

INSCRIPTIONAL EVIDENCE ON THE VALOUR OF RĀJASIMHA PALLAVA

Dr.S.Brahadha Prasanna

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Sanskrit

Srimad Andavan Arts & Science College (Autonomous) Thiruchirappalli – 5

Abstract

Inscriptions are ancient writings or carvings etched onto stone, metal, pottery, and other durable materials, often created to convey information, commemorate events, or honor individuals that provide a glimpse into the lives, beliefs, and events of past civilizations. They are a source of information about the past, and are studied by historians, archaeologists, and researchers. Inscriptions serve as primary sources of historical information, preserving records of events, rulers, and societal norms. They offer insights into the development and evolution of languages and scripts over time. Inscriptions provide valuable information about the cultural and religious practices of ancient civilizations.

The study of inscriptions is called Epigraphy. Inscriptions record the achievements of kings, activities of people who commissioned them, record the ideas of people and the like. Dedication Inscriptions, Commemorative Inscriptions, Funerary Inscriptions, Legal and Administrative Inscriptions are a few types of inscriptions. Deciphering an Inscriptions ma results in Multilingual Texts, Comparative Analysis, Technological Advancements, etc.,

This paper deals with an ancient Pallava inscriptional poem in Saṃskṛtam consisting of 12 verses in the form of a eulogy (Praśasti) of the Pallava King discovered and published by E.Hultzsch a century ago. Rājasimha alias Narasimhavarman II (c.A.D. 670 – 700) is a king adorned with many epithets like *atyantakā*, *Śrībhara*, *Raṇajaya* and is compared with Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva. The Praśasti consists of 12 verses employing various metres about the King and his valour.

Rājasimha and Inscriptions

The inscriptions found at Kāñcī, Vāyalūr, Panamalai and Mahābalipuram ‘Gaṇeśāratha’ inscriptions praise the valour of Rājasimha alias Narasimhavarman II, the son of Ugradaṇḍa Parameśwara. Inscriptions at Vāyalūr and Panamalai describes that Rājasimha was the first to introduce the concept of the divine and the mythic origin of the Pallava dynasty in the history of South India. In Mahābalipuram ‘Gaṇeśāratha’ inscription Rājasimha is found styling himself not separate from Parameśwara in essence, on more than one account.

अमायश् चित्र मायोसौ अगुणो गुण-भाजनाः । स्वस्तो निरुत्तरो जीयाद् अनीशः परमेश्वरः ॥¹

Rājasimha established a clear-cut theory of divinity of the ruling king to the South Indian History.

Royal Titles and Deeds:

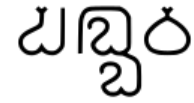
Rājasimha's inscriptions highlight his **military prowess**, his **victories**, and his efforts to **expand his kingdom**. They often mention his title "**Māhamalla**", meaning "**Great Wrestler**", referring to his prowess in battle and physical strength. He is compared to Lord **Kārtikeya** (Subrahmanya), the **king resembles Kāmadeva**, as **Indra** (Vāsava), as **Viṣṇu** (Mādhava). Manu proclaims that the King is a great deity in Human form,

महती देवता ह्येषा नररूपेण तिष्ठति ।²

Inscriptions, the earliest datable reference, remarked that Rājasimha introduced the Śaivasiddhāntamārga, the school of the Śaivasiddhānta Philosophy. The king patronised Śaiva philosophers like was Śrīkaṇṭha, the author of Brahmanūmāṃsā-bhāṣya and Aghorasivacārya, a commentator on the Tattvaparakāsikā of Bhojarāja of Dhārā.

Inscriptions from Kāñci

The poem consists of twelve verses engraved in a single line found on a granite slabs outside around the central shrine and in the front maṇḍapa in the temple currently known as Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñcīpuram, Tamilnadu. It is engraved in an ancient Indian characters called 'Pallava Grantha'. It is a style of Grantha script named after the Pallava dynasty of Southern India (Tamilakam) and is attested to since the 4th century CE.



The Rājasimha Pallava Inscriptions (Pallava Kings)

The **Pallava inscriptions** found in **Kanchipuram** are critical to understanding the **history, administration, religion and culture** of the Pallava dynasty, particularly under rulers like **Rājasimha** and his predecessors. Kāñcīpuram, the capital of the Pallavas, was a major **center of politics, religion and art** during the Pallava period.

The **Rājasimha** is otherwise known as **Māmalla** inscriptions at Kāñcīpuram are of particular importance because they provide insights into the king's **military conquests, patronage of arts**, and his relationship with **religious institutions**.

Religious Significance:

The inscriptions also emphasize his **support for Śaivism**, documenting the **construction of temples** and **donations for rituals**. These inscriptions help in the understanding of the **Pallava kings' role as divine protectors** of their subjects and the **religious patronage** that was a hallmark of their reign.

Division of the Poem

A Praśasti is primarily designed to praise or extol the virtues, achievements, or qualities of a person, usually a king, ruler, or deity. It serves as a form of glorification or laudatory writing.

Verse 1: Mangalacharanam or Nāndi.

The invocatory verse describes the River Ganga, that flows from the head of the Lord Śiva adorns the earth filling the ocean. Śiva, often depicted with matted hair, (jatābhir), a blue throat (after drinking the poison during the churning of the ocean), a snake around his neck (phaṇi-maṇi-kiraṇaiś), and glowing with a divine radiance akin to the moon or jewels. The author identifies various colors with Lord Śiva. "Śuklatvam" (whiteness) refers to purity or the glow of divine light, "Asita" (blackness) describes his hair, which is often depicted as dark or matted. The blue or "nilatvam" refers to the divine color often associated with deities like Krishna or Śiva, signifying vastness and cosmic presence.

शुक्लत्वम् मूर्धदेशे विधु-किरण-रुचा चासितत्वम् जटाभिर्

नीलत्वम् कण्ठ-धाम्ना फणि-किरणैश् शोणिमानम् दधाना ।

निर्यान्ति स्थणु-रत्नात् त्रिभुवन-सरसी-पूरणी वः पुनीतान्

नाना-वर्णार्णवाणाम् सम-सकल-हरिन्मण्डनैः शैलपुत्र्याः ॥ 1 ॥³

Verse 2 – 4 : Genealogy of the Pallava dynasty

Every lineage is connected and originates to great sages and their divine roles in Hindu cosmology. The sages are often born from powerful and illustrious lineages, and their influence can span across the three worlds — earth, heaven, and the underworld. This verse highlights the profound connection between divine power, ancestry, and the greatness of sages associated with the Pallava dynasty. The lineage began from the realms of Brahmā - his mind-born son - the sage Angirās - his son, Śakra's minister and the eater of nectar, i.e., Brhaspati – his son Śamyu – his son Sage Bharadvāja, the fountain – head of the Pallava family. Droṇa, the son of the sage Bharadvāja was equal to Sri Rāma in Archery and was the monumental teacher to the Kauravas and Pandavas. Aśvatthāmā, the son of Droṇa, despite his destructive acts, is referenced as part of the lineage. Then his descendant, Pallava, is a prominent figure in this legacy of the powerful rulers. The complex lineages and legacies that stem from figures like Droṇa, emphasize the continuity of leadership and the roles played by the various characters in shaping the fate of the land and its people.

ब्रह्मालोकादिरासीत् तदनु मुनिर् असाव् अङ्गिरास् तन्
 मनोजास् तत्सूनुश् शक्रमन्त्री गुरुर् अमृत-भुजान् तस्य शंयुस् तनूजः ।
 तस्माद् उग्रप्रभावात् त्रिभुवन – महिताल् लब्ध-जन्मा मुनीन्द्रः
 स श्रीमान् पल्लवानां कुलनिधिर् अभवद् यो भरद्वाज-नामा ॥ 2 ॥⁴

The verse paints a picture of ideal leadership, combining both spiritual and material wisdom with military prowess and personal integrity. These rulers are presented as paragons of virtue who lead their people with justice, strength, and respect for higher values. Valour of Pallavas are described in verse 3 & 4 of the poem that lauds the rulers of the Pallava dynasty, highlighting their many virtues:

They are strong yet humble, wise yet approachable. They are committed to truth, righteousness, and prosperity. They possess the wisdom to manage the three aims of life (Dharma, Artha, Kāma) while maintaining respect for tradition and elders. They are warriors, but their victories are not just on the battlefield—they are victorious over vice and destruction, ensuring peace and harmony in their realms. They are brave, knowledgeable in military tactics, and their leadership is marked by dignity and modesty.

तस्माद् द्रोणस् स रामो गुरुर् अतिमहितः पाण्डवनां कुरूणाम्
 अश्वत्थामा ततोभूत् पृथुर् अविभृताम् स्थैर्य्य-मानापहारी ।
 तत् – सूनुः पल्लवाख्यः सकल-वसुमति भोगिनाम् पार्थिवानां
 शूरानाम् आदिभूतो मनुर् इव जयिनाम् अन्ववायस्य कर्त्ता ॥ 3 ॥
 ब्रह्मण्यानाम् उदिर्ण-प्रबल-कलि-मद-ध्वंसिनां सत्य-वाचां
 गम्भिराणां त्रिवर्ग-स्थिति-चतुर-धियां वृद्ध-सेवापराणाम् ।
 कामादि-अन्तश्-चरारि-प्रसभ-विजयिनाम् हेति-विद्या-वराणान्
 धिराणाम् ऊर्जितानान् – नय-विनयवताम् पल्लवानाम् नृपाणाम् ॥⁵

Verse 5 : King Rājasimha and his Grateness.

The verse portrays an idealized figure from the **Pallava dynasty**, highlighting several key attributes:

Warrior-like Strength: King Rājasimha is a fierce warrior, capable of defeating enemies with great power and using strategic wisdom.

Divine Birth and Blessing: He is compared to Lord **Kārtikeya** (Subrahmanya), suggesting they were born with divine blessings and possess extraordinary courage and valor.

Wisdom and Spirituality: He is highly skilled not only in warfare but also in philosophical wisdom, particularly the Śaivasiddhānta philosophy of Śaivism, indicating their connection to spiritual teachings.

Steadfast and Purifying: His strength is not just physical but also moral. He is capable of purifying all faults and remains unwavering in his duties, exhibiting both inner and outer strength.

Boundless Desire: He has an intense desire for greatness, which drives them to continuously strive for achievement, yet their power is tempered by wisdom and virtue.

तेषां वंशे प्रसूताद् रणरसिक-पुरोन्मर्दनाद् उग्रदण्डात्

सुब्रह्मण्यः कुमारो गुह इव परमाद् ईश्वराद् आट्ट-जन्मा ।

शक्ति-क्षुण्णरिवर्गो विदित बहु नयश् शैवसिद्धान्त – मार्गे

श्रीमान् अत्यान्तकामः क्षत-सकल-मलो ध्रुवाधारः पल्लवनाम् ॥ ⁶

Verse 6: Epithets of the King Rājasimha

King Rājasimha is compared to the following deities who are the powerful forces of protection, prosperity and love, each playing a significant role in the cosmic order and the lives of those who follow the righteous path.

The King resembles Kāmadeva (Manmatha) who is praised for his mastery in the art of love and attraction, enchanting the hearts of women in secret; as **Indra** (Vāsava), the constant protector of those who follow the Vedic path, ensuring their safety and spiritual progress, as **Viṣṇu** (Mādhava) the divine force that defends the righteous and destroys the enemies of the good, protecting the hearts of sages, Brāhmaṇās, and Gods. **Viṣṇu** also bestows wealth and prosperity upon virtuous people, enhancing their lives with both material and spiritual blessings.

कला-चतुर-योषितां रहसि रञ्जने मन्मथः त्रयि-पथ-निषेविनां सतता-पालने वासवः ।

मुनि-द्विज-सूर-द्वीषां हृदय-दारणे माधवः स च द्रविना-संपदा सुजन-तोषने वित्तदः ॥ ⁷

Verse 7: Allusion related to King Rājasimha

This verse, overall, meditates on the moral and spiritual decline of the world, particularly in **Kali Yuga**, while highlighting that even divine forces are not untouched by the degradation of human nature. The sense of astonishment from **Viṣṇu** underscores the gravity of the situation, calling attention to the cyclical nature of time and the challenges posed by each age.

दुष्यन्तप्रमुखैः श्रुताम्बरगता वाणि शरिरं विना क्षमा-नाथैः सूर दृष्वहिर् यदि कृते कण्वादिभिः स्वीकृतैः ।

तन् नाश्चर्यं इदं पुनः कलियुगे दूरिभवत्-सद्गुणे सो श्रौषिद् इति तां गिरं महद् अहो विस्मापानं श्रीभारः ॥⁸

In the Kṛta Yuga, kings like Duṣyanta, was capable of seeing and hearing the God. But it is a matter of great astonishment that King Śrībhārah, meaning the bearer of the goddess of prosperity, i.e., Rājasimha heard that voice of the lord in the dark age of Sin, Kali Yuga. The significance of describing Rājasimha as having heard a heavenly incorporeal voice may refer to an old Śaiva tradition preserved in the Pūsalnāyaṇār Purāṇam, a section of the Tamil epic – poem, Periyapurāṇam also referred by the name Tiruttonḍar Purāṇam written by the Śekkilār. This section connects saint Pūsalnāyaṇār with his contemporary Pallava King (Kāḍavarkoṇ), who built a great beautiful temple for Lord Śiva. The Pallava King successfully completed the construction and fixed an auspicious day and time for consecrating the temple. At that juncture he received an order from the Lord to postpone the consecration ceremony as the Lord wanted to be present at the consecration ceremony of Pūsalnāyaṇār.

There are traditions identifying the Pallava king of the Purāṇam with Rājasimha Pallava and the temple built by the king in present form as Kailāśanātha temple, formerly known as Rājasimheśvara. The author intends to convey us that, the divine incorporeal voice the king heard might have contained the order of the Lord to postpone the consecration ceremony. At the end, the King Rājasimha had a hope and satisfaction that the Lord however could reside permanently in the temple Rājasimheśvara. This hope of the king appears to be echoed in his prayers, contained in verses 10 – 11 of the poem.

Verse 8: Benediction for the continued victory of the King.

This verse conveys a powerful narrative about the **divine intervention of the Supreme Being (Puruṣottama)** in the form of King Rājasimha during the **Kali Yuga**. Despite the rise of pride and arrogance in people (especially kings and powerful figures), the Supreme Being appears to protect the righteous and to battle the forces of destruction.

The **Puruṣottama** is born to protect the people, especially those who are drowning in sin and suffering due to the influences of **Kali Yuga**. The metaphor of the "ocean of sin" and the "fearsome crocodile" speaks to the overwhelming challenges and moral dangers of the current age. King Rājasimha, possessing divinity providence in the face of chaos, symbolizing hope for those suffering in the Kali Yuga with his nature of arrogance and haughty on account of the wealth they had acquired by diplomacy and might.

येनेमे नय विक्रमात्त कमला-सम्पत्ति-दर्पोद्धता भू-भङ्ग-क्षाण-मात्र-धूत-धिषणा नम्रीकृताः पार्थिवाः ।

जातोसौ पुरुषोत्तमो रणजयस् त्रातुञ्जनान् मज्जतः पापाब्धेः कलिकाल भीम मकारग्रस्तान् स जियाच्चिरम् ॥⁹

Verse 9 : Temple erected by the King

This verse seems to describe the king, the divine incarnation, whose **valor and strength** are so immense that they conquer and protect the world. Their **actions elevate the entire kingdom** or world, bringing peace, prosperity, and order. The poet further describes how the King **conquers obstacles** (symbolized by the "thorn in the throat") and earns the **reverence of other kings**, solidifying their rule and establishing a kingdom in alignment with their divine qualities. There's an emphasis on the **divine aspect** of the figure, with the comparison to **Śiva's laughter** pointing to their profound, awe-inspiring, and paradoxical nature. The individual may have a combination of destructive and creative powers, much like **Śiva** himself, who is both the destroyer and the creator, highlighting the divine paradox within this great figure.

The overall tone of the verse presents this person as not merely a powerful ruler, but one who embodies divinity in both their actions and essence, capable of transforming the world around them and elevating humanity.

नयोरजिता-पराक्रमार्जितम अनेन सर्वाङ्गं जगन् नृपेण हत-कण्टकं प्रणात-राजकं भुञ्जता ।

यशः-सदृशं आत्मनो भवनं एतद् उत्थापितं हरस्य हरहास-रूपं अतिमानम् अत्यद्भूतम् ॥¹⁰

Verse 10 & 11 : Prayers for the permanent presence of Lord Śiva

The verse concludes with a fervent prayer for Lord **Śiva** to remain **steadfast in his divine position**, for a long time, and to stay permanently as **Śaṅkara Vṛṣāṅka in the temple** Rājasimha-Pallavesvara, (temple of Īśvara) **built by King** Rājasimha, symbolizing the unshakable nature of his reign and divine power. The temple is described as touching the sky by its top and as robbing the Mt.Kailās of its beauty. The temple was originally named Rājasimheśvara, after his builder and has acquired the name Kailāsanātha temple, the temple of the Lord of Mt. Kailās.

श्रीराजसिंहपल्लवेश्वरे नागेन्द्रभोगभीमभूषणः ।

देवसुरेन्द्र-वृन्द-वन्दिताः स्थाने स्थितो'स्तु शङ्करश्चिरम् ॥¹¹

अस्मिन् नुवृत्रशत्रुद्विरदघनघटाराजसिंहेना राज्ञा राज्ञाम्

आज्ञा विधेयीकृत सकल दिशा निर्मिते धर्म्मि-भाजाः ।

शैले कैलासलीलाम् अपहरति गृहे राजसिंहेश्वराख्यम्

बिभ्रति अभ्रंलिहाग्रे विरचयतु सदा सन्निधानं वृषाङ्कः ॥¹²

Verse 12 : Benediction towards the long reign of the King.

This verse praises the **king** or **hero**, as someone who is:

Majestic and powerful like a lion (Rajasimho), **victorious in battle** (Ranajayah), and a **courageous and valiant** leader. **Adorned with the glory and responsibility** of leadership (Śrībharas) and wielding a powerful weapon (the **wondrous bow** of Citrakārmukah), signifying their martial prowess and divine backing, **a hero** standing apart from others due to their extraordinary **strength** and **leadership** (Ekavīras), with an everlasting **reign** (Ciram). Under the **divine protection** of **Lord Śiva**, with a prayer for them to protect and maintain the kingdom or **earth**, much like how Śiva himself is the protector and benefactor of the universe. An ideal king or a **divine hero**, whose **victories, strength, and connection to the divine** make them the protector of the realm. Their rule is presented as **eternal**, blessed by **Śiva**, and full of **valor** and **divine favor**.

राजसिंहो रणजयः श्रीभरस चित्रकारमुकः ।

एकवीरसश्चिरं पातु शिवचूडामणिर् महिम् ॥¹³

Metres employed in the Poem

Verses 1 to 5 and 11 are in Sragdharā metre. Verses 6 and 9 are in Pṛthvi metre. Verse 7 and 8 are in Sārdūlavikṛīḍita. Verse 10 is in a rare metre and Verse 12 is in Anuṣṭuh.

The word "**Sragdharā**" literally means "a garland of flowers" in Sanskrit, and this is reflected in the structure of the metre. The Sragdharā metre is described as having a flowing, melodic quality, much like a garland of flowers that is intertwined with rhythmic grace. It is often used for its aesthetic appeal and musicality in poetry, making the verse appear fluid and natural. The Sragdharā metre typically consists of 32 syllables, distributed in a specific pattern, often with a varying number of short (laghu) and long (guru) syllables. This metre allows for the expression of complex emotions in a way that feels natural, almost like a song.

Conclusion

The **Pallava inscriptions at Kāñcīpuram** are invaluable not only for understanding the **history** of the **Pallava dynasty** but also for providing insights into **religious practices, royal administration, and the cultural landscape** of South India during their rule. Through these inscriptions, we see how the **Pallavas** established a **strong political and religious** identity, which played a crucial role in their legacy.

References:

1. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.X, Page 8
2. Manu VIII.8
3. Sloka 1 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
4. Sloka 2 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
5. Sloka 3 & 4 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
6. Sloka 5 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
7. Sloka 6 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
8. Sloka 7 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
9. Sloka 8 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
10. Sloka 9 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
11. Sloka 10 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
12. Sloka 11 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci
13. Sloka 12 - Pallava inscriptional poem at Kāñci

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