

Towards a Genealogy of Some Tanjāvur Nāṭyāchāryas and their Kinsfolk

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The dance-art fostered and practised in the temples and royal courts of south India, particularly the Tamil country, came to be known as Bharatanāṭyam as late as the 1930s. In earlier times it was variously known as Dāsīāṭṭam, Sadir, Kelikkai, and by some other names as well.

Our knowledge of the history of this dance does not go very far back in the past. We do not know, for example, what musical compositions were used by the dancers of the Chola period, the high-water mark of Tamil culture. Only some stray references to such pieces are available in the literature of the Tanjāvur Nāyakas.

So far as we are aware, the codification and systematization of this dance-art came about only in the last part of the regime of the Maratha rulers of Tanjāvur. It was the work of four great nāṭyāchāryas—the brothers Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu, identified as the *Sodara Chatushtaya* or, more commonly, as the Tanjāvur Quartet. The performance format devised by them is still the norm, though a few changes have crept in lately.

A lot of ink has been spilt so far in efforts to trace the lives of these nāṭyāchāryas and their kinsfolk. However, most of the biographical work that has come out is either scanty in detail or far from the truth. An authentic history of the Tanjāvur school is therefore sorely needed.

The present article, sharing the available genealogical data and biographical information about the Tanjāvur Quartet and the family's close relatives, is a beginning in this direction. It is part of a larger project dealing with all the nāṭyāchāryas of Tamil Nadu (undertaken with support from Sangeet Natak Akademi). The article is therefore sketchy in parts, being a work-in-progress.

The Background

Mahadevan, Gangaimuthu and Ramalingam were brothers and lived in Tirunelveli, though their ancestors were originally natives of Tanjāvur and had served in the court of the Nāyaka kings; at the decline of Nāyaka rule in Tanjāvur, the family had moved first to Madurai and later to Tirunelveli. Among the ancestors of the family, Gopala Nattuvanar (b. 1638) was patronized and appointed for regular service in the Rājagopālaswāmi temple, Mannārgudi, by

king Vijayaraghava Nayaka (reign 1631–1663). Gopala Nattuvanar's family flourished in Mannārgudi even after the Nāyaka period, and its descendants still live there. Champakavalli and Komalavalli, dancers in Vijayaraghava Nayaka's court, were two of Gopala Nattuvanar's disciples¹.

After the Nāyakas, Tanjāvur came under the rule of the Marathas, who also patronized the fine arts, above all dance and music. Muthayya Nattuvanar of Pandanallur, an ancestor of the celebrated teacher Meenakshisundaram Pillai, adorned the court of Shahji (1684–1712) and staged a *Tyāgarāja Kuravanji*² in the Brihadeesvara temple at Tanjāvur every year. Veerappa Nattuvanar³ was another dance master in the service of the 'Big Temple' at Tanjāvur at that time.

Mahadevan, Gangaimuthu, Ramalingam

The Maratha ruler Tulaja II (reign 1763–1787) is said to have brought over Mahadevan and his two brothers to Tanjāvur from Tirunelveli and given them hereditary service in the Brihadeesvara temple and in his court⁴. Five *velis*⁵ of wet land and a house on the West Main Street of Tanjāvur were also given to them as grants by the king. Some writers have stated in their books (or articles) that two dancers, Vanajakshi and Muthumannar, came along with Mahadevan and his brothers from Tirunelveli, though no evidence has been cited.

Mahadevan (1734–1791) married the daughter of Mannārgudi Gopala Nattuvanar II (of Pratapasimha's court), the guru of Muddu Pazhani (author of *Rādhikā Sāntvanāmu*⁶). Gopala Nattuvanar II was the grandson of his namesake's (patronized by Vijayaraghava Nayaka) daughter. The bride was younger by seventeen years and the couple had no children.

Gangaimuthu (1737–1798) was a prolific composer. His Kavuttuams are still very popular. Two of his Padavarnams have been brought to light by the present writer⁷. One is in the raga Ānandabhairavi ('*Asai Minjudu*'), in praise of king Vanchipala Rama Varma Kulasekhara (reign 1758–1798) of Travancore. The other, in Todi ('*Maiyal Konda*'), is an eulogy of Mala Muthayyan, the officer in charge of the royal treasury during the rule of the same king. Both the compositions are in Tamil. Gangaimuthu had two sons, Subbarayan and Chidambaram⁸, who are (wrongly) stated to be Ramalingam's sons by some writers.

There was another Gangaimuthu, a collateral relative of Mahadevan and his brothers—and the author of *Natanadi Vādya Ranjanam*⁹—who lived in the village Pasuvandanai near Tirunelveli.

No detail whatsoever is traceable about Ramalingam, the youngest of these brothers.

Tiruvarur Gurumoorthi Nattuvanar

Gurumoorthi Nattuvanar, an agnate relative of Mahadevan, was also brought

over from Tirunelveli by Tulaja II and appointed for service in the Tyāgarāja temple at Tiruvarur. One of Gurumoorthi Nattuvanar's disciples was Akhilandam of Srirangam. He had two sons. The elder, Muthuswami, migrated to Madras and came to be known as Pattanam Muthuswami Nattuvanar. He was the guru of Triplicane Krishna Ammal, who later became the *asthāna vidhushi* of Venkatagiri. The second son of Gurumoorthi Nattuvanar was Tambiyappan (also known as 'Suddha Maddalam' Tambiyappan), the prime disciple of Muthuswami Diskshitar.

Subbarayan and Chidambaram

Subbarayan was held in great esteem by Tulaja II, who made munificent grants to him in 1780¹⁰. A number of compositions are credited to Subbarayan. According to Tanjavur K. Ponnayya Pillai, a descendant of Subbarayan, the famous Svarajati, '*E Mayaladira*' in rāga Huseni, is a composition by Subbarayan; V. Raghavan contended that it was a composition by Melattur Venkatarama Sastri, but did not put forth any argument for this claim.

Chidambaram, the second son of Gangaimuthu, was a musician *par excellence*. Right from his early years, he was of a spiritual bent of mind. Even before he was twenty, he renounced worldly life, adopted the name Chidambaranatha Yogi, and went to Kasi¹¹. It is believed that Muthuswami Dikshitar was a disciple of his.

The Tanjāvur Quartet

Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu—the Tanjāvur Quartet—were the sons of Subbarayan and disciples of Muthuswami Dikshitar in vocal music. They had the privilege of being honoured by their guru with the title Sangeeta Sahitya Bharata Sreshtargal. (There is an opinion, based on research, among some scholars that not all the four brothers were disciples of Dikshitar.) During their stay in their grandfather's house at Mannārgudi, they composed some Varnams and songs in praise of Rajagopala, the presiding deity of the town. When they took up their career as dance teachers, the famous Tiruvarur Kamalam, also a disciple of Muthuswami Dikshitar, came forward to help them by presenting dances choreographed by the brothers. The first dancers who learnt their art right from the basics under the brothers were Meenakshi of Mannārgudi and Sarasa Ammal. The former was the great-grandmother of the renowned musician Mannargudi Rajagopala Pillai¹².

Chinnayya (b. 1802) married in a family of musicians belonging to Ammachatram, a village about eight kilometres from Kumbakonam. His father-in-law was Abhiramisundara Nattuvanar. Chinnayya had no children. He spent most of his life in Mysore. He wrote a work titled *Abhinaya Lakshanam* (based on Nandikesvara's *Abhinaya Darpanam*) as "dictated by Subbarayan". It is being

edited by the present writer and will be published soon.

Ponnayya (1804–1864), the second brother, married in Orattanadu—a small village ten kilometres from Tanjāvur—and had four daughters. The first was Kuttiammal, later the wife of Pandanallur Sooryamurthi Pillai and the mother of Meenakshisundaram Pillai. The second was Kamakshi, who married Madras Jagannatha Nattuvanar and was the mother of Nelliappa Nattuvanar. The third daughter was Jnanambal, and she married Subbaraya Nattuvanar of Ammachatram. The name of the fourth daughter is not available; she died of smallpox at the age of six.

Sivanandam (1808–1863), the third brother, married Taiyalnayaki, great-granddaughter of Mannargudi Gopala Nattuvanar II. Her younger sister Parvati married Chockalinga Nattuvanar, a descendant of Gopala Nattuvanar. Sivanandam and Mannargudi Chockalinga Nattuvanar thus became related by marriage. Sivanandam was the guru of the reputed dancer Pudukottai Ammalu (senior), who later continued her practice under Mahadevan II. (Mahadevan II and Sabhapati were the sons of Sivanandam.)

Vadivelu (1810–1847), the youngest of the Quartet, married his brother Ponnayya's sister-in-law. It is believed that he had a daughter who died young.

As already mentioned, the Tanjavur Quartet innovated a new format for Bharatanāṭyam performances and created a relevant repertoire of songs. They composed Melaprāptis, Alārīppus, Jatisvarams, Sabdams (or Sallam Darus), Svarajatis, Varnams, Tillānās and Jāvalis besides a number of Keertanas. Sets of *adavus* were also devised by them for use in dance practice. Tulaja II and later Amarasimha patronized them liberally till the British dethroned Amarasimha and installed Serfoji II (on 29 June 1798¹³), believed to be the adopted son of Tulaja II¹⁴, in his place. The service of the brothers continued for only a few years under this nominal ruler. During that time, they composed a few Varnams honouring the new king. Ponnayya also composed music to *Sarabhendra Bhoopāla Kuravanji* and *Manmatha Vilāsam* and staged them in the Brihadeesvara temple each year. But the situation gradually deteriorated. Serfoji II, a ward of Reverend Schwartz, had been educated in English by him and installed on the throne by his influence, and was a puppet in the hands of the British. Western music was more pleasing to his ears. He passed orders that all his court musicians must learn Western music and even went to the extent of fining his own minister, Varahappayya, "because he was not ready to perform Western music"¹⁵. On one occasion Serfoji sent for the Quartet and declared that he planned to appoint a person for daily service in the Brihadeesvara temple in addition to them. This person was none other than the son of Serfoji's concubine and trained, to some extent, by the brothers themselves. The brothers submitted that the Raja should keep in mind the age and

talents of the appointee before taking a decision. But Serfoji promulgated a firman by which the new incumbent would not only be appointed in the temple, but would also have the exclusive right to temple honours such as *parivattam*¹⁶. This was an insult to the brothers and so they left Tanjāvur. They went first to Madurai, where Ponnayya and Sivanandam composed songs in praise of Lord Sundaresvara. A few months later, Chinnayya proceeded to Mysore on an invitation from the Maharaja and became the *asthāna vidwān* at the court. Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, the Maharaja of Mysore, was a great patron of arts and artists; the Varnams, Jāvalis and such other compositions of Chinnayya are in praise of this king and his heir Chamarajendra Wodeyar. Vadivelu, the youngest brother, went to Tiruvananthapuram and became the chief vidwān in the court of Swati Tirunal. Vadivelu was a great musician as well as a nāṭyāchārya. It was he who first played Carnatic music on the violin; to honour him, Swati Tirunal presented him with an ivory violin in 1834. He had a number of disciples in vocal music, violin and dancing. Seerkazhi Narayanaswami Pillai, guru of the violin celebrity Tiruchi Govindaswami Pillai, Tanjavur Venkoba Rao, and a few others learnt the violin under Vadivelu. He composed a number of Varnams, Keertanas, etc., stamping them with the signature 'Padmanābha' or synonyms of the word. For this reason, many of his compositions have been wrongly attributed to his patron Swati Tirunal, also a composer. It is also said that Vadivelu was instrumental in the revival of Kerala's Mohiniāṭṭam.

When Sivaji, son of Serfoji II and the last Maratha ruler of Tanjāvur, ascended the throne in 1832, he sent messages to all the brothers to come back to Tanjāvur. He apologized for the errors of his late father. After some reluctance, Ponnayya and Sivanandam returned and were reinstated in the temple and the court. But Chinnayya and Vadivelu, well placed in the courts of Mysore and Tiruvananthapuram, did not return to Tanjāvur, and continued in the service of their patrons till the end.

Mahadeva Nattuvanar II

As mentioned earlier, Sivanandam's sons Mahadevan II and Sabhapati became competent nāṭyāchāryas. Mahadevan II (8.2.1832–15.3.1904) trained many students including a male dancer, Krishnaswami Rao Jadhav, a relative of the Maratha royal household. It was Mahadevan who introduced the use of the clarinet in place of the Mukhaveena in Bharatanāṭyam recitals. His wife Tangammal hailed from another distinguished nāṭṭuvanār family of Tirutturaipoondi.

Mahadevan had four daughters: Kannammal, the first, married her maternal uncle's son Swaminatha Nattuvanar of Tirutturaipoondi. Swaminathan was also

the prime disciple of Mahadevan II and later came to be known as Tanjavur Swaminatha Nattuvanar (as referred to in the work of Tacchur Singaracharu¹⁷). Kalyanathammal, Mahadevan's second daughter, was the wife of Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai. Sampoomam, the third, married Pandanallur 'Veenai' Pasupati Pillai, a cousin of Meenakshisundaram Pillai. Pakkiri Ammal, the fourth daughter, was the wife of Tirutturaipoondi Mahalinga Nattuvanar, a younger brother of Swaminatha Nattuvanar¹⁸.

Sabhapati Nattuvanar

Sabhapati (1836–1894), the second son of Sivanandam, married Unnamulai Ammal of Kumbakonam and had two sons, Kannuswami and Vadivelu.

Tanjavur (Baroda) Kannuswami Nattuvanar

Kannuswami Nattuvanar (30.7.1864–16.8.1923) was a great teacher who is reputed to have never in his life made a compromise with quality. He never tolerated dancing devoid of *angasuddha*—symmetrical perfection in using the limbs. Every now and then, it is said, his baton would fly towards the erring student, hitting her elbow-joint. All the students of this hard taskmaster became very worthy artists, perfectionists by their training. Kannuswami was sent to Baroda by the Tanjāvur royal family and stayed there for some years, which is how he acquired the name 'Baroda' Kannuswami. In those days a nāṭyāchārya had to know the art of playing the Mrudangam. (In fact, this was the norm till recent years.) Kannuswami was especially proficient on the Mrudangam. Kumbakonam Azhaganambi Pillai, Tanjavur Vaidyanatha Iyer (guru of Palakkadu Mani Iyer), and some others were his disciples in percussion. Many talented dancers of the time were his students, and dance masters like Papanasam Vadivelu Nattuvanar were coached exclusively by him. Veenabhashini Ammal, an outstanding dancer who was originally a disciple of Alangudi Vadivelu Nattuvanar, continued her practice under Kannuswami Nattuvanar after settling down in Tanjāvur.

Kannuswami married Kuppammal, the elder sister of Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai; their only son was K. Ponnayya Pillai, who was honoured with the title Sangeeta Kalanidhi by the Music Academy, Madras.

Vadivelu Nattuvanar II

Vadivelu II (1869–14.3.1914), Kannuswami Pillai's younger brother, evinced little interest either in music or dance in his early years. His easygoing way of life only earned him the honorific 'good for nothing'. It is said that on a Vijayadasami day — when he was twenty — he was inadvertently hurt by some of his relatives. Without telling anybody, he left the house and went to the home of a local dancer and expressed his desire to train a little girl of the household, Kamakshi. The

family was doubtful, but when he performed Gejja Puja¹⁹ for the girl, all the invitees were amazed to witness his superb mastery in the art. Subsequently he won high respect and soon became a favourite nātyāchārya of Raja Bhaskara Setupati of Ramanāthapuram, who performed the highest ritual honour of *kanakābhisheka* for this versatile nāṭuvanār.

Orattanadu Govindaswami Nattuvanar gave his daughter Meenakshi in marriage to Vadivelu Nattuvanar. The couple had no children. Incidentally, Govindaswami Nattuvanar's aunts were the wives of Ponnayya and Vadivelu (of the Quartet).

K. Ponnayya Pillai

Tanjavur K. Ponnayya Pillai (14.1.1888–30.6.1945), the son of Kannuswami Nattuvanar, was a musician of great eminence. Though he knew the family art well, he did not pursue a career as a dance teacher. He was a full-fledged musician, and a composer of no mean merit, besides being adept in playing the violin and the Mrudangam. He headed the departments of music at Madras and Annamalai universities. He gave special importance to presenting compositions in Tamil in his performances. He wrote a book in Tamil on musical theory, *Isai Iyal*. Many of his students are prominent musicians today.

Ramu and Lakshmu, the twin daughters of Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai, were married to Ponnayya Pillai. Ramu Ammal gave birth to a son and two daughters. The son was named Sabhapati, though today he is better known as K.P. Kittappa Pillai (b. 5.5.1913). The latter's sisters, Chellammal and Kannammal, married Pandanallur Muthaya Pillai and Pandanallur 'Violin' Mahadeva Pillai respectively.

Ponnayya Pillai's only son from Lakshmu Ammal is the famous Veena player K.P. Sivanandam (b. 1.3.1917).

K.P. Kittappa Pillai

Sabhapati *alias* Kittappa Pillai started learning vocal music at the age of seven from Natesa Sastri, a descendant of Syama Sastri; he later learnt from his father Ponnayya Pillai and started giving duet performances with his cousin Narayanaswami Pillai, grandson of Orattanadu Govindaswami Nattuvanar. When the latter passed away, Kittappa stopped singing and took up the Mrudangam. Having had thorough training from his grandfather, Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai, he eventually became a leading nātyāchārya. Bangalore Padmalochani, Vijayantimala Bali, Hema Malini and many other popular dancers are among his students. Vimala is his wife and one of his sons, Chandrasekharan, is now receiving training in nāṭṭuvangam.

Mannargudi Kinsmen

As mentioned earlier, Vaidyalinga Nattuvanar was a descendant of Mannargudi Gopala Nattuvanar. Vaidyalinga's nieces Taiyalnayaki and Parvati were the wives, respectively, of Tanjavur Sivanandam (of the Quartet) and Chockalinga Nattuvanar, son of Vaidyalinga Nattuvanar. Pakkiri Pillai (1867–2.11.1937), the Konakol²⁰ wizard who earned the epithet 'Laya Churangam' ('mine of rhythm'), was the son of Mannargudi Chockalinga Nattuvanar. His son Vaidyalingam Pillai II was also an outstanding Konakol artist²⁰. Pakkiriswami, son of Vaidyalingam Pillai II, is working as a school-teacher.

The third daughter of Tanjavur Ponnayya was married in Ammachatram, where Chinnayya's wife came from. By that daughter, Ponnayya became the grandfather of Subbaraya Nattuvanar, whose grandson was (Pandanallur) Chockalingam Pillai.

Orattanadu Govindaswami Nattuvanar and Pichayya Nattuvanar

Orattanadu is a small village about twelve kilometres from Tanjāvur, and there lived Kodandarama Nattuvanar. Two of his daughters were married respectively to Tanjavur Ponnayya and Tanjavur Vadivelu. Narayanaswami Nattuvanar was the son of Kodandaraman.

Govindaswami Nattuvanar, son of Narayanaswami, married Kunnayi Ammal, daughter of Ammachatram Subbaraya Nattuvanar. Meenakshi, Govindaswami's daughter, was married to Tanjavur Vadivelu Nattuvanar II. Govindaswami's son, Pichayya Pillai (1880–23.12.1945), learnt dance first from his father and then from his elder sister's husband, Vadivelu Nattuvanar. Pichayya Pillai was a venerable nāṭyāchārya and trained many artists like Tanjavur Lakshmikantam and T. M. Arunachalam Pillai. Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai gave his eldest daughter Kamakshi in marriage to Pichayya Pillai; their son was Tanjavur Narayanaswami Pillai (2.3.1910–23.12.1945).

Trained in vocal music by his uncle, K. Ponnayya Pillai, Narayanaswami was considered a repository of almost all the compositions of the Tanjāvur Quartet and of Syama Sastri. He used to give vocal concerts in duet with his cousin Kittappa till he died when he was only thirty-six.

Tirutturaipoondi Kinsmen

Tirutturaipoondi Swaminatha Nattuvanar (9.3.1860–10.9.1931) was the son of Deivaraya Pillai, a Nāgasvaram artist. A disciple and son-in-law of Mahadeva Nattuvanar II, Swaminathan had two sons, Tambikkannu Nattuvanar and Chockalingam Pillai.

Chockalingam Pillai, tutored by Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai, mastered vocal music, naṭṭuvangam, Veena and Mrudangam, but eventually became a

Nāgasvaram-player. For many years, he was heard performing on the Veena and accompanying musicians on the Mrudangam on All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli. He could not tolerate an *apasvara*. Once, on a live radio broadcast, he started shouting at the vocalist he was accompanying on the Mrudangam when the artist went out of tune; further, he left the studio in annoyance while the programme was still on the air. Naturally, this caused great inconvenience to the officials, but even before they could decide to bar him from future radio programmes, he informed them that he would not accept any contract from the Radio in future.

Pandanallur Nātyāchāryas

Pandanallur, a place intimately associated with Bharatanāṭyam, is about twenty kilometres south-west of Mayiladuturai (formerly Mayavaram). The inscriptions of Rajaraja Chola I tell us that four hundred dancers were brought by the king for appointment in the Brihadeesvara temple, Tanjāvur, from various temples. The Pandanallur temple was among them, which makes it clear that the place had plenty of dancers in those times. *Raghunātha Nāyakābhyudayamu*²¹ and other works inform us that Pandanallur was reconstructed by king Vijayaraghava Nayaka. It is also learnt that Pasupuleti Rangajamma, the great woman poet and dancer of Vijayaraghava's court, had lived in Pandanallur at least for some time. This village has the honour of having produced a multitude of dance teachers and dancers. Mention has already been made of Muthayya Nattuvanar of king Shahji's time (1684–1712) who staged *Tyāgarāja Kuravanji* in the Brihadeesvara temple. A scion of Muthayya's family was Kumaraswami Nattuvanar, who was the first disciple of Tanjavur Sivanandam (of the Quartet). Kumaraswami's wife was a close relative of Tanjavur Chinnayya's wife (belonging to Ammachatram). Kumaraswami was a *lakshana-vidwān* and it is said that there was no work pertaining to dance and music which he had not studied. He was the guru of Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai, and the great dancer Tiruvalaputtur Kalyani Ammal was also initiated in the art by him. His younger brother was Viswanatha Pillai, a great vocalist. It is said that, whenever occasion permitted, Gopalakrishna Bharati would come to listen to Viswanatha Pillai's music and shower encomiums on him. Viswanatha Pillai died a bachelor.

Kumaraswami Nattuvanar had two sons, Arunachalam and Pasupati. Composing and rendering rhythmically terse Jatis was 'jackfruit soaked in honey' to Arunachala Nattuvanar (1873–1939). Sometimes he would spontaneously render a Varnam composed in a particular rāga in some other rāga, striking his listeners dumb. Kattumannarkovil Muthukumara Nattuvanar was trained by Arunachalam, and the famous dancer Swarnasaraswati was also one of his disciples.

Arunachalam Pillai married thrice. His first wife was Chellammal, sister of the

Nāgasvaram-player Tanjavur Kaliyamurthi Pillai; the second and third were Meenakshi of Melavasal and Visalakshi of Kumbakonam. None of his wives bore him any children.

Arunachalam's younger brother was a Veena-player and hence addressed as 'Veenai' Pasupati. He married Sampoomam, daughter of Mahadeva Nattuvanar II, and had two sons and a daughter. Subramaniam, the elder son, was a naṭṭuvanār; Chengammal, the daughter, was married to Pandanallur Chockalingam Pillai; and the third child, Mahadevan, is a violinist.

Two sons and two daughters were born to Subramania Nattuvanar (20.11.1900–17.10.1945). The elder son, Swaminathan, is a naṭṭuvanār and lived for many years in Delhi, teaching the art at Sangeet Bharati and other institutions. The second son, Kumaraswami, is a school-teacher. The first daughter of Subramaniam married Rajagopal, a Taval-player and relative of Chockalinga Nattuvanar of Mannārgudi, while Angammal, the second daughter, is the wife of Vadivelu and the daughter-in-law of Pandanallur Chockalingam Pillai.

Chockalingam Pillai and his wife Chengammal had two sons. Subbaraya Pillai, the first son, is a renowned dance teacher in Madras, and the second, Vadivelu, is looking after the family estate in the village.

Veenai Pasupati's second son, 'Violin' Mahadeva Pillai, married Kannammal, daughter of Tanjavur K. Ponnayya Pillai.

Pandanallur Muthayya Nattuvanar, grandson of his namesake of Shahji's times, was a cousin of Kumaraswami Nattuvanar. His son Suryamurthi Pillai (1843–97), though commonly known as a naṭṭuvanār, was also a great scholar of Tamil literature, Sanskrit and puranic lore. Kuttiammal, daughter of Tanjavur Ponnayya, was married to Suryamoorthi and had a daughter and a son. Kuppammal, the daughter, was Tanjavur Kannuswami Nattuvanar's wife, the son being the nonpareil nāṭyāchārya and dance celebrity Meenakshisundaram Pillai (22.9.1869–14.10.1954).

Groomed by Kumaraswami Nattuvanar and Tanjavur Mahadeva Nattuvanar II, Meenakshisundaram Pillai was extremely proficient in several languages—Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam—and on several instruments: violin, Veena, Mrudangam. Besides, he had a thorough knowledge of authoritative works on *nāṭya* and *sangeeta*. He was also an excellent composer. Aspirants galore thronged to Pandanallur to learn under this inimitable master. Tiruvalaputtur Kalyani (who started her lessons with Kumaraswami Pillai), Tangachi, Sabharanjitam, the legendary Jayalakshmi—all of Pandanallur—Rukmini Devi Arundale, Tara Choudhury, Ram Gopal, Mrinalini Sarabhai, U.S. Krishna Rao and a host of other dancers were students of Meenakshisundaram Pillai. He also trained many students in naṭṭuvangam. Tiruvalaputtur Swaminatha Pillai (son of

Kalyani Ammal), Pandanallur Chockalingam Pillai, Tirutturaipoondi Chockalingam Pillai, Muthayya Pillai (Meenakshisundaram's son), K.P. Kittappa Pillai (his grandson), and Pandanallur Swaminathan (another grandson) are a few among them. Kattumannarkovil Muthukumara Nattuvanar also greatly benefited by his guidance.

Meenakshisundaram Pillai's wife was Kalyanathammal, daughter of Tanjavur Mahadeva Nattuvanar. Five daughters and one son were born to them : Kamakshi, who was married to Tanjavur Pichayya Nattuvanar; Ramu and Lakshmu, married to K. Ponnayya Pillai; Chellammal, who was married at Konur; Kunjammal, who married Tiruvanaikkovil Gopala Pillai; and Muthayya Pillai (14.9.1900–10.2.1979).

The latter was a *nattuvanār* and an equally good violinist. Ammani, daughter of Mannargudi 'Konakol' Pakkiri Pillai, was his first wife. After her premature death, he married Chellammal, daughter of K. Ponnayya Pillai. Gopalakrishnan, a *nattuvanār*, and Suryamurthi are among the four sons of Muthayya Pillai.

Nellaiyappa Nattuvanar

Madras Jagannatha Nattuvanar (1836–1907), the second son-in-law of Tanjavur Ponnayya and the son of Kantimati, Tiruvarur Gurumurthi Nattuvanar's daughter, was the father of Nellaiyappa Nattuvanar (1854–1905). Nellaiyappa learnt the art from Mahadeva Nattuvanar II. Duraikannu and Parvati, who were the first to dance to the Viribhoni Varnam '*Muthu Veettu*', Kannammal, and the *abhinaya* expert Mylapore Gowri Ammal—all belonging to Madras—were some of Nellaiyappa's disciples. Sadasiva Nattuvanar, Kandappa Nattuvanar—guru of T. Balasaraswati—and Subbaraya Pillai, a musician and Harikatha exponent, were the sons of Nellaiyappa Nattuvanar.

May their tribe multiply!

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The names of these dancers, as also the genealogy of the Mannārgudi *nattuvanārs*, are in the family records of Gopala Nattuvanar, now in the possession of his descendants.
2. Not the *Tyāgesa Kuravanji*, once annually staged in the Tiruvarur temple.
3. This name is found engraved on the floor of the Brihadeesvara temple, with no other information about him.
4. The sources of information about Mahadevan and his brothers are the family records of the Tanjāvur Quartet; oral reports from the descendants of Pasuvandanai Gangaimuthu; and Tanjāvur Palace records (in Modi script).
5. One *veli* is equal to $6\frac{2}{3}$ acres.
6. An erotic poetic work in Telugu by Muddu Pazhani of king Pratapasimha's court. It was banned and out of circulation for a long time, until the late Bangalore Nagaratnamma got it published again.

7. The manuscripts are in the Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjāvur.
8. Sources: family records of the Tanjāvur Quartet; oral information provided to the present writer by Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai.
9. A work in Tamil by Pasuvandanai Gangaimuthu Annavi (1837–1920) dealing with musical instruments and dance. The author was a relative of Gangaimuthu Nattuvanar, grandfather of the Tanjāvur Quartet. *Sabhāranjita Chintāmani* and *Sangeeta Bharata Sāra Samgraham* were also written by him. He served in the Madurai temple.
10. Tanjāvur Palace records (in Modi script).
11. Informants: Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai and Tanjavur K. Ponnayya Pillai.
12. Informants: Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai and Mannargudi Rajagopala Pillai.
13. Tanjāvur Palace records.
14. There is some controversy as to whether Serfoji II was really the adopted son of Tulaja II, and this is reflected in the Tanjāvur Palace records.
15. Tanjāvur Palace records.
16. A temple honour to those who serve there, performed on specific occasions by cincturing the individual with a silk shawl taken from the deity's idol. This is considered a great honour.
17. Concise biographies of many musicians and nāṭyāchāryas are found in Tacchur Singaracharlu's *Gāyaka Siddhanjanam*. He also authored graded books on Carnatic music in Telugu such as *Sangeeta Kalānidhi*, *Gāyaka Lochanam*, etc.
18. All the genealogical information about Mahadeva Nattuvanar II and his family is based on Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai and the family records of the Tanjāvur Quartet.
19. Gejja Pooja literally means 'worship of the anklets'. It is a performance by a debutante in the presence of invited elderly vidwāns and nāṭyāchāryas; only on their approval, the dancer would make her *arangetram* in public.
20. Konakol is the art of reciting rhythmic solfeggio in accompaniment to dance.
21. *Raghunātha Nāyakābhyaudayamu* is a work by king Vijayaraghava Nayaka of Tanjāvur (1633–1675) in Telugu, in which he extols his own titles, literary prowess, his works and so on, but mainly deals with the daily routine of his father Raghunatha Nayaka.