

KALINGARAYAR

The pioneer in linking rivers in India is a Kongu Vel- lala Gounder by the name of Lingaya Gounder. He constructed the 90 mile long Kalingarayan Canal as early as 1283.

Birth

Kalingarayar (aka Kalingarayan) was born as Lin- gaya Gounder around 1240 AD. He rose to become the Uthara Mantri (Chief Minister) of Pandya King, Veera Pandian (reign 1265 – 1280). He is believed to belong to Saathanthi Kootam (clan).

In recognition of his excellent performance, the King Veera Pandian conferred on him the title Kalingarayan, which is the name used for the dam and the canal built by him. He is now commonly re- ferred to by this name.

Kalingarayan Canal

Kalingarayan Canal

The river starts with a dam in Bhavani (in current Erode District) and connects Bhavani River and Noyyal River crossing rivulets on the way by using aqueducts. A notable achievement even by modern standards.

The works of Kalingarayan is best understood from the words of Dr Francis Buchanan (aka Francis Hamilton or Francis Buchanan-Hamilton), 1762 to 1829, a Scottish Physician who made significant contributions as geographer while staying in India. After the defeat of Tipu Sultan and fall of Mysore in 1799 Buchanan was asked by the then British Governor General of India, Marquis Wellesley to survey the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar. Buchanan visited these regions during 1800 and 1801 and his findings are published in three volumes under the title "A journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar". As part of this study, Buchanan visited Erode on 7th November 1800 and wrote in his journal regarding the Kalingarayan Canal as follows (excluding italicized text added for clarity):

"Irrigation by a fine canal

The canal coming by Erodu (*current Erode*) from the Bhawdni (*current Bhavani*) is an excellent work and waters a narrow space of ground fifteen Malabar hours journey long (*time taken by Buchanan to travel the region*) and of various breadths. At this place the canal is carried over a small rivulet by means of an aqueduct. It is said that formerly it extended all the way to Caruru (*current Karur*) and was carried over the Noycl river (*current Noyyal River*) by means of an aqueduct that must have been a great work. The whole is said to have been made by a Vaylalar (*Vellalar*) farmer named Caling Raya (*Kalingaraya*) who being a rich man and of great influence raised from among the people of his cast a sum sufficient for the purpose. This was more than 400 years ago. His family is extinct and never seems to have received any reward in lands on account of the grand work that he completed..."

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Kalingarayar History

At the time of Buchanan's visit the canal was noted to be irrigating over 3500 acres.

Currently, the canal runs 56.5 miles and terminates at Kodumudi and provides irrigation for close to 16,000 acres of land in Kongu Nadu. It is reported that Kalingarayar was also planning to connect the canal to Amaravathi River and built a dam near Athipalayam for this purpose. However, this extension was not completed.

Other works and Death

Kalingarayan is not only known for his engineering skills but also for being a visionary and for his able administration. It is believed that Kalingarayan let

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Other works and Death

Kalingarayan is not only known for his engineering skills but also for being a visionary and for his able administration. It is believed that Kalingarayan let lower caste persons blow conch (சங்கு) and play instruments during good and bad occasions; plaster their houses on the outside and wear footwear.

Though not much is known about his death, his selfless work will continue to be appreciated by all the people in Kongu Nadu for a long time.

Recognition, commemoration, honours and memorials

Recognition, commemoration, honours and memorials

- Tamil Nadu Government ordered establishment of a memorial statue at Nasuvampalayam in Erode District in 2013.
- Kongu Kalingarayan's statue was unveiled in 2007 near his native Vellode on the occasion of 725 years of completion of the canal.

References

- A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar (1807) Vol II
- Books on Kalingarayan Canal and History of Erode by Pulavar Se Rasu, (2007)

2 THOUGHTS ON "KALINGARAYAR"



arunasadasivam

MAY 28, 2014 AT 1:31 PM

The new Government should do the honour of

2 THOUGHTS ON “KALINGARAYAR”



arunasadasivam

MAY 28, 2014 AT 1:31 PM

The new Government should do the honour of naming the national river integration projects after Kalingarayar. After all, he implemented the first ever river linking project in India as early as 13th century. Shout if you agree and post your views and comments

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balasubramanian

JUNE 25, 2014 AT 8:48 AM

I must say that he should born in T N again to solve the Kauvari dispute.

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