes a distinction between the territories and peoples within his Empire and those ou tside by using the tijira to denote the former and terms anta, prrwlwnta and pratyama to denote the latter. Those who were th.us outside his Empire in the South w.:re the Cholas, Pandyas, Kerala putras and Satyaputras. Tl1ere were two branches among the Cholas who are referred to in plural, one of them according to Ptolemy (second century A.D.) ruling from Orlhura identifiable with. modern Uraiyur (a part of the present Tiruchchirapalli) and the other from a place called Ad.atos. identifiable with AriJmdu, now a village ncar modern Thanjavur which was in the Chota period the headquarters of an administrative division called Arkkattu Kuram. Thus, if th.e Cholas who were in Asoka 's period ruling over the lower Kaveri delta on the borders of his Empire in the south it may be presumed that the Empire of Asoka extended as far as the Gadilam in the South Arcot District and thus included a good part of the South. Arcot District and the Pondicherry area. The region appears to have been occupied by a people who were mentioned in the Mackenzie m·tnuscripL'i as the Kurumbars.

Not much is known about political conditions in the Pondicherry area till one comes to the period of the Pallavas of Kanch.ipuram in the fourth century A. D. Early Tamil literature mentions two territ0rial divisions in the northern p.ut of the Tamil country, namely Aruvanadu and Aruvavadatalainndu. The Aruvanadu was probably the

same as Arunoi mentioned by Ptolemy with its capita l at Malanga ruled by Basaronaga . Malanga was obviously the same Mavilangai. This Aruvanadu covered the region between the G.tdilam and Ponnaiyar in which were included the Pondicherry territory besides Marakkanam and Tindivanam in the South Arcot District. The inclusion of Pondichcrry in this nadu is also borne out by the evidence of the Bahur plates of the Pallava king Nrpatungavannan which mention that the gifl village of Vakur not far from Pondicherry was situated in the Arul•anauukkilvali (the eastern division of Aruvanadu). It was occupied by a people called in earl) Tamil literature as the Eiynar who arc said to have been ruling over the Oymanadu. The Aruvavadatalainadu was then o~.:cupied by a people called the Oliyar who appear to have been divided into several branches (Paloliyar) and were probably of Naga lineage. It is not known if they had anything to do with the Kalabhras who are said to have bcetl overthrown by the Pandya and Pallava kings in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

The Periplus Muris Erytliraci of the last quarter of the first c·~ntury A.D. mentions three market towns and harbours ill the east coast of Soutl:t lndia through which trade with the western countries. pa rticularly Rome. was c:trricd on. The work says : ··Among the market town-; of these countries and hhrbours where the ships put in from Damirica and from the north, the most important a re. in order as they be, first Camra, then Poduca, then Sopatma in which there are ships of the country coasting along the shore as far a<; Damirica··. The three port towns have been respectively identified with Kaverippattinam at the mouth of River Kaveri (Thanjavur District). Pondicherry and Marakkanam (South Arcot District) called So-pattinam or Eyil-pattinam in Tamil literature. If the identification of Poduca wilh Pondicherry i~ correct then it must have ~c n an important place through which the Romans traded with Soutl1 India.

The importance of Pondicherry as a port is further supported by the evidence of the archaeological find:. unearthed from Arikamedu. There was a Roman factory at this Arikamedu as is evidenced by a warehouse, dying watt. Roman pottery (Rouletted ware) and a few amphorae jars associate with the Romans. A number of potsherds inscribed with Dravida letters were also unearthed in the course of the excavations. They bear close resemblance to the unity or the potsherds recovered from the excavations at Alagarai and Uraiyur (Tiruchchirapalli District) and Kanchipuram (Chengalpattu District). The writing

may be assigned to tllC period roughly from the second century B.C. to second century A.D. Archaeological evidence shows that the site was first occupied by the end of the first century B.C. or the beginning of the first century A.D. But sometime in the second century A.D. the site seems to have been de erted for some reason and the place sank into insignificance.

The Early Cholas played a significant and formative role in the political, administrative, economic, social, and cultural development of the Tirunelveli region, which formed the southern frontier of Tamilakam in ancient times. Though the region was often influenced by the Pandyas, the Early Cholas, through military expeditions, administrative expansion, and cultural patronage, left a lasting imprint on Tirunelveli. Literary references, inscriptions, and archaeological evidence together indicate that the Cholas considered Tirunelveli an important strategic and economic zone, especially due to its fertile river valleys, pearl fisheries, and proximity to the southern trade routes.

Politically, the Early Cholas extended their influence into the Tirunelveli region during periods when Pandya power weakened. Sangam literature and later inscriptions suggest frequent conflicts between the Cholas and the Pandyas for control over the southern territories. Tirunelveli, lying between the Vaigai basin and the Tamiraparani river system, became a contested region. Early Chola rulers undertook military campaigns to assert dominance over this area, either directly administering it or installing loyal local chieftains. Through these political interventions, the Cholas ensured control over important trade corridors and secured their southern boundaries.

Administratively, the Early Cholas introduced organized systems of governance in the Tirunelveli region. They followed a centralized monarchy supported by local administrative units such as *nadus* and *urs*. Local assemblies, including village councils, played an important role in managing day-to-day affairs such as land distribution, irrigation maintenance, and tax collection. Chola administrative practices promoted stability and continuity, enabling effective control even in frontier regions like Tirunelveli. The presence of Chola administrative terminology in inscriptions found in the region indicates the spread of their bureaucratic system.

The economic contribution of the Early Cholas to Tirunelveli was substantial. The region benefited greatly from the Tamiraparani river, which supported intensive

agriculture. The Cholas encouraged wet cultivation, especially paddy farming, by improving irrigation facilities such as canals, tanks, and sluices. Land revenue formed a major source of income for the state, and systematic assessment of land helped in maximizing agricultural output. Tirunelveli also gained importance as a center for trade in agricultural surplus, forest products, and pearls, thereby integrating the region into the wider Chola economic network.

Trade and commerce flourished in Tirunelveli under Chola influence. The region was closely connected to ancient ports like Korkai and served as a link between inland production centers and coastal trade hubs. The Early Cholas promoted internal and external trade by ensuring security on trade routes and supporting merchant guilds. Goods such as spices, pearls, textiles, and agricultural produce were exchanged with other parts of Tamilakam and foreign regions, including Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. This commercial prosperity contributed to urban growth and economic diversification in Tirunelveli.

The Early Cholas also made notable contributions to religious and cultural life in the Tirunelveli region. They were ardent patrons of Shaivism, and many temples dedicated to Lord Shiva were either constructed or expanded under their rule. Temples functioned not only as religious centers but also as hubs of economic activity, education, and social welfare. Land grants made by Chola rulers and officials to temples helped sustain priests, scholars, and artisans. The spread of Shaiva devotional traditions strengthened Tamil religious identity in the region.

Culturally, the Early Cholas encouraged Tamil language and literature in Tirunelveli. Sangam poetry and later Tamil works reflect the shared cultural ethos of the Chola-controlled regions. The patronage of poets, scholars, and artists contributed to the diffusion of classical Tamil culture. Music, dance, and ritual performances associated with temples became integral to the social life of the region. This cultural integration helped Tirunelveli become an inseparable part of the broader Tamil civilization.

Socially, the Early Cholas promoted an organized agrarian society in Tirunelveli. Land grants to Brahmins, temples, and military officials led to the development of *brahmadeyas* and temple-centered settlements. These institutions played a role in spreading education, Vedic learning, and ethical norms. At the same time, various

occupational groups such as farmers, artisans, traders, and fishermen found stable livelihoods under Chola administration. Though caste distinctions existed, the Chola period witnessed functional social harmony based on economic interdependence.

Militarily, Tirunelveli held strategic importance for the Early Cholas as a southern defense zone. Control over this region enabled them to counter Pandya resurgence and maintain influence over Sri Lanka-bound sea routes. Fortifications, garrisons, and the presence of military officers ensured law and order. The region also served as a recruitment base for soldiers and auxiliaries, strengthening Chola military capacity.

In conclusion, the contribution of the Early Cholas to the Tirunelveli region was multifaceted and enduring. Through political expansion, administrative organization, agricultural development, trade promotion, religious patronage, and cultural integration, the Cholas transformed Tirunelveli into a prosperous and well-governed region. Their influence laid the foundations for later Chola and Pandya developments and helped integrate Tirunelveli firmly into the historical and cultural framework of ancient Tamil Nadu. The Early Chola legacy in Tirunelveli thus occupies an important place in the study of South Indian regional history.

Pandya

The Sanskrit name Pandya is written in Tamil Pandiya, but the more completely Tamilised form Pandi is still more commonly used all over Southern India. I derive Pandya, not from the Tamil and Malayalam Pandu, ancient, though that is a very tempting derivation, but from the Sanskrit Pandu, the name of the father of the five Pandava brothers. This very form Pandya, in the sense of a descendant of Pandu, is mentioned, as I am informed by Professor Max Midler, by Katyayana, the immediate successor of Panini. It is evident that the kings of this race by their adoption of this name meant to claim kindred with tho celebrated Pandava brothers, and the marriage of Arjuna with the daughter of the Pandya king seems to have been recorded, or invented, as an evidence of this relationship. The earliest indubitable reference to the Pandya kingdom in the records of Northern India is in one of Asoka's inscriptions about B.C. 250.

Intermarriage with the Pandyas

The marriage of **Arjuna and Chitrangada** is traditionally linked to the **Adi-parva of the Mahabharata**. In the original Sanskrit text, however, the king is named

Chitravahana, not a Pandya, and his capital is **Manipura**, not Madurai. According to **Monier Williams' Sanskrit Dictionary**, Manipura is located in the **Kalinga region**, not in the Pandya country. Chitrangada bears a son, **Babhruvahana**, whom Arjuna leaves to rule Manipura.

The **Tamil prose translation** of the Mahabharata identifies Manipura with **Madurai**, calls Chitravahana a **Pandya king**, and equates him with **Malayadhvaja Pandya**. This identification appears doubtful, though a South Indian recension of the Sanskrit Mahabharata (Sabha-parva) supports it by describing **Sahadeva's visit to Manipura**, ruled by a Pandya king. However, **Professor H. H. Wilson** notes that this episode is **absent in northern manuscripts**, weakening the identification. Further, the **Bhagavata Purana** states that Chitrangada was the daughter of a **serpent king**, not a Pandya ruler.

Oldest Pandya Titles

The Pandya dynasty may have existed before this relationship The Maran. with the Pandava brothers was thought of, for Maran, not Pandiyan, appears to have been the most ancient name of the head of the dynasty. In the titles given to the Pandya king in old inscriptions I have always found " the Maran" stand at the head of the list, and I found a portion of Korkai itself called, not Pandya-Mangalam, but Mara-Mangalam, " the good fortune of the Maran." The names seem to have gone in pairs, Mara and Korkai, Pandya and Madura. Korkai-ali, ruler of Korkai, is a title given to Kulasekhara, the supposed founder of the Pandya dynasty, by the author of the Vettri-verkai, himself a Pandya king.

Early Sinhalese–Pandya relations are referred to in the *Mahavamsa*. **Korkai**, at the mouth of the Tamraparni River**,** appears to have been the early capital of the **Pandya kingdom** around the **6th century BCE**. At this time, the king of **Tamraparni (Ceylon)** is said to have sent ambassadors to the Pandya court to negotiate a **marriage alliance**. Though the *Mahavamsa* mentions "Southern Madhura," this may be an anachronism, as **Korkai's** existence may have been forgotten by the time of its composition.

The Pandya king's name appears in Pali as Pandawo or Pandu, likely derived from Pandya/Pandi. According to tradition, Vijaya, the founder of the Sinhalese kingdom, married a Pandya princess, who arrived in Ceylon with a large retinue. Pandya

influence is further suggested by names such as Pandu-vasadeva and Pandukabhaya, early Sinhalese rulers whose names indicate Pandya connections.

Notably, the great irrigation reservoirs of Ceylon are attributed to rulers with Pandya-associated names, suggesting that irrigation techniques may have been borrowed from the Pandya country, especially Tirunelveli–Madura region. Vijaya is also said to have paid an annual tribute of pearls and chanks to his Pandya father-in-law, implying Pandya political superiority. These traditions indicate that the **Pandya kingdom predated Aryan settlement in Ceylon**, pushing the beginnings of Pandya civilisation to **c. 700 BCE**. Early Tamil invasions of Ceylon, however, were mostly by **Cholas**, not Pandyas.

Greek Notices of the Pandyas

Megasthenes, who was sent as an ambassador by Seleucus Nicator (one of Alexander the Great's successors) to the court of Chandragupta Maurya (referred to as *Sandracottus*), visited Pataliputra around **302 BCE**. He mentioned a region in India called **Pandaia**, which he associated with the only daughter of the "Indian Heracles," identified with **Krishna**. Scholars generally agree that this region refers to the **Pandya kingdom** of South India.

Megasthenes' description—especially his reference to pearl fisheries—clearly identifies Pandaia with the southern Pandya country, particularly Tinnevelly (Tirunelveli) and Korkai, which were famous centers of pearl fishing. Although his account mixes myth and fact, he correctly linked the name Pandaia to the Pandya rulers.

Later, during the reign of Emperor Augustus, an Indian embassy was sent to Rome. According to Strabo, the embassy came from King Pandion, widely identified as a Pandya ruler, not Porus. This is confirmed by Georgius Syncellus, who records that *Pandion, king of the Indians*, sent envoys seeking friendship with Augustus. This embassy highlights the advanced political status and extensive foreign trade of the Pandya kingdom, especially through pearl trade and maritime commerce.

Boundaries of the Pandya Country

According to classical Tamil geographical stanzas, regarded as authoritative by Tamil scholars, the boundaries of the Pandya country were clearly defined. The northern boundary was the river Vellaru, the southern boundary was Kumari (Cape Comorin), the

eastern boundary was the sea—comprising the Gulf of Manaar and Palk Strait—and the western boundary was known as *Peruvali* or "the great highway." These stanzas were composed to preserve traditional territorial limits and were accepted by both poets and rulers.

The Vellaru river mentioned as the northern boundary of the Pandya country was also described as the southern boundary of the Chola country, indicating a mutually accepted frontier. This boundary was not the Vellaru near Porto Novo but the river rising near Marungapuri in the Trichinopoly region, flowing through Pudukkottai and entering the Palk Strait south of Point Calymere. This identification is supported by social customs, such as the traditional belief among the Nattukkottai Chetties that women should not cross the Vellaru, as crossing territorial boundaries was considered inauspicious.

The southern boundary of the Pandya kingdom was Cape Comorin, marking the extreme southern tip of the Indian peninsula. The western boundary, known as *Peruvali* or *Valuti-kal* (the Pandya king's highway), referred to the mountain pass leading into Travancore through the Western Ghats near Courtallam. This was specifically the Achchan-kovil pass, which served as the principal western route during early times.

Based on these boundaries, the Pandya territory included the whole of Nanji-nadu in South Travancore, north-west of Cape Comorin. This interpretation is confirmed by inscriptions from the Nanji-nadu region. Thus, the classical Tamil stanzas provide a consistent and historically supported description of the territorial extent of the Pandya country.

Unlike the Cholas and Pandyas, who agreed upon a common boundary, the Cheras and Pandyas appear to have differed in their claims regarding the western frontier. While the Pandyas considered the Achchan-kovil pass as their western boundary, the Chera geographical stanza placed the eastern boundary of the Chera country at Tenkasi. This claim would have transferred a considerable portion of the Tinnevelly Taluk, including Courtallam, to Travancore. Although Tenkasi may have temporarily passed into Travancore's possession, inscriptions clearly show that during the 10th and 16th centuries it belonged to the Pandya kingdom.

The choice of Tenkasi instead of the Achchan-kovil pass as the western boundary would have allowed Travancore to retain its ancestral capital, while Nanji-nadu would still remain within Pandya territory. Another Chera stanza, however, identifies Shenkotta as the western boundary of the Chera country. This view closely corresponds with the present boundary, which passes through Shenkotta town. Earlier, the boundary lay slightly eastward, placing the entire town within Travancore.

Historically, the Shenkotta taluk—lying between the town and the Western Ghats—appears to have originally belonged to the Pandyas but remained under Travancore's control for several centuries. It was temporarily held by the Raja of Travancore under the Nawab of Arcot and was finally annexed to Travancore in 1809. Since Shenkotta lies almost directly south of the Achchan-kovil pass, it is equally reasonable to regard it as the westernmost point of the Pandya country.

According to classical Tamil stanzas, the territorial extent of the three Tamil kingdoms was represented as follows: the Chera country extended over about 800 miles, the Chola country about 240 miles, and the Pandya country about 560 miles.

Pandya Kings

Early Historical References to the Pandya Dynasty

The existence of the Pandya kingdom and dynasty can be traced back to several centuries before the Christian era through external and literary sources such as the Ashokan inscriptions, the Mahavamsa, the Mahabharata, and the writings of Megasthenes. These sources establish the existence and importance of the Pandya dynasty, but they do not preserve the names of individual Pandya kings. Greek geographers writing after the beginning of the Christian era also refer to the continued prominence of the Pandyas among Indian states, though again without naming specific rulers.

An important Indian reference appears in the Brihat-Samhita of Varaha-mihira, an astronomer of the 5th century A.D. (c. A.D. 404), which incidentally mentions the Pandya king, the river Tamraparni, and the chank and pearl fisheries, thereby confirming the economic and political significance of the Pandya country. When ancient Indian texts distinguish the Dravidas from the Cholas, as in the Mahabharata and the Puranas, the Pandyas are generally understood to be included among the Dravidas.

Although local poets and puranic traditions provide long lists of Pandya kings, these lists cannot be accepted as historically reliable due to the absence of corroborating evidence from inscriptions and coins. Works such as the Madura Sthala Purana and its Tamil version, the Tiruvilaiyadal Purana, are largely mythical in character and were compiled much later, probably in the 16th century A.D. Until verified by contemporary epigraphical or numismatic evidence, these king lists have no firm historical value.

Only one name from these traditional lists—Samara Kolahala, likely a royal title rather than a personal name—has so far been found on a coin, though its date remains uncertain. The earliest historically authenticated Pandya rulers are Vikrama Pandya and his son Vira Pandya, whose names appear in inscriptions at Chidambaram. Vira Pandya was defeated by Rajendra Chola in A.D. 1064, which fixes their reigns prior to the Chola occupation of the Pandya country. The frequent appearance of the name "Vira Pandya" in place names and administrative records suggests that one ruler bearing this name achieved particular prominence.

Tirunelveli Nayaks

The rule of the Nayaks in the Tirunelveli region forms an important chapter in the medieval history of Tamil Nadu. After the decline of the Madurai Sultanate in the 14th century, the Vijayanagara Empire reasserted control over the Tamil country. To administer the vast southern territories effectively, the Vijayanagara rulers appointed military governors known as Nayaks. Tirunelveli, which was earlier under the Pandya rulers and later affected by Muslim invasions, came under the control of the Madurai Nayaks, who governed it through provincial governors or Palaiyakkarars. The Nayaks ruled Tirunelveli roughly from the mid-16th century to the early 18th century, leaving a lasting impact on its political, administrative, economic, social, and cultural life.

Under the Madurai Nayaks, Tirunelveli was not an independent kingdom but an important southern province. The Nayak rulers appointed trusted military chiefs to govern the region, collect revenue, maintain law and order, and defend the frontier areas. The Tirunelveli region was strategically important because of its fertile river valleys of the Tamiraparani, rich agricultural production, pearl fisheries along the coast, and its position near Travancore and the Pandyan territories. Hence, the Nayaks paid special attention to the administration of Tirunelveli.

Among the Nayak rulers, Viswanatha Nayak (1529–1564), the founder of the Madurai Nayak dynasty, laid the foundation for Nayak administration in Tirunelveli. He introduced the Palaiyakkarar system, under which the territory was divided into smaller units called Palaiyams, each governed by a Palaiyakkarar. In Tirunelveli region, several powerful Palaiyams such as Ettayapuram, Panchalamkurichi, Kadalgudi, and Nagalapuram emerged. These Palaiyakkarars were responsible for collecting revenue, maintaining troops, and supporting the Nayak rulers during wars. This system helped the Nayaks maintain control over distant regions like Tirunelveli, though it later became a source of political instability.

Krishnappa Nayak I (1564–1572) continued his father Viswanatha Nayak's policies and strengthened Nayak authority in Tirunelveli. He focused on consolidating administrative control and suppressing rebellions by local chiefs. During his rule, Tirunelveli experienced improved revenue administration, and irrigation tanks and channels were repaired to support agriculture. The Tamiraparani river system was effectively utilized for paddy cultivation, which increased agricultural output and strengthened the economy of the region.

The most notable Nayak ruler who influenced Tirunelveli was Tirumalai Nayak (1623–1659). His reign is considered the golden age of Nayak rule. Tirumalai Nayak reorganized administration and strengthened central control over provincial governors. He paid special attention to Tirunelveli because of its economic importance. He encouraged temple construction, renovation, and endowments in the region. Several temples in Tirunelveli district received land grants, gold donations, and regular supplies for festivals during his reign. Temples acted as centers of economic activity, education, and social life.

Under Tirumalai Nayak, the military administration of Tirunelveli was strengthened to protect the region from external threats and internal revolts. Forts were repaired and garrisons were maintained at important strategic locations. The Nayaks maintained a standing army consisting of cavalry, infantry, and elephants, supported by the Palaiyakkarars of Tirunelveli. However, the increasing power of the Palaiyakkarars gradually weakened central authority, especially in distant provinces like Tirunelveli.

The revenue system under the Nayaks in Tirunelveli was largely agrarian. Land revenue was the main source of income, and it was collected in kind or cash. The Nayaks continued earlier systems of land measurement and classification. Special attention was given to irrigation works such as tanks, canals, and anicuts along the Tamiraparani river. The prosperity of Tirunelveli agriculture during the Nayak period made the region one of the important granaries of southern Tamil Nadu.

Socially, the Nayak period in Tirunelveli saw the strengthening of the caste system and the dominance of warrior and landholding groups. Brahmins enjoyed patronage through land grants and temple service assignments. At the same time, artisan communities such as weavers, potters, and metal workers flourished due to increased temple construction and urban growth. Markets developed around temple towns, promoting local and regional trade.

The Nayaks were great patrons of **religion and culture**. Saivism and Vaishnavism flourished in Tirunelveli under their rule. Temples such as **Nellaiappar Temple** at Tirunelveli received royal patronage. Festivals, rituals, and processions were conducted on a grand scale. The Nayaks also encouraged Telugu influence in administration and culture, which is reflected in inscriptions, court language, and naming practices, while Tamil continued to be the language of the masses.

However, the later Nayak rulers were weak, and central control over Tirunelveli gradually declined. The Palaiyakkarars became semi-independent and often defied Nayak authority. Continuous internal conflicts, succession disputes, and external pressures from neighboring powers weakened Nayak rule. By the early 18th century, Tirunelveli witnessed political instability, paving the way for the rise of the **Poligars** and later the intervention of the **Nawabs of Arcot and the British East India Company**.

In conclusion, the Nayak rulers played a significant role in shaping the history of Tirunelveli. Their rule brought administrative organization, agricultural expansion, temple-centered economic growth, and cultural development. At the same time, the Palaiyakkarar system, though useful initially, contributed to political fragmentation in the later period. The Nayak legacy in Tirunelveli is evident in its temples, irrigation works, social structure, and historical traditions, making their rule a crucial phase in the region's medieval history.

Religion

Religion and religious pursuits are the part of human life even from the dawn of civilization and history. Both science and spiritualism are the twin eyes required for the evolution of mankind. Man, by his spiritual attitude and outlook achieves devotion and peace. They inferred in him many faiths and beliefs. The temples and the images of the deities are the outcome of the imagination of men. They are symbolic, but they contain art and philosophy. Therefore, it is natural but they are sacred. At the same time, it cannot be denied that such supreme are precious and the places where they are available captivate the attention of the people.

The temples and images of Gods and Goddesses are standing monuments of culture. The Hindus by uniting the natural beauty with man's conceptions and notions created such architectural products. Further, the arts are the products of the free expressions of the artist. They exhibit beauty, calibre and capabilities. They impose religious themes and ideas over them. So the religion is harmoniously blended with art and architecture and they in turn promote the people to see such things and venerate them

The Indian artist assigned greater stress to natural objects as the symbols. Nature itself was the object of common worship during the hoary past. Indian art is linked with the religious life of the people. Therefore, it is obvious that religion, society and art are inter-connected and inter-related. This is a common feature in the art history and architectural heritage of India. The archaeological excavations and the standing monuments testify to the art heritage of India.

Temple Architecture

Temple architecture is one of the chief factors to have an estimate of the India cultural heritage. During the early stages the religious faith of the people contributed to the development of cultural heritage. There were no ornamental or decorative elements. Their structures were simple in plan, design, principles and techniques. Among Mauryas, Asoka was responsible for the introduction of Rock Cut architecture. He initiated the carvings of Buddhist Chaityas and Viharas near Gaya. Gradually, their process drifted to the peninsular and western India. The Buddhists were the earliest people who used stone for their art practices. Only then the Hindus and Jains adhered to that. The use of stone for the creation of monuments led them to be long standing. They widened the scope in

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adopting new and admirable techniques in the future. They centred mostly around religious architecture.

With the beginning of the sixth century A.D., the Hindus and the Jains showed keen interest in accepting stone as the medium for architecture. They started the excavations of rock-cut cave temples. They even concentrated on the creation of monolithic rock temples. Subsequently they stood as models for the structural temples of different ages by various rulers. While the Sungas and Guptas devoted to the temple architecture in the north, the Sathavahanas, Chalukyas, Rastrakutas and Pallavas marked the introduction of temple architecture in the south. The Pandyas, Cholas, Vijayanagar rulers and the Nayaks too developed it. The temples erected during the sixth or seventh centuries survive even today. Though the Hindu temples met with certain unavoidable consequences they were not totally wiped off by the on slaught of foreign invaders. The Hindu rulers, nobles, merchants, artisans and even common public did their best in revitalizing the temple architecture. Many small or large temples came up. They were modified; additions were made and ceremonies as well as rituals continued. Temples became the glorified aspect of life. Such seal and enthusiasm were more in South India than North India. Therefore, South India became the paradise of temples and that caused for the development of temple architecture.

Significance of Temple Architecture

The developed temple architecture attracted the attention of the people and this helped the promotion of daily rituals and ceremonies. Because of such developments, a large number of specific Mandapas were constructed. Like the Ardha and Muha Mandapas, the Nirukta Mandapa, Vasantha Mandapa, Kalyana Mandapa, Thousand Pillared halls, separated shrines for the consort and Parivara devadas were emerged. It paved the way for the development of iconography and icnometry. In the new model, deities were brought out in different postures. In addition to the above, every God is associated with a specific mount. Bull is the mount of Siva; Eagle mount is linked with Vishnu. Subramanian is associated with Peacock mount. Therefore, they got veneration among the people. While executing the rituals, it is also a customary practice to show some sacred objects known as mangala vastus such as Conch, Chakra, Umbrella, Snake, Tortoise, and Puranakumbha. The number varies according to the agamas adopted in that

temple. Every Indian religion is associated with specific objects. So they are known for their sanctity.

The temples in Tamil Nadu are constructed in areas, which offer fresh air. The different prakaras of the temples contain unpolluted air of fresh nature. The gardens and tanks created around the temples are also beneficial for unadulterated air. In Kerala the roof of the temples are not being flat. They are slanting and that avoid the stagnation of the rainwater. Therefore, it is evident that the temple architecture stands for the scientific and technological skill of the artisans.

Hindu Temple Architecture

In the art history of India, the Guptas of the north were the initiators of the construction of Hindu temples. For the first time, they introduced dressed stones for the construction of temples. Before the Gupta age, the temples were constructed with perishable materials. Hence, they had no permanency. Therefore, it is also necessary to have an idea of those temples. As the Gupta age was one of the Hindu efflorescence, they devoted much to the development of Hindu temple architecture.

South Indian Temple Architecture

In the peninsular India, the Chalukyas, Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagar rulers widened the prospects of temple architecture. It was a tradition, which grew out of humble beginnings in proto-historic times and reached splendid heights in the Imperial Pandya period11. There were temples and idols in the Sangam Age. Therefore, architecture and sculpture of some sort must have been familiar to them. The Silappadikaram, the Manimekalai and the Purananuru speak of temples and Gods. A three dimensional God was known to them and perhaps was represented in plaster. Temples as well as idols were made of perishable materials. During that time, the entire temple complex of the Sangam Age has now disappeared having no trace behind. The only Public structures of any historical importance surviving that age are the rock-beds out of natural rock formations and for the benefit of ascetics. These do not involve any skill in construction engineering nor do they represent any phase of indigenous art.

Pallava Style

The Pallava style comprises the earlier rock cut palace and the later structural palace. The late phase was wholly structural and the first building of this type was the

shore temple at Mahabalipuram. Pallava architecture at its best is seen in the temple of Vaikunta Perumal at Kanchipuram. From Mahendra Varman I to the end of the Pallava period, we have broad divisions of architectural style. Of first, the rock cut of which the monolithic is a well-known form and the later is structural. Of them, the rock cut style itself has minor variations like the Mahendra style and the Mamalla style. The Pillared Mandapa is a special feature of the Mahendra style. The monolithic temples usually called the Rathas belonged to the later style.

Chola Style

The Imperial Chola line continued to survive between 850 and 1259 A.D. The period between 850 and 907 A.D. could be treated as the initial period of the Chola architecture. Misumba Sudani temple of Tanjore, Kannasur Balambraman temple, Tiruppurambiyam Adhiteswaram temple, Nataraja Temple of Chidambaram, Koranganatha temple of Srinivasanallur, Mahalingeswara temple at Tiruvidai Marudur, Brahadeswara temple at Tanjore, Gangaikondacholeeswaram, Kempahareswara temple of Tribhuvanam are having their own style. Thus, it is a supreme complex of Indian architecture and was a unique period in the development of temple architecture.

The temple of Nellaiapper and Kanthimathi were two independent structures with space in between. In 1647 A.D., Vadamalaiappa pillaiyan, a great devotee of Siva built the temples and it was popularly called chainmandapam. A beautiful flower garden was originated in 1756 A.D. next to chain mandapam. It welcomes us with many colourful fragrant flowers. A square Vasantha mandapam with 100 pillars is found in the midst of this garden. The pillars in this corridor have beautifully carved structures of the Nayak rulers.19 The main feature of the temple is that of a single stone Peacock Vaganam Valli and Deivayanai idols have been carved out magnificently.

When a person goes round the corridors before entering into the temple he can witness the Nandi. It is said that Sivanthappa Nayak is solely responsible for the construction of the temple in 1654 A.D. Next to Nandhi mandapam, the image of Suryadevar is installed.

The musical pillars that attract the attention of every one through their marvel and wonderful music note-placed Manimandapam. Each pillar contains a big pillar in the

middle, surrounded by 48 smaller pillars and the entire structure is made out of a single stone. Each pillar produces a musical sound at the time of touching it. This Manimandapam along with the musical pillar was built by Nindrasir Nedumaran in the 7th century A.D.

In the eastern corridor outside of the Swamy Nellaiapper temple, a small temple has been built for Kanthimathi Ambal by a Muslim named Anwar Mauphizkhan, who was the Commander in Chief of the Nayaks of the Carnatic. Hence, this temple architecture is mixed with Chola, Pandya and Nayak styles. This temple has been placed with a number of stone inscriptions. The most important stone inscriptions are those of Veera Pandyan who reigned about 950 A.D. and those of Rajendran I and Kulotunga Chola.

Ammainathaswamy temple at Cheranmahadevi is quite ancient and popular among the common people of this area. There are many inscriptions belonging to the days of Rajaraja I on the walls of the temple. The gopuram at the main entrance is a five-tiered one and its height is 63 feet. There are Ardhamandapa and Manimandapa, which have many sculptures depicting the great efforts made by Cholas and Pandyas for art and architecture.

Pandya Style

The most conspicuous feature of the Pandya style was the emergence of the monumental gateway or gopuram, which dwarfed the towered sanctuary and became the dominating feature of the complex. The gateways were treated with rich plastic decoration. Dravidian style of architecture reached its pinnacle during the period of Pandyas. In each temple there were a number of prakaras, shrines for different deities and the huge towers. There are the imposing elements belonging to the temple architecture from the seventh century onwards. Malayadikkurichi inscription and Anaimalai Narasinga Perumal temple inscription reveal the development of temple architecture under the Pandyas. Malayadikkurichi cave temple, the Anaimalai Narasingaperumal temple, Tirupparamkuntram Subramanya temple, the Tenparankuntram Umayandevar temple, the Kalugumalai Subramanya cave temple, the cave temple at Sivalapperi,

Sendanmaram, Thirukkolakka, Chokkampathi are renowned examples of the Pandya period.

Tiruthalinatha temple at Tirppattur, Ambasamudram temple at Erichchamudayar, Valiswara temple at Thiruvaliswaram, Madurai Kudal Alagar temple, Tirukkoshtiyur Sowmiya Narayana temple, Kurrianatha temples are the best examples of the Pandya period on structural stone temples. They adopted Nagara and Dravida styles in their structures. The Pandya Kings devoted their reign for the construction of the Prakaras of Srirangam, Chidambaram, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Tenkasi temples. The decorated pillars, flower shape motifs and the corbels are known for their artistic value.

Thirukkurungudi Perumal temple is another milestone in the history of Pandya architecture and dates back at least to 700 A.D. The gopuram of this temple is a huge one with five tiers. The sirpamandapam is really a storehouse of art and architecture. The gopuram is exquisite beauty and feast to the eyes of the art lovers. This mandapam with 16 pillars, the figures of dancer at the rathi mandapam, gypsy at the sirpa mandapam, the magnificent images are the contribution of Nayaks and the Vijayanagar rulers. Particularly, Krishnadevaraya the master builder of South India contributed a lot to the development of this temple. Ambasamudram Thiruppudaimarudur temple has four important styles of temple architecture viz. Pandya, Chera, Chola, and Vijayanagara styles.

Nayak Style

The South Indian architecture reached its climax under the patronage of the Nayaks of Madurai. During this period, the gopuram reached its pinnacle attained a height of ten to over 150 ft, showing as many as sixteen stories. The decoration of pillars with rearing dragons and fanciful animals became almost an obsession. Further, this style is characterized by a profuse use of figure sculpture and integration of confronted figures with the architectural scheme. This style is illustrated by temples at Srirangam and Jambukesvara, both near Tiruvannamalai, Srivilliputtur and Madurai.

The Venkadachalapathy temple of Krishnapuram is one of few specimen depicting the architectural marvel and grandeur. It is indeed a treasure house of stone sculptures. Many rare intricately carved sculptures made of granite stone are fine exhibits of architectural skill. This temple was built during the reign of the King Krishnappa

Nayak of the Nayak Dynasty during the latter half of this 16th century (1565 A.D.) It is said that the wonderful collections of sculptures are found during the Nayak King Krishnappa Nayak on his own styles. Another important temple of Nanguneri in Tirunelveli District is Vanamamalai Perumal temple. This temple is famous for the super architectural, the 200 feet ornamental gopuram. This is more influenced by the Vijayanagar and Nayak style. The architecture in this temple is a mixture of both Pandya and the Dravidian styles.

Indo-Islamic Architecture

India is a renowned country known for the development of architecture. It is an indigenous one and developed gradually through the ages. Before the advent of the Muslims, the Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical styles of architecture were so prominent and popular. The Muslim invaders were not mere conquerors but they contributed to the culture, art and architecture. Most of them were builders and they had taste in art and of architecture. The architecture introduced by them comprises of original and mixed elements of both foreign and native styles. They introduced their own themes along with the absorbed Hindu ideas. The Islamic architecture is having massive and extensive buildings. The mosques are having fall minarets, lofts portals and open country.

Qutb-ud-din Aibak was the first ruler of the Slave Dynasty, who introduced the Islamic architecture in India. The rulers constructed Kutub - Minar, Quwat-ul-Islam Mosque at Delhi, the Dhai Dinka and Johnpara. They testify to the introduction of Sultanate architecture. The architectural monument stands for beauty, quality and stability. The Jami Masjid is a wonderful outcome of Delhi architecture. The Mausoleum of Iltumish of old Delhi, the Red Palace of Balban are standing for their unique style. The Palace of Hazar Situm, the City of Siri, the Jamaitkhan tomb, the Dargah of Nizamuddin, the Alai Darwazah, the Kutb Minar, Hauz-l-Alai and Hauz-l-Khas are the works of Alauddin. These are the depictions of the Arabic style of architecture.

During the reign of Tughlaks, the rulers continued their devotion to architecture. Tughlagabad of Ghiyas Uddin Tughlak, Jahanpanah and Fortress of Allahabad are the works of Mohammed-Bin-Tughlak. They renovated the old buildings and adopted Hindu forms in the pillars, doors, windows and brackets which are known for their simplicity.

The Great Mughals were eminent builders and showed zeal and enthusiasm in promoting buildings. In the first phase, the red stones were used in buildings but in the end of the subsequent age, red stones were replaced by white marbles. Shahjahan was mostly responsible for the use of white marbles as decorative elements. The Taj Mahal is an excellent specimen.

Cultural Contributions

Culture is a characteristic way of life inspired by fundamental volumes in which people live. It is an adventure of the dark towards light of the low for elevation and is a call of perfect freedom and freedom is a process of constant rise. It expresses itself in the form of music, sculpture, literature, customs, festivals, values and many other things. Indian culture teaches us the art of utilizing the powers. Culture requires higher sacrifices worthy only of those who do not value any gain more than that of self perfection and revelation of the inner self.

The culture of India grew on a firm faith that nothing remains except truth. It prepared the people to face brutal foreign invasions with calm and composure. The Greeks, the Huns, the Sakas and the Mongols came and leaving no memory in the racial consciousness of the Indians. Whatever they did was not true. It was too brutal to be true. Truth is also good and beautiful.

It is a way of transforming abstract truths in to practical experiences. Einstein said, 'you get from truth only what you dare'. The Indians dare the whole of truth. True culture does not isolate any part of our being. It is a continuous rebirth form the forces of negation. It is not a straight race towards light. It is the art of returning to the dark womb of nature.

India is a popular country with a great past and great tradition. It has a special significance in promotion of national integration and international understanding. It is one of the important media that brings together people of different castes, creed and status on one platform. It has no boundaries. It unites the people with invisible strings. It represents in the form of social life'. Infact, in the name of culture, most cultured things are done, and uncultured ideas are expressed.

India is a land which denotes the uniqueness of culture. It has its own cultural heritage. The Indian cultural heritage has been recognized and accepted by all over the

world. Tirunelveli District has a vast cultural heritage phenomena, comparatively the other Districts of Tamil Nadu. The cultural elements of the District are recognized as the major indigenous elements and the outcome of the imagination of the whole people. The cultural resources of this District such as the fairs and festivals, folk and tribal dances, magics, paintings, art and architecture are the spontaneous expressions and emotions of the people. The festivals captivate the attention of the people by their charm and beauty. This expression will develop the heritage not only reconstructing the past but also the part of destructing the economy in the district.

Dances

Dancing is one of the most ancient arts in Indian culture. It has been a medium to please God. From the early Vedic times, it was established and deeply associated with religious rites. It represented the supposed performances of the Gods, and Goddessess themselves, and maintaining the divine and spiritual concept of the race. styles, modes and forms of dances were based on aesthetic values. In those days it was performed on the occasion of religious purposes. In course of time, secular dancing also came into vogue. The artists, male or female had to train and focus on the stage according to the rules and regulations. There are various classical dances performed in each states for the accession of temple festivals and the cultural programes. They are Bharatanatyam, Chakiarkoothu, Kathak, Kathakali, Krishnattam, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam, Odissi, Ottanthullal and Yakshagana, and a number of folkdances peculiar to various regions and subcultures.

1. **Bharatanatyam**

Bharatanatyam is one of the most ancient forms of dancing in Tamil Nadu. It is a highly traditional and stylized dance. It is combined with poetry and music, dance and acting. The dance flourised in each District of Tamil Nadu and its influence extended over a wide area of the south. In earlier days, it was known as Dasi Attam. It was practiced by Devadasis15, who were residing in temple court performing to please the Gods or Goddesses of the temples. The temple dance could be traced back to the fifth century A.D. From sculptural evidences, it was depicted on the walls of the temples of the Chola dynasty and Vijayanagar Empire. Now Bharathanatyam is a familiar art of Indian sub continent.

Folk and Tribal Dances in Tirunelveli

The folk and tribal dances are recognized as the major indigenous elements of Indian style. Apart from the classical dances, India presents varied style of folk and tribal dances. They have a systematic gesture language, foot work, body movements and rhythm. But the folk dances are the outcome of the imagination of the rural people. They are spontaneous expressions of emotions. The songs sung by the artist lead the dancers. The songs will be for the glorification of the local deities. They are performed regularly on festivals and religious occasions in rural packets. They captivate the attention of the audience by their charm and beauty. They create a social impact over the society. The folk dances are the basis for the establishment of customs and traditions in South India known for its rich cultural heritage. These art practices are also functions as the basis for folk culture. They expose the spirit of the rural mass. The folk dance and songs are popular and owned in the southern Districts of Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi, Ramanathapuram and Madurai.

The major folk dances of this District are kolattam, kummi attam, altam, pinnal kolattam, poikkal kuthurai attam (dummy horse dance), oyilattam, devarattam, puliattam, peiattam, silampattam, kavadiattam, karagam, puliattam and villupattu, amman kuthu, aaliattam, kadhai vasippu, kappalpattu, kazhialattam, kuravan kurathiattam, samiattam, naiyandi melam, pakkirisha pattu, pirunthavana kummi, pommalattam and vasappu nadaham.

The music and dance of Tirunelveli had their beginnings in the temples. From early times, different groups of people were appointed to sing divine songs in the temples. Odhuvars, Sthanikars or kattalaiyars offer short musical programmes in the Hindu temples by singing the devotional Thevaram songs. They lead the chorus in the temple congregational prayers to the accompaniment of the sarangi. It was used in the temples till the end of the nineteenth century. In the temples of Madurai, Tirunelveli, Suchindram (Kanyakumari) and Alwar Tirunagari, there are musical pillars. Such pillars are found in the Artha Mandapam, where the singing of Thevaram was accompanied by the music from stone-pillars.

Folk Arts

In Tirunelveli District, two types of deities are worshipped: one type is the Indian deities and the other is folk deities. Siva, Vishnu, Subramanian, Ganapathy, Parvathy, Lakshmi and Saraswathy are the first type22. Folk deities are classified into two: Amman and Madan. Mutharamman, Kaaliamman, Pathrakaliamman, Uchimahaliamman, Vandimalaichiamman, Esakkiamman, etc are the examples of Amman. Sudalaimadan, Pulamadan, Chinnathampi, Muthupatan etc. are Madans. Festivals are conducted in these worshipping places once in a year according to the economic condition of the worshippers. This worship is called kodai. Villupattu is the central event of kodai. Besides the professional dancers attending these festivals are referred to as Chamiyadikal, Chamakontadigal and Komarathadigal.

Villupattu

Villupattu is one of the heritage resources in Tirunelveli District. In Kodai festival of the temples, Villupattu is the central event. Mostly, these festivals are conducted from January to May. These festivals take place on Tuesdays for female deities and on fridays for male deities. The people worship the deities with preparying Pongal and making offerings. In kodai festival Villupattu (bow-song) is performed ritualistically. Though the Villupattu texts exists in oral traditions, they have been written in palm leaves and note books too. Villupattu is variously known as 'Villadi' pattu and Villadichan pattu. Though musical instruments like bow (vil) pot (kudam) hand drum (utukku) symbol (thalam). The basic constitution of Villupattu is performed by a group. This group mostly consists of five artists. Each one of them plays on the musical instruments and sing. On some occasions one or two more assist them. The group divided into two types. One is Vanampaadigal (lead singers) the other is Itampaadikal (chorus singers). They play on all musical instruments.

The bow is used as musical instrument in Villupattu. It is 10 to 14 feet in length, mostly it carved out of the stem of bamboo or Koonthapanai. The bow is shaped linking materials like vilkathir, munaikuppigal (tip hooks) thick rope (vadam) bells (manigal) and rings. The middle part of vilkathir is bound to the pot. Playing on the leather string with veesukol (beating stick) music is produced. Only the Ideal singer use the veesukol. Pot player is the leader of chorus singers. This pot is made of clay and is baked in skin. Its

mouth portion is very strong. Holding an instrument resembling the table tennis but in the right hand and beating below the neck portion of the pot with a wooden piece called chothukattai.

Villupattu is sung by raising different types of tunes combining rectangular wooden pieces made of strong Karungali tree and beating instruments made of Bronze. The instrument is called udukku or thudi, is capable of making musical variations and various rhythms. The body portion of udukku is made of bronze and its two sides are covered with animal skin. The special rhythm produced is called thudukku. This is indispensable for professional dance in Villupattu. Villupattu is the common programme of all religious festivals in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts even today. Women also perform Villupattu. In traditional Villupattu there are two aspects; one is narration and the other is ritual. The stories are the myths of male and female deities.

Kaniyan Kuthu

Kaniyan Kuthu is the fine art form performed as a ritual in the kodai festivals of folk deities in TamilNadu's southern districts of Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari. This art is mentioned as Kaniyan attam. This art is performed by those belonging to the caste called Kaniyan. Kaniyan koothu is in vogue as one of the folk cults of Tirunelveli District. If there is no kaniyan attam in the worship of Sudalaimadasamy in the cremation ground, kodai festival will not take place.

Only the lead singer conducts the Kaniyankoothu. He is called Annavi. While performing koothu the lead singer sings in front of the deity standing in a corner of the space. The gap between the lead singer and the image of the deity is brooding. During the koothu, he is highly respected by the audience and the administrators of the temple. He sings closing one ear with one hand stretching the other hand and moving it according to the tune. He used to tell vasanam (dialogue) in order to lengthen the story.

The song of the lead singer is to be followed by the supporting singer. Those who are getting trained in Kaniyankoothu used to be assistant singers of this type. Magudam is a very important musical instrument in Kaniyankoothu. This koothu is called Magudattam because of Magudam. The frame of the Magudam is made of the wood of Poovarasu and Neem tree. There are two types of Magudattam. One is called mantham and the other is Uccham. When mantham and uccham are played in unisonkuthu reaches

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the peak. To the right of the lead singer stands the one who plays uccham and to his left the one playing the mantham. Those playing Magudam have to stand and play. Magudam players play only in tune with the song of the lead singer. The sound of Magudam is greater than the sound of thavil. Beating the Magudam, the lead singer sings the lines of Magudam.

In the performance of Kaniyankoothu, two males play the role of women dancers. Till twenty five years ago there was a rule that the saree and blouse required for the Kaniyankoothu should be lent by Puthirai vannar (washer man washing cloths only for depressed caste). Now the dancers purchase cloths for themselves. They tie around their leg with chalangai (small bells). In folk deity temples, Kaniyankoothu is performed in the front portion of the temple. The audience is on both sides in the front portion of the temple. This dance performance takes place during kodai in Sudalaimadan temple.

Kazhialaattam

'Kazhialaattam' is an another art, found in Tirunelveli District. On the sea side, fisher men, in some areas Nadars and in some other areas Muslims perform this art. In this dance, only sticks are important. These sticks are one feet and six inches in length. This is the art dance like the Kolattam played by women. The speed and rhythm of this dance are different from those of kolattam by women. The Annavi who teaches Kazhialaattam has good voice and good capacity to sing songs. Eight people of like physique join in a group and dance according to Annavi's song. They dance wearing head-gear a piece of cloth round the waist and in bare body. Songs is to be sung according to the stick techniques and steps.

At the close of every dance, 'Thiththom terikuda thiththimi thommana thai' is sung. A stroke on the stick in the left hand is stick technique. Bharatham, Ramayanam and kummi songs are sung in Kazhialaattam. Christian songs and Islamic songs also are sung by people of the respective religions. This art finds a place in wedding, kodai festivals, puberty ritual, house warming ceremony, church functions and death.

Oyilaattam

Oyilaattam is one of the arts performed in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. This is an art in which the body is bent like bow and dance performed in tune with rhythm and song. This is a group dance. To perform this, atleast twelve people are

required including singers and instrument players (At the most twenty people participate). This art is performed with entertainment as the main focus. This is also performed in temple festivals, wedding, puberty ritual and the visit of important people. This art is performed both in religious and non-religious functions and festivals.

Stories from the epics of Ramayana and Mahabaratha and allied substories constitute the song themes. Similarly, in Christain Oyilaattam the life history of Jesus Christ and the sub stories from the scriptures are the songs. All these stories are made into songs and prose pieces suitable to the dance. There are two singers. The lead singers sing the song. The assistant singer sings close clapping with him with the jalra in his hand. The artists in the group also have to sing along with them. In agreement with their tune, there are beats on baked clay pot. In the present day groups, skin instruments like thavil and mirudangam are used.

The artists taking part in the dance have dress decorations. They use dhoti and colourful garments. To enable them the artists wear half trousers and banyans. All of them appear in uniform. They used to have a piece of cloth in hand and wear head gear. Some groups have cloths on two hands. Strings of tiny bells of bronze (Salankai) is worn in the anklets of the dancers. Artists stand in two rows one behind the other in equal number with a distance of two feet apart facing the audience. In between the rows only one artist stand separately in the front. The lead singer will begin a song. The assistant singer sings along with him beating the jalra. After that only the artists standing at the centre in the front rows sing. Following that the artists sing. Again the person standing at the centre sings, with gesticulations of the hand and the other artists start the dance.

At first, the dancing is performed standing in rows, thereafter they turn back. Next they go three steps forward, bend, turn back and revert to the original position. Those of the two rows stand face to face going a few steps in the opposite direction, they turn and stand face to face. After that, keeping the cloth in hand against the Chest, holding it by both hands just like holding a gun they go three feet forward and three feet backward. Thereafter they revert to the original position. This is described as gun dance. They dance looking at the audience and keeping their right hands on their waists.

At the beginning of the dance, the song and the beat will be uniform and gradually the speed will increase. After reaching a particular speed the lead singer will blow the

whistle. In the same speed the artists will stop the dance. Again it will be resumed slowly. After that, prose will follow or they play kummi standing in a circle. Dancing, waving the cloth in hand, is considered very important here. Stories from the Ramayana constitute the song theme. In the dance, during prose, activities like fight, and arguments will be shown by acting through imitation.

Puravi Attam Puravi Attam, also known as poikkalkuthirai, puravinattiyam, is a dummy horse dance. This art is a peculiar product of the early Chola period. It evolved from what is referred to in Silappadikaram as marakkalattam or the dance with wooden legs. It was developed under Mahratta Patronage and Thanjavur was the citadel of dummy horse-show artists. It has now become revitalized, refined and modernized. The artistes occasionally adopt Bharathanatya and Kathak styles, in addition to simple, lifting folk rhythms.

The dummy horse is made of jute, card board, paper and glass. The show is performed by men as well as by women. The main attraction is the richly decorated card board horse. The dancer uses this as his dress. He gets into it through the holes made therein and looks as if he is riding on horse back, wooden stills are tied to the dancer's feet and these can be successfully used only after months of experience.

The dummy horse show is also one of the chief attractions in the Hindu temple festivals, marriage processions, Islam, Christian functions, Republic day festivals at Chennai and the important government programmes organsied by the Government authorities. During the festivals at Tirunelveli dummy horse dance which took place is unique.

Oyil Kummi This is an another ancient folk dance form popular in the southern districts. It is also called as nattukottu attam, performed by a large group of men wearing bells on their feet and narrating mythological stories. No other instruments are used in this dance except the ankle bells. This folk dance is performed during the temple festivals. Stories and episodes centering around Murugan and Valli are depicted in the songs. As one of the rare folk art forms of ancient Tamil Nadu, this is being practiced now by the Telugu speaking people of the northern districts.

Kappal Pattu

Kappalpattu, Padahupattu, Odapattu have been performed in Nattardaiva temples in Tirunelveli District from the early days. This dance is performed at the stage inside the boat during the temple festivals. There are three persons consisting of one youngster and the another aged. And the another one person should be a comedy man. This dance is also a dance drama. The performers act as a type of quarreling with double meaning. In another sense kappalpattu is a boat song, sung by travellers in chorus to overcome the fear of tides and to prevent the monotony of travel on lakes and rivers.

Karakam Dance

Karakam is a folk-art developed along with the cult of Mariamman. It is of two varieties, the religious and the professional. The religious type is called saktikarakam. A small pot is filled with water and sealed with coconut. Flower wreaths decorate it and a lime fruit is placed at the top of the karakam. The temple priest or his nominee carries it with great ceremony and sentimental attachment. This is one of their heriditary privileges.

The professional type is known as Attakarakam and is performed anywhere by any one with the necessary practice and skill, to entertain the masses. In Tanjore, East Ramanad district the dance is called "Karaha Chempu", in Madurai, and Tirunelveli districts called "Karakattam", in Kanyakumari District it is famous in the name of 'Kumpattam'. Anyhow in whole Tamil Nadu Karakam dance is generally called as Karakattam42. The word karakam was mentioned by Tholkappiar in his famous work Tholkappiam. Karakam means filled water pot (kudam), and kamandalam. It is one of TamilNadu's regular showpieces of the Republic day floats in New Delhi every year. The Attakarakam or balancing of the pot on the head is accompanied by peculiar musical instruments called pampadi, urumi, thavil, nadeswaram, and thamukku which are among the distinctive components of Tamil music. The karakam dancers wear a close fitting dress and look like warriors. They remind one of the kuda-koothu dancers described in Silappadikaram.

The word Karakam denotes a pot or kumbham filled with sacred water for purificatory purposes. During ordinary rituals, all the seas of Varuna, the Lord of rain and the seven sacred rivers are supposed to be attracted and confined in the karakam and

released only when the final ablution is performed and the water is poured or sprinkled over the heads of the worshippers.

In Tirunelveli District, karagam is also called animankondadi or a way of eliciting the blessings of the goddess. The karagam dancers smear his bare body with holy ash and sandal paste and wears a short skirt. On his head, the dancer balances a pot filled with uncooked rice, surmounted by a tall conical bamboo-frame covered with flowers. He starts from a holy spot or a square and goes to the temple in a procession. Dancing with quick steps he brandishes a sword or a staff while two people beat the drum and blow on a long pipe. From a slow tempo, the dance rises to a delirious frenzy, when the dancer becomes oblivious of himself. Though he tumbles and leaps, he somehow retains the pot on his head, without touching it. People ascribe this feat to the spirit of the deity which it is believed, enters his body. Background music is provided by Nayyandi melam.

Kathai vasippu

This is yet another culture, the art of story telling. Some times the artist sings the song of the story. In malayalam this art is known as "vayana pattu". This art is performed on the stages in Kanyakuamri and Thirunelveli districts. The story or the themes are sudalai madasamikathai, mutharammankathai, unchinimahaliammankathai, muthupattankathai sethrabalankathai, chinnatampikathai. Vettumperumalkathai uallarakkankathai, chinnananchikathai, thottukkariammankathai, and so on now there is no kathai vasippu art in the recent years in those districts.

Kummi

Kummi is one of the most important and ancient forms of village dance of Tamil Nadu. It is performed by women round in shape. kummi is derived from kummai, kummuthal (kaikottuthal) and kuzhumi (kuduthal). It is generally known to kommi, kummi means nannana kottuthal, thattiyam kottuthal, kondankottuthal kummiadithal, kummiyaduthal, kommi kottuthal and koppi kottuthal.

It originated, when there were no musical instruments with the participants clapping their hands to keep time. This dance is usually performed during temple festivals in Tirunelveli, Madurai and Ramanadu districts. Pongal festival, the harvest festival, and the family functions like one to celebrate the coming age of the girl child etc. The first line of the song is sung by the leading lady then the others repeat. Many

varieties of kummi such as poomthatikummi, deepakummi, kulavaikummi, kadirkummi mulaiparikummi etc are known.

Kavadi Aattam

The ancient Tamils when they went to pilgrimage carried the offerings to the gods tied on the either end of the long stick which was balanced on the shoulders. In order to lessen the boredom of the long travel they used to sing and dance about the gods. kavadiattam has its origin in this practice. Special songs were created to be sung while carrying the kavadi sindhu. This dance is performed only by men. It is done by balancing a pole with pots fixed on either end, filled with milk or coconut water.

The poles are made from purasai or teak wood. On the top, bamboo strips are bent like a half moon, covered with saffron cloth and further decorated on the sides with Peacock feathrers. This is mainly a religious dance, performed in the worship of Lord Murugan, the second son of Lord Siva. The dance is accompanied by pambai and naiyandi melam. Kavadiattam is very famous in the Surasamkaram in the Murugan temples. One such Tiruchendur Murugan Temple has been celebrated Surasamkaram. The pilgrims carried kavadi from the various places in Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts and marched to Thiruchendur for the above festival.

Theru Koothu

Therukoothu normally conducted in village festivals, during the months of Panguni and Aadi. This is performed where there four streets meet in open air, the place being lit by gas lights. A wooden bench is set up to seat the singers and the musical group. Here, make up and costumes are considered the prime importance. Only men are allowed to take part. The female roles also played by men. The performance consists of story telling, dialogue-rendering, songs and dance, all performed by the artists. Thus the artists should have a very good performing ability, being all rounders. The stories are taken from puranas, epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata and also local folklore. The play starts in the late evening and gets over only during the small hours of nights. The performance is so captivating that the audience are spell bounded unaware of the long hours. Once therukoothu is more popular in the villages of the southern districts. The Koothu is categorized as nattukoothu dealing with religious topics, peikoothu including thunangaikoothu and porkalakoothu dealing with martial events.

Kali Attam

Kali means joy, fun on games. This is also known as koladi, kolkali, kambadi kali and koloatam. Sticks one foot length are held in each hand and beaten to make a sharp-rasping sound as the dance proceeds with unique steps, twisting and turning. It is performed by both men and women during festivals, auspicious days and weddings. The special qualities to the dance are quickness, alertness, while being careful to hurt the other dancers by the swimming 'kol' (kampu). Earlier, the 'kols' were brightly painted and decorated with brass rings, bells etc. The dancers used to wear ankle-bells. However, no special dress or make up was used for this dance.

Music

Music is a gift of God offered to him for entertainment and to gain peace and solace. It reflects an emotion or wishdom of any single man. The music and dance of Tamil Nadu had their beginnings in the temples. From early times, different groups of people were appointed to sing divine songs in the temples. The traditional musicians like Odhuvars, Sthanikars or Katttalaiyars offer short musical programmes in the temples by singing the devotional Thevaram songs. They lead the chorus in the temple congregational prayers to the accompaniment of the sarangi or the vil-yazh, meaning literally the veena with the bow.

In the temples at Madurai, Tirunelveli, Suchindram and Alwar Tirunagari the musical pillars are even existing. Such pillars are found in the artha mandapam where the singing of Thevaram was accompanied by the music from stone pillars. Indian musical system is based on the ragas. Ragas means colouring in a psychological sense or emotion. Ragas comprise of tones of swaras. There are seven main swaras or tunes or notes. They are Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni. The classical dances of India accompanied with the above ragas. Among the classical dances, Bharathanatyam is the classical dance of Tamil Nadu, ragas are the basic structure.

Folk music is remarkable for the tala intricacies. This is the ancient classical or melodies like manji, sama, navaroz, kalyani, karaharapriya, thodi, and nadanam-K-Kria in the folk songs. Many instruements are used in folk music. They are nagara or gettle drum, damoram is conical instruement. Udukkai is an instruement held in the left hand and played by the finger of the right hand. Davandai is a large size of udukkai played

with a stick, gummati is a pot-shaped drum, ekkalam is an S – shaped horn, and pambai is a pair of coloured and painted cylindrical drums. These instruements are used in the temple festivals in all over Tamil Nadu.

Melody of kulavai

Kulavai is one of the folk music performed by the old women for the special occasion of Tirunelveli. It is also a song sung in beautiful melody, particularly in Tanjavur where agricultural prosperity and music tradition alike have been kept up. Women stand in knee-deep slash, planting the seedlinks and they raise the kulavai sound to expedite work and to honour visitors. Anyone passing between paddyfields has to make token payments or tips to these women, if they greet him in chorus. As well as in Tirunelveli District every occasion of a houses kulavai is performed specifically in the villages.

Pazhyanoor Nili Story

The most popular of the bow-song stories is Pazhyanoor Nili, also known as Pazhayanoor Nili in Tirunelveli District. The story deals with frustrated love and continues from one birth to the next. In fact it is not the story but all the other stories coming under this category consider time as one long continuous stretch, without any past, present or future. In Pazhayanoor Nili, a certain young man, belonging to a trading community becomes enamoured, a few months after his marriage with Nili, of another women of irresistible charm and deserts his young and loving wife. One day, his mistress came to Nili's house to see her lover. Nili shuts the door against the mistress and sends her away. The enraged mistress decides to wreak vengeance on Nili. She refuses admittance to her lover, when he calls later at her chambers. Then asked for the reason, she tells him in detail of the treatment meted out to her by Nili. He promises to make amends and begs to be admitted. She again refuses, telling him that the only way to make amends to her satisfaction is to go back to Nili and return with the be Jewelled Tali, the martial tie of Nili. Thereupon he goes to Nili and lives with her, for some months. He tells Nili one day of his desire to leave his home town with her and settle in some far off place, so that they could forever live away from the sight of his wicked mistress. Nili welcomes the idea and both leave the house. One night and reach a forlorn well in the middle of a forest. It is a moonlit night, and young Nili, who is now in the family way

entreats her husband to spend that night by the side of the well. Accordingly, they break the journey and spread their bed right under the wall of the fathomless well. The night the moon, the sweet scent of the forest flowers and every thing around, above and about Nili exercise a strange spell on her. With fond words of love and affection, she wraps her husband under her arms. Nili's husband who has been patiently waiting for this opportunity snatches her Tali and, deaf to her heart – rending screams treacherously pushes her down into the well and hastens back to his mistress. With this end the story in the first birth.

In the next birth the murderer's husband reborn as a merchant, is on his way to the town where he lived in his previous birth and happens to halt near the same well on a moonlite night. Nili's ghost comes out well and appears before her husband as a woman of surpassing beauty and claims the lonely traveller as her husband. Taken aback, he looks steadily at her for a moment, comes to the conclusion that she is a mohini, an enchantress of the ghost world, and instantaneously rejects her. The claim and its rejection are referred to the wise men of the neighbouring village, who after hearing both parties, give their verdict in favour of Nili, duly declaring the traveller as Nili's husband. Further, the wise men allot a house in the village and order the couple to live there. The couple enter their new abode. There is joy written all over Nili's face the unfulfilled passions, which were cut short at the most crucial stage of her earlier life, come up again in full fury that right and she hugs him to her bosom only to sap the life out of him. The following day, the wise men of the village come to the house only to find the dead body of the traveller with the woman missing. The degree of dramatic tension produced by this story can be under stood only when one actually listens to its performance by the bow-song traupe.

Sudalai Madan Story

It is yet another culture of Tirunelveli district. The story of Sudalai Madan, a ghost of the burial ground, is also a favourite theme. Several historical ballads are narrated in bow song so much so that the bow song is considered as the history class of the folk. On festive occasions in temples, bow-songs on religious themes of old are recited. The extent of the people's interest in this art finds expression in the saying Villadichan Koilile Vilakkara Neramille. The bow-song is going on in the temple and the

people are so much absorbed in it that there is no time even for lighting the lambs there. Apart from the variety of themes and stories another very interesting feature in the villupaattu art is the extempore debate in verse. This art is very familiar in Tirunelveli district in all temple festive.

Folk Music

Tamil folk music is remarkable for the tala intricacies. We come across ancient classical ragas or melodies like manji, sama, navaroz, kalyani, karaharapriya, thodi and nadanam-k-kria in the folk songs. Many instruments are used in folk music. Nagara is a large hemispherical kettle drum used in Hindu temples, struck with two curved sticks and carried on a decorated elephant. It is played before and after making important announcements.62 Damaram is a conical instrument with a shell of wood and braces of leather, placed on a bullock and played with two sticks, one of them curved, and the other straight. Udukkai is an instrument held in the left hand played by the finger of the right hand. It is used in all folk temples and is an emblem of Siva.

Davandai is a large udukkai and is played with a stick. Gummati is a pot-shaped drum held in a horizontal posture while playing. Ekkalam is an shaped horn played with the trumpet and the drum. Pumbai is a pair of coloured and painted cylindrical drums used in temple festivals. In addition to this folk performances harmonium, jalra, mugaveena, nadaswarams, tavils, tamukku, pambai, dolak, urumi are used in temple festivals.

Nayyandi Melam

Nayyandi Melam or chinna melam is a rustic intimation of the classical melam or nadaswaram and is intended purely as an accompaniment to temple festivals (Thiruvizha) and to folkdance-drama to cater to the tastes of the unlettered audience. This orchestra consists of two nadaswarams, two tawils, a pambai, a thamukku and a pair of cymbals. The peculiarity of nayyandi melam is that the instrumentalists also dance while playing their instruments. The troupe is in demand as an accompaniment to karagam, kavadi, dummy horse dance, kuravan kurathi dance, mayilattam, oyilkummi, urummiattam

Temples and Monuments

Kanthimathi-Nellaiyappar Temple–This is most important Hindu shrine in Tiruvelneli. Kanthimathi-Nellaiyappar is a twin temple which is dedicated to Goddess

Parvati and Lord Shiv. The Somavara Mandapam, the 1000 pillared hall, and the Tamira Sabha with excellent wood work, are the most attractive and exotic structures of this huge Temple Complex. The Tamira Sabha is one of the Five Celestial Dance Sabhas [Divine Dance Stages] of Lord Shiv.

Kutralam

On the Western Ghats, is the Kutralam Falls also popularly known as the "Spa of the South".The place is associated with the legend and stories of Lord Shiv. The water of its cascade is believed to possess medicinal properties as it passes through the herb forest before its takes a plunge of around 170 metres.

Krishnapuram Temple

Krishnapuram Temple is a Dravidian style shrine built by the Nayak and Vijayanagara kings during 16th century. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and the Thenkalai (one of the two styles of worship) tradition of worship is followed here.

Panchalankuruchi

A small historic village, Panchalankuruchi is the home of freedom fighter Veerapandia Kattabomman. The village is famous for a memorial fort dedicated to Veerapandia Kattabomman, and it also houses the temple of Devi Jakkamma, the hereditary Goddess of Kattabomman family.

Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve and Wild Life Sanctuary

The MundanthuraiKalakad wildlife sanctuary in Tirunelveli district was developed as a National Tiger Reserve in 1988 with a total area of 817 sq. km in the southern most Western Ghat DID YOU KNOW In the Nellaiappar temple in Tirunelveli, the musical pillars are arranged in such a way that vibrations are produced from the neighbouring pillar, when one pillar is tapped. There is a central pillar having 48 small cylindrical pillars of varying girth, around. ranges.Some of animals found here are Leopard, Sambar, Sloth Bear, Indian Pangolin, Mouse Deer, Tiger, King Cobra, Flying Lizard, Python, Monitor Lizard, and Pit Viper.

Sankaranarayanan Koil

Situated in Sankaranarayanan Kovil town, this famous shrine is said to date back to 900 AD and houses a deity that is a meld of Lord Shiv and Vishnu. The temple also has an impressive dome that is 135 m high and is 9-tiered.

Temples and other monuments

Monuments are built forms erected to confer dominant meanings on space. They present aesthetic value as well as a political function. Often, political elites erect monuments to promote selective historical normative that focus on covalent events and individuals while obliterating while representing selective historical narratives, monuments can include specific conceptions of the present and encourage future possibilities. As such, monuments become essential for the articulation of the national politics of memory and identity through which political elites set political agendas and legitimate political power. Monuments as either aesthetic objects presenting historical and artistic values or as political tools in the hand of those in power. The semiotic approach to monuments can address these issues providing a holistic approach that overcomes the rigid distinctions predominant in previous research on monuments. Although useful analytical categories, the distinction between material- symbolic and political dimensions cannot be extended to the anthological state of monuments. Semiotics can be useful in investigating the meanings of monuments as actively created by the interplay of the material the symbolic and the political dimensions. It provides a methodological basis to consider designers and users as equally contributing to the meaning-making of monuments. Likewise, public knowledge depends on the society in which it exists – it is constantly dynamic in terms of its structure and organization. Furthermore, the way the corpus of public knowledge is being formed is changing, just like the public space of contemporary western societies in which cultural monuments exist. The phenomenon that clearly defines the relationship between the monument and public knowledge is collective memory. The feelings of belonging and forming and identity are influenced by collective memory and at the same time, these are some of the main characteristics of both, monuments and public knowledge. Social reality is created by public knowledge, but it is also mirrored in monuments. Memorials and monuments are of increasing interest to researchers growing out of recognition of the social nature of commemoration and the important role that space and place play in the process and politics of remembering. Research envisions these public symbols as part f larger cultural landscapes that not only reflect certain perspectives on the past but work to legitimate them as part of the normative social order. The research analyzes memorials and

monuments through three conceptual lenses. The 'text' metaphor emphasizes critical reading of the histories and ideologies reading of the histories and ideologies given voice in the content and form of memorials and monuments, as well as the dynamic nature of inscribing memory into space.

Adhichanallur

R. Alexander predicts that the things which were found out would belong to the period from A.D 400 years to 400years after B.C. Wheeler says that the culture of Tamil Nadu the augment stone culture would be from AD200 to AD50. Gorden Eimender says that the period would be from AD700 to AD400. Finally, the things found here help to study the history of the period of this search and each thing belongs to each period in the past. Researchers who support the concept of N.R. Nursy "by comparing the iron things which belong to the period of AD400 between the place of north and center India and south India and under the terms of their unity they say that the things might belong to the iron period of Adhichanallur".

Iron objects predominant

The objects unearthed during this excavation were mostly iron objects and a few copper objects, whereas Coeux beads also formed a large component in the habitation site. The iron objects include both agricultural implements and weapons, which confirms reports of former British India archaeologist Alexander Rea, who extensively excavated Adichanallur back in 1899-1904. The excavation during 2004 and 2005, has not yielded objects like gold diadem and other rich bronze and copper objects, however, Rea has found gold diadem during his survey 100 years1 ago In this state the things they found here they sent to the Manipur museum and under the head of Manipur university professor R. C. Kishore Karshiya's they searched with science and technology and according to the row no. 4 urn no. 10's they found the period of the urn as AD 2000 and according to row no. 7 and urn no. 29, the period of the urn is AD 270. They also predicted the period of the factory which was there would be in AD1500. A. S. Bathrinarayanan says that the oldest urn belongs to the period of AD4000. The things which were found here would belong to A.D 2000 says, Professor A. Ramasamy. According to the sayings of R. Alexander, the search was carried out in the place of the 5acres area which is situated at the center of the posterior region of Adhichanallur. The

urns are buried here at some intervals. At some places, the urns are buried near leaving only a little space between the urns.

In carbon dating results revealed that the relics from Adichanallur date between 905 BCE and 696 BCE, not just older than Keezhadi but one of the most ancient sites in Tamil Nadu. And this is just one among the many fascinating discoveries that we know of Adichanallur.

Caldwell says that a round-shaped stone could be placed over the urns to identify them urns easily. The funeral urns which are found here are less than the size of 1m in diameter, 70cm to 1m in height, round and cylindrical, with one leg in the bottom. The mouth is wide opened whereas the bottom is small. The things which were found in the urns were 1872 in number in the first search and at the second search it was about 400 and at the further research, 3000 things were found. All these were kept in the Chennai Museum. R. Alexandar has said that many kinds of clay pots, iron tools, tools made out of aluminum, war tools, gold jewels, sandalwood or kitchen utensils like stone mixie, which could be used for grinding are the things they have got in their search. He also said he has also got 23 gold coins which would be placed on the forehead of the dead people. It is in the shape of the egg-like wide in the center and small at the edges. It weighs from 2gm to 47gm. Most of them weigh 20gm. Also, they have found out colorful flower bowls and flowerpots which exceed in beauty. The flower bowl which is in row 585 has a string which 3inches long and 2inches height. They have also got the flower bowl no. 1455 with wide horn and bent string. Artistic pots which are made out of aluminum along with their lid are also found. The pot which is in row 1862 is round in shape. A buffalo is placed above the stem on the lid which is in row number 586 and twelve bent strings were around the stem. At the bottom of the bowl sieves with holes have got. Pots made out of thin and strongly made aluminum are seen in row number 252. Steel speer, arrows, axes, spades, and ropes made out of steel used for hanging has got. The ancient division of Tamil landscape was Kurinji (Mountainous region), Mullai (Forest region), Marudham (Agricultural region), and Neidhal (Coastal region). The amalgamation of Kurinji and Mullai is considered as Paalai. Similarly, In Chandhiragnana Aagamam, it is clearly described the division of landscapes in Kanyakumari. In addition, the place is divided according to Maanduga Mandalam, into 64 parts. All the world's ancient civilizations

may be said to have been found in riversides because Riverbeds have many water resources and thereby Agriculture and Cattle farming are feasible only in the river area. In Tamil Nadu, such riverbeds were situated in South Madurai's Paruli river, Kabadapuram's Kumari river, Madurai's Vaigai river, Woraiyur's Kaveri river, and Korkai's Tamirabarani river. It is found from the stabilized mud blocks obtained from adhichanallur that those were used to construct houses. Kings, Ministers, Philanthropists, Merchants lived in Castle and Palace structures and the common people lived in elliptical square huts. During the early stages, copper swords were used in wars. Later, after understanding the utility of iron metal, iron swords are used. In ancient Tamil Nadu, people's occupation was only based on the landscape they lived. People abode in Kurinji were vettuvargal, the people abode in Mullai were Aayargal, people abode in Marudham were farmers, and people who lived in Neidhal were paradhavargal. Apart from that, potters, goldsmiths, carpenters, and merchants were also lived. In the ancient period, there was no evidence of Caste distinction. An M. Basim says, "There was no distinction between high and low among people and they lived harmoniously as groups as found in the literature of Tamil. The distinction of people according to Caste might have originated later". The clothes found in Adhichanallur were woven out of cotton and muslin. "People were found to be dressed till the knee part. Thus, it resembles modern hanging dresses" says T. Satyamoorthy. Assembled chains were worn by these people in hands and around necks. The skeletons found in Adhichanallur serve as proof that people even wore copper bangles. The grindstones found here might have been used to grind sandalwood. Sticks were also found which might have been used to apply ink to eyebrows. This evidence shows that the ancient people were also concerned with their outward appearance. In ancient times, the lives of Tamil people were classified into Agam and Puram, says Professor A. Ramasamy. Agam is love life and It has been always kept secret and Puram is marriage life, associated with chastity says C. Ilakkuvanar. Marriages took place in the presence of elder people of the family or the community says Tolkaapiyam. Many other intricate details are found in Tolkaapiyam such as the birth of a child is celebrated as neyyanai muyakkam, Women were given rights, The pattern drawn by women were called daapam and the women who lost their husbands were not allowed to remarry. Early Tamilians were theists and each landscape had its unique God. Kurinji

had Ceyon, Mullai had Maayon, Marudham had Indhiran and Neidhal had Varunan. After gaining victory in the war, they all worshipped Kotravai. T. Satyamoorthy says, the tridents found here suggest worship of Lord Shiva, and the spears found here suggest worship of Lord Murugan. The carvings found in the pieces of mud pot suggest that goddess worship was also practiced here because the carvings contained a picture of a woman surrounded by Deer, Crocodile, Crane, and Fish.The corpses were not cremated instead they were buried in a specific place allotted for the purpose. Alexander. R says "The dead people were buried in alienated places, or lands, where agriculture is not practiced, or places near a riverbed in urns." Things used by the dead people are also buried with them. These are found in Urns unearthed from Adhichannalur. The things got from Adhichanallur symbolize the prosperous civilization seen on the shore of the river Tamirabarani. The height and gap that the buried aldermen urns seem to belong to the different periods of civilization. The spears and jewels made out of copper belong to a certain period and tools made out of steel also seem to belong to a certain period. There are also possible components that when the funeral place of Adhichanallur is there, forts, residential places, professions would also be there. Only on further research, we could come to know about the whole civilization of Adhichanallur

Government Museum in Tirunelveli

Tirunelveli District belongs to Southern Pandi State and which was once known as "SALI PATHIYUR'is an ancient district. Freedom fighters like Poolithevar, Veerapandiya Kattabomman, VeeranAlagumuthuKone, poets like Subramania Bharathi, PapanasamSivam and great leaders like KappalOttiyaTamilar V.O.Chidambaranar were born in this district. Though divided into many districts for administrative reasons, the famous river Tambaraparani flowing in this district makes it rich. This part was ruled by various emperors like Chola, Pandiya, Chera, and Naickers. The Mother Goddess fossil found during the excavation of 2000 yr old Adichanallur area is world-famous. Cave temples, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, Jain inscriptions show that the Jain religion was also followed in Tirunelveli. Tirunelveli has a unique Tamil slang. This district stretches over an area of 6838 square Kilometers comprising of seven taluks, namely Tirunelveli, Palayamkottai, Tenkasi, Shenkottai, Ambasamudram, Nanguneri, and Radhapuram, and has a total population of nearly 30,00,000. Rivers like Tambaraparani, Manimutharu,

Sitharu, Pachaiaru, Kadambanathi and Jambunathi make the district fertile. EllakkaiMalai, AgathiaMalai, KurtalaMalai and PothigaiMalai are the natural abodes of tribes such as Kanikars, Pazhiyar and KattuNaicker. Moondradaipu, Koonthankulam, Mundanthurai, and Kalakadu have a wide variety of flora and fauna. Dams at Papanasam and Manimutharu help in increasing the fertility of the soil, apart from being a basic source in generating Electric hydel power. The important minerals, of the district, are limestone monocots, graphite, dolomite, gypsum, and colemanite. The cement factory at Thalaiyuthu and the mat weaving center at Pathamadai are examples of rapid industrial growth in the District. To further add to the glory of the district is this museum which was inaugurated on December 31st, 1992, as the 12th district museum which with its exquisite bronzes stone sculptures, wood carvings, paintings, old and new stone implements, Iron weapons, coins, fossils, tribal objects, birds, animals, fishes, marine objects which are being exhibited in separate showcases.

Sculpture Garden

The stone sculptures of Mahaveera, Vishnu, Kali, Durga, some Hero stones, and inscriptions are being exhibited in front of the Government Museum. In 1547 at Ilavelangal, TirunelveliPerumal alias Vettum Perumal along with his soldiers was attacked unexpectedly by Nayak soldiers. In this attack, ten Pandiya soldiers were killed. To commemorate the death of these ten soldiers, ten Hero stones were installed and the stones are also exhibited in the sculpture garden.

Introducing Gallery

Once we enter the museum we are welcomed by introducing a gallery which contains photographs of Tenkasi, Kasiviswanathar temple, Krishnapuram temple, cave temples mural paintings of Sankarankovil, Courtallem waterfalls, and photographs depicting various handicrafts practiced in Tirunelveli districts such as Karukurichi Terracotta and Pathamadai mat products.

Anthropology Gallery

Adichanallur is the world's biggest megalithic burial yard. The potteries of red and black ware, iron, shell, gold, and bronze which are of antique value were unearthed along with burial urns and these are being exhibited in the showcases. The Paleolithic stone implements like hand ax, flakes, the microlithic stone implements collected from

Sayerpuram, and the Neolithic stone implements collected from the Tribal peoples are being exhibited in showcases. Iron and wooden Boomerangs have been used as warfare weapons and hunting weapons by the Tribal people of Pandya Nadu. Showcases with dioramas explaining the occupation, culture, lifestyle of tribes living in Tirunelveli district like Kani, Pazhiyar, Kattunayakar are exhibited. 86 Representing the Tirunelveli folks, their art, culture, dolls, Head pots, Pavaikoothu, and musical instruments like Nadaswaram, Tavil, Tappu, Flute is also exhibited.

Archaeology Gallery

Things like betel boxes, incense burner, hanging lamps, Pavailamp, Spittoon, kendi made of brass used by the people of Karaikudi in their day-to-day activities are exhibited here. A set of metal cost coins from 5th century B.C right down through the age of Kushans, Guptas, Chalukya, Mughals, Cholas, Pandyas, Vijaya Nagar, and the East India company also adorn the gallery.

Umaithurai Gallery

Umaithurai, the brother of veerapondiyakattapomman was once imprisoned by the British in this room. To remember his activities Umaithurai gallery was opened where we can find his life history through photos and weapons used by veerapadiyakattapomman.

Natural Science Gallery

Many medicinal herbs and shrubs which have been collected from Tirunelveli Siddha Medical College are exhibited in pressed herbarium sheets. Also, barks, oilseeds used for making medicines are exhibited in glass jars. Marine animals like crabs, fishes, sea algae, sea urchins, sea cucumber, starfish, and sea horses are being displayed in their aquatic environment. Nine planets of the Solar system are explained using diorama in the TirunelveliGovt Museum. Minerals and ores namely Crysolite, Limestone, Natuieroits, Ammonite, Turilight, pegmatite, Cordierite, Quartz, Sillimanite, Dolomite, Haematite, Pyrite, and a few fossils are exhibited.

Painting Gallery

Kalamkari paintings oil paintings watercolor paintings and batik paintings which explain the traditional paintings of Tamil Nadu adorn the painting gallery. 87 Weekly Holiday: Fridays and Second Saturdays Three National Holidays : (Republic day, Independence day, Gandhi Jeyanthi) Visiting Hours: 9.30 A.M to 5.00 P.M

District Science Centre

The District Science Centre (DSC) was opened to the public on 27th February 1987. It is started with a gallery on "Treasures from Ocean" and a Science Park. It is located near the Collector Office, Kokkirakulam, Tirunelveli Corporation area. It has a lot of exhibits, science working models, and many displays to gain knowledge. Before long the Center got one of the most well-known Centres in the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) due to the tremendous support from the local community. National Council of Science Museums, Government of India is the controlling authority of the center. Popularizing science and technology among the public and supplementing science education in schools and colleges to foster a spirit of scientific inquiry among the students is a major objective of the center.The beautiful architectural main building of the center locates in the middle of the campus. Many outreach programs such as rural science camps,workshops, seminars, science quizzes, science fairvacation hobby courses, etc., are regularly organized.

V.O.Chidambaranar Port

Tuticorin Port, one of the major trading ports in India, is located in Tuticorin in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Today, the port is known as the V.O.Chidambaranar Port. It is an artificial port and hence is one of the best engineering marvels ever created in India. With its massive size, it takes second place in the list of the largest ports in India. This port also is the fourth-largest container terminal in the country. The operations and the management of the port make it the Nation's Premier Port after the Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project. It is most often compared with the Port of Singapore which is the secondbusiest port in the world. V.O.Chidambaranar Port was declared to be a major port in India on 11 July 1974. The port functions all through the year. In Tamil Nadu, it is the third International Port and the second All-Weather Port. Tuticorin is famously known as the City of Pearls and is also famously known for its Ports. The location of the port is strategically planned on the south-eastern coast of India and lies close to the east-west International sea route in the Gulf of Mannar. With India to its west and Sri Lanka to its southeast, the Tuticorin Port is quite well protected from cyclonic winds and storms. It is the only port in South India that provides weekly direct container services to the United States of America and Europe. The VO Chidambaranar

Port in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi, or Tuticorin, created a new record on August 29. It handled a vessel with the highest parcel size, the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways said on Tuesday. The vessel, MV Ince Ankara, arrived from the Port of Mina Saqr in UAE with 93,719 tonnes of limestone, consigned for Chettinad Cements, the ministry said in a statement, adding that the port's previous record for handling the highest parcel size was achieved on May 14, 2021, when vessel MV Bastions brought 92,935 tonnes of coal. The Singapore-flagged MV Ince Ankara docked at the port on August 26 and commenced its discharge using three Harbour Mobile cranes that are capable of discharging more than 50,000 tonnes per day. The entire consignment of limestone was unloaded on August 29. According to the ministry, cargo handling through VOC Port has shown an upward trend during the current financial year. The port handled 11.33 million tonnes of cargo up to July 2021, compared to the 10.58 MT handled during the corresponding period last year, registering a growth of 7.14 percent. The container handling through the port has also seen a remarkable improvement, said the statement.

It handled 2.69 lakh TEUs during this fiscal up to July 2021, registering a 21.07 percent growth, compared to the corresponding period of last fiscal. The Tuticorin port, which now functions under the administrative control of the Union Ministry of Shipping, has a long history, with Tamil literature and historical records highlighting pearl fisheries and trading in pearls in the 7th to 12th Century AD when Pandya and Chola kings ruled. The records mention a well guarded and natural harbor in Tuticorin where ships anchored. The Portuguese sailed into Tuticorin in 1532, while the Dutch captured it in 1649. Many English travelers have recorded their impression of Tuticorin in the 17th Century. In 1974, Tuticorin was declared a major port.

Korkai

Korkai is a small village in Srivaikuntam Taluk of Tuticorin district. It is situated at a distance of 3 km to the north of the river Tamaraparani. The sea originally had receded about 6 km to the east. The river Tamaraparani skirted this town in ancient days. The site is referred to in Tamil Sangam literature and has attracted the notices of the classical geographers as an important port of pearl fishery. In the excavation, a structure with nine courses of bricks in six rows was unearthed at the depth of 75 cm from surface level. Below the structure, three large-sized rings placed one over the other were found.

Inscribed potsherds bearing Tamil Brahmi letters assignable, from 300 BCE to 200 CE3 were also found. Charcoal samples were collected which were assigned to 785 BCE, by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai. The ongoing archaeological excavation at the Korkai region in Tamil Nadu's Tuticorin district, 623km from Chennai, threw light on a 2,000year-old brick structure, The seven-layer brick structure since evinced interest among archaeology enthusiasts in the state. Finding its mention in Sangam literature for its pearl fishery, Korkai was the ancient port city that dates back to the early Pandya dynasty. In the present day, it is a small village in Srivaikuntam taluk of the Tuticorin district. It is believed that the ancient city once situated at the banks of the Thamirabarani river ended up inland, six kilometers from the sea, due to river sedimentation and the receding water

In addition to the existing excavation works, the Tamil Nadu state archaeology department also commenced excavation work at three places in the state, including Korkai. In the Korkai region, excavation trenches have been dug at Korkai, Sivagalai, and Adichanallur. The excavation work commenced on February 26 after the state government sanctioned □29 lakh for the project. The archaeologists dug 17 trenches at Korkai from where they found cast iron material, glass beads, and signs of industrial activities. The recent addition is the seven-layered brick structure indicating that it was a settlement area of the ancient civilization. Between 1968 and 1969, the Tamil Nadu government undertook archaeological research at Korkai and surrounding areas. It was the first time since the archaeology department was formed that the government commissioned excavation works. Research conducted in the past established that Korkai was an archeologically significant place with 2,800 years of history4 . Nine Perforated terracotta Pipes, stacked one above the other, have been found during an archaeological excavation at Korkai, an ancient site, in Thoothukudi District. The Diameter and the height of the pipes were both 27cm. The pipes have a thickness of 1 cm. They were found 30-35 cm below the surface and would have probably been used for distillation5 The literature and archaeological evidence suggest that Korkai was the hub of export and import of goods with other ports of ancient civilizations.

Pandyan port Korkai

Korkai was once a major port during the Pandyan era that had a thick maritime trade with the Roman empire and overseas countries. "The researchers have found Roman ware and rouletted ware from Korkai. The villagers still find a huge number of chunks and oysters shells and coins of different ages when they dig a few feet down the earth". The present Gulf of Mannar of the east coast was mentioned as the "Colchic Gulf" in the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea due to the prominence of Korkai at that time. It is pertinent to note that Korkai has a 2000- year-old "Vanni tree" still standing green and it has become a tourist site. The centuries-old Vetrivel Chezhiya Nangai Amman temple on the Korkaikulam tank is remembered as an old port and district administration had raised an arch. An ancient stone temple Akasalai Eswaramudaiyar temple having stone inscriptions and the adjacent Akasala street6 , which has its reference to the Silapathikaram, are still evident to the ancient port city."The stone inscription at the Akasalai Eswaramudaiyar temple remains blemished as it had been painted over" Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve Sanctuaries.

The Mundanthurai Kalakkad wildlife sanctuary in Tirunelveli district is developed as a National Tiger Reserve from the year 1988 with a total area of 817 sq. km. in the southwestern ghat ranges. The nearest stations are Cheranmahadevi and Ambasamudram, which are 20 km and 15 km respectively from Tirunelveli. The nearest airports are Madurai and Trivandrum. One can reach this place by road also from Ambasamudram and Kalakkad. Frequent buses are plying from Ambasamudram and Kalakkad to this place. Out of 817 sq. km. 459 km. is in the core zone and 358 sq. km. is in the buffer zone. The mountainous undulating topography is the characteristic feature leading to the tropical dry forest on the lower slopes and tropical wet evergreen forests on the upper reaches.7 The climate is dry, humid, and hot, at plains and pleasant cold in the higher elevations. The reserve is the southernmost habitat of the tiger. Other predators like panthers, jungle cats, civets, dholes, jackals, striped hyenas are also found here. India is the home of 18 nonhuman primate species of which five primates occur in this reserve namely liontailed masque, slender loris, Nilgiri langur, common langur, and bonnet macaque. Other endangered species found here are Nilgiri Thar, sloth bear, Indian bison, Indian elephant, Malabar giant squirrel, mouse deer, pangolin. In addition to that sambar

wild boar, spotted deer and porcupine, and mongooses are also found here.8 We can also come across reptiles and amphibians like king cobra, common krait, russets, viper, dark pit viper, monitor lizard, garden lizard, tortoise, crocodiles, and rare species of frogs. Regarding the fauna, there are more than 80 species of birds found in this region. To mention a few spotted frequently here are egrets, herons, jungle fowl, spurfowl, partridge, quails, emerald dove, minivets, bee caters, sparrows, owls, nightjars, kites, paradise flycatchers, and parakeets. There are 24 identified nature trails, which are spread over the reserve. It gives a thrilling experience to trekkers. This Tiger Reserve is open on all days between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. throughout the year. However, the best season is September to January. Forest Rest Houses and dormitories are available at Mundanthurai and Thalayanai.9 Many of our wildlife sanctuaries are in remote areas. They lack restrooms and food. So, the Government should take efforts the setup hotels and lodges in these areas. This may be done with the help of interested private parties. The government should take care of providing the infrastructure by international standards. This will attract more foreigners to our sanctuaries. Also, the standard of our sanctuaries has to be improved. The government has to take special care of the rare varieties of animals. The forest department has to take steps to allow the public to visit these sanctuaries. Sometimes they do not allow the public to visit. So they are disappointed, and they hesitate to visit it again. At the same time, they are also having the responsibility of saving the wild animals from disturbance by the public. They have to be properly motivated not to disturb the wild animals and the flora and fauna. There are also entertainments such as theme parks. The interested private operators should be inducted into this entertainment work. If the wildlife sanctuaries are being upgraded to the international standard, some international standard hotels and lodgesare to be developed to attract foreign tourists. In many places, the roads are in good condition but the bus services are not regular.

Museum The State Government Museum in Courtallam has an assorted collection of interesting items. It was established in 1981. It houses a rare collection of sculptures from the 8th to 18th century A.D. Besides, a burial urn of first century A.D., microliths, different tools of Neolithic culture, two copper plates in Tamil, one copper plate in Telugu, Sati stones, stumpages, Nayak paintings, coins, utensils used by tribal people of

various parts of the state is also preserved in this museum. Government publications of books on Archaeology, Numismatics, and Epigraphy are also available in this museum for reference and sales. Among all these waterfalls, Five Falls is very good since it isless crowded than the main falls, and will be more pleasant than any other fall.

Self-Assessment Questions
1. Describe the role of the Chera dynasty in early Tirunelveli history.
2. Explain the contributions of the Chola rulers to Tirunelveli.
3. Discuss the significance of the Pandya dynasty in the region.
4. Write a short note on the medieval kingdoms of Tirunelveli.
5. How did the Pandyas strengthen regional administration?
6. Examine the role of the Nayaks in Tirunelveli.
7. Describe the temple architecture built by the Pandyas and Nayaks.
8. Discuss the other monuments constructed in Tirunelveli.
9. How did temples influence the cultural life of Tirunelveli?
10. Assess the combined architectural and cultural contributions of medieval rulers.

European Influence and Colonial Administration: Arrival of the British – Economic and Social Changes: Impacts of British rule on Education, Agriculture, Trade, Railways Forest Administration, Commerce and Society – Resistance and Revolts : Notable revolts and freedom fighters from the region – Unsung freedom fighters.

Objectives
- British Rule: Introduced colonial administration.
- Revolts: Region saw anti-British uprisings**.**
- Freedom Fighters: Both famous and unsung locals contributed.

European Influence

The European influence in the Tirunelveli region marks a significant phase in the transition from medieval to modern history in southern Tamil Nadu. Though Tirunelveli was an inland district, it came under strong European impact due to its proximity to the pearl-rich Coromandel and Malabar coasts, the Tamiraparani river system, and its political connections with the Pandya, Nayak, Poligar, Arcot Nawab, and Travancore kingdoms. From the 16th century onwards, European trading companies—particularly the Portuguese, the Dutch, and later the British—played a crucial role in shaping the political, economic, social, and religious life of the Tirunelveli region.

The **Portuguese** were the earliest Europeans to influence Tirunelveli, mainly through their activities along the nearby coastal areas such as Tuticorin (Thoothukudi). After the arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1498, the Portuguese rapidly established trading and missionary centers along the south-east coast. Tuticorin became an important Portuguese base for the **pearl fishery**, which directly affected the economy of Tirunelveli, as the pearl trade depended heavily on labor, supplies, and inland routes from the Tamiraparani basin. Portuguese influence extended inland through trade, religious missions, and political intervention in local affairs.

One of the most lasting impacts of the Portuguese in Tirunelveli was in the **religious sphere**. The Portuguese missionaries, particularly the Jesuits, actively worked in the coastal and inland areas. **St. Francis Xavier** visited the pearl fishing coast in the 16th century and converted many Parava fishermen to Christianity. These conversions had a direct influence on Tirunelveli society, as Christian settlements expanded inland,

supported by Portuguese protection. Churches, schools, and mission centers were established, introducing Western education and new social ideas into the region.

The Portuguese also influenced **local politics** by supporting certain local rulers and communities. They provided military assistance and firearms to friendly chiefs in return for trade privileges and religious freedom. This intervention altered traditional power structures in Tirunelveli and weakened the authority of the Nayaks and Poligars in some areas. The introduction of firearms changed the nature of warfare and strengthened those local chiefs who allied with the Europeans.

The **Dutch** replaced the Portuguese as a dominant European power along the southern coast in the 17th century. The Dutch East India Company captured Tuticorin from the Portuguese in 1658 and controlled the pearl fisheries and maritime trade. Though the Dutch were primarily traders and showed less interest in missionary work, their economic policies had a strong indirect influence on Tirunelveli. They regulated pearl fishing, controlled prices, and ensured steady revenue from inland agricultural regions that supplied food and raw materials.

Dutch control of trade encouraged the commercialization of agriculture in Tirunelveli. Farmers increasingly produced surplus crops such as rice, cotton, and indigo for export markets. This shift from subsistence to market-oriented agriculture changed rural life and increased dependence on European traders. The Dutch also improved port facilities at Tuticorin, indirectly promoting trade routes connecting Tirunelveli with international markets.

The most profound European influence in Tirunelveli came with the **British**. Initially entering as traders through the English East India Company, the British gradually expanded their political authority by exploiting the internal conflicts among the Poligars, Nayaks, and Nawabs. Tirunelveli came under British control in the early 19th century after the suppression of the **Poligar rebellions**, particularly following the defeat of **Veerapandiya Kattabomman** of Panchalamkurichi.

Under British rule, Tirunelveli was integrated into the **Madras Presidency**, marking a fundamental change in governance. The British introduced a centralized administrative system, replacing the traditional Nayak and Poligar systems. British

collectors, tahsildars, and magistrates administered the district, enforcing uniform laws and revenue policies. This brought political stability but also reduced local autonomy.

The **revenue administration** introduced by the British had a deep impact on Tirunelveli. The Ryotwari system was implemented, under which land revenue was collected directly from cultivators. While this system recognized individual land ownership, high revenue demands often burdened peasants and led to indebtedness. British emphasis on revenue maximization altered traditional land relations and weakened village communities.

The British also transformed **agriculture and irrigation** in Tirunelveli. They repaired and expanded irrigation works along the Tamiraparani river to ensure regular revenue flow. Commercial crops such as cotton, tobacco, and indigo were encouraged to meet industrial demands in Britain. Though agricultural production increased, farmers became vulnerable to market fluctuations and colonial exploitation.

European influence was also strongly felt in the **social and educational fields**. Christian missionaries, supported by the British, established schools, colleges, and printing presses in Tirunelveli. Western education introduced new subjects such as science, mathematics, and English literature. This led to the emergence of a new educated middle class, which later played an important role in social reform and the Indian freedom movement.

In the **religious and cultural sphere**, European influence led to the spread of Christianity and Western cultural practices. At the same time, it provoked a response from indigenous society, leading to religious revival movements and reforms within Hinduism. Temples continued to function as cultural centers, but their economic power was gradually reduced due to British regulations.

European influence also reshaped the **legal and judicial system** in Tirunelveli. British courts replaced traditional judicial practices. Codified laws, modern policing, and prison systems were introduced. While these reforms promoted uniform justice, they often ignored local customs and traditions, creating social tensions.

In conclusion, European influence in Tirunelveli was multi-dimensional and long-lasting. Beginning with Portuguese trade and missionary activities, strengthened by Dutch commercial control, and culminating in British political domination, European

powers deeply transformed the region. Their influence brought administrative modernization, commercial agriculture, Western education, and new religious ideas, while also causing economic exploitation, social disruption, and political subjugation. The legacy of European influence continues to shape Tirunelveli's society, economy, and historical consciousness even today.

British Attention overTirunelveli Province Among the Western Poligars of Tirunelveli, Puli Tevar gained a special status thanks to his leadership among Poligars. He strongly believed that he could not accept the overlordship of either the Nawab of Carnatic or his representatives, the amuldars. He nurtured such an independent spirit not only in himself but also among the Western Poligars. The Nawab felt that Puli Tevar was a source of trouble to him in collecting the circar revenue and peshkush. The leadership provided by Puli Tevar enabled his fellow Poligars to defy the Nawab's authority. The occurrence of the Carnatic Wars and subsequent defeat of the French provided an opportunity to the British to involve themselves in the Carnatic affairs. The British realized that the Southern Carnatic region, especially the Tirunelveli region was a fertile region to yield good revenue. Realising the designs of the Nawab and the British, Puli Tevar was determined to provide a formidable resistance. Unable to control the predatory activities of Western Poligars, the Nawab left the collection of revenue of Tirunelveli to the British authorities. The British began to send military generals to suppress Puli Tevar and his allies. It was very evident that the Tirunelveli Poligars were out of the control of the Nawab. Therefore the Nawab offered the Tirunelveli region to the British and, the Nawab, in turn, expected the British to help him to quell the Poligars. The British, on getting the right over the Poligar region, felt that fight with the native military chieftains was unavoidable.

The tussle between the Western Poligars and the British began in 1751 and it became very severe only from 1755. 1 Puli Tevar, the Poligar of Nercattanseval, resisted the expansion of the British Power as well as the authority of the Nawab.

Establishment of British Rule in Tirunelveli District

The modem Tirunelveli District occupies the eastern half of the extreme South of the Indian peninsula. Madura district bounds on the north and north-east; on the south-east and south the Gulf of Manaar, and on the west the Southern Ghats form the natural

boundaries. The plain of Tinnevelly covered with woods and jungle, tank beds and palmyra forest. The great range of Ghats formed the western boundary of the district. The Britishers called this district as Tinnevelly, its Euro-slang term. The district had a past glory from Pre-historic age to the Colonial era. The geological basis of the district was a continuation of the gneiss rocks and mountains. There were 34 rivers, all of which run within the distrj.ct. The Tamirabarani was the chief river, which rises in the Southern Ghats, forming a beautiful. waterfall in Papanasum.

The district was rich in Archaeological remains. Inscriptions, temples, cave temples and paintings were found in the various parts of the district. Robert Bruce Foote while exploring the district in 1883; discovered a number of fragments of chert, silicified wood and limpid quartz imbedded in the red loam underlying the teri sands in the neighborhood of Sawyerpuram, Srivaikundam taluk. These specimens were ·assigned to the Neolithic Age. The famous Archaeological site Adichanallur was found in this district. The burial-urns were unearthed by Alexander Rea (1895-1905), the surveyor of the Archaeological Survey of India in Adichanallur. The first well lighted epoch in the history of district was reflected in the literature of Sangam by Iraiyanar Ahapporul. During the Sangam Age the Tamil country was divided into three dynastical rule of the Chera, Chola and Pandiyas. The area now comprising the Tirunelveli District formed part of the Pandiya country right from the Sangam Age, it was popularly known as 'Thenpandinadu'. 'Ayes' were the 'Vel' chieftains who ruled the country in and around Pothigai Hills. Greek geographer, Ptolemy refers to 'Ays' as A 'ioi' who was ruling the country which included Cape Comorin and Mount Bettigo (Pothigai Hills).

The territory of .the district was known as Thenpandinadu, the Southern Pandya country, but it's represented as the name of one of the twelve districts in the Tamil country. The Korkai was served as the chief port during the Sangam period. The Tamil people, as they were called in Sanskrit, the Dravidians were divided in .ancient times into three great divisions- Chera, Chola and Pandiyas. According to Tamil tradition, Chera, Chola and Pandiya were three brothers whq lived and ruled in Korkai, near the river bank of Tamirabarani in Tinnevelly District. The separation took place, Pandiyas remained at their home land, Chera, Chola went forth to seek their fortunes and founded kingdoms of their own to the north and west. During the early Pandiyas, agriculture was the basis of

economic activity. Hunting and fishing were the chief occupation in the Western Ghats and coastal area. Tamirabarani River played a vital role in the agriculture of the district. There were traders and Traders Guild and internal trade flourished. The Pearls were exchanged during Pandya kingdom.

The Nawabs and British Intervention Over the Territory of Tirunelveli

The district was prosperous under the monarchial regime. The maJor administrative changes took place during the regime of Viswanatha Nayak. The political, economic and military motives were influenced by Viswanatha Nayak and Ariyanatha Nayak in instituting the "System of Palayam". The word Palayam refers i to the small portion of land, which was given to maintain the army and taxes were collected from the native people. Its Tamil name was called Palayyakar or Palayakkaran, "holder of an armed camp", which sufficiently describes the basis of the power of these chieftains. 6 All the Palayams in the kingdom were the states within the state. The village revenue officer was called Maniyakkarars, which became hereditary and continued upto 1980. In 1750, there were 32 Palayams of which 18 were under the control of the Marava Chief and 14 were under Vaduga of Nayak Chiefs.

After the fall of Nayaks, the district was attacked by the Arcot Nawabs. But the Palayakkar resisted the forces of Chanda Sahib, nephew of the Arcot Nawab, who exploited the situation in the South. In 1744, the district was under Nawab, but the Palayakkars were strongly united against the Nawabs.

The Palayakkar of the district continuously fought against the establishment of Nawab rule. In 1744, the outbreak of the First Carnatic War between the French and British over the territory of Madras State. During the second Carnatic Wars, British send an army under -the command of Colonel Heron and captured Madurai, Tinnevelly and Kovilgudi. Many of the poligars rejected the demands of tribute made in the name of Nawab. Puli Devan, Palayakkar of Nerkattumseval, to take arms against the British in the South. On 25th March 1755, the combined forces ofMaphuz Khan and Heron marched from Madurai to Tirunelveli for the suppression of the rebellion. Finally, Maphuz Khan was appointed as the Governor. He was required to pay 15 lakhs of rupees as the annual rent for Madurai and Tirunelveli provinces. Maphuz Khan has faced many problems in the administration. Kattabomman, Puli · D'evan, the Rajah of Travancore, the Maravas

and the Kallars did not accept the overlord ship ofNawab. These Palayakkars tried to annex the nearby territories.

The Maphuz Khan's administration in Madurai was not conducive ·to the Nawab. He found it difficult to settle the country or to subdue the Palayakkars. On 6th· April 1756, the Lord Pigot, Governor of Fort St. George, deputed army under Yusuf Khan. He found that Maphuz Khan was unable to restore order or to enforce the tax ,collection. Yusuf Khan or Khan Sahib led the army towards the small Palayam and killed the Palayakkars. But the Maphuz Khan did not like the entry of Khan Sahib forces and complained to the company. The Pigot justified Khan Sahib's action and refuses to recall.

The agreement was reached between the Nawab and the Company regarding equal share of Revenue. Both of them accepted to appoint a renter, Tartarappa Mudali, a wealthy financier of Tirunelveli agreed to accept the rentership of Tirunelveli province for three years, for a total rent of 30 lakhs. Among this Rs.11 . lakhs for 1st year, Rs.12 lakhs for 2"d year and Rs.13 lakhs for 3rd year. But Maphuz ·Khan promptly asked for the Nawab's consent to appoint Tartarappa as renter. Being reluctant to accept the nominee of the Madras Council and hesitant to oppose the Company, Muhammad Ali directed his opposition against Tartarappa. On 1st July 1756, Muhammad Ali assumed the management of the Province under the joint orders of the Nawab as well as Madras Council. Lord Pi got posted Khan Sahib at Tirunelveli to render military support to the administration of Tartarappa Mudali. This arrangement was a breakthrough in the ascendancy of British power in the South. While the company by virtue of its financial aid to the Nawab for the defence of Tiruchirappalli had already obtained a right to share of the revenue, now it's added a right to appoint an administrator of revenue. But Yuzub Khan holds the military authority, Tartarappa obtained the control of revenue of Tirunelveli. The Nawab's rights was restricted. Every time Tartarappa had relied upon Yusuf Khan for military assistance in civil administration. Tartarappa disliked the interference of Khan Sahib in the civil administration. Tartarappa stopped the payment to the company's troops ,and Khan Sahib seized the revenue collection.

In this situation Maphuz Khan with the support of Patan chiefs of Madurai, Barkataula and Nabi Khan attacked and deClared himself the Governor of Madurai and issued an order appointing Barkataula as his deputy for Nadumandalam and Mir Jafar for

Tirunelveli. Fearing that the French might exploit the situation, Lord Pigot wanted to reconcile with Maphuz Khan. Pigot sent a peace mission under John Calliaund and also offered to pay an annual subsidy of rupees two lakhs but Maphuz Khan refused to accept it and continued independence in the South. Mapuz Khan won the rebel Palayakkars by giving them land and allowed Kattabomman to occupy the· Nawab's villages adjoining Panchalamkurichi, and the Rajah of Travancore to annex Kalakkadu. The Palayakkars who were against Yusuf Khan and joined hands with Maphuz Khan. Maphuz Khan granted Alwar Kurichi, Ambasamudram, Papankulam and Rangasamudram to Puli Devan. Maphuz Khan mobilized the powers of South India and promised restoration of the country to the Nayaks. But the Palayakk.ars of composite of Tirunelveli District, Ettayapuram and Sivagiri did not extented their support. Many of the Palayakkars who joined hands with Maphuz Khan were lukewarm and self-interested.

The rebellion broke out in January 1757 with rebel troops consisting of 1000 horses and 10,000 armeq men rampaged into the villages of Tirunelveli, spreading desolation everywhere. They came to Panchalamkurichi where Kattabomman joined them. The irregular forces of Tartarappa fled and the administration collapsed. Maphuz Khan and Puli Devan summoned the neutral palayakkar of Ettayapuram to join hands with them but, the latter refused. The rebels sent the spoils of plunder to Nelkattamseval. Yusuf Khan advanced from Srivilliputhur to intercept the convoy of I the rebels but did not succeed. The Palayakkars of Wadagara meanwhile occupied Kadayanallur, Tenkasi, Sankarankoil and the Rajah ofTravancore annexed Valliyur.

The major part of Tirunelveli slipped into the hands of Maphuz Khan and his associates. The troops of the Nawab and the Company had retained the control of few strong posts from where they struggled hard to check the progress of the -rebels. The renter, Tartarappa collected taxes from the villages but only in competition with the rebel chiefs. Khan Sahib set up a post at Srivlliputhur and held control of the fort of Tirunelveli. With the help of the Palayakkars of Sivagiri and Sattur, he repulsed the attacks of the rebels on his post at Alwarkurichi. On 5th March 1757, he attacked a large body of the rebels who assembled near Alwarkurichi and inflicted a crushing defeat upon the rebels. Puli Devan lost two of his ·Generals and the Palayakkar of Wadagara lost one of his legs. This

victory enabled Khan Sahib, to take possession of Singampatti, a Palayam of one of the rebel chiefs.

British Mission Under John Caillaud

On 23 February, 1757, Lord Pigot sent an army under John Caillaud to crush the rebellion in the south and restore order. On the way, the army ofPudukkottai Raja also joined with the company troops and the combined army marched. towards Tirunelveli. The Kallars sealed the direct route to Tirunelveli and so, the forces took a circular path enroute Ramanathapuram. On the rebel's side, there seemed a crumbling of cooperation as they sensed insecurity to them. Many rebels wanted peace and some to fight out the issue. The Caillaud forces reached Tirunelveli on 17 March 1757 and joined with forces of Yusuf Khan and Tartarappa.

Cailaud spent a few days at Tirunelveli regulating the affairs of the province. He did not make any serious attempts to dislodge the rebels from Tenkasi, Uthumalai or Wadagara. The shortage of food materials and the onset of monsoon hampered the progress of his operations. Puli Devan and Barakataula urged Hyder Ali to rush his troops for which they offered to pay five lakh of rupees and to cede the strategic fort of Cholavandan.

Caillaud and Khan Sahib withdrew their forces from Tirunelveli to Madurai. The rebels also advanced their forces to Madurai to prevent Madurai from falling into the hands of their enemies. On the way, the forces were dispersed by the Sivagiri Palayakkar for trespass into his Palayam. However, the forces re-assembled and marched towards Madurai. Caillaud, however, unable to capture the fort of Madurai and retreated to Tiruchirappalli.

Though Caillaud re-treated to Tiruchirappalli, the rebel depredations in Tirunelveli and the military operations against the rebels of Madurai continued. Maphuz Khan and Puli Devan recovered the lost posts but, their attempts to storm the fort of Tirunelveli failed. Maphuz Khan was not able to win any decisive victory. Hence, he agreed to take the province on lease furnishing security as proposed by Governor early. Hearing this from Maphuz Khan, the Company sent Rama Nayak to Tirunelveli for settlement, · but the fickle minded Maphuz Khan went back on his words. 15 He surrounded Rama Nayak and threatened him with death if he did not write to the garrison

at Tirunelveli to surrender but Rama Nayak, the Sardars in the .court have intervened and allowed him to return. A few days later, when a branch of troops guarding Tirunelveli fort left for Madurai, Maphuz Khan· attacked the Tirunelveli fort and captured it. The rebels tried to attack Palayamkkottai fort where Tartarappa held his office. But, Tartarappa had the support of the Palayakkars of Panchalamkurichi and Ettayapuram and hence, the Palayamkottai fort could . be protected. Still the rebels retained control of most of the provinces ruling the country with as much violence and oppression as they could.

The rule of the rebel Palayakkars continued in the south until there were . differences of opinion among the chieftains. Captain Caillaud and Khan Sahib succeeded in winning the support of a few rebels to their side. They included the Maravars, Mudemiah and the Palayakkars of Sattur. The Palayakkars of Ettayapuram, Panchalamkurichi and Sivagiri were already the supporters of Tartarappa and Khan Sahib. Kattabomman furnished I 000 troops for service with Khan Sahib, while Mudemiah brought with him the Kallars of Natham. These defections considerably weakened the rebels. However, Puli Devan, Barkataula and N abi Khan attack remained with Maphuz Khan in firm alliance.

Barkataula who successfully defended Madurai fort expected forces from Tirunelveli and appealed to Maphuz Khan. Maphuz Khan having no money made another futile attempt to obtain the rentership of Tirunelveli. Hyder Ali did not help the rebels. Barkataula intended to surrender if the besieging army of Cailaud paid him Rs.l2 lakh17• But Captain Cail1aud sought an unconditional surrender of the fort. Meanwhile Caillaud was informed of Hyder's advancement towards Madurai from Pindigul. Caillaud, therefore, made a settlement with Barkataula agreeing to pay him an amount of 1,70,000 rupees on 8th September 1757. The rebels evacuated Madurai and Caillaud took possession of the fort. Maphuz Khan formed from the siege of Palayamkotai and retreated to western Palayams.

Hyder Ali championing the cause of the rebels invaded Madurai in 1757. Khan Sahib rushed with his force to Madurai to check Hyder's invasion. As Khan Sahib was away from Tirunelveli~ there were no strong forces either of the Nawab or of the company in Tirunelveli. Taking ~vantage of this situation the Palayakkars of Nelkattumsevval, Wadagara, Sattur and Ettayapuram took the head in gaining possession

of circar villages. They even made ravages into the territories of the neutral loyal Palayakkars and occupied Uthumalai. The further depredation of the Palayakkars received a check with . the return of the forces of Khan Sahib to Tirunelveli after the withdrawal of Hyder Ali from Madurai.

Meanwhile Tartarappa's renter-ship expired. and the Governor called him to Madras to settle the account. As Tartarappa was ill, the settlement took place in Pudukkottai. The Nawab by the end of 1758 appointed Hasan Mohammad Khan for the management of Madurai and Tirunelveli provinces. However agreement was made for the sharing of the revenue with the Company on an equal basis and continued to be in force.

Khan Sahib now took the initiative in settling the war tom country. He attempted to win the support of the Hindus. He wrote to the Governor to persuade Maphuz Khan to leave Tirunelveli. He observed that as long as Maphuz Khan was in alliance with the local Palayakkars, it would become impossible to collect the taxes I peacefully. Lord Pigot in turn asked the Nawab Mohammed Ali to call back Maphuz Khan by offering suitable position in Arcot. Mohammad Ali sent messenger to meet Maphuz Khan in February 1758. The messenger went to Nelkattumseval and saw Maphuz Khan residing in a hut made of straw and living a life upon what Puli Devan parted with. Maphuz Khan demanded the recall of Khan Sahib from Madurai and a grant of a district yielding two lakhs of rupees to him as the condition for his withdrawal from the alliance of the Palayakkars. The Nawab rejected the conditions of his brother and hence no settlement was arrived

Khan Sahib came to Madras to assist the British to lift the siege of Madras by the French General Lally. His absence was a blessing for Maphuz Khan and the Palayakkars to expand their territories. In 1759, Khan Sahib was sent to Madurai and the Palayakkars had occupied all the territories from Madurai to Travancore. However Palayamkottai and Madurai remained with the forces of the Nawab and the Company. Maphuz Khan declared himself as the Nawab of Madurai. His chief associates by the time were Puli Devan, Kattabomman and· the Palayakkars of Ettayapuram. In the earlier operation, Kattabomman and the Ettayapuram Palayakkars were either neutral or supported Khan Sahib. Now they became allies to Maphuz Khan who sought the help of the French, but it

did not materialize as they were busy in Arcot fighting Carnatic wars. ·Maphuz Khan had no resources and he depended on the Palayakkars for money

In Madurai, the Governor Khan Sahib had to re-conquer all the territories afresh. He subdued the Kallars and sent an army to Ettayapuram which was also ·,subdued. Khan Sahib surrounded the western Palayams. He reduced the posts of Uthumalai and Surandai to submission. Puli Devan re-occupied Surandai a few days later and Khan Sahib recovered it in the second assault. The .victories of Khan Sahib curbed the aggressive nature of the western Palayakkars for the time being.

Khan Sahib returned to Tirunelveli and drew plans to expel the Palayakkars of Wadagara and the Travancore king from the occupation of Circar territory. The Palayakkars of Wadagara, a close associate of Puli Devan not only ravaged the Nawab's territories but also carried his depredations into Travancore through the passes of Shenkottai. The enmity between the Wadagara chief and the Travancore king was exploited by Khan Sahib. He. sought assistance from the Travancore king to conquer Wadagara which was granted. In September 1759 the combined forces of Khan Sahib and Travancore marched W adagara. The Palayakkars fled to Nelkattumsevval. Puli Devan requested the Travancore king to withdraw his assistance to Khan Sahib and assured compensation for the losses he suffered due to the trespass of the Wadagara Palayakkars into Travancore territories.

The clever Raja showed the letter to Khan Sahib and asked him to cede Kalakadu if he should continue his assistance. Khan Sahib yielded to the circumstances and gave Kalakadu to Travancore, but without the approval of the Nawab.

On the 6th November 1759, Khan Sahib supported by the Travancore forces invaded Nelkattum Sevval. Khan Sahib also received further supporting forces from Travancore and the Maravars. The combined forces sieged Vasudevanallur. Puli Devan and local inhabitants came to the rescue of Vasudevanallur. In the fierce battle ,that ensued, Puli Devan fought gallantly, but, both sides suffered heavy losses. Puli Devan lost 350 men and Khan Sahib 200. At this critical juncture a heavy cannon of the company burst and the war material in Khan Sahib's camp exhausted. The invaders re-treated and Puli Devan won the day's battle. It was due to the sheer gallantry of the

Palayakkars that they humbled the formidable forces of their enemy. Thus another endeavor of Khan Sahib to suppress the western Palayakkars ended in fiasco.

Campaign of Colonel Heron

The British Government at Madras organized the first military attempt in the Poligar region under the leadership of 2 Captain Cope in 1751. The combined forces of the British and Nawab Mohammed Ali could not suppress the Poligars. As the first attempt ended in failure, George Pigot, the Governor of Madras, sent a powerful detachement to the far south, under Col. Alexander Heron. He attacked the chieftains of Manaparai. Then the victorious forces moved to Nattam and stormed the fort of Kovilkudi and massacred the ferocious Kallars. The indiscriminate killing of the inhabitants turned the Kallars against the British. They retaliated and the British suffered considerable loss. Hence the British contingent moved to Tirunelveli.

Before leaving for Tirunelveli, Heron ordered that the Tirunelveli Poligars should forthwith pay all arrears to the Nawab and accept his overlordship. On March 25, 1755, Col. Heron with his army and that of Maphuz Khan, the elder brother of Mohammed Ali, the Nawab of Arcot, arrived in Tirunelveli and threatened the Poligars who did not respond to his first call. The Poligar of Sivagiri remained loyal to the Nawab. However, Puli Tevar, the Poligar of Nercattanseval, raised the banner of revolt and refused to acknowledge the overlordship of Nawab nor Col. Heron's mission. Maphuz Khan was ordered to suppress the rebel chief of Nercattanseval. Col. Heron supported the cause of Maphuz Khan against the Poligars and appointed the latter to be the representative of the Nawab in Tirunelveli. In the meantime, Madras Council recalled Col. Heron in accordance with the treaty concluded with the French in 1755, according to which non-interference in Indian politics was imposed on the British. On May 2, 1755, Col. Heron left Tirunelveli in response to the orders of the Madras Government but instead of proceeding directly to Tiruchirappalli, he went to Nercattanseval. Maphuz Khan convinced Col. Heron that the fort of Puli Tevar was made of mud and very vulnerable. Moreover, Puli Tevar had given asylum to Moodemiah and Nabi Khan Kattack, the Pathan chiefs of Madurai who never accepted the Nawab's supremacy. When the British forces arrived, Puli Tevar decided to resist it. It was the misfortune of Col. Heron that he

was betrayed by his interpreter. Puli Tevar had earlier received secret information that the British had no battering cannons and that they would not remain long in a state of siege.

Heron in Nercattanseval

The fort of Nercattanseval was well built by stone and clay and it stood on a plain. It had no cover near it except a hill. The British troops under Col. Heron encamped near it to batter the fort. Heron sent his vakeel to the place of Puli Tevar to demand the arrears. When Puli Tevar did not accept the demands, Heron threatened to batter the fort into pieces. Finally, Col. Heron demanded 20,000 rupees on the spot as a tribute. Puli Tevar replied to the Colonel that he might do as he pleased and that such a huge sum could not be raised and he was determined not to pay even a single rupee. Due to lack of cannons, Col. Heron's attempt to batter the fort failed. Col. Heron's report on this engagement provided the correct picture of the situation. He wrote, "My information in regard to the strength of the place and force of this Poligar was intolerably bad. Instead of a mud fort and few colleries as I was told, we found a very strong fortification. The fort was defended by about 4,000 men and eleven pieces of cannons served by the Dutch. I tried to batter their walls with six pounder but found that they had no effect. Therefore it seemed it was not an easy task to suppress Puli Tevar who was ready to meet any situation of grave danger.

Robert Orme, who narrates the achievements of Puli Tevar, does not mention the resistance of Puli Tevar and reasons for his success. The success behind Puli Tevar was due to good command and the support of all the Western Poligars and a disciplined band of dedicated soldiers. They were fired by the spirit of challenge and they were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of defending their fort.

In the course of military expedition, Col. Heron committed another mistake. Induced by handsome presents, he appointed Maphuz Khan as renter of Tirunelveli without the knowledge of the Madras Government and the Nawab. This was a violation of trust placed on Col. Heron by the British authority. It was disliked by both the British and the Nawab. Later Col. Heron was tried by the court martial on charges of bribery and dismissed from service.

This information prompted Puli Tevar to continue to be rebellious against the Nawab and the British. He was assisted by the Pathan chiefs who had been the

representatives of Chanda Sahib at Madurai. During the expedition of Col. Heron, these Pathan chiefs abandoned their rule and took refuge with Puli Tevar. After the departure of Col. Heron, once again these Pathan chiefs commenced their struggle over the regions of Madurai and Tirunelveli which were then held by Maphuz Khan.

The Pollam of Puli Tevar and his fort gave him a good citadel of resistance. Among the Poligars, Puli Tevar was known for his heroic activities in the battlefields. He was determined that at any cost it was his duty to replace the Nawab's supremacy. He aspired for the rule of either the Pandyas or the Nayaks whom he called Patron Saints of the Poligars. He was well backed by his able generals. His soldiers were well trained in native guerilla warfare methods. As the British troops were not acquainted with this region, their forces faced untold miseries. Hence all the early British military expeditions against Puli Tevar could not succeed . Convinced of the leadership of Puli Tevar, the contenders for the governorship of Madurai and Tirunelveli provinces sought the help of Puli Tevar and accepted his overlordship.

Even Col. Heron was astonished by the activities of Puli Tevar. The imperial forces under Col. Heron could not face the military prowess of Puli Tevar and his forces. With the help of mere native soldiers, Puli Tevar met the mighty British General and resisted the British administrators. The victory of Puli Tevar and defeat of the British were events of significance in the annals of the rise of Tirunelveli Poligars.

After the victory of Puli Tevar over Col. Heron, the independent activities of the Poligars increased in Tirunelveli. The growing power of Puli Tevar increased the threat to the Nawab and the British. The Nawab urged the British to suppress the power of Puli Tevar. Hence the British adopted the strategy of divide and rule. They realised the strength of Puli Tevar and decided to wean the Eastern Naick Poligars away from the Western Marava Poligars. Puli Tevar responded by taking steps to strengthen his position by organizing the Marava Confederacy. All the local chieftains and Western Poligars whole-heartedly combined and extended their support to Puli Tevar. Thus Puli Tevar was acknowledged as a leader and the responsibilities to protect the interests of the Poligars devolved on him.

Revolt of puli Thevar 1755-1767

In March 1755 Mahfuzkhan (brother of Nawab of Arcot)was sent with a contingent of the company army under colonel Heron to Tirunelveli.Madurai easily fell into their hands.Thereafter colonel Heron was urged to deal with puli Thevar as he continued to defty the authority of the company.Puli Thevar wielded much influence over the western palayakkarars.For want of cannon and of supplies and pay to soldiers,colonel Heron abandoned the plan and retired to Madurai.Heron was recalled and dismissed from service.

Confederacy and Alliance with enemies of the British

Three pathan officers ,Nawab chanda sahib's agents, named Miannah ,Mudimiah and Nabikhan Kattak commanded the Madurai and Tirunelveli regions.They supported the Tamil palayakkarars aganist Arcot Nawab Mohamed Ali.Puli Thevar had established close relationships with them.Puli Thevar also formed a confederacy of the palayakkarars to fight the British.With the exception of the palayakkarars of sivagiri,all other Maravar palayams supported him.Ettayapuram and panchalamkurichi also did not join this confederacy.Further ,the English succeeded in getting the support of the rajas of Ramanathapuram and pudukottai.Puli Thevar tried to get the support of Hyder Ali of Mysore and the French .Hyder Ali could not help Puli Thevar as he was already locked in a serious conflict with the Marathas.

Kalakadu Battle

The Nawab sent an additional contingent of sepoys to Mahfuzkhan and the reinforced army proceeded to Tirunelveli.Besides the 1000 sepoys of the company,Mahfuzkhan received 600 more sent by the Nawab.He also had the support of cavalry and foot soldiers from the Carnatic.Before Mahfuzkhan could station his troops near kalakadu ,2000 soldiers from Travancore joined the forces of Puli Thevar .In the battle at kalakadu ,Mahfuzkhan's troops were routed.

Yusuf Khan and puli thevar

The organized resistance of the palayakkarars under puli Thevar gave an opportunity to the English to interfere directly in the affairs of Tirunelveli .Aided by the Raja of Travancore,From 1756 to 1763,the palayakkarars of Tirunelveli led by Puli Thevar were in constant state of rebellion against the Nawab's authority.Yusuf Khan

(also known as Khan sahib or, before his conversion to Islam,Marudhanayagam) who had been sent by the company was not prepared to attack Puli Thevar unless the big guns and ammunition from Thiruchirappalli arrived.As the English were at war with the French,as well as with Hyder Ali and Marathas ,the artillery arrived only in September 1760 .Yusuf Khan began to batter the Nerkattumseval fort and this attack continued for about two months. On 16 May 1761 Puli Thevar's three major forts (Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur and Panayur) came under the control of Yusuf Khan.

Yusuf Khan and Puli Thevar

In the meantime, after taking pondicherry the English had eliminated the French from the picture.As a result of this the unity of palayakkarars began to break up as French support was not forthcoming.Travancore ,seithur,uthumalai and surandai switched thier loyalty to the opposite camp.Yusuf Khan who was negotiating with the palayakkarars, without informing the company administration,was charged with treachery and hanged in 1764.

Economic and Social Changes

The British administration in India brought about far-reaching economic and social changes that fundamentally altered the traditional structure of Indian society. Beginning with the establishment of British political authority in the mid-18th century and consolidating during the 19th century, colonial rule introduced new economic policies, administrative systems, and social ideas. While these changes were often justified by the British as measures of modernization and progress, in reality they primarily served colonial interests and led to deep-rooted economic exploitation and social transformation.

One of the most significant economic changes under British administration was the **reorganization of land revenue systems**. The British introduced new systems such as the Permanent Settlement, Ryotwari System, and Mahalwari System in different parts of India. These systems replaced traditional revenue practices and aimed at maximizing state income. Under these arrangements, peasants were forced to pay fixed and often high land revenue, regardless of crop failure or natural calamities. As a result, many cultivators lost their land due to inability to pay revenue, leading to the growth of absentee landlords and moneylenders and the decline of peasant prosperity.

British economic policies led to the **commercialization of agriculture**. Farmers were encouraged or forced to grow cash crops such as cotton, indigo, jute, tea, coffee, and tobacco to meet the demands of British industries. This shift from food crops to commercial crops disrupted food security and made Indian agriculture dependent on global markets. Fluctuations in international prices often resulted in severe distress among farmers. The focus on export-oriented agriculture weakened the traditional subsistence economy and increased rural indebtedness.

Another major economic change was the **decline of traditional industries and handicrafts**. Indian artisans, especially weavers and craftsmen, suffered due to the import of cheap machine-made goods from Britain. British industrial products flooded Indian markets, destroying village industries that had sustained local economies for centuries. This process of deindustrialization forced artisans to abandon their crafts and seek employment as agricultural laborers, increasing pressure on land and contributing to widespread poverty.

The British introduced **modern transport and communication systems**, including railways, roads, ports, telegraphs, and postal services. While these developments improved connectivity and facilitated trade, they were primarily designed to serve colonial economic interests. Railways enabled the easy transport of raw materials to ports and the distribution of British manufactured goods across India. Despite their exploitative purpose, these infrastructures also unintentionally contributed to economic integration and the spread of new ideas.

British rule also brought significant changes in **trade and industry**. India was transformed into a supplier of raw materials and a consumer of British goods. Indigenous industries were discouraged, and heavy industries were not promoted. The colonial economy became dependent on Britain, leading to a drain of wealth from India. Profits earned in India were repatriated to Britain, weakening India's economic base and hindering industrial development.

The British administration introduced **new banking and financial institutions**, including modern banks, insurance companies, and currency systems. While these institutions supported colonial trade and administration, they did not adequately serve the

needs of peasants and small traders. Moneylenders continued to dominate rural credit, often charging exorbitant interest rates, which further worsened the condition of farmers.

Socially, British rule led to profound transformations in Indian society. One of the most notable changes was the **introduction of Western education**. English-medium schools and colleges were established, teaching subjects such as science, mathematics, law, and Western philosophy. This created a new educated middle class that became aware of liberal ideas such as equality, freedom, and rights. Although Western education was limited in reach, it played a crucial role in shaping social reform movements and the Indian national movement.

The British also introduced **social reform measures** aimed at eradicating practices they considered backward. Laws were passed to abolish social evils such as Sati, female infanticide, and human sacrifice. Widow remarriage was legalized, and efforts were made to improve women's status through education. However, these reforms were often implemented without understanding local customs and sometimes faced resistance from conservative sections of society.

British administration significantly altered the **caste and social structure**. Traditional social hierarchies were reinforced in some cases through administrative practices such as census classifications and legal recognition of caste identities. At the same time, Western education, urbanization, and new employment opportunities challenged rigid caste boundaries. Lower castes and marginalized communities gradually gained access to education and employment, leading to the emergence of social justice movements.

Urbanization increased under British rule, leading to the growth of **new towns and cities** around administrative centers, ports, and railway junctions. Cities became centers of trade, education, and employment. This urban growth changed social life by promoting new lifestyles, occupational patterns, and social interactions. However, rapid urbanization also resulted in overcrowding, poor living conditions, and the growth of slums.

British rule also influenced **religious and cultural life**. Christian missionaries, supported by colonial administration, spread Christianity and Western cultural values. In response, Indian society witnessed religious revival and reform movements such as the

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Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, which sought to reform Hindu society while preserving its core values. These movements played a crucial role in social awakening and cultural regeneration.

The legal and judicial reforms introduced by the British had significant social implications. Codified laws, modern courts, and police systems replaced traditional judicial practices. While these reforms aimed to ensure uniform justice, they often ignored local customs and traditions. Nevertheless, the idea of rule of law gradually took root in Indian society.

In conclusion, the economic and social changes under British administration were complex and far-reaching. British economic policies led to the exploitation of Indian resources, decline of traditional industries, and widespread poverty, while simultaneously introducing modern infrastructure and financial systems. Socially, British rule brought Western education, legal reforms, and new social ideas, which challenged traditional practices and laid the foundation for social reform and national consciousness. Thus, British administration reshaped Indian society and economy in ways that were both destructive and transformative, leaving a lasting legacy on modern India.

Impact of the British Rule in Tirunelveli District

In Tirunelveli District, the depressed people of the Hindu religion suffered many social restrictions imposed on them by the landlords and the people of upper castes. Hence, they tended to convert to other religion preferably to Christianity. The Christian Missionaries helped to bring about a radical change and to create an atmosphere in favour of religious and social reform. In the mean time, the British established primary schools and primary health centres in the rural areas of the district. More over they opened factories in the urban areas1 . From 1600 A.D. onwards, the Roman Catholic and Protestant Missionaries established their missionary work through the Church Missionary Society (CMS), London Missionary Society (LMS), the Madurai Mission and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. In about 1680, the congregational work stretched to Palayamkottai, Viravanallur, Kadayanallur, Kayattar, Tenkasi, Surandai, Pannikulam, Kamanayakkanpatti, Vadakkankulam, Kayalpattinam, Pettai, Sivalapperi, Tirukalur and Kalakad.2 According to 1991 census, the Christian population of the District was 1,21,277 males and 1,31,453 females3 . Certain communities like the Pallars,

Paravars, Parayars and Nadars felt no social equality. Hence, they were easily converted by the Christian Missionaries. The Missionaries not only converted them but also looked them after by providing education and other social welfare measures. The converts could get higher status in the society by their education

Agriculture

The impact of British rule on Indian agriculture was profound and long-lasting, fundamentally altering the traditional agrarian structure of the country. Agriculture was the backbone of the Indian economy before the advent of British rule, supporting the majority of the population and ensuring food security through a subsistence-oriented system. British colonial policies, however, transformed agriculture into a revenue-oriented and export-driven sector designed primarily to serve imperial interests rather than the welfare of Indian cultivators.

One of the most significant impacts of British rule on agriculture was the **introduction of new land revenue systems**. The Permanent Settlement, Ryotwari System, and Mahalwari System replaced traditional arrangements and fixed high revenue demands on cultivators. Under these systems, revenue had to be paid in cash, compelling farmers to sell their produce in the market. Failure to pay revenue often resulted in the loss of land, leading to the emergence of landlords, absentee zamindars, and moneylenders, while peasants were reduced to tenants or agricultural laborers.

British policies led to the **commercialization of agriculture**, shifting the focus from food crops to cash crops such as cotton, indigo, jute, tea, coffee, sugarcane, and tobacco. This change was driven by the needs of British industries and global markets. As a result, traditional food cultivation declined, making agriculture vulnerable to market fluctuations and contributing to frequent famines. Farmers became dependent on middlemen and European trading companies for seeds, credit, and marketing.

The British administration neglected **irrigation development**, except in regions that promised high revenue returns. Traditional irrigation systems such as tanks, wells, and canals were often ignored or allowed to decay. Though the British constructed some canals and dams, these projects were mainly aimed at increasing revenue rather than ensuring farmer welfare. Inadequate irrigation made agriculture dependent on monsoons, increasing the risk of crop failure.

Another major impact was the **increased indebtedness of farmers**. The monetization of the economy and the need to pay land revenue in cash forced cultivators to borrow money from moneylenders at high interest rates. Inability to repay loans led to the alienation of land and perpetual debt. This cycle of indebtedness weakened the economic position of peasants and increased rural poverty.

British rule also caused the **decline of traditional agricultural practices**. Indigenous methods of farming, crop rotation, and soil conservation were neglected. The emphasis on mono-cropping of commercial crops led to soil exhaustion and declining productivity over time. British agricultural research primarily focused on export crops rather than improving food grain production.

The introduction of **modern transport systems**, particularly railways, had a mixed impact on agriculture. Railways enabled the easy transport of agricultural produce to distant markets and ports, integrating Indian agriculture into the global economy. However, this also meant that food grains were exported from famine-stricken regions, worsening the suffering of the rural population during droughts and famines.

British agricultural policies contributed to the occurrence of **frequent famines** in India during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The focus on cash crops, high revenue demands, poor relief measures, and unrestricted export of food grains aggravated famine conditions. Millions of people died in famines such as the Great Famine of 1876–78, highlighting the failure of colonial agricultural policy.

The British also altered **rural social relations** through their agrarian policies. The creation of landlords and intermediaries changed the traditional relationship between peasants and the state. Social inequalities increased as wealthy landlords and moneylenders gained power, while small cultivators and agricultural laborers faced exploitation and insecurity.

Despite these negative impacts, British rule introduced some **limited positive changes** in agriculture. Scientific surveys, introduction of new crops, and establishment of agricultural departments and research stations contributed to agricultural knowledge. However, these benefits were unevenly distributed and largely overshadowed by widespread exploitation.

In conclusion, the impact of British rule on Indian agriculture was largely detrimental. Colonial policies transformed a self-sufficient agrarian economy into a dependent and vulnerable system driven by revenue extraction and export needs. The commercialization of agriculture, high land revenue demands, neglect of irrigation, and exploitation of peasants led to chronic poverty, indebtedness, and recurring famines. At the same time, these agrarian changes also sowed the seeds of peasant resistance and nationalist movements, making agriculture a central issue in India's struggle against colonial rule.

Education

The western education in Tirunelveli District can be traced from the days of the Portuguese. The Roman Catholic Missionaries led by the Portuguese had influenced among the Parava community people in Tirunelveli coastal area at the beginning of the 16th century. The most important Catholic Missionary was St. Francis Xavier, who served in the District towards the close of 1542. He was a native of Spain, going with bell in hand, he succeeded in collecting in every village a large concourse of people among whom he spread the Christian faith. In each village he visited, and he left a copy of the Christian instruction for the people to understand the rudiments of Christianity. In the beginning of the 17th century, the Catholic Mission established a Theological college to impart training to Jesuit Fathers and Brothers at Thoothukkudi for propagating Christian tenets in the District and thereby to pave the way for the educational development in the region. A galaxy of foreign Catholic Missionaries dedicated their lives for the cause of education in the District. Father Beschi, was the most celebrated. He is remembered ever for his contribution to the Tamil literature. He was a native of Italy and arrived in Tirunelveli in 1711. He taught the people both in Tamil and in English.

Among the Protestant Missionaries who came from England to this District, Rev. James Hough and Rev. C.E. Rhenius were the key figures. Rev. James Hough from the date of his arrival in 1816 as a Missionary, devoted his whole energy to educational work in the District. He started a number of schools in this region and distributed Bibles and prayer books to the people. Rev. C.E. Rhenius who arrived in this District in 1820, generally followed Hough's policy of educational work and founded a number of educational societies. The most important among the societies established by him was the

Dharma Sangam. It was admired both by the Christians and non-Christians for its studies on Geography, Astronomy and French Grammar. In his work he was assisted by Rev. Schmid, another Protestant Missionary in the District and his wife who took keen interest in the development of women's education in Tirunelveli. On the eve of mid 19th century the Protestant woman Missionary Miss. C.C. Giberne within a short period opened a Training school at Kadatchapuram, in Palayamkottai which later on became the nucleus of the Sarah Tucker Training School.

Educational policy of the Madras Government and Its Impact on the District

It is a matter of interest to look back upon a few historical landmarks of modern education in the state and its impact on the District. In 1822, some facts about the educational system in Tirunelveli were brought to light because of a statewide enquiry, conducted under the orders of Sir Thomas Munro, the Collector of Tirunelveli14. The enquiry revealed that the public instruction was in a bad state. Few schools that existed in the District were in fact nothing better than the indigenous schools. Therefore, in 1826 Sir Thomas Munro constituted a board to organize a system of public instruction with authority to establish schools both at the District level and at the taluk level throughout the state. In every District there was a collectorate school. In the collectorate schools, English was taught as one of the languages along with the language of the District. In every taluk, there was a tahsildary school under a competent schoolmaster, but he was not to receive any training in Madras as of the collectorate teacher. In the tahisildary schools, the entire teaching was conducted in the language of the District.

The subjects taught in these schools were not in any way different from the subjects taught in the indigenous schools. The new scheme aimed at the establishment of a few well-managed schools so that, they might be held out as models for the numerous indigenous schools, which were considered an unsatisfactory condition. In accordance with the new scheme, a collectorate school and two tahsildary schools were opened in Tirunelveli District. But all these schools in this District as well as in other District in the Madras State soon turned out to be total failures. The teachers of the collectorate schools were described as the refuse of the expectants on the collectors list while the teachers of the tahsildary schools were said to be inferior, overall, to the common village masters.

A new era dawned in 1830, when the Court of Directors of the East India Company advocated the filtration theory, the best result could be obtained by educating the higher classes in the first instance and leaving it to them to create a desire for educating among masses. Then there was another controversy as to whether English or the Indian languages should be given prominence in the scheme of education. The controversy reached its climax in the famous Minutes of Lord Macaulay of 1833 and the equally famous resolution of Lord William Bentinck, on 7th March 1833 which endorsed the Minutes of Macaulay by observing that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science and that all funds allocated for the purpose of education would be spent on English education alone.

In consequence of this policy, the collectorate and tahsildary schools in Tirunelveli as well as in other Districts were abolished in 1836 and the Board of Instruction was superseded by a Committee of Native Education and the Committee was directed to organize a normal school for training teachers for the new English schools which were to be eventually opened in different parts of the state. This committee was shortly afterwards replaced by the University Board constituted in January 1840 by Lord Elphinstone, the then Governor of Madras. The University Board was replaced by the University of Madras through Legislative action on 5th September 1857. By 1854, the filtration theory has been discarded and the policy of mass education inaugurated. As a result, the University was remodelled. A Department of Education was organized. Provisions were also made for normal schools, a few provincial schools, several taluk schools, depots for schoolbooks and educational presses and scholarships.

The experiment of private sector in education since 1855, with the formulation of the grants in aid rules, resulted in the establishment of a number of aided institutions such as Boarding School at Sattankulam in 1856. During the period, 1856-57, there were 273 schools aided by Government with 7088 students in the District. In 1871, with the constitution of the local bodies under the Town Improvement Act and the Local Board Act, instruction was given to local authorities to organize education.

E.V Aluation of Colonial Economy

Two events of great significance to Britian occurred just at the time when India was being conquered. The first was the industrial revolution, which increased the demand

for raw materials and food stuffs, and second her loss of North American colonies as a result of their declaration of independence in 177 6. The later event made ,England search for an alternative source of supply of raw cotton and foodstuffs that American colonies had supplied earlier while the former increased the need for market for the products of her newly established industries. Under this circumstances, the conquest of India came to acquire a special significance for England. The countries size and population of a sub-continent which offered an unlimited market for her rapidly growing industries and an inexhaustible source for the supply of raw materials and food stuffs. British policies in India came to be shaped by the needs and desires of the industrial interests of imperial power. The East India Company might have promoted the export of manufacturers from India to increase its commercial profits. The Regulating Act of 1773 imposed upon the Court of Directors, the legal obligation that all revenue transactions of the East India Company servants should be placed before the commissioners of the Treasury of His Majesty's government.291 Under this circumstance, steps were taken for building up the revenue administration in 1774. On 18th August 1774 in Fort St. George a revenue consultation was presented by Governor. According to that, the Governor and Council constituted the personal and sat as a Board of Revenue when revenue matters were discussed and the proceedings recorded separately. The whole business of Bntish government was collectively conducted by the Council consisting of the Governor, the Commander-inChief and two Councilors. The council was called the Board and Governor was its President. The two words 'Council' and 'Board' was not the same thing and this was in conformity with ·contemporary legal usage. In compliance with the provisions of the Pitts India Act, the director's issued orders that the administration of the ·Presidency should be divided into four distinct branches, namely, a Board of Council, a Military Board, a Board of Trade and a :Soard of Revenue.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century the people of India were engaged in various industries like weaving, cotton, silk, tanning spinning, dyeing and working in metals also gave employment of millions. However the policy of East India Company to foster Indian industries. The workers were directed to work in the Company's factories and prohibited working outside "under severe penalties, by the authority of the Government. The manufacture of silk and cotton goods declined in · India, and the

people who had exported these goods to the markets of Europe and Asia in previous centuries began to import them in increasing quantities. The Company's charter was renewed in 1813. An enquiry was made and witnesses were examined, previous to this renewal. In mid-19th century, India had suffered from repeated famines in Bengal and Madras, which led to the· decline of manufacturers.

The successive Charter Acts placed more and more restrictions on the Company's commercial and trading activities till 1833, when company was completely divested of its trading rights. When the East India Company's Charter was renewed in 1833, it was provided that the Company should thenceforth "discontinue and abstain from all commercial and trading business" and should stand forth only as administrators and rulers of India. The beneficial results of this provision became manifest before many years had lapsed. The Company felt a greater interest in the trades and manufacturers of India, when they were no longer rival traders. By then, ·England had almost achieved her object of turning Indian economy into a colonial economy - a market for her manufacturers and a source for the supply of raw materials to her industries.

The House of Lords and Commons inquired if the abolition of the Company's trade would increase the volume of British trade with India and would benefit the private traders and manufacturers of England; the state of the internal trade of India, carried on by the people of that country. To foster indigenous trade and industries the people of India was not the object of the inquiries made either in 1813 and 1833 nor has this object been even seriously and steadily pursued during the seventy years which have elapsed since.

Assessment of Trade in Tirunelveli District

The share of each district in the total value of general trade from 1882 to 1883 came from the chief port, which had of course the largest share or nearly half of the trade: Malabar comes next with 19.5 percent: then follow Godavery with 8.2 percent, Tinnevelly with 8 percent: South Canara with 4.5 percent and Tanjore with 4.4 percent after these come Vizagapatnam, Ganjam, Krishna, South Arcot, Madura and Nell ore.

In the early years of British occupation, trade either by land and sea was small. In 1808 there were sixteen ships engaged in sea tariff. They were chiefly in jaggery to Madras and in cloths to Srilanka. The total export by land and sea in 1.806 was i

estimated Rs.2 to Rs.2.5 lakhs of pagodas or about Rs.1 0 lakhs of rupees exclusive of the Company's investments, ~hich amounted on the average to about Rs.1.5 lakhs of pagodas, making a total of about Rs.3.5 lakhs of pagodas or Rs. 14 lakhs of rupees. The bulk of the trade was in cloths with Srilanka. The trade by land chiefly of raw cotton valued at about Rs. 80,000 and tobacco valued at about Rs. 75,000.306 The imports were chiefly confined to pepper and betel-nut· from Travancore in small ·quantity and rose occasionally. The following table gave the particulars of export and import trade in the articles mostly in demand for years and exclusive of amount in treasury.

The total trade of the district had risen from a little over Rs.14lakhs"in 1806 to Rs.235 lakhs in 1865, from which point it declined to Rs.103 lakhs in 1870, and had since risen again to Rs.l47 lakhs. Next to rapid progress, on the whole the most noticeable feature of the trade was the increasing proportion of the value of imports to that of exports, showing, perhaps that the people of Tinnevelly by degrees getting more value for their exports as communication was made easier and the real value of exported goods became better known to the mass of people or as competition induces merchants to give· a larger equivalent for the cotton, which they exported. The export trade had risen from about Rs.l4 lakhs in 1807 to 146 lakhs in 1865, the year which the American war gave so great an impetus to the cotton trade, after. which it fell to 66 lakhs in 1870 and had risen again to Rs.75 lakhs.307 The most important item of cotton, jaggery showed at a slowly declining figure, cotton goods of native manufacture were also declining, while a brisk trade in the re-export of European cotton was growing up. Imports had risen more steadily from Rs.2 lakhs in ·1830 to Rs.51 lakhs in 1875. Nearly half consists of cotton goods. Paddy and rice were occasionally in demand. The rice and paddy cultivation was steadily increasing in the region ofTinnevelly.

Inland Trade

The inland trade of India still languished under the obnoxious transit duties which had been handed down from the preceding century. It will be remembered that the East India Company first obtained their footing in the country by an exemption of their export and import trade from those transit duties, to which the inland trade of the country was subjected. And it will also be remembered that when the servants of the Company claimed this exemption for their own private trade, N awab Mir Kasim in a fit of noble

generosity abolished all transit duties in Bengal. When the East India Company became the undisputed masters of Bengal in 1765, the time came for them to follow the example set by Mir Kasim and to relieve the inland trade of India from those duties which repressed it. But the duties brought revenue, however small, and the East India Company were slow to part with any portion of their revenues.

The transit duties became more oppressive under the British rule than they had been under the Nawabs. For Company's power was more far-reaching, absolute and undisputed, and each low-paid officer, at each Chowki or toll house, had the means of exercising greater oppression. The evils grew without cessation for sixty years, and as . late as in the year 1825.

During the socially, politically and economically adventurous tenure of William Bentinck, Charles Trevelyan made an enquiry and submitted a report on Transit Duties. As per the report, the duties showed that the evils had grown under British rule as compared with the state of things under the Nawab of Bengal; that traders all over the country were subjected to delay and exactions; that manufacturers were killed and inland trade paralysed by the extortions of Customs Officers.309 During Ellenborough period the Inland Duties were abolished in Sindh in 1843, iri the territory of Jalun in 1844 and in the province of Madras by Act of 1844. Another major tax was really harassing industries called Mutarfa Tax on traders and professions. In 1853, the tax was abolished all over India, except in the province of Madras. 'The ·Madras Native Association' in their petition to the House of Commons described the Mutarfa as a "tax upon traders and occupations, embracing weavers, carpenters, all workers in metals, all salesman, whether passing shops which were also taxed separately or vending by the road-side, some paying on their tools, others for permission to sell- extending to the most trifling articles of trade and the cheapest tools the mechanic can employ, the cost of which frequently exceeded six times by the Mutarfa, which was exorbitant and heavily taxing". The association demanded to abolish Mutarfa in the Madras Province also. The initiative was taken after the Parliamentary inquiry in 1853, that the whole tax was abolished all over the India including Madras Province.

Inland trade was by far the most considerable, inasmuch as the bulk of production was consumed in the country, and even interportal trade on the long .seaboard plays but a

subordinate part in distribution. As regards inland trade however the only statistics available were: i) the returns of exports and imports of goods passing to and from the foreign European settlement ofYanam, Pondicherry, Karaikal and Mahe; ii) the returns of trade with the n~tive states ofHyderabad and Mysore; and iii) the tariff returns of the Madras and South Indian Railways.311 The returns of trade with the foreign European settlements were compiled by the special establishments maintained at the frontier stations for the purpose of levying duty and forwarded to the Collector's office, where they were put together by the ordinary establishments and submitted to the Board's office and forwarded to the Government of India monthly. The land traffic with the native states of Mysore and Hyderabad had been registered since December 1880. The registration was effected by a small establishment maintained for the purpose at all the principal stations on the frontiers, through which the bulk of the trade usually passes. There were formerly returns of trade with Travancore across the Tinnevelly frontier, but these were discontinued in 1880, as the proportion of Travancore land-trade to Travancore sea-trade was held not to be large enough to warrant the expense.

The main motivation behind British inturusion and subsequent domination of Itidia was commercial and economic, the British impact in the economic sphere had been the most deleterious and devastating. British used the most sophisticated methods to exploit India's vast and rich economic potential.

Impact of the British Rule In Social Life

The population of the Tinnevelly District by the ce11Sus of 1871 was 16,93,959. The number of villages in 1871 was 1,824 (Thousand eight hundred and ,twenty four) among these 70J% of the population lived in Ryotwari and Government village, 23.5% in Zamindari and 6.2% in lnam villages. 89% of total population was Hindus, 5% Muslims and Native Christian. The number of Christians in Tinnevelly in 1871 was 1,02,249 of whom rather more than half were Roman Catholic the rest Protestants. The Protestant missions had been most successful among the Shanar caste, the Roman Catholic among the Paravers and fishermen along the sea coast.3 The history of the Catholic Church in Tinnevelly . practically dates from the 16th Century, though there were some traces of more ancient missions. In 1542, St. . Francis Xavier visited the coastal. area of Tinnevelly District and started preaching the doctrine of faith315 The Paravas had started

converting into Christianity and they spread across coasts ofTinnevelly, Madura and Srilank:a. After the Francis Xavier, the Jesuits Mission of Madura was founded by Father Robert de Nobili (From Italy) in 1607 and soon it was extended to Tinnevelly district.316 Most of the Jesuits Fathers started preaching in the coastal area of Tinnevelly district. In 1749, the Jesuits were suppressed by the Portuguese. Till 1837 only few Jesuits priest served as preacher in the district but after the restoration of Society of Jesus, there was steady growth in the region of Tinnevelly. They built so many churches and schools for Boys and Girls. In 1820, two Lutheran Ministers (Rhenius and Schmidt) were sent and the Church Missionary Society was started and under them the conversion was increased.

The major castes constituted Brahmins (Priests), Kahatriyas (Warrior), Chetties (Traders), Vellalars (Agriculturalists) Idaiyars (Shepherds), Kummalars ,(Artisans), Kanakan (Writers), Kaykolan (Weavers), Vannian (Labourers), Kosavan (Potters), Sathani (Mixed Caste), Sembadayan (Fisherman), Shanars (Toddydrawers), Umbattan (Barbers), Vannan (Washermen), Parayars and others.

The population of Tinnevelly district was basically agricultural. The produce of the land was the sole source of wealth as of the necessaries of life; for this reason people were engaged in cultivation. The British had taken so many measures to regulate the land revenue system in India like Permanent Settlement of Bengal in Bengal, Mahalwari System in the North West Province and Ryotwari System in Madras Province. The Ryotwari System was introduced in May 1820 by Thomas Munro, as per the system the collectors were encouraged to break up joint-tenure wherever it existed and to enter into engagements with tenants separately.318 The system was introduced each and every district in Madras Province. The land tenure system was changed after it was introduced in Tinnevelly district. The British land tenure system was affected in many ways. The rights of individuals without regard to class, a spirit of independence had arisen among the previously dependent classes, such as artisans, weavers, village servants and others, who can no longer be manipulated for the purpose of village tyranny. Most of the castes were involved in the agricultural cultivation but the Sudras largely cultivated their lands themselves, assisted by Paraiahs and Pallars as farm servants. Apart from the agricultural community, the ordinary artisans like the carpenter, the gold smith, the black smith and

the potter existed in most of villages. The industries also connected with the ,cultivators and artisans.

Cotton, Salt, Pearl, Charik, Food Grains and other raw materials also exported from various taluks of the districts. Tinnevelly was the centre of the trade activities; the chief item was rice, which was exported in large quantity to the dry taluks of Tinnevelly. A considerable import business in Europe cotton and other articles were also carried in Tinnevelly region. Metal utensils were made up in Tinnevelly for sale in the town and in other parts of the district. In 1876-77 the average areas under the chief crops were rice 36,000 acres, cumbu 10,000 acres, samei 23,000 acres, pulses 11,000 acres, cotton 18,000 acres. Most of the· people were involved in the agricultural activity; they became traders after the cultivated products were exported to other regions. The wealthy villages of the river valley and other parts of the Ambasudram talu.k cultivated rice. The weaving industry was popular and flourishing. The weaving industry got declined after the piece-goods were imported from Europe. William Bentinck wrote in 1834, "The misery hardly finds a parallal in the history of commerce. The bones of the Indian weavers are bl~aching the plain of India". Karl Marx also commended that, "it was the British instruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheel. England began with depriving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons." Most of them involved were Hindus, but in Pottalpudur and other villages Muhammadan Lubbais were also engaged. The condition of the weaving class in general was very . . poor; they were declining in numbers.

The salt was an important commodity, which was exported from Tuticorin ,port to Bengal for internal consumption and was exported to Srilanka and Indonesia322• The Tuticorin port played an important ·role in exporting Salt, Pearl, Chank, Cotton and other Raw materials. According to Caldwell, "the port has served as an emporium of cotton trade, in the 18th and 19th Century attracted many traders and craftsman from other areas.

Hindu and Christian Nadar's were involved in all trade activities in the Tuticorin region. Cotton, Millets and Pulses from the hinterlands and salt, dried fish and jaggery

from the coastal" villages of Tuticorin were the main commodities exported by Nadars to Srilanka and Bombay.

Robert Hard Grave Junior; in his book 'The History of Nadars' had quoted from the British records, that all the ginning mills and cotton godowns in Ramanathapuram and Tirunelvelly District were in the hands of the Nadars. Nadars were an enterprising community, which constitutes a sizable population of the district. The community referred to as Shanars also. But the correct term was said to be Shanar derived from Tamil word.

Shanars or Nadars of the district embroiled thems~lves m a great many disputes, first over private property rights and then for access to temple honors. They were able to succeed in their case in course of time. While the dominant castes, Brahmins, Vellalars and Vadugars, contested with one another for power and influence, the success of the Nadars posed a much more serious challenge to Maravars ·and Mirasdars in the district. Before 1859, individual Nadar families took up fight for land tenant rights. In their dispute with Mirasdars, Nadars pursued rights by the same means and with much same results as cultivating tenants generally did. Missionaries supported Nadar's efforts and the Nadar conversion to Christianity made the Tirunelveli district one of the bright spots of the heathen world for the Church Mission Society. Village after village Nadars converted to Christianity. The Nadar converts established new self-sustaining communities with the help of the Missions. Schools and Self-help societies enabled Christian Nadars. to develop new village outside Mirasdar control.

In 1857, a schismatic Nadar convert, called Sattampillai added smnething new to Nadar enterprise. He opposed Caldwell's opinion that Nadars were of low castes and he proceeded to formulate a new counter vision of the Nadars. His message was that great Nadars had once ruled as proud kings in the southern Tamil Country. They had titles Nattar or Nadar but were toppled from power and subsequently oppressed by rulers who depended on wily Brahmins. Contemporary English men who wrote ethnographic and historical accounts of Tirunelveli and the people. Though well aware of the new Nadar history of Sattampillai, discounted it and published accounts n:iore in line with customary, less flattering images ofNadar tradition. Sattampillai's vision of oppressed Nadars seeking their rightful place in society also gained some importance for Mirasdars

and their supporters, who concentrated their wrath on missionary efforts to uplift Shanars and spread Christianity stimulating heated exchanges in villages and in the press adopt customs, dress, marriage and dining that expressed higher caste status. They petitioned government for the official designation of their caste to be changed in all public records, most importantly the Census of India, be changed in all public records, most importantly the Census of India, from Shanar to Nadar. They sued in courts for access to temples, from which Nadar devotees were _customarily excluded so that, they could establish their new status in the patronage and worship of Gods. The Nadars, demand for temple entry met with fierce resistance particularly from Maravars, who seem to have been most resentful of this Nadar attack on customary rules of access to sacred precincts in traditional Marava domains. Conflicts centred around towns where Nadar businessmen prospered visibly and around villages where Marava and Nadar fortunes had moved in opposite directions for decades. Conflict .over temple entry became increasingly tense during 1860s. The Government policy decision to settle the temple entry disputes threatened peace in the district. During the 1870s, Court suits and street scenes flared when Nadars sought to worship deities in large temples in Madurai, Tiruchendur and Srivilliputhur. In 1878 a district Munsif barred Nadars from entering Srivilliputhur temples but allowed Nadar procession on village streets. The issue for judges was whether to legitimize N adar entry into sacred precincty under state protection· and thus to recognize the Nadars social status that was customarily denied. The Government vacillated while the Nadars asserted against -higher caste oppositions.

Caste differences began to surface in the society during the British rule. Higher caste residents of Tirunelveli town understandably opposed the movement of 'low caste' people and funeral processions along their streets. Most of the families of the town owned land and worked out appropriate routes for low caste funerals in spa,tially segregated Mirasdar villages nearby. Such processions would not touch town streets· at all but would move away to the cremation or burial ground unseen, through paddy fields and irrigation ditches.

Underlying epochai change in this agrarian society, the peninsular landscape and culture provided a substratum of continuity and constancy yet even the land and culture underwent subtle transformations as peasants made critical decision about how best to

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invest their time and energy. In villages, those peasant decisions produce rhythms of inner movement that altered the structure of rural society over· generations and decisive action did not occur in a vacuum. Gradual transformation of the marginalized peasant's society had a dramatic change in Tamilnadu and Tamil culture.

Epochal expansions in the extent of agrarian interaction brought new ideas, technologies and rural actors into the centre stage of the Tirunelveli region, which conditioned peasant decision both ·by imposing constraints and by opening new opportunities. Local conflicts between the Nadars and the Maravars, the Mirasdar's movement into government and politics, the scheduled commtmity efforts to find jobs in town and overseas were the factors that caused social changes in the district .between 1800 and 1900. The villagers in this region shared with rustic folk worldwide the fate of being relegated to obscurity and robbed of history by cosmopolitan intellectuals working in metropolitan centres that dominated the end of the nineteenth Century.

Reasons for rail development:

With the liquidation of the East India company, the British Raj established their rule in India.The Britishaimed to develop a railway system in Indiato overcome the problem of transportation which took long days to reach the destination. This development changed the social, political and economic scenario of India. This construction of railways contributed in connecting the manufacturing center to the distribution areas where the goods could be easily made available to the ultimate consumer. The development of Railways benefited in two ways one is that the people could move from one place to another without any barrier and second it helped in commercialization of agriculture products.

Railways in India:

The railways were constructed in India by the Britishers but its establishment was very difficult. It required a lot of hard work, time along with heavy investment of money. To bring the materials and engineers to India from England was a very difficult task. Also, a high cost was incurred in bringing the other materials from another part. So, its construction required a proper flow of money. The Colonials found it difficult for construction of railways from their capitals as it involved a heavy outflow of money from their treasury. So, for this the "Guaranteed system" was introduced.

During 1850 to 1947 the railways were considered as a most important infrastructural development in India. Due to which each aspect of the Indian society was connected with each other. The first line was opened in 1853 connecting port of Bombay to Thana. It covered a distance of 21 miles.It consisted of 14 cars being hauled by three steam locomotives, and carried 400 passengers. The network started growing from 838 miles to 15,842W miles. Within two decades the network expanded and it covered 6541 miles where India was regarded as the fourth largest railway system in the world. iThe other ports of Calcutta and Madras were also connected by 1854 and 1856. It was Lord Dalhousie under whose rule the establishment of railways and its progress was been made possible. He was of the view to expand the British empire over the Indian economy by accumulating much wealth of India for which this project of railways was suited. Prior to the introduction of the plan, Dalhousie had submitted a minute to the court of directors stating the grounds on which the railways would be established in India. He was well aware of the issues related to the railways. After a lot of discussion on the management and the finance of the railways a final decision was made up in 1849 for the construction of railways in India, but in the favor of the private enterprises. This railway project was to be in the supervision of the state and the private entrepreneur would help in the investment and its construction. It was also noted that the private enterprises would get a return of 5% on their investments. After many years of financial investment along with construction the railways in 1901 had started to gain profits.

Rail networks:

The private British Companies, Private Indian Companies, The Government of India and some native states were the participants in the construction and management of the Indian rail network. It was divided into four phases i.e.; under the first phase the private British companies undertook the construction and management of the lines under public guarantee system up to 1869. In second phase i.e., 1870, the Government of India had made an entry for managing and construction of state railways. The third phase was an involvement by both the public and private participation where the Government of India was the owner and the private companies were in charge of the operation as well for the construction. During the fourth phase Government of India overtook the railway operations. The Great Indian Peninsular Railway (GIPR) was incorporated on 1st August

with an aim of connecting up of interior to the port and also to the city of Bombay. In 1900 GIPR became the first state- owned company. By 1907, all the major lines which were established by the government were given on lease back to the private operators.

Impact:

The development of the railways had a great impact on the all sectors of the Indian economy. This construction helped both for the movements of goods and passengers easily. Its contribution had revolutionized the trade both internally and externally. Prior to the development of the railways, the agriculture goods were not much sent outside but after its construction the agriculture produce had been sent on bulk which resulted in commercialization of agriculture products. The agriculture produces of India became quite demanding internationallyfor products like wheat, rice, jowar, oilseed and cotton. Railways helped to mold the Indian economy in terms of their foreign trade where the exports for the produce was on the increase.

- It changed both the status of the domestic and foreign trade in India by quick transportation of raw materials and agriculture produce.
- It increased the agricultural output in terms of export and import of grains, which took agriculture to commercialization level.
- It provided jobs at different levels and sectors which in turn increased the opportunity for employment.
- Railways were also valued most for performing their work in times of famines as it was considered as convenient way of supplying food to the areas affected by famines.
- It took back its control from the external contractors (1869 – 1881) for the purpose of expansion. So, the areas could be benefitted who were affected by famine due to intense droughts in the country.
- Railway development also gave rise to the coal industry as there was demand for the coal even from the distant part of the country.
- Apart from this, it also had some negative impact as due to the development of railways the Indian handicraft industry was at its decline. The commodities did not have more demand as compared to the British ones, so were getting ruined.

- The freight charged on Indian products were also too higher which was another reason for making the products uncompetitive in the market.

The new amenities were introduced in the passenger train during 1890's which included toilets, gas lamps and electric lighting. At this point the railways had gained much popularity which led to overcrowding. This overcrowding led to the creation of a fourth class. India had started building is own locomotives by 1895 and by 1896 it was able to assist the construction of the Uganda Railway by supplying its own experts and equipments.

Transformation of Forestry 1882-1920

The 1878 Forest Act in British India made certain changes, including the creation of Reserved Forests and Protected Forests. Afterwards, the government made an effort to designate more forest areas as Reserved Forests. However, these rules weren't applied in the Madras Presidency until the Madras Forest Act was introduced in 1882. 16 Between 1882 and 1883, the Tirunelveli district had approximately 2.1 lakh acres of reserved forest, and this grew to 2.71 lakh acres by 1919/1920. This represents a 34 per cent increase in reserved forest area over 38 years. This data highlights that a significant portion of the forest came under government control, resulting in the disruption of the traditional livelihoods of tribal communities.

In the 1840s, the government realised the timber shortage, and their sole recourse was to promote the extensive regeneration of these tree species through plantation efforts. This goal was ultimately achieved. The area dedicated to planting teak, tea, and coffee witnessed a significant surge from the 1850s onwards and continued even after the enactment of the Madras Forest Act in 1882. Various exotic tree species, including eucalyptus, mahogany, casuarina, and cinchona, were introduced in different locations across South India as part of plantation efforts. The initial endeavour in coffee plantation can be observed in the Kuttalan area of the Tirunelveli district, and it subsequently extended to other regions. In 1883, there were approximately 51 coffee plantations in the Tirunelveli district, covering a total area of 2,719 acres. This accounted for roughly 1.1% of the entire coffee estates in the Madras Presidency. Despite this, the government managed to produce a coffee yield of 1.28 lakh pounds in the same year. Furthermore, there was a remarkable increase in artificial plantations. In 1884/1885, only 535 acres

were designated for plantation in the Tirunelveli district, but this figure had surged to 5,358 acres by 1919/1920, resulting in the addition of more than 4,800 acres over 38 years.

The government departmental agency has removed a substantial amount of timber since the enactment of the Madras Forest Act. In the year 1894/1895, the extraction of timber reached its peak, and the revenue generated during this period was the highest compared to other years until 1920. In total, the revenue collected from timber between 1882 and 1920 amounted to approximately 132,614 Rs. The expansion of railways and industries led to a substantial increase in the demand for firewood and charcoal. The government procured the highest amount of firewood in the year 1889/1890. Over the period from 1882 to 1920, the government generated approximately 87,953 Rs in revenue from the sale of firewood and charcoal in the Tirunelveli district. Bamboo extraction by government departmental agencies was minimal during the post-Forest Act period, and the government's revenue from bamboo from 1882 to 1920 amounted to just 2,976 Rs. Additionally, the government generated revenue of approximately 16,046 Rs through departmental agency from the sale of forest minor produce.

The government acquired a substantial amount of timber and other minor forest produce for commercial purposes through private licenses in the Tirunelveli district, surpassing the collections made by departmental agencies. Over the years from 1883 to 1920, the revenue from timber alone amounted to approximately 155,490 Rs. Firewood and charcoal saw the highest revenue in the Tirunelveli district during this same period, totaling around 1,812,664Rs. Bamboo collection through licenses also contributed significantly, with approximately 24,593 Rs earned during the same period. The data clearly indicates that the forests of Tirunelveli were extensively transformed and exploited for commercial gains during the postForest Act period, resulting in an overall revenue accumulation of approximately 31 lakhs Rs from both departmental agency and private licenses.

Commerce

The essence of merchant capitalist operation is to 'buy cheap and sell dear'. It is good to have a monopoly to enable one to do that. It is even better to be able ro use coercion and state power to do that really well. This was the Seautry of the position of the

East lndia Company as a government (since 1765 in Bengal and in some other parts of lndia where the Company extended territorial control:

As you know, by the 1770's and 1780's there had developed a collective monopoly of the English Company and its servants engaged in private trade in respect of ccrtain commodities, particularly cotton cloth in Bengal (Unit 14). That meant that arrisan, had no option bui to sell their products to the i'ompany and its servants. How wa\ \uch a situation brought about? To a great ewtent this was the result of LI\C of coercion. A classic instance is provided by the restructuration of the relationship between the weavers on the one hand, and the Company and the \erbrant, of the Company on the other, between the 1750's and the 1780's in Iknpal.

'Up to the middle of the 18th century, the weavers appear to havc enjoyed -Independence and freedom to sell their products to the Engl~sh. the French or the Dutch or to lndian merchants. From the 1750's. the gomastas began to compel 'weavers to $ell their products to the English. The elimination of the French and the Dutch from conipet~tion by military means helped the process. Extortion by fraudulent undervaluation of cloth and chicanery in the English Factories became common. The weavers were bullied and harassed by the Factors, through the agency of Gomastas, to accept advance and to produce cioth. In the 1780's this practice became systematised as the Khatbandi system: the artisans were indentured to sell exclusively to the Company under Regulations passed by the Bengal government.

Thus the artisans were reduced step by step to the position of bonded labourers by the denial of free access to the market, by the use oi coercion, and by laws and regulations made by the Company's government. Another instance that you already know of is the production of indigo (Unit 16): in the ryoti system the peasant was forced to cultivate and to supply indigo at a low price by the English indigo planters. To a lesser degree, opium was also produced under the threat of coercion.

Now, what is the result of this system of semi-monopoly and coercion? It creates a buyers' market, i.e. a situation where the buyer can dictate the price, the buyer being the English Company, its servants, and later. English traders, planters and agency houses.
It was, of course, to be expect4 that an English Factor in the later 18th century would pay the weaver as little as possible, or th~i the English Indigo planter in early 19th century

would pay the indigo-grower ryot as little as possible, if the Englishman had the advantage of a monopoly position or coercive power. Lower prices paid to the weaver or the indigo farmer would inflate the profit margin of the English trader. Thus, sections of the artisans and peasants were producing unda coercion goods which did not fetch a price that would allow more than subsistence to the producer.

Consider this situation where trading capita! gets a nice profit margin without having to make any capital investment in the production of cotton cloth or indigo or opiclrm. Why should the trader invest his money ir. the production process if he is making good money merely by buying the product at a low price? And consider the producer who obtains such a 'low price that he cannot add to his capital stock, for he has scarcely any surp!us after feeding himself and his family. How can the artisan or the weaver add to his capital stock, i.e. his tools'and implements. if he is forced to sell his-product at a price so low as to make accumulation of funds in his hands impossible? Then who will invest and add to the capital stock and generate higher production with new tools and implements and machines? In other words who will invest in technological development and increase in productivity? The answer is, no one. Thus the scheme of things outlined above contains one of the explanations of the longstanding stagnation in technology and productivity characterising 19th century India. In fairness one must add that Indian trading and money lending capital played the same role as that of foreign trading interests in this regard; the only difference was that the latter received more firm backing from . state bower in the initial stages of the establishment of this pattern.

In short, capital remained outside of production process, leaving technology and organization of production by and large where it had been in the 18th century. It is o! dourse true that there are variations from region to region, from industry to industry. In some cases the involvement of the capitalist was greater; e.g. in the raw silk industry in Bengat where wage employment was not uncommon, or in the nijabsidi system (see Unit 16) where indigo planters employed people in farms owned by the planters. These are exceptional cases and affected only a small section of producers.

Society

The impact of British rule on society in the Tirunelveli region was deep and transformative, reshaping traditional social structures, cultural practices, religious life,

education, and everyday living. Before the advent of British rule, Tirunelveli society was largely agrarian and organized around village communities, caste-based occupations, temple-centered social life, and the authority of local rulers such as the Nayaks and Poligars. British conquest and administration in the early nineteenth century introduced new systems of governance, law, education, and religion that gradually altered the social fabric of the region.

One of the most significant social changes under British rule in Tirunelveli was the **decline of the traditional Poligar system**. The suppression of Poligar rebellions, especially after the execution of Veerapandiya Kattabomman, destroyed the authority of local chieftains who had earlier exercised social and political leadership. British administration replaced them with collectors, tahsildars, and village officials, weakening indigenous leadership and introducing a new colonial social order based on bureaucratic authority.

British rule brought about important changes in the **caste structure of Tirunelveli society**. The colonial census, legal classifications, and administrative practices reinforced caste identities by formally recording them. At the same time, British rule indirectly challenged traditional caste hierarchies by opening new avenues of employment through government service, education, and missionary institutions. Marginalized communities, particularly the so-called depressed classes, slowly gained opportunities for social mobility, though discrimination continued in rural society.

The **impact of Christian missionary activity** on Tirunelveli society was particularly significant. Supported by British protection, Christian missionaries actively worked in both coastal and inland areas of the district. Large numbers of people from marginalized communities embraced Christianity, seeking relief from caste oppression and access to education and social equality. Missionaries established churches, schools, orphanages, and hospitals, which became centers of social change and community development.

Western education introduced by the British and Christian missionaries played a crucial role in transforming Tirunelveli society. English and vernacular schools were established in towns and villages, spreading literacy and modern knowledge. Education created a new class of teachers, clerks, and professionals, altering traditional occupational

patterns. Educated individuals began questioning social evils such as caste discrimination, superstition, and gender inequality, contributing to social reform movements in the region.

British rule also influenced the **status of women** in Tirunelveli. Missionary schools promoted female education, which was previously limited. Social reform efforts encouraged widow remarriage and opposed practices such as child marriage. Though these changes benefited only a small section of society initially, they laid the foundation for long-term improvement in women's social position.

Urbanization under British rule affected Tirunelveli society significantly. Administrative centers, railway towns, and market hubs grew, bringing people from different castes and communities into closer contact. Urban life weakened traditional social barriers and promoted new forms of social interaction. However, rapid urban growth also led to problems such as overcrowding, poor sanitation, and the emergence of slums.

British legal and judicial reforms transformed social relations in Tirunelveli. The introduction of modern courts, codified laws, and policing systems replaced customary judicial practices. While this promoted uniformity and rule of law, it often ignored local traditions and village-level dispute resolution mechanisms. Nevertheless, the idea of legal equality gradually influenced social attitudes.

The spread of **print culture and communication** under British rule contributed to social awareness in Tirunelveli. Newspapers, books, and pamphlets in Tamil and English disseminated new ideas related to social reform, nationalism, and political rights. Print media helped connect Tirunelveli society with broader movements in Tamil Nadu and India.

British rule also affected **religious and cultural life** in Tirunelveli. While Christianity expanded under missionary influence, Hindu society responded through religious revival and reform. Temples continued to function as cultural centers, but their economic and administrative autonomy declined under colonial regulations. Religious festivals and rituals persisted, though often adapted to changing social conditions.

The combined impact of these changes led to the emergence of **social reform and political consciousness** in Tirunelveli. Educated elites, missionaries, and social reformers

played a role in spreading nationalist ideas. Tirunelveli later became an important center for freedom movement activities, shaped by the social transformations initiated during British rule.

In conclusion, British rule profoundly altered Tirunelveli society. It weakened traditional power structures, reshaped caste relations, expanded education, encouraged religious change, and introduced modern legal and administrative systems. While these changes disrupted indigenous social institutions and caused cultural tension, they also promoted social awakening and reform. The legacy of British rule in Tirunelveli is thus marked by both social dislocation and the foundations of modern social consciousness.

Notable Revolts in the Tirunelveli

The Tirunelveli region occupies a prominent place in the history of popular resistance against foreign domination and oppressive rule in South India. From the late eighteenth century onwards, Tirunelveli became a major center of revolts against British authority due to heavy taxation, interference in local administration, destruction of the Poligar system, and exploitation of peasants and local chiefs. The revolts in this region were marked by strong leadership, popular participation, and a spirit of regional patriotism, making Tirunelveli one of the earliest centers of armed resistance to British rule in Tamil Nadu.

One of the earliest and most significant uprisings in the Tirunelveli region was the **Poligar Revolts**. The Poligars (Palaiyakkarars) were local chieftains who enjoyed considerable autonomy under the Nayaks and later under the Nawabs of Arcot. When the British East India Company took control of the region, they attempted to abolish the Poligar system and impose direct revenue administration. This led to widespread resentment among the Poligars, who saw British policies as a threat to their authority, land rights, and traditional privileges.

The most famous revolt in Tirunelveli was led by **Veerapandiya Kattabomman**, the Poligar of Panchalamkurichi. Kattabomman resisted British attempts to collect tribute and interfere in local administration. His defiance symbolized resistance to foreign domination and unjust taxation. When negotiations failed, the British launched a military campaign against him. After fierce resistance, Kattabomman was captured and executed

in 1799. His martyrdom turned him into a legendary figure and inspired future resistance movements in the Tirunelveli region.

Closely associated with the Poligar resistance were the **Maruthu Brothers of Sivagangai**, whose influence extended into Tirunelveli. The Maruthu Brothers organized armed resistance against British authority and sought to unite Poligars across southern Tamil Nadu. Their uprising was one of the earliest organized anti-British movements in India. Though ultimately suppressed, their revolt demonstrated the potential for collective resistance and coordination among regional powers.

Another important uprising in the Tirunelveli region was led by **Oomaithurai**, the brother of Kattabomman. After Kattabomman's execution, Oomaithurai continued resistance against the British with renewed determination. He rebuilt Panchalamkurichi fort and mobilized Poligars and local people against British forces. The British eventually captured him and destroyed Panchalamkurichi, symbolizing the complete suppression of Poligar power in the region.

The **South Indian Rebellion of 1801**, also known as the First War of Independence in the South, had a strong base in Tirunelveli. This rebellion involved several Poligars, including those of Ettayapuram, Nagalapuram, and other nearby areas. The revolt was marked by coordinated attacks on British camps and revenue centers. Though lacking modern weapons and centralized leadership, the rebellion represented a united resistance against British imperialism. Its suppression led to severe punishments, confiscation of lands, and reorganization of administration in Tirunelveli.

The **Peasant uprisings** in Tirunelveli during the nineteenth century also deserve mention. British revenue policies, especially the Ryotwari system, placed heavy burdens on cultivators. High land revenue demands, exploitation by moneylenders, and frequent famines led to rural unrest. Though these peasant revolts were often localized and unorganized, they reflected deep dissatisfaction among the agrarian population and contributed to a tradition of resistance.

The **Vellore Mutiny of 1806**, though centered elsewhere, had indirect influence in the Tirunelveli region. The mutiny inspired local resistance and strengthened anti-British sentiment among soldiers and civilians. News of the mutiny spread rapidly, alarming

British authorities and leading to stricter control measures in southern districts, including Tirunelveli.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tirunelveli also witnessed **nationalist protests and movements** influenced by the Indian National Movement. Leaders such as **V.O. Chidambaram Pillai** mobilized people against British economic exploitation, particularly in Tuticorin and surrounding areas. Though these movements were non-violent compared to earlier revolts, they carried forward the legacy of resistance established by the Poligars.

The **Tuticorin labour and trade-related protests** reflected a new form of resistance rooted in economic nationalism. Workers, traders, and local entrepreneurs opposed British monopoly over trade and shipping. These movements broadened the base of resistance by involving urban populations alongside rural communities.

In conclusion, the Tirunelveli region played a crucial role in the history of resistance against British rule. From the heroic Poligar revolts led by Veerapandiya Kattabomman and Oomaithurai to peasant uprisings and nationalist movements, Tirunelveli emerged as a stronghold of defiance and sacrifice. These revolts were not merely local disturbances but expressions of a deep-rooted desire for freedom and self-rule. The legacy of these struggles continues to occupy a central place in the historical consciousness of Tamil Nadu and the Indian freedom movement.

Freedom Fighters from the Region

The Tirunelveli region occupies a distinguished place in the history of India's freedom struggle. From the late eighteenth century to the twentieth century, Tirunelveli produced several brave freedom fighters who resisted British rule through armed rebellion, political agitation, economic nationalism, and mass movements. The region's tradition of resistance began with the Poligar revolts and later evolved into organized nationalist movements under the Indian National Congress. The freedom fighters of Tirunelveli represented different phases of the freedom struggle and reflected the changing nature of resistance against colonial domination.

One of the earliest and most celebrated freedom fighters from Tirunelveli was **Veerapandiya Kattabomman**, the Poligar of Panchalamkurichi. He openly defied the British East India Company by refusing to pay unjust tribute and resisting interference in

his administration. Kattabomman's resistance symbolized the struggle to protect regional autonomy and traditional rights. His execution in 1799 by the British transformed him into a martyr and a symbol of early resistance against colonial rule. His sacrifice inspired later generations of freedom fighters in Tamil Nadu.

Another prominent freedom fighter from the Tirunelveli region was **Oomaithurai**, the younger brother of Kattabomman. After his brother's execution, Oomaithurai continued armed resistance against the British. He rebuilt the Panchalamkurichi fort and mobilized Poligars and local people against colonial forces. Though he was eventually captured and executed, Oomaithurai's courage and determination kept the spirit of resistance alive in southern Tamil Nadu.

The **Maruthu Brothers**—Periya Maruthu and Chinna Maruthu—though based in Sivagangai, had strong influence in the Tirunelveli region. They organized a united front of Poligars across southern Tamil Nadu, including Tirunelveli, against British rule. Their rebellion in 1801 was one of the earliest organized anti-British uprisings in India. The proclamation issued by them calling upon people to rise against the British reflected early nationalist ideas. Their execution marked a severe blow to early resistance but left a lasting legacy.

A towering figure in the modern phase of the freedom struggle from Tirunelveli was **V.O. Chidambaram Pillai**, popularly known as **V.O.C.** Born in Ottapidaram near Tuticorin, he played a crucial role in promoting economic nationalism. He founded the **Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company** to challenge British monopoly in maritime trade. His efforts encouraged self-reliance and national pride. V.O.C. also mobilized workers and participated actively in the Swadeshi and nationalist movements. His imprisonment and suffering made him a symbol of sacrifice and patriotism.

Another important freedom fighter from Tirunelveli was **Subramania Siva**, a close associate of V.O. Chidambaram Pillai. A powerful orator and nationalist leader, Subramania Siva inspired people through fiery speeches advocating freedom and social reform. He participated actively in the Swadeshi movement and was imprisoned by the British for his revolutionary ideas. His role in awakening political consciousness among the masses of Tirunelveli was significant.

The region also produced intellectual freedom fighters such as **Subramania Bharati**, who had close associations with Tirunelveli and southern Tamil Nadu. Though not born in Tirunelveli district, Bharati's influence was strongly felt in the region through his revolutionary poetry and writings. His works inspired youth and nationalists, instilling ideas of freedom, equality, and social justice.

Several lesser-known freedom fighters from Tirunelveli also played crucial roles in the freedom struggle. Local leaders, teachers, lawyers, and students participated in Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India movements. They organized protests, boycotts of foreign goods, and picketing of liquor shops. Many faced imprisonment, fines, and social ostracism for their participation.

Women from the Tirunelveli region also contributed to the freedom struggle. Inspired by Gandhian ideals, women participated in nationalist activities such as spinning khadi, spreading nationalist ideas, and supporting political campaigns. Though their contributions were often overlooked, they played a vital role in sustaining the movement at the grassroots level.

The participation of Tirunelveli freedom fighters strengthened the Indian National Movement in Tamil Nadu. Their sacrifices connected early armed resistance with later mass movements, showing the continuity of the struggle for freedom. Tirunelveli became a center of nationalist activity, particularly during the Swadeshi movement and the Gandhian era.

In conclusion, the freedom fighters from the Tirunelveli region made remarkable contributions to India's struggle for independence. From early warriors like Veerapandiya Kattabomman and Oomaithurai to modern nationalists like V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva, Tirunelveli produced leaders who fought courageously against British rule. Their sacrifices, ideals, and patriotism occupy a proud place in the history of Tamil Nadu and the Indian freedom movement.

Unsung Freedom Fighters

The history of the Indian freedom struggle in the Tirunelveli region is not limited to well-known leaders alone. Alongside celebrated figures such as Veerapandiya Kattabomman and V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, there existed numerous unsung freedom fighters whose sacrifices, resistance, and contributions have remained largely

unrecognized. These men and women played a crucial role in sustaining local resistance against British rule through armed struggle, political mobilization, social reform, and support activities. Their efforts reflect the collective spirit of freedom that permeated Tirunelveli society.

One of the earliest unsung heroes of the Tirunelveli region was **Oomaithurai**, the brother of Veerapandiya Kattabomman. Though often overshadowed by his brother, Oomaithurai played a decisive role in continuing armed resistance against the British after Kattabomman's execution. He reorganized Poligar forces, rebuilt the Panchalamkurichi fort, and mobilized local chiefs and peasants. His unwavering resistance and eventual execution demonstrate the depth of local opposition to British rule.

Another lesser-recognized figure was **Sundaralinga Kudumbanar**, a close associate of Kattabomman. He stood by Kattabomman during confrontations with the British and chose martyrdom rather than submission. His loyalty and sacrifice symbolize the collective nature of resistance in Tirunelveli, where leadership was supported by devoted followers whose contributions are often neglected in mainstream history.

Several **Poligars of Tirunelveli** such as those of **Ettayapuram, Nagalapuram, Kadalgudi, and Sivagiri** actively resisted British authority but remain relatively unknown. These Poligars opposed British revenue demands and military interference. Though their revolts were suppressed, their resistance delayed British consolidation and inspired popular defiance among the rural population.

During the **South Indian Rebellion of 1801**, many local leaders and common people from Tirunelveli participated actively. Village headmen, soldiers, and peasants supported the Poligar forces by providing shelter, food, intelligence, and manpower. Their collective participation, though undocumented in official records, was essential for sustaining the rebellion against British forces.

In the later phase of the freedom struggle, **local nationalist leaders and activists** in Tirunelveli worked tirelessly at the grassroots level. Teachers, lawyers, merchants, and students organized meetings, spread nationalist ideas, and mobilized public support during the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India movements. Many of

them faced imprisonment and economic hardship, yet their names rarely appear in national histories.

Women freedom fighters of Tirunelveli also remain largely unsung. Inspired by Gandhian ideals, women participated in spinning khadi, boycotting foreign goods, picketing liquor shops, and organizing community support for nationalist activities. Their involvement challenged traditional gender roles and strengthened the mass character of the freedom movement in the region.

Christian converts and members of marginalized communities in Tirunelveli also contributed to the freedom struggle in subtle yet significant ways. Through education, social reform, and participation in nationalist activities, they supported the broader cause of freedom and social equality. Their role highlights the inclusive nature of the movement in the region.

The **role of peasants and laborers** in Tirunelveli deserves special mention. They resisted oppressive land revenue policies, supported nationalist leaders, and participated in protests and strikes. Though lacking formal leadership or recognition, their collective action formed the backbone of resistance against colonial exploitation.

The contributions of **local intellectuals and writers** from Tirunelveli also remain underappreciated. Through pamphlets, speeches, and vernacular writings, they spread awareness about colonial exploitation and inspired patriotism. Print culture helped connect rural society with the broader national movement.

In conclusion, the unsung freedom fighters of Tirunelveli played an indispensable role in India's struggle for independence. Their contributions—whether through armed resistance, political activism, social reform, or everyday acts of defiance—kept the spirit of freedom alive at the local level. Though history has often overlooked their names, their sacrifices and commitment form an integral part of Tirunelveli's rich legacy of resistance and patriotism. Recognizing these unsung heroes is essential for understanding the true, collective nature of India's freedom struggle.

Self-Assessment Questions
1. When and how did the British arrive in Tirunelveli?
2. What changes did the British administration bring to the region?
3. How did British rule affect education in Tirunelveli?
4. Discuss the impact of British policies on agriculture and trade.
5. What role did the railways and commerce play under British rule?
6. How was forest administration affected during colonial times?
7. Name some notable revolts that occurred in Tirunelveli.
8. Who were the famous freedom fighters from the region?
9. Mention contributions of unsung local freedom fighters.
10. Assess the overall social and economic impact of British rule in Tirunelveli.

Political Developments and its Changes: Political Parties, Integration into the Indian union – Economic Transformation: Industrialization and Modernization efforts – social changes; Social movements and Educational reforms

Objectives
- Politics: Parties formed; joined Indian Union.
- Economy: Industrialization and modernization.
- Society: Social movements and reforms.
- Education: Literacy and educational reforms

Political Developments and Its Changes

The Tirunelveli region occupies an important place in the political history of southern Tamil Nadu due to its long tradition of local governance, resistance to external authority and active participation in modern political movements. From the period of Nayak and Poligar rule to British administration and later integration into independent India, Tirunelveli witnessed continuous political transformation that reshaped its administrative structure, power relations and political consciousness.

During the pre-colonial period, Tirunelveli was governed by the Madurai Nayaks, under whom local chieftains known as Poligars or Palayakkarars exercised considerable autonomy. These Poligars collected revenue, maintained armed forces and administered justice in their territories. Political authority was decentralized and rooted in military strength and hereditary privilege. This system reflected a feudal political order in which loyalty to the Nayak ruler was combined with local independence.

A major political change occurred with the expansion of British power in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Poligar Wars marked the decisive end of indigenous political authority in Tirunelveli. The defeat of prominent Poligars such as Veerapandiya Kattabomman and the suppression of local resistance enabled the British East India Company to establish direct control over the region. Tirunelveli was incorporated into the Madras Presidency, bringing it under centralized colonial administration.

Under British rule, traditional political structures were dismantled and replaced with modern administrative institutions. The office of the District Collector became the

center of political authority, supported by courts, police and revenue officials. This marked a shift from localized feudal governance to bureaucratic rule based on laws and regulations. Although this system ensured administrative uniformity, it excluded local populations from real political power, leading to growing discontent.

The introduction of Western education, print media and modern communication played a crucial role in changing political awareness in Tirunelveli. Educated elites, lawyers, teachers and traders began to engage with ideas of liberty, rights and nationalism. Political associations and public meetings became common, creating a platform for political debate and participation. These developments laid the foundation for organized political movements in the region.

The early twentieth century witnessed the rise of nationalist politics in Tirunelveli. The Indian National Congress gained strong support, and the region became actively involved in the freedom struggle. People from Tirunelveli participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement. Hartals, protests, boycott of foreign goods and constructive programmes mobilized peasants, students and workers, transforming political activity into a mass movement.

Alongside nationalist politics, non-Brahmin and social justice movements significantly influenced political change in Tirunelveli. The Justice Party challenged Brahmin dominance in administration and education, promoting political representation for non-Brahmin communities. Later, the Dravidian movement introduced radical ideas of social equality, rationalism and linguistic pride. These movements reshaped political ideology and broadened political participation among marginalized groups.

The achievement of independence in 1947 marked a new phase in the political development of Tirunelveli. The integration of the region into the Indian Union brought democratic governance based on the Constitution of India. Universal adult franchise enabled people from all sections of society to participate in elections, making politics more inclusive. Tirunelveli became an integral part of the democratic framework of the Indian state.

Post-independence politics in Tirunelveli was strongly influenced by Dravidian parties such as the DMK and later the AIADMK. These parties emphasized social justice, reservation policies, welfare schemes and regional identity. Political power increasingly

reflected popular aspirations rather than elite dominance. Local leadership emerged from diverse social backgrounds, strengthening democratic representation.

The establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions further transformed political life in Tirunelveli. Decentralization of power enabled village-level participation in governance, development planning and decision-making. Women and marginalized communities gained representation through local bodies, enhancing grassroots democracy and political empowerment.

In conclusion, the political developments and changes in the Tirunelveli region reflect a transition from feudal authority to colonial bureaucracy and finally to democratic governance. The decline of Poligar rule, the impact of British administration, the rise of nationalist and Dravidian movements and post-independence democratic institutions collectively shaped the political landscape. These transformations not only altered structures of power but also awakened political consciousness, making Tirunelveli an active participant in the political life of modern Tamil Nadu and India.

Political Parties

The development of political parties in the Tirunelveli region reflects the broader evolution of modern politics in Tamil Nadu and India. From the early phase of nationalist mobilization during British rule to the dominance of Dravidian parties in the post-independence period, political parties played a central role in shaping political consciousness, social reform and democratic participation in Tirunelveli. The region gradually moved from traditional loyalties and elite leadership to mass-based party politics.

During the early twentieth century, the Indian National Congress emerged as the first major political party to influence Tirunelveli politics. The spread of Western education and nationalist ideas created a supportive environment for Congress activities. Local leaders, lawyers, teachers and merchants organized Congress committees and mobilized people for the freedom struggle. The Congress provided a platform for political training and leadership, transforming Tirunelveli into an active center of nationalist politics.

The Congress party played a decisive role in mobilizing the masses of Tirunelveli during major national movements such as the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil

Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement. Boycott of foreign goods, participation in protests and constructive programmes attracted peasants, students and workers into political activity. Through these movements, the Congress expanded political awareness and strengthened mass participation in the region.

Alongside the Congress, the Justice Party exerted significant influence in Tirunelveli, particularly among non-Brahmin communities. The Justice Party emphasized social justice, communal representation and administrative reforms. Its activities challenged the dominance of elite groups in politics and administration. In Tirunelveli, the Justice Party helped politicize caste identities and encouraged participation by socially marginalized groups.

The emergence of the Dravidian movement marked a major shift in party politics in Tirunelveli. Inspired by the ideals of rationalism, self-respect and social equality propagated by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, Dravidian ideology found wide acceptance in the region. The Dravidar Kazhagam created strong social awareness, which later translated into electoral politics through the formation of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

The DMK became a dominant political force in Tirunelveli after independence. By advocating Tamil identity, social justice, anti-caste policies and welfare measures, the DMK attracted support from backward classes, scheduled communities and the urban middle class. The party's emphasis on mass communication, public meetings and cultural politics reshaped political culture in the region.

The formation of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) further diversified political party competition in Tirunelveli. Under the leadership of M.G. Ramachandran and later Jayalalithaa, the AIADMK focused on populist welfare schemes, charismatic leadership and grassroots mobilization. The party gained strong electoral support in both rural and urban areas of Tirunelveli.

Left-wing political parties such as the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) also played a notable role in Tirunelveli's political landscape. These parties were particularly active among agricultural laborers, industrial workers and trade unions. Their focus on class issues, labor rights and land reforms contributed to political awareness and social activism in the region.

After independence, national parties such as the Indian National Congress continued to remain relevant in Tirunelveli, though their influence gradually declined in comparison to Dravidian parties. Coalition politics and alliances became common, reflecting the plural nature of party competition. Electoral contests in Tirunelveli thus mirrored the broader political trends of Tamil Nadu.

Political parties also played a crucial role in strengthening democratic institutions in Tirunelveli. Participation in elections, local body politics and legislative processes expanded over time. Panchayati Raj institutions provided opportunities for parties to mobilize support at the grassroots level, encouraging leadership from diverse social backgrounds.

In conclusion, the evolution of political parties in the Tirunelveli region illustrates the transition from nationalist politics to socially oriented and regionally rooted party systems. The Congress laid the foundation for mass political mobilization, while the Justice Party and Dravidian parties transformed politics by emphasizing social justice and equality. The continued presence of regional, national and left-wing parties enriched democratic life and ensured active political participation in Tirunelveli, making it an important arena of modern Tamil Nadu politics.

Integration into the Indian union

The first signs of the power tussle emerged when the crown started to aggressively push its agenda on the princely states. This was evident in a letter sent to the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces in 1884. The letter said that "succession to a native state is invalid until it receives in some form the sanction of the British Authority." This meant that the ruler was not a heir of the state but was enjoyed its power on behalf of the British empire. Thus over the time, this divide increased until 1928 when Motilal Nehru Committee offered a solution. The offer was to join the Indian federation. This led to a dispute between the princely rulers and two fractions. One was "the federationists" which constituted of the Maharajah of Bikaner and the Nawab of Bengal. The other group comprised of the Maharajah of Patiala.

The Federal Structure Sub Committee was before long comprised to especially investigate the question of formation of an alliance of Indian States; it expressed in its report of 15 January 1931 that the States and areas were to be joined in an alliance and

upheld for specific safeguards for the states. Over time thoughts continued with respect to this, and the dignitaries expressed their concerns at the Second Round Table Conference in September 1931. Gandhiji, who overwhelmed the Conference significantly, was against dyarchy at the middle and guaranteed unlimited oversight over India for a completely dependable government. The British didn't consent to this interest. English PM Ramsay reported toward the finish of the Conference that the extraordinary thought of an All-India Federation actually holds the field. The guideline of a capable central government subject to specific obligations and safeguards through a progress period, stay unaltered. This occasion additionally prompted a shift in perspective among numerous princely rulers. The Committee had passed on no expectation for rulers to acquire monetarily by joining the organization. In this manner, the rulers turned fearful with regards to joining the league.

Soon afterwards, The Government of India Act was passed by the British parliament in 1935. This established a kind of constitutional relationship between the princely states and the British rulers. Although, the accession to the federation was optional for the princely states but, efforts to convince the states were persistently pursued by Viceroy Linlithgow.

The rulers continued to drag out the requests for concessions while the political department made an honest effort to appease them. It was in January 1939 that the Viceroy gave the last proposal to the rulers as a roundabout letter encasing updated drafts of the overall statements of the instrument of promotion. The deal incorporated no possibility of variety and a 6-month cutoff time to react on the matter. The rulers tracked down the proposition "on a very basic level inadmissible". In the meantime, following the decisions that occurred in the areas, individuals in the Princely States started to foment for common freedoms also and in this way, on 3 December 1938, Gandhiji announced that there was no arrangement except for complete autonomy. He likewise cautioned the British and the Princely States that Congress strategy of nonintercession might be deserted to help individuals. Before any result could be reached, the second World conflict broke out in 1939, and the British concluded they required the assistance of the Indians, accordingly relinquishing the recommendation for the arrangement of an organization.

Integration of States:

One of the greatest benefit of integration of princely states with the India Union was that it allowed a smooth administration of the country. The large number of small states made it difficult to govern the country. Each state would have a separate agenda and rules from its neighboring states. This would have caused conflicts and resulted into creation of barriers between states. Thus, any kind of comprehensive economic policy would not have worked for these states which is in fact important for the growth of the country. Apart from this, the large number of princely states was also dangerous for the unity of the country and could turn into a security threat. The disruptive forces could have also arisen due to the differences as provinces were ahead in development of democratic institutions while autocracy was still prevalent in the states. The signs of disruption were already prevalent in some areas and political progress had been compromised there.

Under such circumstances, this task of integration was assigned to then Deputy Prime Minister of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Except for the States of Hyderabad and Junagadh, all the states signed the "Instrument of Accession". However, later on these two were also integrated. Post-integration, the management and affairs of these states with the center were cast into a new mold in order to fit into the constitution which was newly formed in the 1950. It had provisions for three categories of States. The territorial integration of princely States was of the following three types:

1. States that merged with the neighboring provinces;

2. Grouping of some States into a separate entity;

3. Transformation of some States into centrally administered areas.

The cycle through which the states were changed into the ones with a new constitutional design was of two steps. It required, in any case, the accession of the Indian States to the Dominion of India. Also, it included the progressions by which the union of little States would turn into feasible authoritative units. With it likewise was set into activity the improvement of democratic establishments and capable legislatures in the States. The division of states before independence can be seen more clearly in the map given below.

Junagadh

The increase of the rulers was just the preface to a last arrangement of the States issue. Before we could imagine the following stage, an undermining cloud showed up over the western skyline. This was the Nawab of Junagadh's accession to Pakistan. It was the most significant among the gathering of Kathiawar states and contained an enormous Hindu populace managed by the Nawab, Muhammad Mahabat Khanji III. The last Nawab of Junagadh was a relative of Sherkhan Babi. The Nawab, Sir Mahabatkhan Rasulkhanji, was an unusual of uncommon vintage. His main distraction in life was canines, of which he possessed hundreds. Without a doubt, that he conveyed his affection for canines to such lengths that he once coordinated a wedding of two of his pets, over which he burned through a tremendous amount of cash and out of appreciation for which he declared a State occasion! The Nawab had from the start been offering empty talk to the ideal of an assembled Kathiawar.

It was on September 15, 1947 that Nawab Mahabat Khanji of Junagadh decided to merge his princely state with Pakistan. By utterly disregarding Mountbatten's perspective, he integrated Junagadh to Pakistan through the ocean. The leaders of two expresses that were dependent upon the suzerainty of Junagadh — Mangrol and Babariawad — responded by pronouncing their autonomy from Junagadh and consenting to India. Accordingly, the Nawab of Junagadh militarily involved the two states. Leaders of the other neighboring states were furious at this and responded aggressively by sending troops to the Junagadh outskirts. Moreover, they also asked to the Government of India for its help. India trusted that assuming Junagadh was allowed to agree to Pakistan, mutual strain previously stewing in Gujarat would decline, and didn't acknowledge the Nawab's decision of increase. The public authority brought up that the state was eighty percent Hindu, and required a plebiscite to choose the subject of increase. Thereafter, India blocked the supplies of fuel and coal going to Junagadh from its territory. It also cut off air and postal connections to Junagadh and sent soldiers to the wilderness. Pakistan consented to conduct a plebiscite, however, it wanted India to withdraw its troops. This condition was dismissed by the Government of India.

After the Indian forces reached Junagadh on 26 October, the Nawab and his family escaped to Pakistan. Before leaving the princely state, the Nawab had emptied the

state coffers and took wealth along with him. On November 7, 1947 Junagadh's court, confronting breakdown, welcomed the Government of India to assume control over the State's organization. The Dewan of Junagadh, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, the father of the more popular Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, welcomed the Government of India to intercede. The Government of India acknowledged the greeting of the Dewan to mediate. After these events, a plebiscite was conducted in February 1948 the outcome of which was in favor of India. A plebiscite was led in February 1948, which went consistently for promotion to India. Junagadh turned into a piece of the Indian province of Saurashtra until November 1, 1956. Thereafter, Saurashtra was made to be part of Bombay. In 1960, Bombay state was parted into the territories of Maharashtra and Gujarat based on linguistic differences, where Junagadh was located at that time. Today, this former princely state is a part of Gujarat.

Hyderabad

This was the largest and most financially well to do state which covered an enormous part of the Deccan level. At that time, Nizam Mir Usman Ali was ruling over a large Hindu population in the state of Hyderabad. From the beginning onward, he was exceptionally clear on his interest for a free state and unmitigatedly would not join the Indian Territory. Thereafter, he drew support from Jinnah and the tussle throughout Hyderabad developed further after some time. Various solicitations and warnings from Patel were not sufficient enough to change the psyche of the Nizam, who continued growing his military by bringing in arms from Europe. Things got ugly when outfitted aficionados (called Razakars) released savagery focused on at Hyderabad's Hindu occupants. The Congress government chose to make a more unequivocal turn later the Lord Mountbatten abdication in June 1948. On September 13, 1948, Indian soldiers were shipped off Hyderabad under 'Operation Polo'. In an outfitted experience that went on for around four days, the Indian armed force dealt with the state and Hyderabad turned into the indispensable piece of India. Afterward, trying to compensate the Nizam for his accommodation, he was made the legislative leader of the province of Hyderabad.

Travancore

The historic significance of this princely state was that it provides a strategic advantage for maritime trade. Moreover, this region had adequate labor and was rich in

natural resources. From the very beginning onwards, this state had refused to integrate into the Union of India. Not only this, it also questioned the Government of India at that time. The Dewan of Travancore, Sir C. P. Ramamswamy Aiyar made it clear by 1946 that his aim was to create an independent state of Travancore. However, this state would also consider signing a treaty with the Union of India. Some of the scholars have also stated that Sir C. P. Aiyar had ties with the then British government. British government supported an independent state of Travancore because they wanted to extract and purchase a mineral called monazite form that area. This mineral was found in abundance in Travancore and would have helped Britain in developing nuclear weapons at a rapid pace. Sir, C. P. Aiyar was adamant for making Travancore an independent state till July of 197. Thereafter, an attempt was made on his life by a member of the Kerala Socialist Party. This led to a change of heart and soon afterwards, on July 30, 1947, Travancore joined the Union of India.

To conclude, it can be said that the integration of princely states into India was a historic event not only for India but for the whole word. As such a peaceful merger is rarely achieved. India at that time was largely fragmented with some 500 odd princely states covering 28 percent of its area and 48 percent of the Indian population. Most of these states were also allies of the British and it was not easy to appease them. Moreover, there was a risk of Balkanization of India if these states were to form allies and become powerful in their own regions. There is no doubt in the fact that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a vital role in the process along with V.P. Menon who was then the secretary of the Ministry of States. For this task, Patel deployed a variety of tactics ranging from invoking the patriotism of the princes to warning them regarding the possibility of anarchy in case they refuse to join India. As an enumeration for giving up their states, the Government of India made payments to the royal families known as "privy purses". Bikaner, Baroda and some other states from Rajasthan were the first ones to join the union while the others followed. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the fact that this process has saved India from internal political, social and economic conflicts between the states in the years to come. However, the tussle that emerged during the merger of Kashmir is still a challenge for India today.

Economic Transformation

Limited diversification in exports and the broader structure of the economy has been an underlying characteristic of many low-income frontier economies. Concentration in sectors with limited scope for productivity growth and quality upgrading, such as primary commodities, may result in less broad-based and sustainable growth. Moreover, lack of diversification may increase exposure to adverse external shocks and macroeconomic instability. This presentation is based on ongoing IMF work that examines the role of diversification in the macroeconomic performance of frontier economies using both crosscountry data and case studies, and analyzes diversification in both trade and the broader domestic economy. Some key messages are:

Economic development critically involves diversification and structural

Transformation—that is, the continued, dynamic reallocation of resources from less productive to more productive sectors and activities. This process involves not just external trade, but the broader economy. Increases in diversification are strongly associated with lower volatility and higher growth.

There are major differences across regions and countries in the degree to which they have succeeded in diversifying and transforming their economies. Over an extended period, East Asia has on average been particularly successful in diversifying its exports, particularly in comparison with sub-Saharan Africa. Much of the progress has occurred through diversification along the 'extensive margin', that is, through entry into completely new products.

Structural transformation crucially involves changes not only in the type, but also in the quality of goods produced. Producing higher quality varieties of existing products can constitute a way of building on existing comparative advantages. It can boost countries' export revenue potential through the use of more physical- and human-capital intensive production techniques. Overall, East Asia has on average benefited significantly from quality upgrading. Yet, it is important to note that the potential for quality upgrading varies by product. Agricultural and natural resources tend to have lower potential for quality upgrading than manufactures. Therefore, for frontier economies at early stages of development, diversification into products with longer quality ladders may be a necessary first step before large gains from quality improvement can be reaped.

Industrialization efforts

The Tirunelveli region has undergone a gradual but significant transformation through sustained industrialization efforts over the colonial and post-independence periods. Traditionally known for its agrarian economy supported by the perennial Tamiraparani River, Tirunelveli's economic structure slowly diversified with the introduction of cottage industries, small-scale manufacturing and modern industrial enterprises. These industrialization efforts reshaped employment patterns, urban growth and socio-economic relations in the region.

In the pre-colonial period, Tirunelveli's economy was largely rural and self-sufficient. Industrial activity existed mainly in the form of traditional crafts such as handloom weaving, metal work, pottery, oil extraction and carpentry. These activities were household-based and catered to local markets. Though limited in scale, they formed the economic backbone of rural society and laid the foundation for later industrial development.

During British rule, industrialization efforts in Tirunelveli remained limited due to colonial economic policies that emphasized agriculture and raw material extraction. However, certain industries emerged due to regional demand and resource availability. Cotton ginning, handloom weaving and salt production developed slowly, while beedi manufacturing became a prominent cottage industry providing employment to women and landless laborers. The colonial introduction of railways and road networks indirectly supported these industries by improving market access.

The post-independence era marked a turning point in Tirunelveli's industrial transformation. The Government of India's planned development strategy and the Five-Year Plans emphasized balanced regional growth and promotion of small-scale industries. Tirunelveli benefited from these policies through the establishment of agro-based industries such as rice mills, oil mills, sugar processing units and food-processing industries. These initiatives added value to agricultural produce and strengthened rural-industrial linkages.

Textile-related industries played a crucial role in Tirunelveli's industrialization efforts. Cotton mills, power loom units and handloom cooperatives expanded steadily, generating employment and supporting traditional skills. Beedi manufacturing continued

to be a major source of livelihood, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. These industries helped diversify income sources and reduced excessive dependence on agriculture.

Government-led industrialization efforts further accelerated transformation through the creation of industrial estates and institutional support. The establishment of SIDCO industrial estates provided infrastructure, power supply, transportation facilities and access to credit for small entrepreneurs. Cooperative institutions encouraged collective ownership and promoted rural industrial development. These efforts nurtured local entrepreneurship and industrial self-reliance.

Infrastructure development played a vital role in industrial modernization in Tirunelveli. Rural electrification enabled mechanization and improved productivity. Expansion of banking facilities, transport networks and communication systems integrated the region into the broader state and national economy. Technical and vocational education institutions supported skill development and workforce readiness.

The social impact of industrialization in Tirunelveli was considerable. Industrial employment contributed to urbanization, social mobility and the emergence of a working and middle class. Women's participation in industries such as beedi manufacturing and textiles enhanced household incomes and economic independence. Traditional social hierarchies gradually weakened as occupational diversification increased.

Despite its achievements, industrialization in Tirunelveli faced challenges such as limited large-scale investment, market competition and environmental constraints. Nevertheless, the emphasis on small-scale, agro-based and sustainable industries ensured steady and region-appropriate growth. Industrial efforts focused more on inclusive development than rapid industrial expansion.

In conclusion, industrialization efforts in the Tirunelveli region brought about meaningful economic and social transformation. Through the gradual expansion of cottage, small-scale and agro-based industries supported by state initiatives and infrastructure development, Tirunelveli transitioned from a purely agrarian economy to a diversified regional economy. These industrialization efforts contributed significantly to modernization, employment generation and balanced regional development, making Tirunelveli an important component of Tamil Nadu's industrial landscape.

Transformation through Modernization Efforts

The Tirunelveli region has experienced a steady and multidimensional process of modernization that transformed its traditional agrarian and feudal society into a more diversified and dynamic socio-economic structure. Modernization in Tirunelveli did not occur abruptly but evolved gradually through administrative reforms, infrastructural development, educational expansion, technological change and social reform movements. These efforts collectively reshaped the region's economy, politics and social life.

In the early phase, modernization efforts in Tirunelveli began under British administration with the introduction of modern systems of governance. Traditional political and judicial practices were replaced by codified laws, courts and bureaucratic administration. The establishment of district administration, revenue departments and police systems marked the transition from customary authority to institutional governance. Though colonial in nature, these changes introduced the framework of modern administration.

Infrastructure development formed a crucial aspect of modernization in Tirunelveli. The construction of roads, bridges and railway connectivity integrated the region with major urban and commercial centers. Improved transport facilities enabled the movement of goods, people and ideas, facilitating economic exchange and social interaction. Communication networks such as postal and telegraph services further connected Tirunelveli with the wider world, accelerating modernization.

Agricultural modernization significantly influenced the region's transformation. Expansion and regulation of irrigation systems along the Tamiraparani River improved agricultural productivity. Introduction of improved seeds, tools and farming techniques gradually replaced traditional methods. Market-oriented agriculture encouraged farmers to adopt new practices, linking rural Tirunelveli to regional and national markets.

Modernization efforts also transformed Tirunelveli's economic structure through industrial and commercial development. Small-scale industries, agro-based units and cottage industries benefited from mechanization, electrification and improved credit facilities. Banking institutions and cooperatives expanded financial access, promoting entrepreneurship and economic integration. These changes reduced exclusive dependence on agriculture and diversified livelihoods.

Education played a central role in the modernization of Tirunelveli. The spread of Western education through missionary and government institutions introduced scientific knowledge, rational thinking and modern curricula. Schools, colleges and technical institutions expanded access to education, producing an educated workforce capable of participating in modern economic and administrative systems. Education also served as a powerful instrument of social mobility.

Social modernization in Tirunelveli was driven by reform movements that challenged traditional hierarchies and customs. Caste-based discrimination, superstition and gender inequality were increasingly questioned. The influence of the Self-Respect Movement and Dravidian ideology promoted rationalism, social equality and self-respect. These movements reshaped social attitudes and encouraged progressive values.

Urbanization further contributed to modernization in Tirunelveli. Growth of towns and administrative centers led to new patterns of living, occupational diversification and cultural exchange. Exposure to modern lifestyles weakened traditional social control and fostered individual aspirations. Urban centers became hubs of education, industry and political activity.

Post-independence modernization efforts gained momentum through state-led development initiatives. Welfare schemes, public health programs, electrification and housing projects improved living standards. Democratic institutions and Panchayati Raj systems strengthened participatory governance and political modernization. Women and marginalized communities increasingly accessed education, employment and political representation.

Despite challenges such as regional disparities and limited large-scale industrial investment, modernization in Tirunelveli followed a balanced and inclusive path. Emphasis on gradual change, social reform and regional suitability ensured sustainable transformation. Modernization did not entirely erase traditional values but adapted them to contemporary needs.

In conclusion, modernization efforts in the Tirunelveli region brought comprehensive transformation across administrative, economic, social and cultural spheres. Through infrastructure development, educational expansion, agricultural improvement, social reform and democratic participation, Tirunelveli evolved into a

modern regional society. These modernization efforts played a vital role in integrating the region into the broader framework of modern Tamil Nadu and the Indian nation.

Social changes; Social movements and Educational reforms

The Tirunelveli region has undergone profound social transformation over the last two centuries as a result of colonial rule, nationalist politics, reform movements and post-independence development. Traditionally structured around rigid caste hierarchies, patriarchal norms and religious customs, Tirunelveli society gradually evolved through social reform initiatives, mass movements and educational expansion. These processes collectively reshaped social relations, values and opportunities in the region.

Social changes in Tirunelveli began to emerge during the colonial period with the introduction of modern education, new administrative systems and exposure to Western ideas. The rigid caste structure that governed social interaction, occupation and access to public spaces began to face questioning. Urbanization, market-oriented economy and the rise of an educated middle class weakened traditional social controls and encouraged mobility across occupational and social boundaries.

One of the most significant social changes was the gradual erosion of caste-based discrimination. Issues such as untouchability, denial of temple entry and exclusion from public amenities became focal points of social reform. Marginalized communities in Tirunelveli increasingly asserted their rights and dignity, challenging long-standing social inequalities. These struggles marked a shift from passive acceptance to organized resistance.

Social movements played a decisive role in accelerating these changes. The influence of the Self-Respect Movement led by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy was particularly strong in Tirunelveli. The movement promoted rationalism, self-respect, women's rights and the rejection of caste-based oppression. Practices such as self-respect marriages and anti-superstition campaigns gained acceptance, transforming social attitudes at the grassroots level.

Alongside the Self-Respect Movement, anti-untouchability and social justice movements mobilized oppressed communities in Tirunelveli. Leaders and activists organized protests, public meetings and campaigns demanding equal access to education,

employment and public institutions. These movements created political awareness and empowered marginalized groups to participate actively in social and public life.

Religious and missionary movements also contributed significantly to social change in Tirunelveli. Christian missionaries established schools, colleges and hospitals, particularly in rural areas. By providing education and healthcare to marginalized communities, these institutions promoted social mobility and improved living standards. Missionary activities also challenged traditional caste barriers and encouraged equality and dignity.

Educational reforms formed the backbone of social transformation in Tirunelveli. During the colonial period, missionary and government institutions introduced modern education, English language instruction and scientific learning. Tirunelveli emerged as an important educational center in southern Tamil Nadu, producing scholars, administrators and reformers.

After independence, educational reforms expanded rapidly under state-sponsored initiatives. The establishment of government schools, colleges, teacher training institutes and technical institutions improved access to education across caste and class lines. Reservation policies and welfare schemes enabled socially and economically disadvantaged groups to pursue higher education and professional careers.

Education played a crucial role in women's empowerment in Tirunelveli. Increased access to schooling and higher education enabled women to participate in public life, employment and social reform movements. Female literacy and awareness improved family welfare, health and social status, contributing to broader social change.

The combined impact of social changes, social movements and educational reforms led to the emergence of a more egalitarian society in Tirunelveli. Traditional hierarchies weakened, social mobility increased and democratic values gained acceptance. The growth of civil society institutions and voluntary organizations further strengthened social reform efforts.

In conclusion, the Tirunelveli region experienced deep social transformation through sustained social changes, reform movements and educational expansion. The challenge to caste oppression, promotion of rationalism, empowerment of marginalized communities and spread of modern education collectively reshaped the social fabric.

These developments played a vital role in integrating Tirunelveli into the modern socio-cultural framework of Tamil Nadu and India, fostering equality, awareness and progress.

Political Developments and its Changes: Political Parties, Integration into the Indian union – Economic Transformation: Industrialization and Modernization efforts – social changes; Social movements and Educational reforms

Self-Assessment Questions
1. Which political parties emerged in the region after independence?
2. How was Tirunelveli integrated into the Indian Union?
3. Describe the industrialization efforts in the region.
4. What modernization projects were undertaken in Tirunelveli?
5. Discuss major social changes in the region post-independence.
6. Name important social movements that influenced Tirunelveli.
7. How did educational reforms improve literacy?
8. What role did government policies play in social development?
9. How did modernization affect economic growth locally?
10. Assess the overall political, social, and economic transformation of the region.

Unit – V

Current Socio – Economic Landscape; Major, Minor industries, educational institutions and their role in economic development – Cultural Continuity and Change. Fairs, Festivals, arts, cult and cultural practices in the modern era – Challenges and Futures Prospects; Environmental issues, urbanization, Technology and development challenges

Objectives
- Economy: Industries and education drive development.
- Culture: Fairs, festivals, and arts continue.
- Modernization: Urbanization and technology transform society.
- Challenges: Environment and development issues persist.

The underlying differences in the socio-economic characteristics of the sample respondents are examined in the previous chapter on the basis of their age, community and other factors. The levels of education, type of family, type of house, family size, type of employment, monthly income, living conditions like mode of cooking, type of drinking water used, etc., all varied among them. This chapter presents the analysis regarding the expenditure and asset possession of the respondents, functioning of the SHGs in the study area and the role of these SHGs in the socio-economic development of the sample respondents with the help of ratio analysis, descriptive statistics and diagrammatic representation. Moreover, testing of hypotheses is also presented in this chapter.

The **social landscape of Tirunelveli district** in Tamil Nadu reflects a blend of demographic diversity, educational progress, cultural plurality, and persistent social challenges. According to census and demographic data, the district's population includes significant Hindu majority communities alongside Muslim and Christian minorities, with Scheduled Castes making up a notable portion of the population and a relatively high overall literacy rate compared with the state average, indicating educational advancement in the region. Despite improvements in schooling and literacy, **caste identity and caste-based social dynamics remain prominent in everyday life**, often shaping social interactions, community identity, and conflict, especially among youth. Public spaces—from schools and colleges to streets and social media—regularly reveal caste symbols and pride, and authorities have reported frequent arrests related to caste-provocative

content online in efforts to maintain communal harmony. Such caste-related tensions have been recognised by local administrators as hindering broader socioeconomic development, reinforcing that traditional hierarchies continue to influence social behaviour even as economic and educational change accelerates. Alongside these challenges, Tirunelveli's social fabric is strengthened by its **cultural heritage** and **community institutions**, where Tamil language and tradition play central roles in festivals, community life, and local identity. The district's **educational infrastructure**, including schools, arts and science colleges, and a major university, contributes to social mobility and cross-community interaction. However, within rural and urban settings alike, issues such as caste discrimination, youth unemployment, and the influence of social media on communal sentiments illustrate the ongoing struggle for social cohesion and equitable opportunity, marking Tirunelveli's contemporary social landscape as one of both promise and challenge.

The economic landscape of Tirunelveli district **is** characterised by a mix of traditional agrarian activity, diverse industrial presence, emerging services, and evolving opportunities for future growth. The district's economy remains **chiefly agrarian**, with a large proportion of the population depending on farming and related activities; major crops include **paddy, cotton, spices, coconuts, bananas, and condiments**, and there is a growing focus on **horticulture and micro-irrigation technologies** to increase productivity and farmer incomes. Agriculture not only sustains rural livelihoods but also feeds agro-based industries and supports allied livelihoods such as cattle rearing, poultry, and fishing due to its coastal belt. The district also has **significant natural resources**, including limestone, garnet sand, and other minerals, which underpin sectors like **cement, sugar, rice bran oil, calcium carbide, and printing paper manufacturing**. Traditional **industrial activities** include **beedi rolling, cotton textiles, spinning and weaving mills, steel workshops and small-scale units**, while **food-processing industries** have grown in importance since the late 1990s, contributing to local employment and value addition. Urban Tirunelveli also benefits from a sizeable **service sector** including education, healthcare, and tourism, with religious tourism playing a supportive role in the regional economy. In recent years, efforts to **diversify the economic base and enhance skills** have been visible through initiatives such as

renewable energy projects and **skill development centres for solar energy workers**, aimed at creating employment in emerging sectors. Moreover, industrial discussions between district officials and enterprises show local emphasis on expanding **micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** to generate employment and strengthen industrial training. While Tirunelveli's economy still leans strongly on agriculture and traditional industries, **strategic development plans, industrial estates, and smart city initiatives highlight a shift towards modernisation**, inclusive growth, and sustainable urban-economic development, making it a dynamic and evolving economic region within Tamil Nadu.

The **socio-economic landscape of Tirunelveli district** in Tamil Nadu reflects an agrarian foundation complemented by industrial diversification and emerging service sectors, creating a multifaceted regional economy with both traditional and modern elements. Agriculture continues to be the backbone of the district's economy, with a significant portion of the population engaged in cultivation of paddy, coconuts, bananas, spices, pulses and other condiments**,** supported by extensive irrigation and agro-related activities that contribute to rural livelihoods and food security. This agrarian base also sustains agro-based and food-processing industries**,** which have developed especially since the late 1990s and now represent one of the leading industrial segments in the region, providing employment and value addition to primary produce. Tirunelveli is also rich in mineral resources such as limestone, garnet sand, ilmenite and granite**,** which support major mineral-based industries including cement factories, lime production units and related chemical processing**,** tapping local raw materials and contributing to the industrial output. Beyond these, the district houses a range of major industries such as cotton textile mills, spinning and weaving mills, sugar factories, cotton seed oil units, printing paper and flour mills**,** which collectively engage large workforces and anchor the region's manufacturing profile. The beedi (tobacco) industry remains a notable component of the economy, particularly as a household industry employing many women workers**,** while workshops for steel products, tanneries, brick kilns, safety match production, mat weaving and handloom textile units illustrate the prevalence of minor and small-scale industries that provide significant local employment and maintain traditional crafts. Additionally, small industrial estates such as those at Pettai and

Gangaikondan established by SIDCO and SIPCOT support diversified manufacturing including engineering goods, PVC and plastic products, aluminum vessels, agro-processing units and fabrication works**,** further broadening the industrial base and creating skilled and semi-skilled employment opportunities. The services sector, including religious tourism, education, healthcare and a budding IT and startup ecosystem, enriches the socio-economic fabric and reflects a shift toward knowledge and service-oriented employment, though agricultural and industrial linkages remain central. In sum, Tirunelveli's socio-economic landscape is a dynamic mix of agriculture, major industrial establishments, small-scale and cottage industries, and evolving service sectors, collectively shaping regional development, employment patterns, and prospects for inclusive growth.

Educational Institutions and Economic Development

Education is a fundamental human right, serving as a potent tool for socio-economic development. It plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty and gender inequality, thereby elevating the standard of living and health status of individuals. Education yields substantial and consistent returns in terms of income. On an individual level, education opens doors to employment opportunities, financial prosperity, and an improved standard of living, contributing to the overall economic development of society. Essential for human development, education offers a pathway for economic growth and enhances people's understanding of cultural and social norms. Strategic and effective investments in education are imperative for building human capital and eradicating extreme poverty. Addressing the learning crisis, eliminating educational deficiencies, and equipping young individuals with advanced cognitive, socio-emotional, technical, and digital skills are central to our approach.Education holds immense importance for both males and females, and its impact is crucial for the development of individuals and societies, regardless of gender. However, historically, there have been disparities in access to education between males and females. Recognizing and addressing these disparities is essential for achieving gender equality and promoting the well-being of both men and women. Here are some key points regarding the importance of education for both genders:

Importance of Education for Males:

i. Professional Development:

Education equips males with the skills and knowledge needed for various professions, contributing to their career development and economic stability.

ii. Economic Contribution:

Well-educated men are more likely to contribute to economic growth and stability by participating in the workforce and potentially attaining higher-paying jobs.

iii. Family Support:

Education enables men to provide better support for their families, promoting financial stability and overall well-being.

iv. Social and Civic Engagement:

Educated men are more likely to be actively engaged in their communities, participating in civic activities, and contributing to social development.

Importance of Education for Females:

i. Empowerment:

Education is a powerful tool for empowering women, fostering independence, selfconfidence, and a sense of agency over their lives.

ii. Health and Family Well-being:

Educated women tend to have better health outcomes and are more likely to make informed decisions regarding family planning, leading to healthier families.

iii. Economic Opportunities:

Education opens up economic opportunities for women, improving their chances of entering the workforce and achieving financial independence.

iv. Gender Equality:

Education is a key driver for promoting gender equality. It challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

v. Community Development:

Educated women often play a crucial role in community development, contributing to the social and economic progress of their communities.

vi. Reducing Maternal Mortality:

Education is linked to lower maternal mortality rates. Educated women are more likely to access prenatal care and make healthier choices during pregnancy.

vii.   Breaking the Cycle of Poverty:

Providing education to women helps break the cycle of poverty, as educated mothers are more likely to invest in the education and well-being of their children.

The **educational landscape of Tirunelveli** is a key driver of the district's socio-economic development, with a diverse network of **schools, colleges, technical institutes and vocational centres** that collectively build human capital, improve employability and support broader economic growth. At the **higher education level**, **Manonmaniam Sundaranar University** serves as a central public university affiliated with over 100 colleges in the region, offering diverse programmes in arts, sciences, engineering and technology, thereby expanding opportunities for advanced learning and research and creating a skilled workforce that can attract industry and innovation activities to the district. Institutions such as the **Government College of Engineering, Tirunelveli**, provide specialised technical education in engineering disciplines, equipping students with industry-relevant skills that enhance their employability in core sectors such as construction, manufacturing and information technology. Similarly, **Francis Xavier Engineering College** contributes to producing a large pool of engineers and technologists, many of whom enter the labour market with capabilities that support both local enterprise and wider economic competitiveness. Other prominent colleges like **Rani Anna Government College for Women** and **Sadakathullah Appa College** emphasise inclusive education in arts, sciences, commerce and social sciences, enabling a diverse range of career pathways, fostering entrepreneurship, and improving socio-economic mobility for students from varied backgrounds. At the foundational level, a strong system of **public and private schools** ensures widespread basic literacy and foundational skills, while government welfare programmes promote equity by supporting educational access for students from disadvantaged groups. **Vocational and skills-based training**, such as programs offered through **Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** and non-formal training centres like **Vinnarasi Industrial School**, bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical industry needs, producing job-ready youth in trades such as electrical work, welding and fitting to meet local industry and service demands. The cumulative impact of

these educational institutions extends beyond individual advancement; educated and skilled graduates support **economic diversification**, attract investment, enhance local productivity, and stimulate **entrepreneurship** and small business growth. The establishment of new educational infrastructure like a proposed state-of-the-art library and cultural amenities further underlines government focus on knowledge infrastructure, which indirectly supports economic development by fostering research, innovation, and a culture of lifelong learning. Thus, Tirunelveli's educational sector plays a **pivotal role in economic development** by generating human resources, promoting inclusive socio-economic participation, and enabling sustainable regional growth.

Cultural Continuity

Historical Background

The history of Tinnevelly is marked by the rule of various dynasties, including the Pandyas, Cholas, and Nayaks, each contributing to the region's cultural richness. The Pandyas, who ruled from Madurai, had a significant influence on Tinnevelly, especially in terms of temple architecture and religious practices. The Cholas, known for their contributions to art and architecture, also left a lasting impact on the region. The Nayaks, with their administrative reforms and patronage of the arts, further enriched the cultural landscape of Tinnevelly.

Religious Influences

Religion plays a central role in the cultural heritage of Tinnevelly. The region is home to numerous temples, each with its own unique architectural style and historical significance. The Nellaiappar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is one of the most prominent temples in Tinnevelly, known for its intricate carvings and grand festivals. Other significant temples include the Sankaranarayanar Koil and the Kutralanathar Temple in Courtallam. These temples not only serve as places of worship but also as centers of cultural and social activities.

Festivals and Rituals

Traditional festivals and rituals are an integral part of Tinnevelly's cultural fabric. The annual Car Festival (Ther Thiruvizha) at the Nellaiappar Temple attracts thousands of devotees and showcases the region's vibrant cultural traditions. The Adi Thabasu festival at the Sankaranarayanar Koil is another significant event, characterized by

elaborate rituals and processions. These festivals are not only religious celebrations but also occasions for community bonding and cultural expression.

Classical Arts and Crafts

Tinnevelly has a rich tradition of classical arts and crafts, reflecting the region's artistic heritage. Bharatanatyam, the classical dance form of Tamil Nadu, is widely practiced and performed in Tinnevelly. The region is also known for its contributions to Carnatic music, with numerous musicians and composers hailing from Tinnevelly. Traditional crafts, such as the intricate weaving of Koorai sarees and the making of brass lamps and vessels, highlight the region's craftsmanship and artistic skills.

Cultural Change

The **cultural landscape of Tirunelveli** has been undergoing significant change as traditional practices, historical heritage, and modern influences intersect to shape contemporary life in the region. Tirunelveli's culture is rooted deeply in ancient Tamil traditions that encompass **distinct linguistic identity, religious festivals, temple rituals, cuisine, folk arts and community festivals**, with icons like the **Nellaiappar Temple** continuing to play a central role in social and religious life through temple rites and annual celebrations that draw people across communities. Historically, the city's cultural identity was shaped by its Tamil heritage and the influence of dynasties like the Pandyas and later Nayaks, whose patronage sustained artistic expression, temple architecture, and classical performing arts such as **Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam**, all of which are preserved and celebrated in local functions. Over time, **modernisation, education, urbanisation and media exposure** have introduced new social values and ways of life, leading to changes in dress, language use, entertainment preferences, and social interaction patterns, especially among youth. The blending of old and new is visible in how younger generations participate in both traditional festivals and contemporary cultural expressions, including film music, digital arts, and global trends, while continuing to value their heritage. Cultural change is also reflected in **community responses to environmental awareness and ritual practices**, as seen in recent clean-up efforts along the Thamirabarani River to address waste from ritual offerings, indicating a shift toward more sustainable cultural practices. At the same time, community initiatives aimed at promoting Tamil culture, such as cultural centres established in the early 2000s,

suggest an ongoing effort to reinforce regional identity amidst change. Thus, Tirunelveli's cultural evolution illustrates a dynamic interplay between **preservation of traditional Tamil heritage and adaptation to modern influences**, where religious rituals, local dialect and artistic forms sustain continuity while new social attitudes gradually reshape communal and cultural life.

Fairs

Fairs have historically played an important role in the **social, economic, and cultural life of Tirunelveli**, functioning as centres of trade, religious gathering, and social interaction. Traditionally, fairs were organised near temples, rivers, and pilgrimage centres, especially along the **Thamirabarani river basin**, where agricultural communities gathered after harvest seasons. These fairs facilitated the exchange of agricultural produce, cattle, handicrafts, pottery, palm-leaf products, and household goods, thereby supporting rural livelihoods and small traders. Over time, fairs became spaces for cultural expression, where folk performances, storytelling, puppet shows, and traditional games were conducted. Even in the modern period, temple-based fairs during annual festivals continue to attract large crowds, strengthening social bonds across villages and towns. Thus, fairs in Tirunelveli act not only as economic marketplaces but also as cultural institutions preserving traditional lifestyles and community cohesion.

Festivals

Festivals form the **core of Tirunelveli's cultural identity**, reflecting its deep-rooted Tamil traditions and religious pluralism. Major Hindu festivals such as **Pongal, Deepavali, Tamil New Year, and Navaratri** are celebrated with great enthusiasm across urban and rural areas. **Temple festivals**, especially those associated with the **Nellaiappar–Kanthimathi Amman Temple**, occupy a central place in social life, with annual Brahmotsavams, car festivals (Ther Thiruvizha), and processions drawing devotees from across the district. Agricultural festivals like Pongal underline the region's agrarian base and express gratitude to nature, cattle, and water resources. Muslim festivals such as **Ramzan and Bakrid**, and Christian festivals like **Christmas and Easter**, are also observed, highlighting communal harmony. These festivals reinforce moral values, collective participation, and cultural continuity while adapting to modern forms of celebration.

Arts

The artistic traditions of Tirunelveli are a blend of **classical, folk, and devotional art forms**, nurtured over centuries by temples, rulers, and local communities. Classical arts such as **Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam** have flourished under temple patronage, especially during religious festivals and cultural events. Folk arts occupy a prominent place, including **Karagattam, Kummi, Oyilattam, Villupattu, and Therukoothu**, which narrate mythological stories, local legends, and social themes. These art forms serve both as entertainment and as mediums of social education. Traditional crafts such as palm-leaf weaving, pottery, and bronze casting also reflect the artistic skills of local artisans. In the contemporary period, cultural sabhas, schools, and educational institutions contribute to preserving these art forms, ensuring continuity amid changing cultural patterns.

Cult

Folk cults and local deity worship form a **distinct and powerful dimension of Tirunelveli's religious culture**, deeply connected with village life and social structure. Worship of **guardian deities (Kaval Deivangal)** such as **Sudalai Madan, Karuppasamy, Ayyanar, Muneeswaran, and Pechiamman** is widespread, particularly in rural areas. These cults are closely associated with protection, fertility, health, rain, and justice, reflecting the everyday concerns of agrarian communities. Rituals often involve night ceremonies, animal symbolism, folk songs, drumming, and offerings, distinct from Sanskritic temple worship. Folk cults promote collective participation and reinforce caste and kinship ties within villages. Despite modernization, these practices continue to thrive, adapting to new contexts while preserving indigenous belief systems. They represent the resilience of local traditions and the grassroots nature of religious expression in Tirunelveli.

Cultural Practices in the Modern Era

The **cultural practices of Tirunelveli in the modern era** reflect a dynamic process of continuity and change, where age-old Tamil traditions coexist with the influences of education, urbanisation, technology, and globalisation. While Tirunelveli continues to be deeply rooted in its traditional cultural ethos shaped by temple life, agrarian rhythms, and community customs, modern socio-economic transformations have

significantly altered the way culture is practiced, expressed, and transmitted. Traditional religious observances, festivals, and rituals remain central to social life, but their modes of celebration have evolved with the use of digital communication, organised committees, amplified music systems, social media publicity, and modern infrastructure, indicating a shift from purely community-based practices to more organised and institutionalised cultural forms.

In contemporary Tirunelveli, **religious and ritual practices** continue to play a dominant role, especially temple worship, festival processions, and family ceremonies such as marriages and rites of passage. However, these practices have undergone noticeable changes: rituals that were once simple and locally oriented have become more elaborate and time-bound, influenced by urban lifestyles and professional commitments. Modern marriage ceremonies, for instance, combine traditional Tamil rituals with contemporary elements such as banquet halls, professional photography, digital invitations, and cosmopolitan customs, reflecting the blending of tradition with modern aspirations. Despite these changes, religious institutions like temples and churches continue to function as cultural anchors, preserving moral values, social discipline, and collective identity.

Language, dress, and everyday social customs also illustrate cultural transformation in the modern era. While Tamil remains the primary language of communication and cultural expression, the increasing use of English—especially among students, professionals, and urban youth—has influenced speech patterns, education, and cultural outlook. Traditional attire such as veshti, saree, and half-saree continues to be worn during rituals and festivals, but modern clothing styles dominate daily life, particularly in urban areas. This selective retention of tradition demonstrates how cultural practices are adapted rather than abandoned, allowing individuals to navigate both local identity and modern social expectations.

Modern education and media have played a crucial role in reshaping **artistic and recreational practices** in Tirunelveli. Folk arts such as Villupattu, Karagattam, and Therukoothu still survive, but they are now performed mainly during festivals, cultural programmes, and academic events rather than as everyday entertainment. At the same time, cinema, television, digital platforms, and social media have become dominant

cultural forces, influencing music preferences, fashion, social attitudes, and youth culture. Cultural sabhas, colleges, and schools increasingly act as custodians of tradition by organising cultural festivals, competitions, and awareness programmes that reinterpret traditional arts in contemporary formats.

Cultural practices in the modern era also reflect changing **social values and reformist influences**. Issues such as gender equality, education for women, inter-caste interaction, and social mobility have gradually altered traditional norms governing family structure and community relations. While caste and kinship continue to influence social behaviour, modern legal frameworks, education, and urban exposure have encouraged more inclusive and individual-centred cultural attitudes. Women's participation in education, employment, self-help groups, and public life has reshaped domestic and social cultural practices, contributing to gradual but meaningful cultural change.

In recent years, **technology and digital culture** have emerged as powerful agents of cultural transformation in Tirunelveli. Online platforms are now used to livestream temple festivals, conduct religious discourses, promote local arts, and preserve cultural memory. Social media has enabled younger generations to reinterpret tradition, express regional identity, and engage with global cultural trends simultaneously. At the same time, concerns about cultural dilution have led to renewed efforts to document, preserve, and promote indigenous practices through cultural organisations, academic research, and heritage awareness programmes.

The **cultural practices in the modern era in Tirunelveli** represent a complex synthesis of tradition and modernity, where inherited customs continue to provide social meaning while adapting to contemporary realities. Rather than experiencing cultural decline, Tirunelveli demonstrates cultural resilience, with practices evolving in form and expression while retaining their essential values, thereby ensuring continuity of Tamil cultural identity in a rapidly changing modern world.

Challenges

Tirunelveli faces a range of **developmental challenges** that arise from the interaction of its historical legacy, socio-economic structure, and uneven modernisation. One of the foremost challenges is **economic dependency on agriculture**, which remains vulnerable to monsoon variability, declining groundwater levels, and rising input costs.

Although the Thamirabarani River provides irrigation support, issues such as seasonal water scarcity, pollution, and unequal distribution affect agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. This has led to income instability among farmers and agricultural labourers, contributing to rural distress and migration to urban centres.

Another significant challenge is **limited industrial diversification and employment opportunities**, especially for educated youth. While Tirunelveli has agro-based and small-scale industries, the absence of large-scale industrial hubs and high-end service sectors has resulted in underemployment and outward migration to cities like Chennai, Coimbatore, and Bengaluru. This "brain drain" weakens local economic dynamism and places pressure on urban infrastructure in destination cities, while Tirunelveli itself struggles to retain skilled human resources.

Social challenges, particularly caste-based divisions and identity politics, continue to influence social relations and development outcomes. Despite progress in education and social awareness, caste consciousness affects social harmony, access to opportunities, and collective development initiatives. In certain areas, these divisions hinder cooperation, discourage investment, and slow the pace of inclusive growth. Alongside this, issues such as gender inequality, limited participation of women in formal employment, and unequal access to higher education remain areas of concern.

Urbanisation has introduced new **infrastructure and environmental challenges**. Rapid growth of Tirunelveli city and surrounding towns has increased pressure on housing, sanitation, waste management, and transportation systems. Environmental degradation, including river pollution, deforestation in surrounding regions, and improper waste disposal, threatens ecological balance and public health. Climate change impacts, such as rising temperatures and erratic rainfall, further intensify these environmental risks.

Future Prospects

Despite these challenges, Tirunelveli possesses **strong future prospects** rooted in its natural resources, human capital, cultural heritage, and strategic development initiatives. One of the most promising areas is **agricultural modernisation and diversification**. Adoption of micro-irrigation, organic farming, value-added agro-processing, and climate-resilient crops can enhance farm incomes and reduce

vulnerability. Strengthening farmer cooperatives and linking agriculture with food-processing industries can transform the rural economy into a more sustainable and profitable system.

The district also holds considerable potential for **industrial and renewable energy development**. Tirunelveli's favourable geography supports wind and solar energy projects, offering opportunities for green investment, skill development, and employment generation. Expansion of MSMEs, industrial estates, and startup ecosystems—supported by government policies—can stimulate local entrepreneurship and reduce dependence on external employment markets. With proper infrastructure and incentives, Tirunelveli can emerge as a regional hub for agro-based, renewable, and small-scale manufacturing industries.

Education and skill development represent another major pillar of future growth. The presence of universities, engineering colleges, arts and science institutions, ITIs, and vocational centres provides a strong foundation for human capital formation. Aligning educational curricula with industry needs, promoting research and innovation, and encouraging entrepreneurship among youth can convert Tirunelveli's educated population into a powerful engine of economic development.

Tirunelveli's **cultural heritage and tourism potential** also offer significant prospects. Religious tourism centred around historic temples, eco-tourism linked to the Western Ghats, and heritage tourism highlighting the district's rich history can generate employment and promote inclusive growth. Sustainable tourism practices can simultaneously preserve cultural identity and environmental integrity while contributing to local income.

Finally, the future prospects of Tirunelveli depend heavily on **good governance, social cohesion, and sustainable planning**. Strengthening local institutions, promoting social harmony, empowering women and marginalised communities, and adopting environmentally responsible development strategies can ensure balanced and inclusive growth. With coordinated efforts from government, civil society, educational institutions, and local communities, Tirunelveli can overcome its present challenges and move towards a resilient, diversified, and sustainable future.

Environmental Issues in Tirunelveli

Environmental issues constitute one of the most serious development challenges facing **Tirunelveli district** in the contemporary period. The district's ecology is closely linked with the **Thamirabarani River**, which serves as a lifeline for agriculture, drinking water, and cultural practices. However, increasing **urban waste disposal, sewage discharge, ritual pollution, and agricultural runoff** have adversely affected river water quality, posing risks to public health and irrigation sustainability. Groundwater depletion due to excessive borewell usage, especially in semi-arid regions of the district, has further intensified water stress. Deforestation and degradation in the foothills of the Western Ghats, driven by human encroachment and resource extraction, threaten biodiversity and disturb ecological balance. Climate change has added new dimensions to these problems, with erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and prolonged dry spells affecting agriculture and rural livelihoods. Thus, environmental challenges in Tirunelveli highlight the tension between traditional dependence on natural resources and the pressures of modern development.

Urbanization

Urbanization in Tirunelveli has accelerated in recent decades, transforming the social, economic, and physical landscape of the district. The expansion of **Tirunelveli city and surrounding urban centres** has been driven by population growth, rural-to-urban migration, educational institutions, and administrative functions. While urbanization has improved access to education, healthcare, markets, and communication, it has also created serious challenges related to **housing shortages, traffic congestion, inadequate sanitation, solid waste management, and pressure on civic amenities**. Informal settlements and unplanned urban growth have emerged in peri-urban areas, reflecting gaps in urban planning and governance. Traditional community spaces and cultural landscapes have been altered, sometimes leading to the erosion of social cohesion. Moreover, rapid urban expansion has encroached upon agricultural land and water bodies, intensifying environmental stress. Hence, urbanization in Tirunelveli represents both progress and strain, requiring balanced and sustainable planning to ensure inclusive urban development.

Technology and Development

Technology has emerged as a crucial factor in Tirunelveli's development, but its uneven adoption presents significant challenges. While educational institutions, banking, governance, and communication sectors have benefited from digitalisation, **technological access remains unequal**, particularly between urban and rural areas. Many rural communities face limited digital infrastructure, low internet connectivity, and inadequate technical skills, resulting in a digital divide that restricts access to e-governance services, online education, and modern markets. In agriculture, although modern technologies such as micro-irrigation, improved seeds, and mechanisation are available, small and marginal farmers often lack the financial capacity and technical knowledge to adopt them fully. Industrial and employment growth has also been constrained by limited technological upgrading, research facilities, and innovation ecosystems. Furthermore, automation and digitalisation pose challenges to traditional livelihoods and low-skill employment, raising concerns about job displacement. Thus, while technology offers opportunities for economic transformation in Tirunelveli, inadequate infrastructure, skill gaps, and unequal access remain major barriers to development.

Integrated Perspective

Environmental degradation, unplanned urbanization, and uneven technological development are deeply interconnected challenges in Tirunelveli. Urban expansion intensifies environmental stress, while technological limitations hinder effective resource management and sustainable planning. Addressing these issues requires an integrated development approach that combines **environmental conservation, planned urban growth, and inclusive technological advancement**. Strengthening local governance, promoting environmental awareness, investing in digital infrastructure, and ensuring community participation are essential for sustainable regional development.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Name the major industries in Tirunelveli.
2. Mention some minor industries and their significance.
3. How do educational institutions contribute to economic development?
4. Describe the role of industries in regional growth.
5. List important fairs and festivals celebrated today.
6. How are arts and cultural practices maintained in modern Tirunelveli?
7. Explain the impact of urbanization on society.
8. How has technology influenced development in the region?
9. What are the major environmental challenges faced locally?
10. Suggest ways to address future development challenges in Tirunelveli