

Ilango Adigal's

The Tale of an Anklet

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Writer's Biography:

- ▶ Ilango Adigal was a Jain monk, a Chera prince, and a poet
- ▶ He is one of the greatest poets from Cheranadu (now Kerala)
- ▶ He was the brother of a famous Chera king named Ceñkuttuvan
- ▶ He is traditionally credited as the author of *Silappatikaram*, one of the five great epics of Tamil literature

The story of Silappatikaram

- ▶ *Cilappatikaram* is set in a flourishing seaport city of the early Chola kingdom
- ▶ Kannaki and Kovalan are a newly married couple, in love, and living in bliss
- ▶ Over time, Kovalan meets Matavi (Madhavi) – a courtesan
- ▶ He falls for her, leaves Kannaki and moves in with Matavi
- ▶ Finally, with much encounter, he returns to Kannaki and succumbs his death
- ▶ Gradually, Kovalan dies and his wife controls the entire family
- ▶ In the end, Kannaki also dies and her idol is implanted as a model figure for worshipping by the whole society

Major Characters in *Silappatikaram*

Kannaki

Kannaki is a legendary Tamil woman who forms the central character of the Tamil epic *Silappatikaram*. Kannaki was the daughter of the merchant and ship captain Manayakan from Puhar. She marries the son of Macattuvan, Kovalan, whose family were sea traders. The story of *Silappatikaram* relates how Kannaki took revenge on the Pandya King of Maturai, who had wrongfully put her husband Kovalan to death. She cursed the entire town of Maturai. The capital city of Pandyas was set ablaze resulting in huge losses.

Kovalan

Kovalan was married to Kannaki. But later he fell in love with Madhavi when he saw her at her dancing debut in the court of the Chola King Karikalan. Kovalan left Kannaki and starts living with Madhavi. At last, penniless, Kovalan realised his mistake and returned to his wife Kannaki. Kovalan hoped to recoup his fortunes by trade in Madurai, by selling the precious anklet of Kannaki. When Kovalan tried to sell the anklet, it was mistaken for a stolen anklet of the queen. Kovalan was accused of having stolen the anklet and was immediately beheaded by the king without trial.

Madhavi

Madhavi is an important character in the Silappatikaram, one of the epics in Tamil literature. Madhavi was born in a lineage of courtesans, and was an accomplished dancer. Kovalan, who was married to Kannaki, fell in love with Madhavi and started living with her. She lived with Kovalan happily for some time. During that period, Madhavi's mother stole all the wealth of Kannaki the wife of Kovalan by using Kovalan's ring without the knowledge of Madhavi and Kovalan. After 3 years, Kovalan learned the truth about the mother's crime. He grew angry with Madhavi and again returned to Kannaki. After Kovalan left her, Madhavi came to know of her mother's theft and showed her moral worth by returning all the wealth of Kovalan to his father. Upon learning the tragic turn of events, Madhavi shaved her hair and became a Buddhist nun.

Themes in Silappatikaram

- ▶ Love and Rejection
- ▶ Happiness and Pain
- ▶ Good and Evil
- ▶ Virginity and Innocence
- ▶ Karma and Dharma

Thank You