

1 War: An Ethical Representation of a Butcherly Enterprise in 2 Kalki. R. Krishnamurthy'sSivakamiyin Sabadham

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6 **Abstract**

7 The prominent Tamil kingdoms in ancient Tamil Nadu were the Cheras, Cholas, Pandiyas and
8 Pallavas. Similarly, the primary literature in the history of Tamil Literature is the Sangam
9 Period (200 B.C- 300 A.D). Kalki. R. Krishnamurthy with the help of a few available
10 historical records of the ancient Pallava realm has rendered the world a masterpiece through
11 the novel Sivakamiyin Sabadham. The novel is divided into four parts. The paper brings out
12 the features of the foundational tenets pertaining to war as enunciated in an ancient Tamil
13 treatise Tolkappiyam in the novel Sivakamiyin Sabadham.

16 **Index terms**— puram, tinai, sangam, war, tamil.

17 **1 Introduction**

18 istorical novels are set in the past and the plot revolves around historical events. Contrary to this nature,
19 Literature affects the present. The historical works of Kalki. R. Krishnamurthy would not have earned mammoth
20 readership if it had been a mere imitation of past events. Though the characters are dead and gone, Kalki as a
21 writer brings them back to life by infusing the element of culture within them. Where history failed, Kalki has
22 attained success in reviving the lives of the Chola dynasty and the Pallava Empire by making the characters live
23 the culture that has been passed down for centuries in the Tamil region.

24 No phase in Tamil Literature is as memorable as that of the Age of Sangam Literature. Sangam literally
25 means academy. There were three Sangams in the history of Tamil Literature. What is available to the modern
26 reader is only a fragment of the second and third Sangam. But these works cannot be set aside as obsolete for
27 its influence is mighty even in works of today.

28 Aiyangar in his book Tamil Studies says that the Tamil sangam is known to some English scholars as the
29 'Madura College' and to others as the 'Madura University.' The Age of Sangam may have been covered or even
30 perhaps been buried by the subsequent ages. But the literary greatness of the epoch remains unparalleled for the
31 simple reason that right from the works that followed the Sangam Age up to the present ones, reveal patterns
32 established by the Sangam writers. Nature is a powerful presence in these works. Varadarajan in his book on
33 Sangam Literature states that "These ancient poets do not treat of Nature alone, but resort to it always to
34 describe human life in its varying aspects, chiefly love and war. In short, they knit together the feelings and the
35 beauties of Nature in closest bonds and warmest associations" (2-3). Merged with nature is the universal theme
36 of love and war and this has long been methodically categorized in an ancient voluminous work of the Sangam
37 Age, Tolkappiyam. It appears to be a book on Tamil grammar but it is much more, for it encapsulates an entire
38 way of life-not merely of an era but it is almost impossible to evade its clutches, however modern a Tamilian's
39 lifestyle may appear to be.

40 The two themes of love and war are categorized under Akam and Puram. The former which literally means
41 'internal' deals with love and its associated emotions while the latter meaning 'external' refers to the social world.
42 Puram primarily deals with war and also praise of kings. It concentrates on the outer field of life. It constitutes
43 other aspects of human experience such as valour, heroism, ethics, benevolence, philanthropy, social life and
44 customs of the people. Similar to Akam, Puram also constitutes seven 'tinai's' or behavior patterns or phases

45 of war and the social world. A major difference between the categories of love and war is that Akam poems
46 highly depend on its image to deliver its objective since it delves deep into sensitive human emotions which are
47 intangible. On the other hand, Puram is expansive. Tinais pertaining to Puram are based on action rather
48 whereas in Akam, the principal speaker is the landscape.

49 The seven tinais are named after flowers of various species. These flowers which are native to the Tamil region,
50 are worn as garlands at different stages of war. The tinais in Puram are Ve?ci, Va?ji, U?i?ai, Tumbai and V?hai.
51 The two tinais which are considered unsuitable for poetry are K??ci and P?d?n. It is evident from these tinais
52 that all is not unfair in war because battles were not a disorderly confrontation among kingdoms. There was a
53 code governing the conduct of warfare. Cows, women and children were not injured during sieges and battles.

54 2 H

55 The first stage of war is Ve?ci. It refers to cattle lifting. It is the first phase, initiated by a tribe to start a war.
56 Ve?ci is the provocation phase in a war. Before the rise of kings, the Tamil country was ruled by petty chieftains.
57 The chieftains who desired to capture the neighbouring territory would start a war by raiding the cattle of the
58 enemy. The possessions of ancient chiefs were cattle. So, lifting cattle of a kingdom was reason enough for two
59 kingdoms to start a battle. In the Tamil region, which gives predominance to valour, a slight provocation served
60 as a best cause for war. Stealth pervades this tinai.

61 The activity that follows is the expedition conducted by the chieftain through the woods to reach his opponents'
62 territory. This phase is Va?ji which covers preparation for war and beginning of an invasion. The season is the
63 rainy season and they march through the forests to reach the enemy's fort. This invasion gradually leads to the
64 siege of forts or an inhabited fertile area in the city of the enemy's. The time is dawn. This attack on the fort
65 is called U?i?ai. Only after the third phase, comes the open battle. This pitched battle is called Tumbai. The
66 time of the day associated with this tinai is evening and grief suffuses the entire tinai. The tribe which emerges
67 victorious wears the v?hai flowers as garlands. This phase is called V?hai. Abduction, possession of women,
68 search for wealth and fame forms a part of the V?hai tinai. When a poet sings of the impermanence or the
69 frailty of life and war, it falls under the K??ci phase and the poet's song of praises for the victorious king is called
70 P?d?n.

71 Apart from the seven tinais, the tinais attributed to Puram are Karanthai, Nocci and Pothuviyal. During
72 the first phase, when the enemy tries to steal the cattle, the host defends the stealthy act. Defending against
73 cattle raids is called Karanthai. Similarly, when the enemy attacks the fort and tries to take over, the natives try
74 to safeguard their land. This contributes to Nocci. Pothuviyal includes general heroism, philosophical themes
75 and elegies for heroes.

76 Sivakamiyin Sabadham is a historical novel written in the 20 th century by Kalki.R.Krishnamurthy. It exposit
77 three different battles in the Pallava history fought during the reign of Mahendravarman I and his successor
78 Narasimhavarman in the seventh century A.D. The Pullalur battle, the Vatapi invasion and the Pallava retaliation
79 against the Chalukyas are the three wars that occur in the novel. War is resonant right from the beginning of
80 Sivakamiyin Sabadham. The gates of the fort are sealed as early in the first chapter when the Pallava Kingdom's
81 espionage informs their king about a possible Vatapi invasion. But before Pulikesi, the Emperor of Vatapi, arrives
82 on the Pallava soil, Naganandi, a bikshu reaches Kanchi, the capital city of the Pallavas. He sends messages to
83 other kingdoms in the four directions and he himself sets forth to the south to incite the other kingdoms against
84 the Pallavas. His plans succeed. The words of Kannabiran to his wife Kamali confirm the success of his designs:
85 "The King of Ganga Nadu seems to be in a hurry. He is coming from the west with a large army, eager to
86 reach Kanchi before Pulikesi does." (SK 74) This is proof of one of the many crooked strategies hatched by the
87 bikshu. He tries to distract and weaken the Pallava troops. When they engage in a battle, their forces would
88 be divided; but the Pallava army is unfazed by the sudden preparation for war. Rather, a tone of jubilation is
89 present among the men folk—"War of a much larger scale than the Mahabharata War is about to break out only
90 now. The opportunities for Mamallar to perform his gallant acts will arise only now" (SK 78). The hint of war
91 arouses a sense of joy in the Tamil people, because the belief is that they are born to perform deeds of valour at
92 the battlefield. And so, even the unexpected war does not have a terrifying effect on them.

93 The first stage in warfare is the prelude to war. Usually, a provocative issue ignites a battle. The prelude
94 to the Pullalaur battle is fuelled by Naganandi. The two kingdoms were at peace and the Emperor Mahendrar
95 least expected an attack from this quarter because it is Mahendrar's father who had gone to the Ganga Kingdom
96 to crown the Ganga King, Durvineethan's father. The two kingdoms remained at peace until Naganandi sends
97 messages to disrupt it through unfair means. The Queen, normally a symbol of patience says, "I too am enraged
98 with the Gangapadi king's ungrateful and treacherous act" (SK 77). Gratitude is held in high honour among the
99 Tamils. To return ingratitude to a person who extended help incurs wrath and curse not only by the society but
100 also by the Creator is a widely accepted belief. The Pallava army only doubles its hatred towards the ungrateful
101 king, which is but a natural emotion common to man. The Pallava king sums up the nature of the Ganga king
102 and also the phase of Ve?ci initiated by the enemy: "Like a fox interrupting the combat between two lions, he
103 has chosen to invade the Pallava kingdom when Pulikesi is attacking us! Durvineethan is hurriedly advancing
104 towards us, even without halting at night!" (SK 77) The phrase 'hurriedly advancing' describes the Ve?ci phase
105 where an army travels to meet its rival. Further, the army of the Ganga King travels even by night, a strategy

106 which involves stealth-to attack the enemy even before they are aware of. This is characteristic of the first phase
107 of war.

108 Ahead of the next phase, the Va?ji, where the invading army reaches the enemy's territory, Emperor Mahendrar
109 sends messages to his son to counter the Ganga King's strategies. "He has asked you to take the army stationed
110 at Kazhukunram and vanquish Durviveethan before he reaches Kanchi" (SK 82). The counter attack by the
111 Pallavas to stop the enemy reaching its territory falls under Karanthai, where the host initially tries to avoid the
112 pillage of the enemies. The Pullalur battle is the first step taken by the enemies to rout the Pallava Empire. In
113 the first case, the dangers were unanticipated, least from a friend-turned-traitor like the Ganga King. The second
114 is the closing in of different armies from all directions-Ganga Nadu from the west, the Pandya Kingdom from the
115 south and the Vatapi from the north. The eastern border is covered by the Bay of Bengal. And so, "Mamallar
116 has proceeded to the battlefield along with the army stationed at Thirukazhukunram for our self-defense" (SK
117 99). Defending the host territory becomes the reason for the Pallavas to retaliate.

118 The Pullalur battle does not exhibit the other two phases in warfare. The Va?ji phase and U?i?ai is rerouted
119 by the Pallava King's war tactics. Since the Pallava army marches towards their western borders, the enemy is
120 barred from an invasion. Before they could invade, the Pallava forces retaliate. So the Va?ji phase is partially
121 present amidst the Pallavas progressing towards the battle. Another reason behind the partial portrayal is that
122 the Pallava army does not plan a siege on the Ganga Kingdom's fort. But they progress towards the Tumbai
123 phase. The phase of pitched battle is not a firsthand picture of war. It is narrated by Gundodharan and is also
124 recounted by Sivakami, Aayanar and few other people. The sculptor and his daughter stay at the viharam in
125 Ashokapauram, a short distance from the battlefield. There they see "Several people were frantically running
126 down that road." Further, "At corner, a few people carrying a tall flag staff were running. The flag hoisted on
127 the flag staff was torn to shreds" (SK107). Kalki describes the phase of Tumbai through eyewitnesses. A Tamil
128 sense of valour is exhibited in this portrayal. Fleeing from war is the worst disgrace for a king and his warriors.
129 Aayanar is anxious to learn as to which troop is fated to such an ignominy. Kalki builds up on the suspense as to
130 how the battle proceeded. B. Kolappan in an article on The Hindu titled "Ponniyin Selvan in 32 Hour Animated
131 Film" says, "The gripping narration of Kalki also has an element of suspense as he will suddenly change the
132 scene." It is usually the case to kindle the reader's interest. In this context, Kalki does not change the stage to
133 another character, rather opens doors, but one at a time. He does not give a sequent narration of the battle
134 and he does not narrate it immediately. He first kindles the readers' interest through the eyes of Sivakami and
135 Aayanar, who view these events from outside the battlefield-the entrance of the viharam. They gather only a few
136 details-that "It is obvious that one side has lost the battle. The vanquished side is desperately fleeing" (SK 108).
137 Kalki allows these two characters to speculate on the outcome to arouse the suspense of the events. Kannabiran
138 who arrives at the scene adds a little more detail. He says, "We are pursuing those who are fleeing out of fear of
139 fighting" (SK 111). Kannabiran displays that the Pallava Kingdom has gained an upper hand. But what exactly
140 happened in the war is known only that evening when "Gundodharan suddenly made his appearance" (SK 112).
141 The Pallava spy cum disciple of Aayanar narrates that "The two armies met on the outskirts of the Pullalur
142 village, which was two kadu to the South west of Kanchi" (SK113). He also describes the battle scene: "The
143 Ganga Nadu army was thrice as large as the Kanchi army Mamallar headed. But Mamallar's brave army pounced
144 unexpectedly on the Ganga Nadu army" (SK 113). He also narrates of the cowardly fleeing of Durviveethan,
145 the Ganga King. Kalki does not take his readers to the battle front in the Pullalur encounter but narrates the
146 facts through his characters, steadily building up on the details-Sivakami, Kannabiran, Gundodharan and finally
147 the author himself narrates the tactics employed by Mahendra Pallavan. The reason behind the intervention
148 of the author is to reveal the truth behind the war which the characters are unaware of-it is the Pallava King
149 who intercepts the scroll sent by Naganandi and misleads the Ganga King to proceed immediately towards the
150 Pallava kingdom. There are two motives for the Pallavan's messagefirstly, he is sure that his army would be able
151 to tackle the Ganga Nadu army; secondly, the immediate advancing of Durviveethan implies that he would not
152 partake with the Vatapi army as allies, thereby reducing the strength of the Vatapi army to a certain extent.

153 The V?hai phase which denotes victory seemingly appears as if incomplete. The reason being that is, when
154 from the Pallava army, "A thousand handpicked horsemen also reached the Pullalur battlefield. As the horsemen
155 arrived unexpectedly at the battlefield and attacked, the Ganga army lost its nerve and fled" (SK 123). Because
156 the opponent and his army run away from the battle, victory is not determined on the battlefield. However, the
157 V?hai stage is not totally absent. Mamallar and Paranjyothi, with a few men reach up to the banks of the South
158 Pennai River to decimate the fleeing army. The Pallava army is again betrayed by the intervention of Naganandi,
159 who makes a breach in the Thiruppaar Kadal Dam so that the entire area be flooded. He also helps the Ganga
160 King and his army to reach the other side of the shore through boats. The Pallavas do not possess the privilege
161 to imprison the Ganga King; but he is imprisoned by the Pallava Kingdom's neighbourhood friends-Anandhan
162 Mazhavarayan in his fort. Thus V?hai belongs to the Pallavas when they defeat the Ganga King.

163 The Pullalur battle does not exhibit all the phases enunciated in Puram. On the other hand, it follows the
164 fundamental code of warfare as is appropriate in the Tamil society. Fleeing a battle is a shameful deed. The
165 Ganga King flouts the code of valour and heroism. His imprisonment is therefore appropriate.

166 The war between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas "is a well-known incident in the annals of Dakshina Bharata"
167 (BL 17). The war is a realistic portrayal, not because it adheres to the patterns of Puram but also because of the
168 duration it covers. Ponniyin Selvan, another historical masterpiece of Kalki, is a story that centers on love and

169 war but Sivakamiyin Sabadham is primarily a tale of war interspersed with love. The Battle at Pullalur is only
170 a miniature of war-it is in fact a strategy utilized by Mahendarar to mitigate the strength of the joined forces and
171 also to provide a firsthand battle experience to his son. Contrary to the Pullalur Battle, the war against Vatapi
172 is a well-planned one as it uncovers the protocol of warfare. The first part of the novel begins with a prelude to
173 the Vatapi war and the fourth and final part of Sivakamiyin Sabadham ends with the after-effects of the same
174 war. It is evident, therefore, that the entire novel runs on this much-spoken war as the scenario.

175 The Chalukya invasion in Sivakamiyin Sabadham begins with the Va?ji phase and not the usual stage of
176 Vetci. The Va?ji phase begins in the first quarter of the first part. The Pallavas are least prepared for a war
177 of high magnitude. However, it does not signify that they are incapable because in the seventh century India
178 "Harshavardhanar rules the area to the north of the Narmada, Pulikesi reigns over the region between the
179 Narmada and the Tungabhadra and Mahendra Pallavar rules the area to the south of the Tungabhadra" (BL
180 55). The Pallavas were the most prominent kingdom in the south during Mahendra Pallavar's reign. The Pallava
181 Emperor had planted spies in various kingdoms so as to glean information about the kingdoms. But somehow,
182 his spies are cheated, for the Pallavas come to know about the Vatapi army's plans only after the army begins
183 marching in the Va?ji phase. Mahendarar declares that "The King of Vatapi, Pulikesi, has mobilized a large army
184 and is invading us. It would be necessary for us to gather a massive army and wage a bitter war" (PJ 92). The
185 Ve?ci phase which normally precedes all the other stages in a war steps to the fore only after the Va?ji phase.
186 The Ve?ci phase comes ahead because the Pallava soldiers failed to ascertain the enemy's moves.

187 The Chalukyas are successful in the Va?ji phase, where they stealthily reach the borders of the enemy territory
188 without them being aware of it. This stage also covers the reason for waging a war. Another reason for the laxity
189 on the part of the Pallavas is that there was no reason for any realm to wage a war against them. The Pallava
190 Emperor's confession to his son testifies their stand: "That's my mistake Narasimha! I did not anticipate a war
191 during my lifetime. I spent the time I ought to have spent on warfare in dance, music, sculpture and painting"
192 (PJ 121). The ulterior behind the invasion which also constitutes the Va?ji tinai is known to the Pallavas at a
193 later stage-only when the siege is about to begin. The prelude to the war is because a poet Bharavi who was
194 closely associated to Emperor Pulikesi, refused to come to the Vatapi kingdom because he was enamoured by
195 the beauty of the Kanchi city. "It was the spark that the poet Bharavi ignited then that has become this war.
196 Pulikesi wrote in one of his messages to Bharavi, 'I will come to Kanchi one day and see if what you say is true'"
197 (SK 237). This serves as a prelude for the Vatapi King to march against Kanchi. Later, he himself tells King
198 Mahendarar, "You take my large kingdom that stretches from Narmada to the Tungabhadra and give me just
199 the city of Kanchi in exchange" (BL 80). Another reason for the Vatapi king to initiate a war is his brother
200 Naganandi's provocation. These serve as proper reasons for the Chalukyas to attack the Pallavas during a time
201 when they are least equipped to face a battle.

202 The Vatapi army is in the advanced stage of the Va?ji phase when the novel begins. The Ve?ci phase is
203 narrated only as events of the past. The Pallava army fails to identify the stealthy initiation of the Chalukyas.
204 The Emperor's words reveal the magnitude of their precarious situation. "The King of Vatapi, Pulikesi has
205 crossed River Tungabhadra and has entered our kingdom with a huge army. I heard that his army consists
206 of lakhs of foot soldiers, thousands of elephants, hundreds of carts harnessed by powerful bulls, and sixteen
207 thousand horsemen" (PJ 48). The prolificness of the Va?ji phase lies not only in the massive number of the
208 progressing troops but also because "Pulikesi's demonic army has effortlessly defeated our border forces and is
209 rapidly advancing. We do not have the forces to stop Pulikesi's army. Our forces stationed at various locations
210 are retreating. The Pallava Kingdom is in grave danger" (PJ 49). The Va?ji phase is also symbolized in the
211 Vatapi army involving in activities that would force the host to retaliate. The Vatapi force is successful in this
212 phase of warfare because the Pallavas are defeated in their own borders and added to the woe is the retraction
213 of their soldiers.

214 To retreat is an act of shame in the Tamil tradition. The young-blooded Narasimhan is unable to digest
215 this shameful activity on the part of his army. But Mahendarar known for his astuteness takes control over the
216 situation and asks his son to enforce patience. Mahendarar is quick to agnise the potential of his kingdom. He
217 does not act impulsively because he weighs the situation pragmatically. He perceives that his army is unprepared
218 for such a massive attack. He realizes that the only possibility is to play with time. Through his intuitive
219 intelligence, he first secures the protection of the Kanchi Fort and simultaneously discovers the setbacks in his
220 domain also. The Emperor's decree to procure food and weapons inside the Fort marks the beginning of the
221 Nocci phase in warfare. Usually, the Karanthai stage precedes the Nocci tinai but preparation to secure food and
222 weapons begins ahead, keeping in mind the enemy's treacherous attacks. The beginning of this phase is seen in
223 sealing the food resources inside the Fort. "A column of boats sailed one after the other in that canal towards
224 Kanchi.

225 Most of the boats were laden with sacks of paddy. Each boat was manned by two" (PJ 112). Securing weapons
226 also take place concurrently. Kalki juxtaposes landscape and human activities to reiterate the significance of the
227 context. He first describes the peaceful landscape and then proceeds to describe that This peace and serenity
228 were deceptive as thunder, rain, storm and earthquake were soon to follow. Indicating this, a boat laden with
229 weapons made its way along the canal amidst the boats laden with paddy. Several weapons like spears, swords,
230 lance, knives and shields filled the boat. .

231 The peaceful boats that carry life-giving resource (food) are disquieted by the boat carrying munitions which
232 are symbols of destruction. Such is the position of the Pallavas also.

233 With the onward motion of the Nocci phase begins the Karanthai stage too. Karanthai is the defending act
234 against cattle raids. Although the Pallava army is not completely victorious in the Karanthai stage because
235 of their retreat, it does not mean that that they are defeated either-Mahendrar recovers from the news of the
236 enemy's steady invasion. He lives by his words when he puts into action the dictum he earlier pronounces—"Rulers
237 should always keep their eyes and ears open. This is extremely essential during war time" (PJ 114). He uses his
238 'laid-back approach' to set right the loopholes in his fort. He also gives orders to fortify the fort for the siege.
239 Not only is the fort renovated, but he immediately calls for the Council and then stations his army at different
240 quarters. He then disappears from the Kanchi Fort giving orders to wait till the enemy begins the siege. He
241 disguises as Vajrabahu and proceeds to enter into the enemy barricade. His strategy of patience towards the
242 bikshu allows him to extract the plans of the enemy. The King is quick-witted to realize the true colour of the
243 bikshu when he surmises—"our enemies' spies may be camouflaged in the ochre robes of monks" (PJ 113). He is
244 also correct in his judgments on Paranjyothi—"That youth is innocent. I believe that deceptive bikshu is trying to
245 engage in treachery using that youth. I guess that the bikshu is an extremely clever spy of the Vatapi kingdom"
246 (PJ 117). Had he arrested the bikshu, Pulikesi would have immediately stormed and razed down the Fort of
247 Kanchi.

248 The king who is gifted with a remarkable foresight, disguises as Vajrabahu and befriends Paranjyothi who
249 himself is not aware that Naganandi is using him as a Vatapi messenger. Naganandi sends a scroll through
250 Paranjyothi asking the Vatapi army to invade immediately and wage war against the Pallava kingdom. The
251 innocent youth thinks that he is carrying a message pertaining to the secrets of the indelible Ajantha paintings.
252 Vajrabahu who knew that Paranjyothi is carrying a scroll, stays in the Mahendra Rest House, drugs him in
253 the night, reads the contents sent by the bikshu, burns the scroll and replaces it with a similar scroll but with
254 a different message-he writes an irrelevant message concerning the paintings in the Ajantha caves. Vajrabahu
255 then proceeds to enter the enemy camp pretending to be a messenger of a friendly neighbouring kingdom. He
256 also saves Paranjyothi who unwittingly gets trapped by Pulikesi who plans to behead him. The disguise of the
257 Pallava King as Vajrabahu and his exploits to counter further invasion by the Vatapi army falls under Karanthai.
258 The king tries to safely escort his kingdom against the siege planned by his opponents. By undertaking such a
259 dangerous venture, he also gauges the strength of the enemy, where he sees Thousands of elephants trained for
260 war stood in rows like black hills. The white tents pitched amongst the elephants resembled white colour hills.
261 Countless horses, camels, rams, chariots and carts dotted the landscape. Like ants that swarm a place strewn
262 with sugar, lakhs of warriors were found in the army camp. ??PJ 202) The impossibility to attack and win
263 such a huge well-armed force is confirmed by the King's visit to the enemy terrain. The Karanthai phase ends
264 with the return journey of Vajrabahu and Paranjyothi to their own Fort. The journey symbolizes the Emperor's
265 growth-he learns of the mistakes he had committed, especially the overindulgence in sculpture. His penitence
266 results in setting things right by commanding the sculptors to build 'Bharata Mandapams' in every village where
267 people can congregate and listen to discourses on Mahabharata. This is because the Emperor realizes that "This
268 war cannot be won solely by Mahendra Chakravarthy and the army. The citizens of the Pallava Empire must
269 also be motivated. They must be willing to give up their lives" (PJ 232). In other wars, the Karanthai phase
270 does not prolong for a longer duration. But in the case of the war between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas, the
271 Karanthai stage proves decisive. The novel is divided into four parts, in which only at the end of the second part
272 comes the siege. The other two parts cover the remaining three phases, not inclusive of the other retaliatory
273 war. This means that the first two parts of the novel concentrates on the initial stages of a military attack which
274 emphasizes on the importance of the Karanthai phase. It is in this phase that the course of the war shifts to
275 the advantage of the Pallavas. Moreover, it becomes a stage of physical and intellectual growth for the Rishaba
276 army.

277 The Karanthai phase opens its portals to the U?i?ai phase which deals with the siege of the enemy's fortress.
278 The siege begins at a later time-period than scheduled. This is due to the interception of Naganandi's message
279 in which he had originally written about the poor defense set-up of Kanchi; he had asked the Vatapi military
280 to continue marching without stopping on the way so that they may capture the Fort in three days. But the
281 Pallava King defends immediate siege by misleading the Vatapi army. The Vatapi army on the other hand, waits
282 for the bikshu's approval to begin the siege. Owing to the Pallavan's intervention, the siege begins eight months
283 later. The span of eight months changes the course of the war. Mahendra Pallavar himself says "Had the Vatapi
284 army directly marched to Kanchi, we could not have withstood them for more than three days. Fifteen of the
285 fifteen thousand Chalukya war elephants would have sufficed to force open the gates of our fort" (SK 239). The
286 Pallava head's insight and war strategies enable the Pallavas to strengthen their ramparts. And so, when the
287 Vatapi forces surrounded the Kanchi Fort, they were not able to penetrate through the Fort.

288 The U?i?ai phase begins when the siege of Kanchi starts. Contrary to the message stated earlier by Naganandi,
289 the siege lasts for months. The Nocci phase is intertwined with the U?i?ai and Karanthai part in this war. When
290 the Pallava forces were gathering weapons to defend the invasion, Paranjyothi follows the Emperor's orders in
291 beefing up the Fort. Paranjyothi and Mamallar under the command of Mahendrar take care of every single
292 detail to defend the attack on the fort. The first step undertaken by any advancing army is to cross the moat.
293 Commander Paranjyothi equips the Queen Bhuvana Mahadevi on the defense measures carried out on the fort.

294 He tells about the moat—"I too saw it eight months ago. Previously, it was like a small canal. Now it is as large as
295 an ocean. Crocodiles with their jaws wide open thrive in the moat" (SK 78). The possibility of building bridges
296 across the moat will be countered by five thousand archers camouflaged within the fort walls to shoot arrows on
297 the enemies. Concealed pits, invisible nets and traps are all set either to injure or kill the enemy. Boulders too
298 are placed on the fort walls to roll it down at the opportune time. The strategy session to defend their territory is
299 planned and executed meticulously by these three heads. They also gather the appropriate information regarding
300 their attackers-their usual plan of action, their manner in laying a siege-and plan their defense accordingly. The
301 Vatapi army is in the habit of intoxicating their elephants by making them consume liquor so that their strength
302 grows manifold and also wild. To subvert this move, the Pallavas build an inner fort gate embedded with spear
303 tips. If the outer wooden gate is broken, the spear tips on the inner gate would be a death knell to the elephants.

304 The arsenal of the Pallava Kingdom alone is not depleted. Mahendra Pallavar considers a gamut of defense
305 measures to keep his kingdom safe from the enemy's clutches. He gathers the Council to explain the practical
306 difficulties the kingdom might encounter. "The Chakravarthy expects the siege to continue for even up to a year"
307 (SK 232) says the Commander Kalipahayar. So they gather all the available food supplies for the people in the
308 fort. The primary concern of the King is the safety of his people. He frankly tells them of the possibilities in
309 case of a long siege. He arranges for the chieftains to reach their respective places before the siege and asks if
310 they would stand by him.

311 By dawn tomorrow, the Vatapi army would have reached our fort. All of you should leave the city before
312 that. All of you should rush back to your respective kottams. When the Kanchi Fort is under siege, there will
313 be no communication between you and those of us within the fort. When Pulikesi is defeated, he will vent his
314 anger on the surrounding villages. You should be prepared for all this. Chiefs of the Kottams! Think well before
315 you respond. Are you prepared to sacrifice all you have to safeguard Kanchi? Will you tolerate all the atrocities
316 perpetrated by the demonic Vatapi army? Will you be steadfast even if famine strikes the nation and people die
317 of hunger? asked the Chakravarthy majestically. ??SK 240).

318 The chiefs answer positively in unison which echoes the Tamil social life where unity is considered the primary
319 strength. This becomes the case with the Pallava army too. The humanistic approach followed by the King
320 delineates the kingly features in Mahendrar, where his prime concern lay in the safety of his people and he does
321 so through love. Another tactic adopted by the Pallava men which brings out the unity and sacrifice is that "Our
322 spy force headed by Shatrugna functioned excellently. The Chiefs of the Kottams have also worked skillfully.
323 Unmindful of the famine that the country may face, they broke down all the dams and canals" (BL 42). The
324 Pallavas break down the storage resources of water to inflict their enemies of thirst and dryness. The Nocci
325 phase is meticulously capitalized by the Pallava forces. And so, when the U?i?ai stage begins, the ramparts prove
326 indestructible to the Vatapi army.

327 The Vatapi soldiers do not have new tricks up their sleeve in the siege of Kanchi. They act as per the
328 expectations of the Rishaba army-their infantry try to scale the Fort walls, cross the moat, build bridges and
329 intoxicated elephants which were half successful in ripping open the outer wooden gate only to be injured by the
330 spear-embedded gates. After some time, they managed to break the spear tips through heavy logs of wood only
331 to be barred by a strong inner wall. The U?i?ai phase continues as Pulikesi plans to starve the inhabitants of
332 the fort but it backlashes on him for it is his men who are left without food. The food scarcity for the Vatapi
333 army is because "The villages that surrounded Kanchi were evacuated" (BL 118). At the beginning of U?i?ai,
334 the Vatapi King had an upper hand but the situation topples to give way to the Pallavas. The success of their
335 defense lay on the fact that "The siege lasted for about eight months during which time the ramparts of the
336 Kanchi Fort stood tall without any damage being done. Not even one soldier was able to enter the Kanchi Fort"
337 (BL 17). Mahendrar's defense stands an example of the 747 th Kural in which Thiruvalluvar says "A fort should
338 be impregnable to foes who gird it round, //Or aim there darts from far, or mine beneath the ground." The kural
339 defines the term fortthat which cannot be captured by blocking, assaulting or even undermining it. The U?i?ai
340 stage does not lead to the expected sequence-the Tumbai.

341 The stage of siege yields to a truce called by the Vatapi king Pulikesi. He initiates the armistice not only
342 because his troops languished without food resources but also more importantly because of the message he
343 received that Naganandi is imprisoned and is about to be impaled on a stake. In spite of warnings "We have
344 heard that the Vatapi king is a treacherous man who has no code of ethics and that he has a demonic character.
345 Can there be a hidden ruse behind his stated intention of visiting Kanchi?" (BL 57) from the Ministers' Council
346 and also from his own family, Mahendra Varmar invites the enemy on the grounds of the 'Pallava dynasty's
347 dharma' and also to avoid unnecessary loss of lives. The Vatapi King is accorded a royal welcome. When the
348 two kings meet, "Their eyes met. Mahendrar's face bore a slight smile and conveyed no emotion. But Pulikesi's
349 face reflected the fury that was simmering within him" (BL 57). The Pallava King, who displayed remarkable
350 statesmanship earlier, is suddenly bereft of even the fundamentals of logical reasoning. Like the man mentioned
351 in the 792 nd Kural which says "Alliance with the man you have not proved and proved again, //In length of days
352 will give you mortal pain" (164), Mahendrar fails to make repeated inquiry before trusting his enemy which finally
353 wounds him mortally. He flaunts the city's greatness and in one of the conversations, he divulges the gimmicks
354 he employed to thwart the invasion earlier. His conversation with Pulikesi seem to justify his irrational act: "I
355 revealed the tactics I had employed to counter your invasion as I thought that would be betraying our friendship
356 by suppressing them" (BL 83). The Tamil custom could blame fate for the actions of the Pallava king but the

357 same tradition has framed the Council and granted powers to the council in order to temper autocracy. A King
358 who is like a deity to the Tamil people cannot afford to commit mistakes. If it is so, then the entire nation suffers.
359 The careless tongue of Mahendarar reaps its own disaster. Pulikesi embraces Mahendarar's friendship superficially
360 and does not act according to the treaty. This is because "When Pulikesi took leave of Mahendarar Pallavar and
361 left through the northern gates, he was a disgruntled man. His heart was akin to a volcano filled with black
362 smoke, molten lava and fire that was waiting to erupt" (BL 101). Pulikesi was fuming within because he felt that
363 he was deceived and that had he arrived earlier, the beautiful city of Kanchi would have been annexed. He breaks
364 the ethics of warfare by issuing a decree that Fifty four thousand of the sturdiest soldiers in the army would be
365 left behind. They would form small groups, plunder and then set fire to the villages and towns that lay within
366 a radius of four kadu from Kanchi. These soldiers would imprison the young men in the villages and towns, kill
367 the young men, maim the aged and seek revenge in any other manner they deemed fit. Importantly, all sculptors
368 and sculpture galleries had to be demolished. One arm and one leg of the sculptors had to be amputated. ??BL
369 105) The Vatapi forces execute the order of their king. The Pallavendra who trusts the friendship of Pulikesi and
370 blurts his tactics, reaps untold miseries for himself and his kingdom. Though Mahendarar is left with most of his
371 forces, his son Mamallar and his aide Paranjothi were not present to shoulder his burden as they were sent to
372 a battle against the Pandian army. Mahendarar gathers his forces to combat the remaining Vatapi soldiers. This
373 Tumbai phase of battle scene is the Manimangalam battle which witnesses the fall of the Pallava King. Mamallar
374 and Paranjothi hasten to join their leader but not before he receives the fatal wound wielded by a poisonous
375 dagger. As they arrive, they see that "the majority of the soldiers who accompanied Mahendarar Pallavar from
376 Kanchi had died fighting bravely on the Manimangalam battlefield" (BL 140). The Chalukyas with their meager
377 army emerge victorious in this battle. All the same, they scatter and flee the Sooramaran encounter against the
378 Pallavas. The V?hai phase, nevertheless, belongs to the Chalukyas because the Pallavas suffer heavy losses. "The
379 Chalukyas had set fire to the houses, huts, haystacks and crops ready for harvesting. Ashes covered the entire
380 region. It seemed as though the Pallava Nadu had become a large and horrific graveyard" (BL 141). Excluding
381 these inflictions, the major loss they suffer is the loss of their king. He fails to recover from the injuries he
382 sustained in the battlefield.

383 The war initiated by the Chalukyas exposes all the phases elaborated in Puram. The different stages are
384 projected in its own pattern to enforce the historicity of this major war. This war does not come to an end with
385 the V?hai phase. Rather, another cycle of these stages is repeated when Narasimha Pallavar assumes charge as
386 king.

387 The growth of Narasimhar is evident in the second cycle of the war. He is no longer the same Mamallar who
388 yielded to anger and impatience. Revenge contributes towards the Ve?ci phase and serves as the best cause to
389 restart the battle that had ended earlier. But a thirst for vengeance does not blind the eyes of the new Emperor.
390 This is evident in his conversation with Aayanar: "When I failed to bring your daughter back from Vatapi, I
391 thought I could mobilize an army in three years and invade Vatapi." But the initial plan encounters practical
392 difficulties and so, "The task we set out to accomplish in three years has taken us nine years" (SD 22). The Ve?ci
393 phase which is inclusive of the preparations to begin a war reaches its heights at Thirukazhukunram, the place
394 where the Pallava army had camped.

395 Horsedrawn chariots, bullock carts and beasts of burden like cows, camels and donkeys occupied the area up
396 to the southern horizon. Sacks of grains, clothes, daggers, shields, swords, spears, lances, tridents, bows, and
397 arrows, several other uncommon weapons, mounds of thick ropes, rope ladders, hooks, spades and torches were
398 stocked in those carts lay around. Observing the canopies that were heaped up like a mountain in one place,
399 one would think that it was possible to cover the sky with these without allowing a single raindrop to reach the
400 earth. .

401 The war preparation far exceeds that of the Chalukya invasion. Manavanman, the Prince of Lanka and the
402 Cholas join the Pallavas in order to decimate the Vatapi army. Following the Tamil ritual to start on an auspicious
403 day, the army sets out on the dawn of Vijayadasami. "Mamalla Chakravarthy after performing ceremonies like
404 Yatra Danam and Graha Preethi at the entrance to the ancient Pallava palace, sought the blessings of the elders
405 including Rudrachariar, took leave of his mother Bhuvana Mahadevi and left for the battlefield mounted on the
406 royal war elephant" (SD 69). The Tamil customs of departure for war are far more elaborate-war drums were
407 followed by the woman folk showering flowers and blessings on the warriors. The Ve?ci phase encapsulates the
408 Tamil customs as well. The parting of soldiers from their wives and family form a part of this tinai also. Mamallar
409 entrusts the safety of the palace to his wife from her brother's possible invasion also falls under this tinai.

410 The marching of the army towards the Tungabhadra border (Chalukya Kingdom) forms the Va?ji tinai. "The
411 Pallava army crossed the North Pennai River a week ago. It must have neared the Tungabhadra River by now"
412 (SD 144). The Va?ji phase is similar in style to that of the Chalukyas when they marched against the Pallavas.
413 Contrary to the Pallavas who displayed solidarity during the invasion, the Vatapi kingdom begins to fall apart
414 during this phase and hence the Karanthai and Nocci stage of protecting their territory is totally absent. This
415 becomes a major setback to the host army. The major divide is the fraternal fights between Pulikesi and his
416 brother Neelakesi (Naganandi Bikshu) over Sivakami. Others include the division of Vatapi forces that are
417 stationed at the other borders in their kingdom; Pulikesi himself is held at Ajantha and he races with time to
418 enter the Vatapi Fort. In addition to these impediments, a famine breaks out near the Tungabhadra River and

419 so the army stationed close by was redirected to the distant land of Vengi. Pulikesi is devoid of time to regroup
420 his entire forces.

421 The Karanthai phase is spoiled by Naganandi who then played traitor, dons the same role against his own
422 brother. He had dismissed the Chief of the spy forces and assumed charge over it. Pulikesi was led into the belief
423 that Mamallar was gathering a huge army to invade Lanka. Naganandi who knew about Narasimhar's planned
424 attack does not inform his brother. Therefore, only words of hope and courage fill the Karanthai phase.

425 The U?i?ai stage commences when the Pallava army "surrounded that expansive city's fortress from all sides"
426 (SD 148). The U?i?ai stage is cut short when the invaders learn about the absence of Pulikesi inside the fort.
427 The stage is disrupted of its importance when only a small army is left behind—"After deploying a small force to
428 continue the siege at Vatapi fort, a major portion of the Pallava army started marching northwards" (SD 150).
429 The short U?i?ai phase quickly paves way to the phase of pitched battle. The Vatapi emperor who expected that
430 the Pallavas would attack the Fort and that he could wait till he gathers his other forces and then attack is left
431 with no choice but to face the combat. He is forced to forego a retreat as it would cause a slur on the heroism
432 of the entire army. The two armies lock horns in the northern outskirts of Vatapi where the battle proceeds for
433 three continuous days and nights. The butcherly Tumbai phase of this war reflects the fatality of war.

434 The dead elephants that lay on the battlefield resembled black granite hills. The corpses of humans and those
435 of horses were all piled together. The pathetic moaning of humans, the horrific shrieking of elephants and the
436 sorrowful neighing of horses that were on the verge of death mingled together to form an intolerable din. Rivers
437 of blood flowed in all four directions on the battlefield. The mutilated limbs of warriors floating on the rivers of
438 blood presented an excruciating sight. It is impossible to provide an accurate description of hat war in which
439 lakhs of warriors a d thousands of elephants and horses were deployed. ??SD 150) The gory Tumbai phase
440 prolongs for three days. Loss of lives affects both the sides but the Chalukyas receive the major blow when
441 Pulikesi is killed in the encounter. But none of the armies are able to ascertain it. The victory phase belongs
442 to the Pallavas. The garland is its symbol and so is jubilation: "the Pallava Chakravarthy and his commanders
443 garlanded and congratulated each other and celebrated the conclusive victory secured by the Pallava army" (SD
444 151). The V?hai phase is not complete in this victory on the battlefield. The Pallavas return to the camp and
445 join the rest of the forces to continue with the siege. The U?i?ai phase reenters to ensure complete victory to
446 Mamallar and his army. Initially, the Vatapi forces offer a truce because they thought their King is dead. Even
447 Paranjyothi and the Ministers accede to it but this suggestion is vehemently disfavoured by Mamallar. He averts
448 the same mistake committed by his father-he learns a valuable truth to never trust an enemy's peaceful offer.
449 True to his doctrines, the Vatapi army lowers its white flag from the fort and deploys soldiers. They exult over
450 their king's return; the Pallava army erects scaffolds, throws sulphur bombs and illuminated torches into the city.
451 Through elephants, wooden masts and iron rods, they break open the gates and enter the city that was already
452 set on fire. The invasion which ensues constitutes the U?i?ai phase. The Pallava forces emerge victorious and the
453 V?hai phase becomes complete when Paranjyothi hoists the Simha flag of the Pallavas atop the Jayasthambam
454 erected earlier by the Chalukyas.

455 The tina is of Puram are all exhibited in the war between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas. The Chalukyas
456 resort to chicanery in most of the phases. In the initial stage, the Bikshu roams the territory as a friend to the
457 Pallava Empire, Pulikesi oversteps the treaty, the Chalukyas brutally murder the villagers on their way and finally
458 they call for a ceasefire but suddenly withdraw it during the siege of the Vatapi Fort. War, from ancient times is
459 seen as a clash between good and evil. This battle in Sivakamiyin Sabadham also echoes similar thoughts. The
460 Vatapi King and his army represent deceit and lack of cultural values. Hence war becomes necessary to weed out
461 evil.

462 Puram centers on action and so landscape is subsidiary in nature. Nevertheless, Kalki does not permit
463 landscape to dwell in its supplementary state. In every possible comparison, elements of nature relevant to the
464 Tamil region are fused into the context. The phases of war are also a reflection of the social life in the land.
465 Puram deals with social life in which the predominant occupant is war because war was the ancient system of
466 life. But the brutality of war is not praised. Rather it is heroism that is extolled by the Tamils. Heroism is the
467 cornerstone of war. Puram which most importantly deals with warfare reveals a thirst for honour and renown.
468 Fame induced the kings of the past to undertake conquest on an extensive scale in order to earn an undying
469 name in the world. Monarch and warrior in unison bowed to the principle of conquering kingdoms. The martial
470 spirit was rife in the ancient Tamil land. However war was not totally devoid of ethics. The five major phases in
471 warfare is enough testament that there existed a code even in carrying out a butcherly enterprise.¹

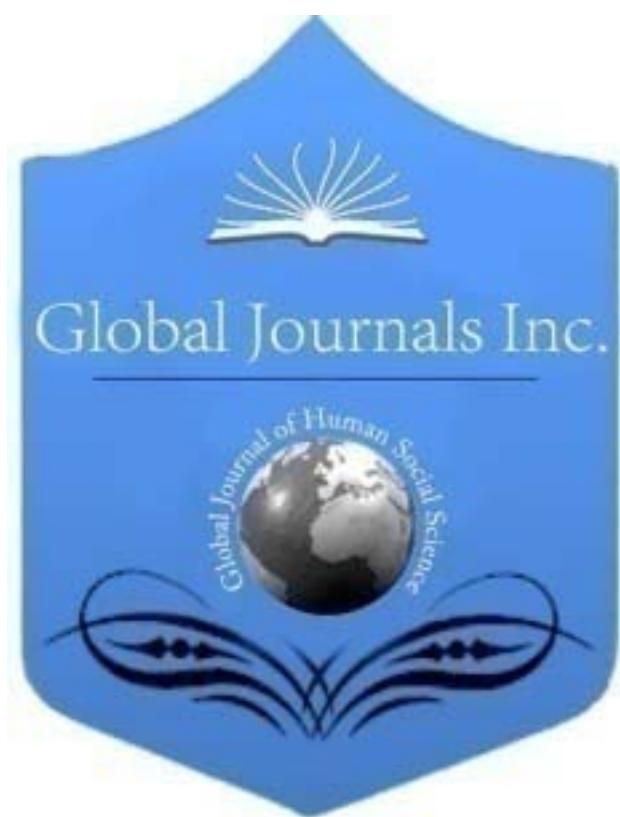


Figure 1:

⁴⁷² .1 Works Cited

⁴⁷³ Aiyangar, M Srinivasa.