

Sangam Literature

The Sangam literature is known to be authored by 473 poets, out of which 102 were unknown. These poets arrived from distinct backgrounds; some belonged to royal families, and a few were even farmers. A minimum of 27 of the total poets were females.

Several poems under the Sangam age literature discussed Heroism and displayed great liveliness. They dealt exclusively with matters that were non-religious and lacked references to rich legends.

Classification of Sangam Age Literature

Sangam Literature has been categorized based on the composition, context and interpretation period.

- The literature is split into two types: Akam and Puram.
- Akam poetry relates to the feelings and sentiments of romantic love, sexual connection, and sensuality.
- In contrast, Puram's poetry focuses on exploits and courageous attainments in the setting of war and public life.

Given below are the details of every classification.

Sangam Literature Classification	
Based on Period of Composition	Sangam Literature Details
Patinenmelkanakku	The most ancient Tamil poetry works formed 200 BCE to 100 BCE.
Patinenkilkanakku	Literary work formed between 100 CE and 500 CE, before the era of the Pallavas Group of 18 poetry manuscripts Primary works include Palamoli, Thirukkural, Naladiyar, etc.
Based on the Context and Interpretation	Sangam Literature Details
Akam (Inner)	Abstract conversation on human factors such as sexual connections, love, etc.
Puram (outer)	Experiences by human beings such as customs, ethics, heroism, social life, philanthropy, etc.

Sangam Literature is divided into seven minor genres, called Tinai, which includes Akam and Puram. This genre is based on the terrain or location in which the poetry is created, which possesses the following.

Sangam Age Literature Classification	
Kurinci	Mountainous regions

Mullai	Pastoral woods
Marutam	Riverine agricultural land
Neytal	Coastal regions
Palai	Arid regions

In addition to the geography-based *Tiṇais*, the classifications used for Akam poetry are namely:

- Perunthinai - Unsuitable, big genre
- Kaikkilai - Badly-matched, one-sided
- Ain-tinai - Well-matched, mutual love.

Takanobu Takahashi commented that Puram poetry is straightforward as it utilizes names and locations. The *Tiṇais* about Puram poems were similar to Akam. Types are occasionally based on the activity listed below:

- Kanchi (Disaster)
- Vetchi (Cattle charge)
- Vanchi (Attack, training for war)
- Paataan (Burial hymn and praise)
- Vakai (Victory)
- Pothuviyal
- Tumpai (War)
- Karanthai
- Ulinai (Encirclement).

Three Types of Sangam Literature - Muchchangam

It is known that there are three types of Sangam Literature (Academy of Tamil poets) according to the legends of Tamil. These are recognized in old Southern India, commonly known as Muchchangam. The three types are:

- **First Sangam** - This was held at Madurai, accompanied by legendary scholars and divinities. There is no availability of literary work under this Sangam.
- **Second Sangam** - It was conducted at Kapadapuram, solely Tolkappiyam prevails from Second Sangam.
- **Third Sangam** - It was held at Madurai. This Sangam was a valuable source to rebuild the history of this era and consists of a few Tamil literary works.

Sangam	Time Period	Kingdom	No. of Poets
First	4440 years	Pandiyā	549
Second	3700 years	Pandiyā	1700
Third	1850 years	Pandiyā	

Tolkappiyam - 2nd Literature of Sangam Age

The 2nd Sangam or Tolkappiyam literature work is the most ancient existent work of Tamil till now and was formed by Tolkappiyar. It was found between the 4th - 5th centuries CE.

- It provided details on human psychology, economic, political, and social circumstances during the Sangam period.
- It also explained Tamil grammar.
- Tolkappiyam has significantly less influence on Sanskrit in its literature work.
- The work includes a comprehensive range of 1612 Sutras.
- There are nine chapters in this work that are equally divided into three sections.

Third Tamil Sangam

The literature from the third Sangam period was classified and assembled in the tenth century CE into two classifications based on chronology.

- The principal origins of information for this Sangam age are archaeological sources, foreign accounts, and academic sources.
- The structure of the third Sangam is organized into eight anthologies known as Ettuthokai/Ettuttokoi and ten idylls known as Pattuppattu.

Ettuthokai - Eight Anthologies of Sangam Literature

Ettuthokai, also well-known as the Eight Anthologies, is a poetic work of Tamil that comprises part of the Eighteen Greater Texts anthology series of Sangam Literature. It includes the listed literary works.

Name	Extant poems	Number of poets
Narrinai	400	175
Kuruntokai	402	205
Ainkurunuru	499	5
Patirrupattu	86	8
Paripatal	33	13
Kalittokai	150	5
Akananuru	401	145
Purananuru	398	157

Pattuppattu - The Ten Idylls

It was commonly spelt as Ten Idylls and is a classical poetic Tamil work in Sangam Literature. It contained Puram (public life and battle) poems with 100 and 800 lines. It includes the listed literary works.

Name	Author of Sangam Literature	Poem Lines
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Malaipatukatam	Perunkaucikanar	583
Kurincippattu	Kapilar	261
Perumpanarruppatai	Uruttirankannaiyar	500
Tirumurukarruppatai	Nakkirar	317
Netunalvatai	Nakkirar	188
Pattinappalai	Uruttirankannanar	301
Porunararruppatai	Mutattamakkanniyar	234
Mullaippattu	Napputanar	103
Cirupanarruppatai	Nattattanar	296
Maturaikkanci	Mankuti Marutanar	782

Post-Sangam Period (200 CE - 600 CE)

The era began in 200 CE and lasted till 600 CE. It is believed that Jain writers also authored five minor works. The post-Sangam period witnessed the composition of five big epics in Tamil:

- Jivaka Chintamani
- Valaiyapati
- Kundalakesi
- Manimekalai
- Silappadikaram.

Silappadikaram

Ilango Adigal composed this Sangam. The meaning of term depicts the story of an anklet. The Author is considered stern-prince, and his elder brother was Chera king Senguttuvan.

- The main character is Kannagi, who seeks revenge for her poorly killed husband from the Pandya empire.
- The poem gives a lot of understanding into modern Tamil culture, government, values and social life of the people.

Manimekalai

Chithalai Chathanar, also known as Sattanar, composed this literature, a continuation of Silappadikaram. The principal objective of the Author was to grow Buddhism in South India as the work unites the faith of Buddhism over other theologies of the time.

Significance of Sangam Literature in Ancient South India

Sangam literature or poetry focused on individuals and culture. It is virtually only non-religious except for reference to numerous gods. The literature provided wisdom into diverse aspects of old Tamil society, individuals, and religious and non-religious beliefs.

- It constitutes evidence of Sanskrit loan words, indicating continuing academic and linguistic cooperation between ancient Tamil Nadu and other regions of the subcontinent of India.
- The Sangam literature offered recorded evidence of native literary evolution in Southern India, similar to Sanskrit literature and Tamil's classical status.
- The existing mythological Sangams certify a group of scholars who influenced the life of old Tamil Nadu based on literacy, intellectual, cultural and linguistic aspects.

List of Sangam Literature Books

The Sangam books collection contains 2381 poems in Tamil written by 473 poets, out of which many poets are still unidentified. Mentioned are some of the best books for Sangam Literature. These are available online on popular websites.

Sangam Literature Books	Author
The Interior Landscape, Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology	A.K. Ramanujam
Tamil Heroic Poetry	K. Kailasapathy
Tamil Love Poetry – The Five Hundred Short Poems of Ainkurunuru (Translation of all the 500 poems)	Martha Ann Selby
The Four Hundred Songs of War and Wisdom	George L. Hart and Hank Heifetz
Tholkappiyam	S. Ilakkuvanar
Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions of the Sangam Age	Iravatham Mahadevan
The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India	Kamil Zvelebil
Poets of the Tamil Anthologies – Ancient Poems of Love and War	George L. Hart
Landscape and Poetry – A study of nature in Classical Tamil Poetry	Xavier Thani Nayagam
The Poems of Ancient Tamil – Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts	George L. Hart

Decline of Sangam Literature

The decline of the Sangam age began at the end of the 3rd century AD. The Kalabhras inhabited the Tamil homeland after the Post-Sangam era between the span of 300 AD to 600 AD. The period witnessed was known as a dark side or interregnum by the ancient chroniclers.