

# Class 11

## Reading Comprehension

Text type: Factual passage

Task types in strict accordance with the CBSE examination scheme

### Naturer's Wrath

When high tidal waves hit the Indian coastline the last time before 26 December 2004, they were not called “tsunami” waves as they are now known. Ancient scriptures and literature have evidence that waves from the Indian Ocean did hit the Nagapattinam coast in 900 AD and destroyed a monastery.

According to the literature, available in the library of the Thondaiman kingdom in Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu, it was during the reign of Raja Raja Chola that waves had washed away the monastery and several temples and killed hundreds of people. There is evidence of this even in Kalki Krishnamurthy’s novel *Ponniyin Selvan—the Pinnacle of Sacrifice*.

In the chapter *The Sea Rises*, the author explains how the sea had risen so high that it seemed to be touching the mass of dark clouds suspended in the sky. The black mountain of water, far from being stationary, was moving steadily forward. The sea inundated warehouses and sheds and began to flow into the streets. Ships and boats seemed suspended in mid-air, precariously poised on the water peaks. The book also describes how the gushing waters swallowed an elephant.

According to Vijay Kumar Thondaiman, brother of the Thondaiman prince, the library of the royal family of Pudukottai had a collection of 12,000 books dating back to the 17th century. These books talk about the Buddhist monastery Raja Raja Chola went to conquer in Sri Lanka and how he, instead, became a devotee of Buddha himself and allowed the Buddhists to build a temple in Nagapattinam. It was around that time that the monastery was totally washed away.

More about such havoc is described in the great epic *Sillapathikaram*, written in Tamil 2,000 years ago by Elango Adigal, a Jain monk. He has recorded how Cauvery Poompatinam, now known as Poompuhar, was destroyed and even today we find the ruins excavated by the *Archaeological Survey of India* (ASI). It talks about the sea waves that came and destroyed the place. The waters came inland and evidence of destruction of temples is still there. A whole township and its people were forced to shift to drier lands. They are now the Chettairs, a leading business community of Tamil Nadu, who are supposed to have been from the *Sangam* age.

Another historic temple-town Mahabalipuram also faced the fury of the sea and in 1200 AD, a portion of the famous temple was washed away. Many other monuments were also lost. The *Pallava* dynasty, to which belonged Narasimha Pallava and his father Mahendra Varman, had built the Mahabalipuram temple.

*The Wonder that was India* by A L Basham speaks of the *Chola*, *Pallava* and *Pandya* dynasties and also describes Mahabalipuram’s destruction by sea waves. *The History of South India* by K A Neelakanta Shastry talks about changes in the level of the Coromandal coast and mentions how Korkai and Kayal on the Tirunelveli coast are now buried under dunes.

#### 1. Answer these questions.

6 marks

- a. Nagapattinam faced the wrath of nature twice. When were they?

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- b. Kalki Krishnamurthy's novel *Ponniyin Selvan—the Pinnacle of Sacrifice* describes the havoc wrecked by the waves in 900 AD. Mention four terrifying facts that he mentions.

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- c. When was the Buddhist monastery built in Nagapattinam?

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- d. How was Poempuhar destroyed? What is the evidence of it having been destroyed by water?

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- e. Where did the people of Poempuhar shift for safety?

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- f. When was the temple in Mahabalipuram built? What was its fate?

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**2. Find words phrases from the passage which mean the same as:**

2 marks

- a. summit .....  
b. unearth .....  
c. flooded .....  
d. destruction .....