

# NANDI-KKALAMBAGAM.<sup>1</sup>

[<sup>1</sup> This article originally appeared as No 1 of “Tamil Historical Texts” in the “Indian Antiquary”, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the authors – *Ed. L.T.*]

A *kalambagam* is a variety of poetic composition in Tamil in which the hero is praised in a variety of metres on a number of *turais* or topics, and should consist of 100, 95, 90, 70, 50, or 30 verses according as it is in praise of a deity, a saint, a king, a minister, a merchant or a *velalan*. The verses should run in antadi fashion, i.e., the last word of each verse should begin the succeeding one.<sup>2</sup> [<sup>2</sup> See the *Panniru-pattiyal* under the head *kalambagam*.] The most famous compositions of this kind are *Tiruvavangam*=*kkalambagam* of Pillai= p Perumal = ayyangar and the *Alagar-kalambagam* by an unknown author.

The *Nandi=kkalambagam* is a poem in praise of a king called Nandi and contains strangely enough 110 verses, having ten verses more than even the highest number which is prescribed for a deity by the *Panniru-pattiyal*. It is commonly ascribed to a younger brother of the hero of the poem, though from the way in which the author speaks of himself this does not appear to be the truth. In the final verse of the poem in describing the hero's death, the poet feelingly says:

“Your countenance has gone to the moon in the heavens,  
Your fame has entered the dark ocean,  
Your valor has passed to the tiger in the wilds,  
Your fingers have attained the *kalpaka* tree,  
She of the honeyed lotus flower (Lakshmi) has joined *Hari*,  
The ruddy fire has claimed your body,  
O! Nandi, the all-bountiful! Where shall I and my poverty find refuge?”<sup>3</sup>

[<sup>3</sup> This verse follows the idea of the hymn in the funeral rites portion (i.e., the so-called *Pitri-medha-pracna* – ed. L.T) of the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, in which the several elements are asked to take unto themselves their own contribution to the physical body of the dead man. The king's countenance is said to have gone to the moon because during his lifetime his face rivaled the moon in its brightness, and after his death it is left as the sole heir to all the brightness, and beauty which was shared by them both. His fame likewise was vast and unfathomable as the ocean, his valor was like the tiger's his fingers would yield every request and wish of the suppliant, like the *kalpaka* tree. Lakshmi is said to have re-joined *Hari*, because during the king's lifetime the Goddess of Fortune was undivided from him. (Vide *Prapathka* 6, *Anuvaka* 1, section 4.)]

The impression produced by the verse is also corroborated by the general tenor of the whole work. The hero, Nandi, is described in this work as bring a Pallava king:- *Pallavar kon Nandi* – verse 2 of Introduction, verse 15, 35, 40, 70, etc., of the poem. (The Pallava king Nandi) *Pallavar tonral* – v. I (born of the Pallava dynasty). *Pallavar kolari* – v. 59 (a lion among the Pallavas). *Pallavan* – vv. 65, 83. *Kadavan* – v. 29.

In verse 30 the king is said to have belonged to the race of the moon:- *Chandra-kula prakasan* (the light of the Chandra = kula or the Lunar Race).

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His capitals appear to have been Kanchi, modern Conjeevaram – vv. 8, 10, 22, 29 and 80; Mallai,<sup>4</sup> [<sup>4</sup> In vv. 54 and 83, the place is called Kadan-Mallai, which is the name by which it is known to the Vaishnava *Alvar Tirumangai* (see the two decades on *Kadan-Mallai-ttalaayanam*, and the decades on *Tiruvai* and *Tirumaraiyur*). The *Alvar* describes it as a flourishing sea=port (*Tiruneduntandagam*, verse 9). The place was also praised by *Bhutattalvar* in verse 70 of his *Iyarpa*.] ‘the modern Mahabalipuram, situated in the Chingleput District – vv. 1, 3, 46, 54, 72 and 83; and Mayilai, or Mailappur, the Modern Mailapur, a suburb of Madras – vv. 44, 51, 55 and 69.

His rule extended over (1) the Tondainadu – vv. 4, 5 and 39; (2) the country watered by the Kaveri:- *Kaviri-vala-nadan* – vv. 11, 17, 27, 28, and 44. *Ponni nannattu mannan* – (king of the prosperous country watered by the Ponni, i.e., the Kaveri). *Sonadan* – (owner of the Chola country) v. 74. (3) Over the Chera country:- *Seranadan* –v. 74. (4) Over the Kongu country:- *Konga!* – v. 41. (5) Over the Alagai Nadu:- *Alagai nadan* – v. 39. (6) Over the western regions:- *Kudakk-udai vendan* – v. 65.

In verse 28, he is described as “*Kaviri vala nadan Kumari=kkongan Gangai-manalan kurai, kalal vira = Nandi*” – “the valiant Nandi, lord of the prosperous country watered by the Kaveri, of the sea-coast round Kumari (the Cape Comorin) and the spouse of the Ganges.”

He is said to have held sway over the Bana kings:- “*Vada Vengada-nadudai mannan piran*” – v. 55. “Lord over the kings of the northern Venkata (hills).” See also vv. 33 and 67, where he is described as *vada Vengadattan* (lord of the northern Venkata hills).

Nandi is said to have won battles at the following places:- (1) *Tellaru* – vv. 28, 33, 38, 49, 52, 53, 71, 75, 79, 80, 85, 86, and 96. (2) *Kurukodu* – vv. 2, 35, and 84. (3) *Palaiyaru* – v. 31. (4) *Vellaru* – v. 23. (5) *Nallaru* – v. 61.

In verse 27, the Chera, Chola, Pandya kings of the northern regions are said to have paid tribute to him. He had fought with the Cheras and the Cholas (vv. 42 and 81), and also with the Pandyas (vv. 4 and 81).

In verse 81 he is described as having thwarted the intentions of his younger brothers, thus:-

“*Kula virar=agam-aluat- tambiyar-ennam-ellam paludaga venra talai mana virattuvan Sembayar Tennar Serar-edir vandu mayach-cheruvenra &c. &c.*”

“The great hero who conquered so as to destroy the hereditary warriors [who perhaps helped his younger brothers] and so as to defeat the intentions of his younger brothers; and who killed the Sembayar (the Chola), the Tennavar (the Pandya) and the Cherar who opposed him in battle.” From this we can infer that the phrase “hereditary warriors” may refer to the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras, who might have helped the younger brothers of Nandi against himself.

Nandi seems to have been a patron of Tamil Literature – *paindamilaiy-ayginara Nandi* (the king Nandi who studies classic Tamil) –v. 104. *Tamil Nandi* – v. 107.

He is called by several surnames in the poem:- (1) *Avani Naranan* – verse 4 of the Introduction, vv. 18, 22, 64, and 66 of the Text. (2) *Videl-vidugu* – vv. 11, 13 and 74. (3) *Ukkiramakopan*<sup>1</sup> [<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Ugra-kopan (a man of fierce hunger).]– vv. 20 and 55. (4) *Kuvalaya-marttandan* – v. 29. (5) *Maludayan* – v. 48. (6) *Manodayan* – v. 63. (7) *Varatungan* – v. 89. (8) *Manabharan* – v. 109. (9) *Nandi=chchiraman* – v. 106 (10) *Desa-bandari* – v. 96.

Having now summarized all the information of any historical interest in the poem, we shall proceed to discuss them in the light of inscriptions. The king, who is the hero of this poem, cannot be NANDIVARMAN-PALLAVAMALLA who was opposed by the Dramilas in about 760 A.D., since of the numerous battles which he and his general UDAYACHANDRA are said to have fought<sup>2</sup> [<sup>2</sup> S.I.I., Vol. II., pp. 363-364.] not one of those given in this poem are mentioned. We are therefore compelled to conclude that he must be the same person as the Nandi.<sup>3</sup> [<sup>3</sup> Ep. Ind., Vol IV., p. 181.] We have inscriptions of NANDIPPOTTARASAR, who fought the battle of Tellaru, at Conjeevaram<sup>4</sup> [<sup>4</sup> No. 12 of the Government Epigraphist's Collection for 1895] in the Chingleput District, at Sendalai,<sup>5</sup> [<sup>5</sup> No. 11 of the same for 1899.] Koviladi<sup>6</sup> [<sup>6</sup> No. 283 of the same for 1901.] and Tillaisthanam<sup>7</sup> [<sup>7</sup> No. 52 of the same for 1895.] in the Tanjore District, and at Tiruvadi<sup>8</sup> [<sup>8</sup> No. 52. Of the same for 1895.] in the South Arcot District. We know from the poem that one of his surnames was Avani Naranan. In one inscription to Nandivarman, found in the Muktisvara temple at Kaverippakkam,<sup>9</sup> [<sup>9</sup> No. 406 of the same for 1905.] the place is named as Kavadiappakkam, while in the inscriptions of Nripatungavarman and the Chola kings who came after him the place is called Kavadiappakkam *alias* AVANI-NARAYANA-CHATURVEDIMANGALAM.<sup>10</sup> [<sup>10</sup> Cf. Inscriptions Nos. 391, 394 and 395 of the same for 1905.] The inscriptions thus corroborate our poem in these particulars. That “Nandippottarasar who was victorious at Tellaru” should be the same person as Ko-visaiya-Nandivikramavarman is evident from the fact that KADUVETTI-TAMILA= pPERARAIYAN, who is mentioned as an officer of the one<sup>11</sup> [<sup>11</sup> No. 12 of the same for 1895.] is also mentioned as an officer of the other.<sup>12</sup> [<sup>12</sup> No. 304 of the same for 1897.] The Bahur plates say that Nandivarman was the son of Dantivarman. This Dantivarman was a contemporary of the Rashtrakuta Govinda III. (A. D. 782-814). Therefore the Nandi of our poem must have belonged to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century A. D. We do not propose in this paper to enter into the question of the necessity of postulating a Ganga-Pallava dynasty, which has been dealt with by one of us already in the Madras Christian College magazine<sup>13</sup> [<sup>13</sup> *Christian College Magazine* for April, 1907.] and which will be dealt with again in detail in a forthcoming paper in the *Epigraphia Indica*.

In the *Bharata-venba* of PERUMDEVANAR mention is made of a king who was victorious at Tellaru. If this reference is to “Nandippottarasar who was victorious at Tellaru,” we can fairly infer that Perundevanar was a contemporary of his.

As to the country that he ruled over, we find inscriptions of his, as already pointed out, in the Chola, and the Tondai-nadus, but we have not as yet succeeded in getting any from the Chera and Kongu countries. We cannot say what particular region is denoted by Alagainadu, but there is a village called Alagapuri in the Pudukkottai State. That he was a Suzerain of the Banas who ruled over the *Vada Vengada-nadu*, is proved by a number of his inscriptions in the Vengada-nadu, which is said therein to belong to the Bana country. Nandi's predecessor, Dantivarman, is mentioned as the overlord of the Bana king

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VIJAYADITYA MAVALI VANARAYA, <sup>14</sup> [<sup>14</sup> No. 226 of the Government Epigraphist's Collection for the year 1903.] and his successor, Nripatunga, as overlord of VANA VIJADHARA. <sup>15</sup> [<sup>15</sup> No. 228 of the same for the year 1903.] Nandippottarasar himself in an inscription belonging to the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign is mentioned as suzerain over VIKRAMADITYA MAVALI VANARAYA. <sup>16</sup> [<sup>16</sup> No. 229 of the same for the year 1903.]

The poem unfortunately leaves us entirely in the dark as to the person or persons against whom he fought the several battles mentioned. The following passage in verse 64:- “*Tellarru= attanre pon Vaigai muninda Nandi*” (Nandi who fought on the banks of the golden Vaigai (river) on the same day as at Tellaru) leads us to suspect that about the time of the battle at Tellaru, the king's forces must have fought another battle on the banks of the Vaigai's river in the Madura District.

Of the king's surnames, we have already dealt with Avani-Naranan. Videl-vidugu occurs in inscriptions found at Tiruvallam, Tiruppalatturai, Conjeevaram, &c. The meaning of this term is not clear. But we meet with similar names such as Marpidugu,” Pagappidugu<sup>18</sup> [<sup>18</sup> S.I.I. Vol. II., p. 341. See also the footnote 5 on the same page.] for Dantivarman and Mahendravarman respectively. The last part of the surname means the thunderbolt in the Kannada and Telugu languages. The other surnames given in the poem are not met with in inscriptions.

The following places are mentioned in the poem as the scenes of the king's battles, viz., Tellaru, Nallaru, Palaiyaru, Kurugodu and Vellaru. Of these Tellaru is a village in the Wandiwash Taluk of the North Arcot District; Nallaru is famous for its Saiva temple of Darbharanyaesvara, and is situated in the French Settlement of Karaikkal in the Tanjore District; Palaiyaru is perhaps the same as Palaiyarai, a village about three miles to the south of Kumbhakonam, also in the Tanjore District. There are two places called Kurugodu, one in the Bellary Taluk of the Bellary District and another in the Kolar District of the Mysore Province. The former is called simply Kurugode, while the latter is called Dodda Kurugode. In the first mentioned are several ruins, consisting of beautiful temples of the Chalukya style of architecture, a fine fort on a hill, and it was one of the strongholds of Tippu Sultan. The latter is believed to be an old capital of the Gangas. Vellaru is the name of two rivers, one of which runs between the South Arcot and the Trichinopoly Districts, while the other passes through the Pudukkottai State. Which of these two rivers is meant by the poem we are not able to judge from the reference.

The Bahur plates assert that Dantivarman, the father, and Nripatungavarman, the son of Nandivarman, were devout worshippers of the lotus feet of Vishnu. The *Kalambagam* describes Nandi as “*Sivanai muludu= maravada chintaiyan.*” Verse 97 (one whose mind never forgot Siva).

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