

PLACE NAMES FROM
KAVERIPAKKAM
INSCRIPTIONS

Dr. V. N. SRINIVASA DESIKAN

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KĀVĒRIPĀKKAM is about 30 kilometres from Kāñchīpuram. This is an ancient site and its historicity can be dated back to the Pallava period. The village has been referred to as Kāvēripākkam, Kāvādipākkam, Kāvidipākkam, Amaninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam, Avāninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam, Vijayagaṇḍagōpāla-chaturvēdimaṅgalam and Vikramachōḷa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam in the inscriptions. Kāvēripauk or Cauverypauk was the name prevalent in the East India Company days. The original name was Kāvēripākkam and it was given as a *brahmadēya*, after which the village came to be known as Avāninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam. It is known from the thirteenth year inscription of Nandivarman III that this village was granted as a *brahmadēya* and named after one of his titles *Avāninārāyaṇa*.¹ Another inscription dated in the fifteenth year of Nṛipatuṅga mentions Kāvēripākkam *alias* Amaninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam.² Two other inscriptions of this king refer to the village as *Kāvidipākkam āgiya Avāninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam*.³ In an epigraph of Pallava Kampavarman, the same epithet is used.⁴

During the Chōḷa times also, the village Kāvēripākkam was known as Avāninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam.⁵ In the inscriptions from Śīrugarumbūr and Tirupāṅkaḍal, references to the name Kāvēripākkam as Avāninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam are available and it is also known by another name Amaninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam.⁶ But in the inscription of Telugu Chōḍas, the village came to be known as Vijayagaṇḍagōpāla-chaturvēdimaṅgalam,⁷ probably after the name of the chief Vijayagaṇḍagōpālādēva. In the Vijayanagara inscriptions, the village is referred to as Vikramachōḷa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam.⁸

From a study of these inscriptions from Kāvēripākkam,

Tirupāṅkaḍal and Śirukarumbūr, it can be seen that the founder of the chaturvēdimaṅgalam was Pallava Nandivarman by whose title it came to be called Avaniṅārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam. This name seems to have survived even during the early Chōḷa days as evident from an inscription of Parāntaka's period. But later on, probably during the time of Vikramachōḷa (c. 1118-35 A.D.) Kāvēripākkam was re-named as Vikramachōḷa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam as the early name Avaniṅārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam does not occur in later inscriptions. In the middle of 13th century when the Chōḷa authority waned due to the chieftains like the Telugu Chōḍas started asserting their independence, Kāvēripākkam was again re-named as Vijaya-gaṇḍagōpāla-chaturvēdimaṅgalam. However, during the Vijayanagara times, the place is mentioned by a name of Chōḷa affiliation as Vikramachōḷa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam and not as Vijaya-gaṇḍagōpāla-chaturvēdimaṅgalam. At the same time, the name Kāvidipākkam was also current.

The name Kāvēripākkam must have been derived from Kāvīdi + pākkam i.e., the settlement of mercantile community. There are numerous references in Tamil literature like *Śilappadikāram Maduraiḱkāñchi*¹⁰ *Puṛaṇāñṇūru*¹¹ and *Narriṇai*¹² to the terms *Kāvīdi-makkaḷ* and *Kāvīdi*. The term *Kāvīdi* would mean 'an important tradesman' and also 'a member of the mercantile corporation'. In this connection the meaning of the word *kāvīdi* as explained in *Tolkāppiyam* and *Chūḍāmaṇi-Nighaṇṭu* may be relevant here. According to *Tolkāppiyam*, *kāvīdi* is an ancient title bestowed on Veḷḷāḷas by Pāṇḍya kings. According to *Divākaram*, *kāvīdi*¹³ is referred to as minister, while in *Chūḍāmaṇi-Nighaṇṭu*¹⁴ the term *kāvīdi* denotes the accountant caste or Collector of revenues. It is also interesting to note that the Bāṇas who held control over this region during the Pallava period, could have named this village, as Kāvidipākkam, probably after one of the Bāṇa generals, Kāvīdi.

Thus, it is clear that the term Kāvīdi was an important functionary in the ancient times. In the work *Śilappadikāram*, he is clubbed with the other important functionaries.¹⁵ The *Maduraiḱkāñchi* refers to the qualifications of *kāvīdimakkaḷ*. (*kāvīdi* nobles) as those who could discern between good and evil with an enquiring mind and can control evil with love and justice, eliminate evil thus being men famed for their moral equity and high rectitude.¹⁶

Regarding the suffix *pākkam* as seen from the early Tamil context, it may be pointed out that this would mean as in Maruvūr-pākkam of Kāvūripaṭṭiṇam, a suburban area adjoining a city or port inhabited by cultivating land owners and or traders. Possibly, later on, it became a generic name for the village settlement. Perhaps this term Kāvīdipākkam which is more inland could have derived its name from an agricultural and trading centre adjoining the city.

The name Avāninārāyaṇa-chaturvēdimaṅgalam owes its origin to the Pallava king Nandivarman III, the hero of *Nandikkalambagam*. He is said to have had several *birudas* according to his work, such as *Telḷāru-erinda Avāninārāṇan*, *Viḍēlviḍugu*, *Kāvērīnāḍaṅ*,¹⁷ etc.

Another possible interpretation for the name Kāvēripākkam, is that it must have derived from the title *Kāvērīnāḍaṅ* borne by Nandivarman III. King Nandivarman III had extended his reign upto the Kāvērī region. Presumably, the king would have named this village as *Kāvērīnāḍaṅpākkam*, which in course of time had become Kāvēripākkam.

There is an interesting but a purely legendary story connected with the derivation of the name Kāvēripākkam. According to this tradition, it is said, once there was a pious lady who was known by different names such as *Vasumati*, *Vāsuki* and *Kāvērī*. The lady was so dedicated to Śiva-pūja that she used to prepare rice-cake with the help of sand. Thus the village Kāvēripākkam came to be called after the devoted and chaste lady Kāvērī who prepared (*pākam*) rice cakes.¹⁸

To conclude, it is surmised that the settlement of Kāvēripākkam primarily owes its origin to the fertility of the soil and irrigation facilities afforded by the natural lake. It must have served as the nucleus of the settlement like that of the *Veḷḷālas* and of the tradesmen who were held in high esteem by the king as the village derived from the name *kāvīdi*, in due course. The village should have attracted the *brāhmaṇa* settlers also and the status of *Chaturvēdimaṅgalam* should have been bestowed on them during the time of Pallava Nandivarman III, after whose title Kāvēripākkam was called *Avāninārāyaṇa-Chaturvēdimaṅgalam*.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 *A.R.Ep.*, 1905, No. 406; *S.I.I.*, Vol. XII, No. 50
- 2 *Ibid.*, *S.I.I.*, Vol. XII, No. 67
- 3 *Ibid.*, Nos. 79 and 82
- 4 *Ibid.*, No. 104
- 5 *Ibid.*, Nos. 312 and 307
- 6 *A.R.Ep.*, 1968-69, Nos. 185 and 188; *Ibid.*, 1904, Nos. 686-87 and 689; *S.I.I.*, Vol. XIX, Nos. 39, 84 and 121
- 7 *A.R.Ep.*, 1905, No. 389
- 8 *Ibid.*, Nos. 386, 390 and 383
Ibid., 1904, No. 696
S.I.I., Vol. XVII, No. 753
- 9 *Silappadikāram, Ālpaḍukāthai*, l. 8 to 11
- 10 *Maduraikkāñchi*, 194-99
- 11 *Sahādēva Purāṇam*, 322
- 12 *Naṟṟiṇai*, 364
- 13 *Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. II, pt. I, p. 903
- 14 *Chūḍāmaṇi Nighaṇṭu*, 1910 (Madras), p. 35
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 10
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 11
- 17 *Nandikkalambagam*, 1977, Madras
- 18 I am indebted to Sri Sivasubrahmany Gurukkal of Koṅgaṇḍēvara temple at Kāvēripākkam, who was kind enough to give an account of the legend.

