



# ICON OF COIMBATORE

## Kalingarayan Canal Ushers Prosperity

Coimbatore can aptly be called the 'Rome of Kongunad'. This ancient part of the Tamil country was infested with jungles for a long time. Later Aditya Chola (875 -907) captured the Kongu Region and made it a part of the great Chola Empire for the next 400 years. The Kongu Cholas ruled this region for a couple of centuries and this was followed by the rule of the Vijayanagar Monarchs after a short Pandya interregnum.

It was during this time that one local ruler Kalingarayan cured the Emperor's child of madness, thanks to the grace of Goddess Kali and was granted the title Rayar, thereby his lineage came to be known as the Kalingarayars forever.

The Kalingarayars were originally of the Pundurai region and ruled from Vellode for several generations. One day their relative at Karur passed a remark about their dry lands and the coarse rice that was consumed by them at a wedding betrothal. Immediately, Kalingarayar decided to complete the wedding only after making his region prosperous.

Thanks to a dream where the good Lord guided him with a snake and a peacock, Kalingarayar dug out a canal from the river Bhavani and converted his lands into fields of prosperity. Later, he celebrated the wedding of his child with great joy. He prayed at the shrine of Padagavalli Nachiyar after the construction of the same.

He fixed the peacock as his royal insignia as a remembrance of the grace of Lord Subramanya due to



The Poligar of Uttukuli

which he had established the great hydrological marvel, the Kalingarayan Canal which continues to irrigate thousands of acres of land in the Kongu region for the last nearly eight centuries.

Kalingarayar's Vellalar community was originally from the Perianadu Nadumandalam. During the time of a Chola ruler,

Authonda iChakravarthy, they migrated to the Kongu region under the guidance of the Chera rulers.

Later Kavalikkanadu near Pollachi was also granted to the Kalingarayars and they established their rule at Uttukuli. This migration was to also ensure that they did not benefit from their work which converted the

lands in Vellode into wet lands.

Such was the integrity and sense of sacrifice that prevailed among rulers and contributors those days.

Kalingarayar under took a pilgrimage to a number of places and later constructed the powerful Agathuramman temple at Uttukuli and this became

the royal deity thereafter. He reclaimed lands, dug wells and canals for his people in a short time. His region covered an area of approximately 1800 square kilometres in this region besides the Poondurai region.

Later during the time of the ninth Polygar Nanjia Kalingarayar, the Viceroy of the Vijayanagar Empire, Viswanatha Naick of Madurai was troubled by the five rebel rulers who built forts in the Tirunelveli region. Kalingarayar fought a pitched battle with them and brought their heads as trophies to Madurai.

Subsequently while Kongunad was under Immadi Raja Wodeyar, Kalingarayar subdued the ruler of Coorg and was granted a gold gilt palanquin by a grateful Monarch. Later during the times of Tipu Sultan the Kalingarayar family had to move over to Bombay

he took over the administration and cleared all the debts with his efficient administration.

He was born in 1864 and assumed office in 1881. He learnt much under Wright, a retired European Inspector of Police. He was known for his etiquette and added "The Golden Grove" as part of his palace where he took pains to fix a billiards table.

He did much for his ryots and was like a kind father to them. Kalingarayar was a ruler of charitable disposition and he donated the first X-ray machine in this region to the Government Hospital on Trichy Road in Coimbatore. He served on the District and Taluk Boards and was an Honorary Visitor to the Agricultural College and Research Centre in Coimbatore for a number of years.

His able management of his estate and his interest

Madras Zamindars and Landholders Association, Member - South Indian Liberal Federation and also the head of the reception committee of the Non-Brahmin conference those days.

He had the rare privilege and honour of representing the Zamindars to E.S. Montague, Secretary of State and His Excellency Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy of India. This yielded good results for our region. Again he gave a princely sum to Vivekavarthany Sabha on the request of the ruler of Anegundi and also Rs.3000 for the Rajkumar College plus money for a school in Uttukuli. The Pasteur Institute in Coonoor and the Lawley Hospital were among the recipients of his largesse.

When Stanes came up with the C.S.&W Mills, Kalingarayar supported the effort and he also helped people at the time

Navarathri regularly. He had music, dance, poojas and religious discourses for ten days and fed everyone during the celebrations.

The grand durbar on Vijayadasami was a divine sight with Muthuramaswamy Kalingarayar holding court in a grand outfit. The hereditary sword and turban added to the lustre of the day. This reminded everyone that the Kalingarayars were originally warriors and military chieftains who had 5000 infantry, 5000 cavalry and a kadagam of elephants during their days of glory.

The Kalingan paddy is another relic that talks of their heydays. Muthuramaswamy Kalingarayar had vast lands in Coimbatore and contributed enormously for the development of the city. This laid a proper foundation for the growth that propelled the city into the path of glory and success.

Muthuramaswamy Kalingarayar spent his last days in contemplation of the ultimate truth. He was a lover of music and learnt it under tutors. He loved dogs, horses, wrestling and gymnastics all his life.

Today it is not possible to find a noble ruler like Dewan Bahadur Muthuramaswamy Kalingarayar. The people of our region can learn much from his life and work towards the progress of this region in an inclusive and mature manner.

- Rajesh Govindarajulu  
with inputs  
from Siddharth.  
A.M.R. Kalingarayar of  
Uttukuli.

**Kalingarayar gave huge donations for a public park in Coimbatore and also money for the Veterinary Hospital.**

and spent a couple of years out of their region. They returned to the Coimbatore region and once again ruled their region peacefully.

Agathur Muthu Ramaswamy Kalingarayar became the 33rd Poligar and ushered in stability and prosperity for his people. He had residences in Uttukuli, Kodaikanal, Coonoor and Coimbatore. When the nearby Zamin of Samathur got encumbered,

in public matters earned him certificates of honour from the Government of Madras on two occasions. Kalingarayar gave huge donations for a public park in Coimbatore and also money for the Veterinary Hospital.

Once again, he contributed resources for the YMCA. He was granted the title Dewan Bahadur by the Government of the day. He was also the Vice President of the

of plague in our region. Kalingarayar supported the World War I effort by subscribing to the war bonds to an extent of Rs.15000, a princely sum 100 years ago.

He was absolutely unassuming with simple manners, cultured and enlightened and accessible at all times. He spent nearly Rs.5000 every year on the temples and religious institutions at Uttukuli where he held a grand