

PANDYAN RULERS AND POETS: THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE IN SANGAM AGE OF TAMILNADU

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The earliest historical kings of the Pandyan country are those mentioned in the early Tamil works that have come down to us in the form of the collections known as the Sangam works. The Sangam works are generally understood to comprise the two long poems like the Silappadikaram and the Manimekalai. The anthologies of occasional verses and short poems by different poets brought together in the well known collections. The normal extent of the Pandyan kingdom in Sangam age corresponded to the Tirunelveli, Ramnadu and Madurai. Pandyan kings and princes ruled them upto near tenth century A.D. About twenty names of Pandyan rulers and princes can be gathered from Sangam works.

Tenkasi Pandyas

Tenkasi Pandyas were also great patrons of Literature. The beautiful verses in chaste Tamil engraved on the walls of the temple. The works of royal poets Athiviraraman and Vararungaraman form a part of the rich legacy left by them.¹ Tenkasi pandyas not only a great ruler they are a great Tamil poets. Their contributions were important one to the Tamil literature during the 15th and 16th century.² Athivirarama Pandya's Naidatham was based broadly on the Sanskrit Harsha's Nidatham. Paditrruppattanthati was based broadly on the Sanskrit Skandapurana. Varatungarama Pandya, a Pandya king of the period was a litterateur of merit and wrote Paditrruppattanthati.³ He also translated into Tamil the Erotic known as *kokkoha* from Sanskrit. And many other Tamil works was written by Tenkasi Pandya kings and Tamil poets.

Athivirarama Pandya

Athivirarama Pandya was a great litterateur. He wrote many books and translated the 'Naidatham' (or) Nala's story from Sanskrit to Tamil.⁴ He written also Koormapuranam, Kasi kandam, Vayusankithai, Lingapuram, etc. He was also well versed in Sanskrit. He also wrote for children teaching morals.⁵ 'Narunthogai alias Vetri Verkai' is a code of moral written by this king especially to be taught to children. He called 'Vallabadevan, Pillai pandian, Kulasekharan, Gunasekara vazhuthi, Tamil valartha Thennavan'.⁶

Naidatham

Naidatham was one of the five epics in Sanskrit. It was written by Harsha in Sanskrit language. Nidatham situated in the banks of river Bioshni. Nidatham was ruled by Nidatham, his real name Nalan son of Veerasenan.⁷ Tenkasi king Athivirarama Pandya translated the 'Naidatham' (or) Nala's story from Sanskrit to Tamil. Naidatham divided into 28 chapters (Padalam) and 1173 songs. Ten songs Palm leaf script was much damaged, so 1163 songs are available in Chennai Tamil Suvadi library. Palm leaf script length thirty seven centimeters and width three centimeters, which wrote in two sides with six lines each page.⁸ Naidatham is one of the great grammatical book in Tamil, so the new proverb rise in "Naidatham Pulavaruku Ovudatham' (Naidatham is the medicine for the Poets).

Kasi Kaandam

Kasi kaandam was written by Athivirarama pandya. This work was based broadly on the Sanskrit Skandapurana's Fourth Kaandam (chapter) Kasi kaandam. Kasi kaandam contains 2526 songs. Forty one chapters from Poorva kaandam with 1209 songs, fifty nine chapters from Uthra kaandam with 1317 songs.⁹

Koorma Puranam

Koorma puranam was written by Athivirarama Pandya. Koorma Puranam contains two Kaandams which Poorva kaandam and Uthira kaandam. Forty eight chapters (Aththiyayam) from Poorva kaandam with 2729 songs. Forty seven chapters from Uthira kaandam with 3717 songs in beautiful Tamil.¹⁰

Mahapuranam

Mahapuranam wrote about Masi Mahamagam. Mahapuranam was based broadly on the Sanskrit Padmapuranam. Mahapuranam contains twenty eight chapters (Sarukkam) and 1424 songs (Seiyul). This poem change into book format and published in 1904.¹¹

Narunthogai (Vetri Verkai)

Athivirarama Pandya wrote for children teaching morals. 'Narunthogai alias Vetri Verkai' is a code of moral written by this king especially to be taught to children. Nanrathogai contains Eighty two proverbs (Neethimozhigal) with hundred and twenty lines. In early period, Vetri Verkai was one of the Tamil School syllabus subject in Tamilnadu.¹²

Varagunarama Pandyan

Varagunarama Pandyan was the second son of Parakrama Kulasekharan. A Tenkasi inscription mentions that he was crowned in 1588 A.D. He ruled the portion in and around Karivalamvanthanallur in Tirunelveli. He was also a poet. He wrote verses of Shiva, the presiding deity of Karivalamvanthanallur and the collection is known as *Pathitru pathu Anthathi*, *Kalithurai Anthathi* and *Venba Anthathi*. He wrote also *Pramothra kaandam*, *Sivakavasam* and *Kokkokam*.¹³

Tirukaruvai Pathitruvalu Anthathi

Tirukaruvai Pathitruvalu Anthathi verses wrote about Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of Karivalamvanthanallur. Anthathi means, end of the poem's line Eluthu (word), Asai, Seer, Adi (Grammar) from the first poem, if came to the first of Second poem, called as *Anthathi*. Pathitruvalu means, hundred songs. This poem here same to Tiruvasagam, so Tirukaruvai pathitruvalu Anthathi otherwise called as "*Kutti Tiruvasagam*. Kalithurai Anthathi and Venba Anthathi each hundred songs.¹⁴ Pramothra Kaandam

Pramothra Kaandam was written by Varadungarama Pandya. It was third chapter of Skandapuranam. It translated from Sanskrit to Tamil. Pramothra Kaandam contains twenty two sub-chapters with 1323 songs. Sivakavasam was one of the parts of Pramothra Kaandam.¹⁵

Kokkokam

Kokkokam was written by Varadungarama Pandya which translated from Sanskrit to Tamil. It was sexual work. Kokkokam contains six chapters with three hundred and thirty one songs with two hundred and ten pages.¹⁶

Varagunarama Pandya

Varagunaraman ascended the throne in 1615-1616 A.D. He was said to be the brother of Adhivarama Pandya. The pandyas, as a ruling clan, preserved the Tamil culture and literature, right from the 17th century A.D. Varagunarama Pandya wrote Linga Puranam, Vayusangithai and Ambigai malai.¹⁷

Linga Puranam

Linga Puranam was Varagunarama Pandya's first work. Linga puranam contains two kaandams there are poorva kaandam and Uthira kaandam. Poorva kaandam contains hundred and eight chapters with 1955 songs. Uthira kaandam contains forty five chapters with five hundred and fifty one songs.¹⁸

Vayusangithai

Shiva Puranam contains were twelve sangithai, Vayusangithai was the last chapter of Shiva Puranam. Varagunarama Pandya was translated the Vayusangithai. This work divided into two kaandams which are Poorvakaandam and Uthirakaandam. Poorva kaandam contains thirty chapters with five hundred and thirty seven songs. Uthirakaandam contains thirty chapters with seven hundred and ninety seven songs.¹⁹

Ambigai Malai

Ambigai Malai was a praise work. Thirty kattalai kalithurai songs was praise to the Madurai Meenakchi. Every song finished the word 'Madurapuri Ambigaye' Ambigai Malai contains thirty songs.²⁰

Kasikalian

Kasikalian was a ministry poet of Varathungarama Pandya. He sung “*Pancharathnamalai*”. This song found in the inscriptions of Tenkasi Kasiviswanathar temple. There are Kudaimangalam, Vaanmangalam and Nanmangalam. This inscription found on the northern wall of the Rajagopura entrance. Pancharathnamalai sung about coronation of Varathungan and Virapandyan.²¹

Trikooda Rasappa Kavirayar

Trikooda Rasappa Kavirayar was born in Melegaram near Tenkasi. He was a great Tamil Pulavar in 17th century A.D. He loved Tirucourtallanathar and Tirucourtallanathar temple. So he sung about TiruCourtallam.²²

Large number of poem was sung by him, there are:²³

1. Tiru Courtalla Thalapuram,
2. Tiru Courtalla Kuravanji,
3. Tiru Courtalla Malai,
4. Tiru Courtalla Sileadai Venba,
5. Tiru Courtalla Yamaga Anthathi,
6. Tiru Courtallanathar Ula,
7. Tiru Courtalla Oodal,
8. Tiru Courtalla Paramporul Malai,
9. Tiru Courtalla Covai,
10. Tiru Courtalla Kuzhalvaimozhi Malai,
11. Tiru Courtalla Komala Malai,
12. Tiru Courtalla Venba Anthathi,
13. Tiru Courtalla Pillai Tamil and
14. Tiru Courtalla Nannagar Venba.

In 1716, Nayak ruler Muthuvijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak request to Trikooda Rasappa Kavirayar to sung TiruCourtalla Kuravanji. So Muthuvijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayak gave a copper plate with special title “Tiru Courtallanathar Kovil Viththuvan and Sannathi Pirapanda Viththuvan” and donated the land. This land called ‘*Kuravanji Medu*’.²⁴ One of the most important of the poem was the Tiru Courtalla Kuravanji by Trikooda Rasappa Kavirayar. Chokkampatti Zamin Chinnananja Thevar doated Nanjai land to Trikooda Rasappa Kavirayar which Vadakku Thottam at Melagaram, Nanthavana thottam, Keelthottam, Nannagaram, Mathalaivilai, Pulianthoppu, Mathakadi Nanthavana thottam and Courtallaperi. Zamin Chinnananja Thevar gifted the home to Trikooda Rasappa Kavirayar at Melagaram.²⁵

The Sangam literatures were give fairly much information on political changes in ancient Tamilagam. The foregoing research reveals the former fallen greatness of Sangam Tamils. The Sangam age is considered to be the golden age in the history of Tamils. The

Sangam literature shed light on the political, social and economic life of ancient Tamils. The Pandya rulers and poets were gave great contribution to the development of literature during the Sangam Age. The vast majority of the inhabitants led a tribal life yet sections of the people made considerable progress in their cultural pursuits. Tribalism existed together with urbanity and so also did villages and towns and minor chieftains and major powers.

End Notes

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