CHAPTER XI

SCULPTURES

In the region of our study, about ninety-five temples have been noticed and they range in time from 7th century A.D. to the end of Vijayanagara period, to which this study is restricted. During this large span of time extending over nine centuries, temples were built under the patronage of different royal dynasties. It is an established fact that the sculptural art has seen development from time to time due to the change in the taste of the people, artists and technology. The temples built during this vast period contain various types of sculptures carved for decoration, propagation of the religion and for worship as cult objects. The sculptural art of these temples has witnessed a long history and development of its own. The region of our study being a buffer zone has been influenced by the artistic traditions of both the Tamil and Kannada cultures. Therefore, the influence of both the cultures is discernible in the carving of sculptures, particularly during the early phase.

These sculptures are found carved in different parts of the temple and also preserved in the premises of the temple. These sculptures, technically (technical as far as the method of carving of them is concerned) belong to different categories. They are the sculptures in the round, sculptures in high relief and sculptures in low relief. This classification is purely on the basis of the mode of sculpting.

There is also another classification based on the theme of sculptures carved. The type of sculptures found in the temples can be classified as follows:

i) Cult/Votive objects

ii) Divine and Semi-divine sculptures

iii) Narrative panels
iv) Divine tableaus

v) Portrait sculptures

vi) Faunal, floral, geometric and non-geometric designs, objects, attributes, insignia, etc.

These sculptures are found carved on the *adhiṣṭānas, hastihastas, bhitti, stambhas, uttaras, vitānas, prastaras, vājanas, nāsis, tōraṇas, kōṣṭhas, kapōta, dwārabandha* and *balipīṭhas, dhvajasthambas, sōpānas, pranālas, jālakas, vimāna* and *gōpuras* etc., and even on the floor. Besides these, many individual sculptures of the themes mentioned above are also found in good numbers.

In the present context, the description and study of all types of sculptures, according to the classification, is made, as far as possible, in a chronological order. Iconographical remarks are made wherever necessary.

The dawn of sculptural art as stated earlier, can be traced to 7th century A.D., in the region of our study. The famous sculpture of Ananthaśayana Vishnu carved in the rock-cut shrine at Namakkal is known as the earliest of the sculptures found in the region. This sculpture has striking resemblance with its parallel theme found in the famous Mahiṣamardini cave at Mahabalipuram. Therefore, the sculpture under study has been assigned to middle of 7th century A.D., on stylistic grounds. It is interesting to note that, by that time, matured sculptural art had already made its presence in the Salem region.

After the carving of sculptures of Vishnu at Namakkal there is a gap of about two centuries in the history of the development of sculptural art in the region. By the middle of ninth century A.D., structural temples begin to appear and no longer was the rock cut tradition in vogue. The temples of the Nolambas built at Dharmapuri mark not only the beginning of structural temple architecture but that of sculptural art also of the region. The Dharmapuri temples possess relief sculptures carved on the pillars, ceiling and the socle.
They are all narrative panels depicting important incidents from the epics and puranas. As they are only reliefs in the panels and friezes, it is difficult to identify any particular artistic trait in them. However, on the architectural and inscriptional evidence, these temples have been ascribed to the Nolamba style of art.

Besides these art forms found in the above said temple, there are also a few individual sculptures preserved in the Dharmapuri museum and also at some temples of the region. These sculptures have close resemblance with some of the well-known specimens of Nolamba sculptural art. Therefore, it may be clearly said that during the 9th and 10th centuries A.D., Nolamba style of sculptural art prevailed in the region.

By the end of 10th century and onwards, the region witnessed the political supremacy of the imperial Cholas. Large number of temples were constructed in the region under the patronage of the Chola kings and officers. From this time onwards, the sculptures carved in this region are influenced by the artistic tradition of the Tamil country. The sculptures carved during the period of the Chola occupation of the region bear clear-cut traits of the Chola sculptural art.

The political supremacy of the Hoysalas in the 13th century A.D., made its impact on Salem region too. Hoysalas ruled this region for a short span of about a hundred years. During this period, about twenty temples are known to have been built in the region. Of these, about a dozen temples possess the influence of Hoysala sculptural art in the form of delicate carvings of friezes of faunal, floral forms and architectural themes, designs and decoration of the pillars and other decorative motifs.

After the dawn of the Vijayanagara empire, a uniform application of architectural and sculptural motifs begin to appear in the temples of almost the entire region, south of Tungabhadra. Therefore, one can see, during this period
the depiction of sculptures and other decorative carvings in the temples almost on a uniform pattern associated with the Vijayanagara School of art.

The region of our study, being under the influence of the Chola artistic tradition for a long period, the emphasis for the carving of decorative panels and other designs was less in the temple art. The reason for this is also because of the medium that was used for the construction of the temples. During the early period (i.e. the Nolamba period), fine-grained medium was used for the carving of sculptures, friezes and other decorative motifs of the building. Therefore, intricate and crisp carvings, sometimes even with a good polish are noticed during this period. After the occupation of this region, by the Cholas, uniform use of granite came in to practice. This medium was not suitable for the carving of lavish decoration on the temple walls.

The Chola artists actually preferred to build the temples with simplicity; hence not much importance was given for the carving of decorative designs on the temple exteriors. Pure architectural mouldings were preferred for decoration of the building. Therefore, the minimal decorative carvings are found on the temple walls. But the Cholas school of had the practice of installing neatly carved sculptures, carved in a different medium, in the wall niches of the temples. Many such sculptures, fortunately, are available for the understanding of the sculptural art of the Chola period.

During the Vijayanagara period emphasis was given for the architectural art. Sculptural art was not given much attention. Walls of the temples were built plain exhibiting simplicity and austerity. Only architectural decorations were with all details. Bhittipādas, kōṣṭas, kumbhapañjaras were the main themes of decoration. However, the absence of sculptural forms was suitably compensated by the carving of huge sculptural pillars in the halls and mantapas of the period. Instead of the temple walls, the pillars of the mantapas possess beautiful reliefs.
and also, life size sculptures in the round of puranic personages, horses, vyālas, simhas, etc.

The portrait sculptures in the round and in reliefs are also found in good number in the region. Carving of the sculptures of Alvars and Nayanmars begin from the time of the Cholas and continued during the Vijayanagara period also. Besides this, the portrait sculptures of the patrons of the temple also come into being during the Vijayanagara period.

The temples of the Salem region have a wealth of sculptures belonging to different creeds. Majority of the sculptures are Shaivate in nature, followed by Vaishnava sect. Besides these, a few Jina and Buddha sculptures are also found. The table given at the end of the chapter gives a detailed picture of the creed, the class, type and also their location in the temple complex.

Of the sculptures found in the region, Shiva and his different forms dominate in number. Next in number are the sculptures of Vishnu, Devi (Parvati), Surya, Brahma and others. A form of Shiva, i.e. the Bhairava is maximum in number. Forms of Shiva like Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Lingodbhava, miscellaneous forms of Shiva like Bikṣātanāmūrti, Umāsāntvanāmūrti, Tāṇḍavamūrti, Vṛṣasahitaṁūrti, Umāsaḥitamūrti and Ardhanārīśvara are also noticed. Forms of Shiva, cited above and also those not listed, are also found in reliefs on the pillars of the temple but those sculptures are very small in nature and are purely for decoration of the temple interiors. They are not considered for the statistical analysis.

Next are the sculptures of Vishnu. Of the forms of Vishnu, Narasimha sculptures are maximum in numbers followed by the sculptures of standing form of Vishnu along with Śrī Dēvi and Bhū Dēvi worshipped in the sanctums of the temples. Rests are the sculptures of Narasimha. Other forms of Vishnu, like Varāha, Varadarāja, Rāma, Vēṇugōpāla etc., are also noticed.
All the other deities, being subsidiary in nature, are represented in their regular forms. After Vishnu, next come the forms of Durga, which are represented in two different forms. They are the Vishnu Durga and Mahishamardini. Of the sculptures of Durga, majority of them are Vishnu Durga while only three sculptures are of Mahishamardhini.

Now, the study and description of the sculptures of Shaivite, Vaishnavite, and other creeds are made here. In this study, only important sculptures ie., Important from the point of view of iconography and workmanship are only considered. Smaller sculptures, small reliefs and unimportant sculptures are not taken for study. However, they are listed in the table given at the end of the chapter.

**SHAIVA SCULPTURES**

All the Shaiva temples of the region, except one, have the Lingas housed in their sanctum. The only image found in the sanctum is of *Ardhanārīśvara*. It is the hermaphrodite form of Shiva representing half male and half female form. It is a standing image, above six feet high, but very much worn out due to continuous worship. From its stylistic traits, it appears to be of the Chola period datable to 10th Century A.D. This sculpture is a standing in *tribhaṅga*. The left hand i.e. of Parvati is in *katihasta mudra*. The right hand i.e. of Shiva holds an unidentified object. It is not *triśūla*, not *danḍa*, and not even the *pināka*. It is a long club like weapon. The tip of the object is held by Shiva, while its heavy end is supported by his waist.

The other forms of Shiva found are not enshrined in the sanctum. Majority of them are found in *dēvakōṭas* of the walls of the shrines. Among these sculptures, form of Dakṣināmūrti is predominant.
Fig 48. An eye copy of Ardhanārīśvara stone image in the sanctum of Ardhanārīśvara temple at Tiruchengodu (approximate height 5'-6', photography not allowed in the temple).

Not to Scale
SHIVA

Three sculptures of Shiva standing in samabhanga are found in the Salem region. Of these, two are free standing images and one is a relief inside the dēvakōṣṭa of a temple (pl-176). This form of Shiva is also called by the name Candrasēkharamūrti. Shiva is four handed and his hands are disposed thus, The upper right hand parasu, upper Left hand-trisūla, lower left hand-katihasta and lower right hand-abhaya. Of these sculptures, the one in the Salem museum is carved in granite (pl-177). It is simple in its carving and also archaic in its traits. It is also a relief sculpture and the features remind those of the Pallava style. The other two sculptures are of early Chola period. Both have tall slender form and identically executed and reflect the workmanship of Chola style of art (pl-178).

DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI

Dakṣināmūrti is a form of Shiva, which is found invariability in almost all the Shaiva temples of Tamilnadu. Shiva, in this form, is depicted as the ‘Guru- who guides his devotees in the right path (Dakṣināmārga)’ and hence called by this name. The images generally are housed inside the kōṣṭas in the southern wall of the shrine, as per the prescription of the Texts. In the region of our study, images of Dakṣināmūrti found are all of Vyākhyaṇa daksināmūrti. In this form, Shiva is represented as seated on a rock in lalitasana. His right hand is in vyākhyaṇamudra. Other hands hold sarpa, agni and aksamāla. The four sages (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata) are represented as seated on the foreground. The height of these images varies from one and a half feet to four feet. The earliest sculptures of Dakṣināmūrti can be seen at Pillur (pl-179). It is a grīvadēvata and the only Dakṣināmūrti to be seen as grīvadēvata in the region. The practice of enshrining Dakṣināmūrti images in the temples of the region continues till the end of Vijayanagara Period. The best
of the Daksinamurti sculptures are to be seen at Tadavur (pl-180) and at Salem. They belong to the Chola period.

BHAIKARAVA

The cult of Bhairava appears to be very predominant in the region of our study. Forty-two sculptures of Bhairava of various types are noticed. These sculptures are found in the round and in relief. The sculptures in the round are found in the gūḍhamaṇṭapa, parivārālayas and prākāranaṇṭapas of the temple. Bhairava, according to tradition is considered as the kṣetrapāla. Therefore his sculptures are found generally in almost in all the temples. In the forms of Bhairava of the region different varieties are discernable. They are four-handed, eight-handed, and sixteen-handed Bhairavas. These Bhairava sculptures except three are in sthānaka posture (pls-181,182,183,185)), while three are in āsīna posture (pl-184). Iconographically, they may be identified as vāṭuka, kṣetrapāla and aghōra Bhairavas.

The earliest of the Bhairava sculptures, seen in the region, belong to the Nolamba period (10th Century) (pl-185). The cult continued during successive periods. A rare instance of constructing a separate temple for Bhairava is also noticed. This is of the period of the Hoysala king Veersomeshwara, as evidenced by an inscription in the temple1.

AGHORA BHAIKARAVAMURTI

Another aspect of Shiva, annihilating the demon of darkness, is the form of Aghorabhairavamurti (pl-186). It is a popular representation in a different way. The way, the theme is represented here is interesting. Shiva is standing on the dwarf-demon holding a shield and a sword. Shiva is piercing the head of the demon with his triśūla i.e. suggesting the expelling of ajñāna (ignorance) from the head. Shiva is eight handed. He holds in his hands, weapons and attributes like, khadga, khetaka, mrga, dhanus and bāna. The ferocity of the face of Shiva
is enhanced by his up-curled mustaches. It is a forceful, dynamic form of Shiva full of action. It is a sculpture of 16th Century A.D.

LIŃGÖDBHAVA MÜRTHI

Twenty-one sculptures of this form of Shiva are found in the region. All these sculptures are housed in the kōśta of the back wall of the sanctum of the shrines of Shiva and this is according to the Textual prescription (pl-187). All of the Liṅgōdbhavamūrti sculptures have uniform iconographic forms. The quality of carving is also uniform in them. This form represents Shiva inside an oval recess in the centre of the Liṅga. Always Brahma and Vishnu are represented in the form of Swan and Boar.

The concept of Liṅgōdbhava of Shiva is depicted in a unique form in a sculpture carved attached to the shaft of the bhadraka pillar at Kailasanatha temple at Taramangalam (pl-188). It consists of Shiva, Bramha, Vishnu and a tātaṅkavṛkṣa. The composition of these subjects is very interesting. Shiva, in the form of liṅga is depicted on a large pedestal. Vishnu is seated embracing the shaft of the liṅga with his two legs and hands. Bramha is standing at the backside of the liṅga and he is embracing the tip of the liṅga by his two fore hands. He is five headed and holds in his upper hands a rosary and a pot. By the side of Bramha is a tall tātaṅkavṛkṣa. Thus the episode of Liṅgōdbhava is conceived in a unique way by the artist and depicted in a very effective manner. Bramha shown as five headed also strengthens the conclusion that this is of the Liṅgōdbhava episode. It is noteworthy a parallel to this type of depiction has not been found anywhere.

BHĬKSĀṬAṆA MŪRTHI

Two examples of this form of Shiva are reported. One is a sculpture in high relief (pl-189) and the other is almost in the round carved attached to the shaft of a bhadraka pillar of the Vijayanagara times (pl-190). Of these, the second example is noteworthy. It is a sculpture of three feet height. It has got
eight hands. The attributes are the damaru, sarpa and an unidentifiable object. He is feeding the mṛga with his right hand. He holds the triśūla and the kapāla in his lefts hands. The other two attributes in his left hand are again unidentifiable. The sculpture exhibits the trait of late Chola and early Vijayanagara style of art. Both the sculptures of Bhikṣāṭanamūrī have attractive stance and gait. They are well carved and proportionate in form. Though carved in hard granite, both the sculptures are very attractive with their ornaments, and attributes.

NĀṆṆARĀJA

Naṭarāja is the dancing form of Shiva, also called by the name Tāṇḍava. There are different forms of dancing Shiva identified by different names. The most popular is the Naṭarāja. Other forms are Sandhyatāṇḍava, Urdhvāṇḍava, Gaṇaṇtatāṇḍava, etc. The sculptures of this deity as wall reliefs and also in the round on the shafts of pillars are noticed. Naṭarāja is a very important form of Shiva worshiped throughout Tamilnadu. Temples of Naṭarāja at Chidambaram, Madurai and Thiruvengadu and also the one at Nedusal in the region of our study are well known. Though the cult of Naṭarāja is very popular, stone sculptures of this deity are rarely noticed. In the region however, almost all the Shiva temples invariably have a bronze sculpture of this deity.

In the region of our study, five examples of this deity carved in stone are found. Two are wall reliefs and three are carved on a big scale on the shafts of the pillars of the mahāmanṭapa. Now, coming to the wall reliefs, Shiva is carved as wall relief in two examples, as dancing on the Apasmārapuruṣa. He has four hands, two of his hands hold dāmaru and agni, while the other hands are disposed differently in different sculptures. It is interesting to note that in one of the relief, he holds a triśūla from which he is piercing the body of the demon lying below. He is flanked by Vyāghrapāda and Patañjali. In another
example, the two hands of Shiva are disposed in abhaya and lambahastha gestures. On his left is the relief of standing Shivakami. It is again interesting to note that, this sculpture is the representation in stone relief of a bronze image, because it has the pedestal and the prabhāvali with flames, copied exactly like that of the bronze.

Three more sculpture in the dancing form identified as that of ūrdhvatāndava are also found. These sculptures are known for their exquisite quality of workmanship, the magnitude and their grandeur. All these sculptures are attached to the shafts of pillars of the mahāmaṇṭapa and prākāra maṇṭapa of the temple. They are dateable to 16th century AD. The sculpture from Taramangalam is a magnificent representation of the theme. Shiva is represented as standing on one leg over the back of apasmārapuruṣa. His other leg, i.e., the right leg, is lifted upwards, towards the sky. Shiva is sixteen and handed holds various types of weapons and attributes. By his sides are standing Brahma and Vishnu. Parvati is represented and she in añjalimudra. Shiva’s two lower hands are represented as holding and beating the kettledrum held near the thighs. The entire image is on a pitha supported by the bharavāhakas. The composition of the figure is very elegant and balanced and is very impressive to the eye. The entire sculpture has a height of about eight feet.

Another example from Thirucchendogu, is also equally attractive and beautiful in its form and execution (pl-191). Shiva is eight-handed and holds various weapons and attributes. He is also holding and beating the kettledrum in his two forehands. This image is also in ārdhva Posture. The image is attractive for its delicate carving and exquisite workmanship. The face of Shiva is very calm and serene. Another sculpture of this form in the same place is also noticed. In every respect, this sculpture is similar to the one described above.
UMĀŚĀNTVANAMŪRTI

Two examples of this form are noticed. One is a loose sculpture enshrined in the kōṣṭa of a temple (pl-41). The other is carved attached to the shaft of a bhadraka pillar (pl-192). The first is earlier in date. It has all the features of the typical Chola school of art. Particularly noteworthy is the tall parallel-sided jaṭāmukuta of Shiva, which reminds us of similar jaṭāmukutas of Shiva sculptures of Tanjore temple. Shiva is standing in tribaṅga posture and gently caressing the chin of Parvati who is standing by his side. Shiva is four handed and the only attribute of Shiva is the mrga held in his upper left hand. From his upper right hand, he loosens his matted hair and releases Ganga. His right fore hand is touching the chin of Uma while his lower left hand is embracing her. The ornamentation, the costumes and the mode of their carving and decoration are all typically Chola in character. The expression in the face of Uma is neatly delineated. She is shown as annoyed by the act of Shiva i.e. keeping Ganga is his jata. This aspect of Shiva is also called by the name Gaṅgāvisarjanamūrthi.

The second example is of a later period (16th century). The sculpture is carved attached to the shaft to the pillar. It has a two-tiered pedestal supported by bhāravāhakas, over which, Shiva and Parvati are standing. Shiva is consoling Parvati by gently touching her chin. Shiva is four handed. In his upper right hand a tiny standing image of Ganga in anjalimudra is carved. Uma is two handed. She holds lotus in her left hand and the right hand is in kaṭihasta posture. The image has a semi-circle halo. The carving is not very elegant as the previous example but the general outlay, the stance and scheme of representation all exhibit workmanship of good quality.

VRŚABHASAHITAMŪRTI

One example of this form is noticed. It is carved, attached to the shaft of a bhadraka pillar (pl-193). It is datable to 16th century AD. Shiva is standing in
tribhanga. Behind him is the standing Nandi. Shiva is resting his left elbow on the hump of Nandi, and Nandi is licking fingers of Shiva’s left hand. Shiva’s two upper hands hold paraśu and mrga, while his lower right hand is in Abhayamudra. Shiva stands on a pedestal supported by bharavāhakas. There is a flat simple and big halo behind Shiva. The ears and kundalas of Shiva are carved very prominently and his locks of hair arranged in a peculiar but stylistic manner is noteworthy. This form of Shiva is also called by the name, Pradōṣamūrthi, the worship of which, at the pradōṣakāla (dusk) is considered very auspicious and fruitful. Bronzes of the same theme of similar form are available in good number in the Salem region.

UMĀSAHITAMŪRTI

Umāsahtamūrti carved attached to the shaft of a bhadraka pillar (pl-194), is a life size sculpture of Shiva and Parvati standing side by side and gently embracing each other by their left and right hands respectively. This form of Shiva is also called by the name Āliṅganacandraśēkharamūrti. Shiva holds in his right hands the paraśu and mrga. His left hands are holding Uma. Lower left hand is embracing Uma’s waist, while his upper left hand is placed on her left shoulder. Uma is two handed and holds a lotus in her left hand and her right hand is placed embracing Shiva’s waist.

A big prabhōvali with kirtimukha is carved for the entire sculpture. The sculpture has the features of Vijayanagara art. This sculpture on stylistic and architectural grounds is dated to 16th century A.D.

SUBSIDIARY DEITIES:

DĒVI

Sculptures of Parvati, called by different names locally, are available in good numbers. These are all cult objects enshrined in the Amman shrines of the different Shiva temples of the region. They are all sculptures, carved in the
round, with or without a prabhāvalī. They are carved either in sthānaka or in the āśīna postures. The standing sculptures are all in samabhāṅga (pl-195) or tribhaṅga postures. They are always four handed holding in their upper hands pāśa and aiṃkuṣa and the lower hands are disposed in abhaya and varada mudras. The decorations are all conventional and traditional. The independent sculpture of Parvati enshrined inside the Amman shrines begin to appear from late Chola period and this tradition continued during the successive centuries also. As most of these sculptures are under worship, they are covered with varieties of dresses, ornaments, masks and shield. Therefore, it is not possible to go into the details of the iconographic variations, if any.

**DURGA**

Two forms of Durga are found in the region. The first form is that of Viṣṇudurgā, which are found in good number. This form of Durga is commonly noticed in almost in all the temples built in the Tamil tradition. The Texts prescribe that the northern and southern walls of the antarāla are to be installed with the images of Mahiṣamardini and Ganesha respectively. Therefore, the sculptures of Viṣṇudurgā are found carved in the northern niche of almost all the temples. The Nolambas copied this tradition and this tradition penetrated deep into Hemavathi, the capital of Nolambas in Anantapur Dist.

This form of Durga is represented as standing in samabhāṅga or tribhaṅga on the head of a Buffalo (pl-196,197). Durga is always four handed. Two upper hands hold śaṅkha and cakra, while the two lower hands are disposed in abhaya and varada mudras. Iconographically and aesthetically these sculptures are not attractive. These sculptures begin to appear from the early Chola period and continue even during the later period. Similar representation of the goddess standing on the head of mahiṣa but with a different form and conception is also noticed. The sculpture is very crude but iconographically it is interesting. The head of the mahiṣa is carved like that of a
rākṣasamukha with two horns of a buffalo. The goddess is standing in samabāṅga on the head of the demon. She is eight handed and holds bow and arrow and the other four hands hold unidentifiable objects. As the image is crude in appearance and form stylistically also it is difficult to date this sculpture.

Another form of depiction of the same theme is also noticed. Stylistically, it can be dated to the Nolamba school of Art. The goddess is depicted as standing in triṃbhaṅga posture (pl-198). She is eight handed. Behind the Devi is the seated lion with prominent manes and representation of this lion reminds us of similar lion motifs of the Pallava pillars. This sculpture may be dated to the 10th century AD.

Another form of Durga, in the act of killing the demon is also noticed (pl-199). It is a relief sculpture inside a wall niche of a temple datable to 10th century AD. The sculpture is crude in its form as well as in its execution. But the mode of representation deserves mention here. The goddess is four handed and she is holding śaṅkha and cakra in her upper hands. Of the two lower hands, the left hand is holding the head of maḥiṣa while the right hand holds khadga from which she has pierced the body of the demon. This is mode of representation of Maḥiṣamardini was popular in the Karnataka tradition. The Tamil tradition as opposed to this, represents the same theme in a different form i.e. the Viṣṇudurga, cited above, and the other is the depiction of a battle scene in which she confronts maḥiṣa, face to face, as depicted in the famous maḥiṣamardini cave at Mahabalipuram. But the representation of Durga, the sculpture under study, is in Karnataka idiom. This region being a part of Nolambas territory is influenced by the Karnataka mode of sculpting.

Another sculpture of the same theme and mode of depiction is found in the Kamakshiamman temple at Dharmapuri assigned to the Nolamba period and
workmanship. This is the sculpture in the round, called by the name – Samhāradurga.

KĀLI

Three sculptures of Kāli in dancing posture are noticed in the region. All the three are attached to the shaft of the pillar and are quite impressive in form and size. They are datable to 16th Century AD. The sculpture from Thiruchengodu is the best of the group of Kāli sculptures found in the region (pl-200). The goddess is four-handed. She holds đamaru and triśūla in her upper hands and khadga and khēṭaka in the lower hands. The ornamentation is quite rich on the body and the drapery is also equally delicate and crisp. The halo of Kāli is carved like rising flames. There is also a wide spread jata on the two sides of her head. She wears various ornaments and also a breast band (kucabandha). Each and every part of her body is well carved with varieties of ornaments and drapery. Behind the image of Kāli is the seated Lion, the vehicle of the Goddess. The image is standing on a tall pedestal supported by bhārarvāhakas.

The second example of the same deity is also in dancing posture. This is eight handed. Two upper hands are in swargahasta gesture, middle hands hold śaṅkha and Cakra, the lower hands are in lōlahasta gesture and the two fore hands are in samyuktahasta gesture. She is represented as dancing with both her knees bent and the feet kept apart. The image has the flame like coiffure, flat semi circular halo crowned by the kirtimukha is provided for the sculpture. The images, though iconographically interesting, lacks beauty and also sense of form and proportion.

VĪRABHADRA

Though Virabhadra is known since the Puranic period, the cult of Vīrabhadra became popular only during the Vijayanagara period. Therefore Vīravahadra is adopted into worship in later temples. Four sculptures are
reported in the region. Of these, two are noteworthy for their excellent workmanship. These two sculptures are life-size forms of the deity. Both are four handed. Iconographically, Vīrabhadra is supposed to hold bow and arrow and *khadga* and *khetaka*. But in the example from Thiruchengodu temple (pl-201), Vīrabhadra holds, in his upper right hand, an unidentified lump-like object. Vīrabhadra, in his ferocious fighting, is killing *Dakṣa* lying on ground. He is trampling him with his right foot and has pierced his chest with his sword. The ornaments of the god are the *jaṭāmukuta*, fillet, necklace, *udarabandha*, *kēyūra*, *kaṅkana*, *upavītamāla*, etc. The high-soled sandals Vīrabhadra wears are a regular feature of all the Vīrabhadra sculptures. The sculpture is neatly executed with great ferocity and action. It is a sculpture carved attached to the shaft of the pillar of the *mahāmaṇṭapa*.

**Ganeshha**

Sculptures and reliefs of Ganesha are found in umpteen numbers. They can be noticed in each and every temple of the region, carved inside the *kōṭas*, placed in the *mālikas*, *khulikās* and in the *gūḍhamaṇṭapas*. The sculpture of Ganesha, like that of *Mahīṣamardini*, is to be installed in the *kōṭa* of the *antarāla*, but on the southern side. Hence, they are found in each and every temple of the region. The sculptures of Ganesha begin to appear in the region from the early Chola period onwards. Iconographically, they are in two postures, namely, the *sthānaka* and the *āsīna*. He is seated in the normal as well as in *rājatilāsana*. He is always four-handed holding *pāśa* and *āṅkuśa* in his upper hands and *bhagnadanta* in his lower right hand, while the left is disposed variedly. Normally holds a *mōdaka*. But there are also variants. In one example, his left hand is on the left knee, while the right hand holds the *mōdaka*. The sculptures, varying in size from two feet to four feet are commonly noticed. The image of Ganesha is sometimes associated with a crude sculpture of a mouse seated in his front, carved separately.
CAṆḌIKĒŚVARA

The sculpture of this deity is available in plenty. They are found as relief sculptures, loose relief sculptures and as sculptures in the round. They are all in āsīna posture. They are carved commonly in sukhasana seated on a pedestal and occasionally in ardhapadmasana. The iconographic description of Caṇḍikēśvara is as follows. He should be represented always two handed. His right hand holds paraśu and the left is jānuhasta. He should be installed on the side of the pranāla facing south. Good number of sculptures of Caṇḍikēśvara are found in the region. They are all carved according to iconographic prescriptions mentioned above.

A rare instance of Caṇḍikēśvari, a feminine form of Caṇḍikēśvara is also found (pl-202). Iconographic features are the same but the image is that of a woman. It is now placed in the mahāmanṭapa of the Amman shrine of Kamanatheshwara temple. It is to be noted that this image is not kept near the pranāla of the Amman shrine. It is strange to see the presence of such a sculpture in a temple. The Texts do not mention anything about this form of the sculpture.

NANDI

Zoomorphic forms of Nandi are found in all the Shiva temples of the region. They are represented in the round as seated on a pedestal. The representation is uniform throughout, but only the depiction and decoration varies slightly from place to place and time to time. Of these, three images of Nandi are noteworthy. The first is the image of Nandi placed in the premises of Kali temple at Hosur (pl-203). On the pedestal of this image reliefs of devotees standing in a row in sthānaka posture and añjali gesture are carved. It is a very rare feature noticed only in this temple.

Another sculpture found at Shiva temple at Semmandapatti is noteworthy for its decoration and for the carving of the makara in relief on the
left knee of the bull (pl-204). No explanation for this can be found in the Texts. However, probable explanation for this can be given here. According to mythology, Ganga wanted to see the ceremonies and rites conducted for Shiva inside the sanctum, as she could not see the same sitting on the head of Shiva. Therefore, Nandi asks Ganga to come and sit on his knee along with him. As Ganga had no other specific place in the temple complex, Ganga comes out of the sanctum and sits on the knee of Nandi and watches the rituals conducted inside the sanctum. Therefore, in accordance with this story, tiny representation of Ganga is carved. It is possible that in the present example, instead of Ganga, a symbolic representation of that goddess in the form of her vehicle i.e. the makara is carved (pl-205). It is to be noted here that the Indian art symbol of makara represents water (Ganga) also.

Another rare example of Nandi in anthropozoomorphic form carved attached to the shaft of the pillar is found in the temple of Tantonrishwara temple, Belur (pl-122). Here, Nandi, with human form, in añjalimudra is standing in samabhanga. He has the head of a bull wearing a conical kirīta. The image is simple in its execution and elegant in form and is very interesting. It is standing in a pedestal. Its height is about five feet.

BḤRṆĪGĪ

A solitary example of Bhrīgi carved in the round is noticed in Tantonrishwara temple, Belur (pl-206). It is a sculpture of late origin as evidenced by its stylistic factor and mode of representation. Bhrīgi is three-legged and two-handed. He has a Jata coiffuer. He wears necklaces and upavīta made of bells. Bhrīgi is supposed to have a rickety figure, with his skeletal frame prominently visible. But in this example, he is not represented so. He has a supple body but the idea of his skeleton is symbolically represented through prominently visible ribs on his chest.
ŚĀSTA

The synonymous name of Śāsta is Ayyappa. Ayyappa is derived from the word Ārya. The āgamas refer to his name as Ārya only. The cult of Ayyappa is late in its origin. Hence, sculptures also belong to later period. The iconographic features are that he is two-handed, he sits in utkūṭitāsana and his mount is elephant (pl-207). His weapons depicted are either the vajrāyudha or the bow made of sugarcane. According to mythology, he is Hariharaputra i.e. son born from the union of Shiva and Vishnu (in the form of Mōhini).

The images of Śāsta are found in good numbers. He is also considered as the guardian deity of some of the temples of the region. He is always kept in the northwestern corner of the temple. Of the Śāsta sculptures found in the region, the one noticed at Airavatheshwara temple at Attimugam is noteworthy for his beauty and elegance (pl-208). Śāsta is sitting on a rut elephant in utkūṭitāsana. He has a long jata spread around his shoulder. He holds vajrāyudha in his right hand. He wears necklaces, nāgakēyūra and other ornaments. The carving is neat, intricate and quite proportionate. The sculpture is datable to the late Hoysala period as evidenced by inscriptions.

JWARAHAREŚVARA

Rare and only example of a very uncommon concept of Shiva is the Jwaraharēśvara form. It is found enshrined in a kōṣṭa built in to the prākāra wall of the Kailasanatha temple at Taramangalam (pl-209). The sculpture, on stylistic grounds is datable to late Vijayanagara period. It is a very rare representation of god Shiva not mentioned any where in the āgamas or in the vāstu Texts. However, Mahabharatha and Vishnudharmottara Purana mention this form of Shiva. In the Shantiparva of Mahabharatha, Bhishma mentions the manifestation of the deity as a concept of Shiva. According to that, Shiva created Virabhadra out to his anger to kill Dakṣa. Still the anger of Shiva did not get doused. Then, the entire anger, i.e., the heat (jwara) of Shiva came out
of his third eye and this form of Shiva was created. Bhishma mentions that if people worship this form of Shiva, all their fever will go away.

The sculpture is in *sthānaka* cum dancing posture. The image has three legs. The two main legs stand firmly on the ground with slightly bent knees. The third leg is lifted up with bent knee and turned towards right as in the sculpture of *Nāṭarāja*. He has three hands, holds in his left hand *agni* and the other left hand is stretched in the *lambahasta* gesture. There is only one right hand, which is in *abhayahasta*. *Jwaraharēśvara* has three heads, one facing the front and the other two facing the two sides. There is a flame-like halo and also, *jaṭamukuta* for all the three heads. The entire sculpture has a *prabhāvali* supported on two pilasters. The same iconography is given for this sculpture in *Mahabharatha* and in *Agni Purana* also. The sculpture, in general, is very neatly executed. Though the form looks strange, it is very intelligently composed. The decoration is also quite elaborately done.

**SUBRAHMANYA**

Sculptures of *Subrahmanya* are found in good numbers and are of late period and may be ascribed to the late and post Vijayanagara Period. Two types of sculptures of *Subrahmanya* are available. The first one is the form where he is seated on a peacock. He is twelve handed and holds a variety of weapons and attributes. He is six-headed. A semicircular *prabhāvali* is provided, which runs all around, connecting all the hands and *kirīṭa*. This sculpture is always accompanied by two separate sculptures of *Valli* and *Dēvasēnā*.

The other form represents this god as standing as a boy having two hands. He is single headed. His left hand is in *kaṭihasta* gesture, while his right hand holds the *dandāyudha*. That is why this deity is also called by the name *Dandapāṇi*. 
SAPTAMĀṬRKA

The Saptamāṭrka are Brāhmī, Vaiṣṇavi, Māhēśvari, Kaumāri, Indrāṇi, Vārāhi and Cāmuṇḍā. The concept of saptamāṭrka is very old and goes back to the Puranic period. The sculptures of the saptamāṭrka begin to appear from the time of the Badami Chalukyas and continued during the successive centuries. The Nolambas being the overlords of a region of Karnataka adopted the cult of Saptamāṭrka and procured some of the best specimens of the saptamāṭrka sculptures of Karnataka. Contrary to this, in Tamilnadu, the saptamāṭrka worship was never in vogue. Therefore, in the heartland of Pallavas and the Cholas the carving of saptamāṭrka sculptures are not to be seen. The region of our study being buffer state, the cult of Saptamāṭrka entered this region as early as 10th Century A.D.

A few sculptures of saptamāṭrka are found in the region. The carving of saptamāṭrka sculptures is generally of two types. The first is the type where māṭrka are carved individually. The second type consists of a row of saptamāṭrka carved on a single piece of stone. All these sculptures may be in relief or in the round. But, majority of the examples are in high relief only. The panels of saptamāṭrka or the group of saptamāṭrka images are always flanked by the sculptures of Ganesha and Vīrabhadra. Sometimes, in the place of Vīrabhadra, Vīṇādharaśiva is carved.

In the region of our study, independent sculptures as well as the panels are noticed. They range in height from two to three feet. The sculptures of a few māṭrka found at Chandrachudeshwara temple at Hosur appear to belong to 10th Century A.D. during which period Nolambas ruled over this region. The sculptures bear certain of the Nolamba sculptural features, like heavy breast and voluptuous feminine forms. The ornate kirīṭas are also carved to these sculptures. These traits remind us of similar sculptures of māṭrka preserved in the Hemavathi museum. Therefore, these sculptures may be attributed in the
10th Century AD. This is an incomplete set of mātrka images. The images found in this group are Brāhmī and Vaiṣṇavi. Remaining five mātrkas are missing.

There is one more set of mātrkas sculptures, of which only two are extant. These are carved on a single slab in high relief. They are of Brāhmī and Mahēśvari. Stylistically, they appear to be poor replicas of their Hoysala counter parts. Two more sculptures of Brāhmī and Chāmuṇḍā are reported in the Chandrachudeshwara temple at Hosur (pl-210). They bear the clear stamp of Vijayanagara sculptural art.

One full set of mātrkas carved independently in the round is found at Shukavaneshwara temple at Salem. Each sculpture of the group is carved on a high pedestal. The sculptures are represented in lalitāsana. The sculptures are quite big in size. Each may be of four feet in height. But unfortunately, all these sculptures are not well-finished. These sculptures are datable to Vijayanagara period. Only one full panel of saptamātrka sculptures is noticed at Bheemeshwara temple at Manapalli. It is of crude workmanship and hence, deserves no mention here.

**JYĒŚṬHĀ DĒVI**

The goddess, who came out of the ocean when it was churned by the demons and the gods to bring out the nectar hidden inside the ocean, is Jyēśṭhādēvi. Jyēśṭhādēvi is considered as the elder sister of Mahalakshmi. Jyēśṭhādēvi is worshiped only in Shiva temples and never in the Vaishnava temples. Jyēśṭhādēvi is represented always with her Kākadhwaja and also flanked by her son and daughter. The son is always represented as bull-faced (pl-211).

The sculptures of Jyēśṭhādēvi are found in good numbers in this region. All the sculptures are in high relief carved on independent slabs. Except in one example, Jyēśṭhādēvi is represented as sitting in sukhāsana flanked by her son
and daughter. The figure in background a kākadhwaja or dhvajas is relieved (pl-212).

Āgamas prescribe certain anatomical features like an ugly face, sagging breast and big paunch. But none of these features are seen in any of these sculptures. Jyēṣṭhādevī is always represented as two handed. She holds a kumuda (water lilly) in her right hand and the left hand is always in the iānuhasta gesture. Her son and daughter are represented as seated in utkuṭitāsana. The daughter holds a lilly while the son holds a club. A solitary relief found at Kamanatheshwara temple at Aragalur has all these deities in standing posture (pl-213).

Of the sculptures noticed in this region, the one found at Shukavaneshwara temple, Salem seems to be the earliest sculpture of this deity datable to 11th Century A.D. The concept of Jyēṣṭhādevī appears to begin from the middle Chola period and continued during the successive centuries. This is a concept not familiar in the Karnataka region.

CĀMUṆḌĀ

An aspect of Durga in the posture of killing the demons Canda and Munda, according to the Puranas is called by then name Cāmuṇḍā. Generally only one body of the demon is carved at the feet of the Goddess. Three sculptures of Cāmuṇḍā are noticed in the region. Two are sculptures in the round, while one is a relief. But, in the saptamāṭrka group, Cāmuṇḍā is represented in a different way. In saptamāṭrka group Cāmuṇḍā is not represented in the samhāra posture. She is just represented as sitting in the sukhāsana on a pedestal or in utkuṭitāsana. Of the three sculptures under discussion, two are from the saptamāṭrka group and one is an independent relief of the goddess in the samhāra posture. She is eight-handed. The demon is lying below the feet of the goddess. There is a flame like kirīta for the goddess.
Two other sculptures are from the Saptamātrika group. Of these, one is in the Dharmapuri museum while the other is in Sinnakottur (pl-214). Both are identical in their form, but the one at Dharmapuri museum is bigger in size (five feet) than the other. The goddess is seated in sukhasana on a pedestal. She is four-handed. She holds dāmaru and triśūla in her right hands. pāśa and pānapātra in her left hands. She has a flame like halo and headgear. She wears makara and patra kundalās and other ornaments. Prominent among them is the rundamāla. The neatly arranged pleats of her sari are delicately depicted and executed. The figure is well decorated but lacks beauty and dynamism.

VAISHNAVA SCULPTURES

Sculptures of Vishnu and those connected with Vaishnava sect. They are comparatively less in number in the region. The reason being that this area was dominated by the Shaivites and Shaivism was almost the state religion under the Tamil rulers.

The region of Salem, being a buffer state, also experienced the same state of religious affairs. The earliest of the monuments/shrines to be noticed in the region belong to Vaishnava cult. They are the rock cut shrines of Namakkal. They are datable to the middle of 7th century AD. After that no material remains belonging to Vaishnava cult are been noticed anywhere the Salem region. It is only during the middle of 13th century, one can notice the existence of Vaishnava monuments. These Vaishnava temples are known to have been in existence during the first quarter of the 13th century. During that period, the region was under the political sway of the Hoysalas. It is possible that because of the Hoysala rule Vaishnavism might have been revived in the area, which resulted in the construction of a few Vaishnava temples.

During the Vijayanagara period, Vaishnavism becomes an important religion. Throughout the Vijayanagara empire, temples dedicated to Vishnu are known to have been constructed. Vaishnavism, no doubt, received equal
patronage as Shaivism from the Vijayanagara rulers. It is also a known fact that the religion of the royal family of the Vijayanagara rulers was Sri Vaishnavism.

The region of Salem being a part of Vijayanagara empire, closer to the Vijayanagara capital than any other region of Tamilnadu, was also influenced, to a great extent, by the religious policy of the Vijayanagara rulers. There are about twenty temples in the region, the construction of which is ascribable to Vijayanagara period. Though inscriptional evidence cannot be furnished for the exact date of construction of these temples, the architecture and decorative motifs used in these temples help us to fix the date of these temples to the Vijayanagara period.

During the post-Vijayanagara period, the area was ruled by a few palegars belonging to Shaiva sect. They have given innumerable grants to the Shaiva temples of the region but not to the Vaishnava temples. This fact clearly shows that Vijayanagara style of architecture, as far as the Vaishnava temples where concerned, ended with the fall of the Vijayanagara empire. Therefore, all the Vaishnava temples of the region are ascribed to the late Hoysala and Vijayanagara periods only and not to the post Vijayanagara days. Therefore the Vaishnava sculptures found in these temples can also be definitely dated to the period extending from the beginning of 13th century to the end of 16th century, with few exceptions. These exceptions being the sculptures of Vishnu installed in the niches and parivārālayas of the Shaiva temples of the early period.

SCULPTURES OF VISHNU

Earliest Sculptures of Vishnu found in the region of our study are from the rock cut shrines of Namakkal. All the sculptures found here are in high relief carved on the wall in between the pilasters. They cannot be actually called as the regular niches, but they are the recession made in the interspaces of the pilasters. They are huge reliefs as those found in the caves at Mahabalipuram.
and Badami. The date of these rock-cut shrines has been established as 7th century AD. Hence the sculptures are also dated to the same period.

Sculptures of Śeṣaśāyi Vishnu, Vāmana/Trivikrama panel and Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa panel are carved in one cave while in the other cave seated Narasimha, Ugrnarasimha, Vāmana/Trivikrama, KēvalaNarasimha and Vaikuṇṭhanārāyaṇa are carved. The Śeṣaśāyi sculpture at Namakkal belongs to the uttama-yogaśayanamūrti and the Vaikuṇṭha-nārāyaṇa belongs to the uttama-bhogaśasanamūrti class of sculptures. All the sculptures are known for their simplicity and beauty of their execution. Their poses and postures are natural. The sculptures are full of dynamism and movement. Archaic quality of the sculptures is very well visible in their depiction. The contours of the body are very strong. These sculptures closely resemble the sculptures in the Pallava port city of Mahabalipura.

The depiction of the Sculptures also has resemblance with the Sculptures of Vaishnava cave 3 at Badami particularly those of Trivikrama and Bhūvarāha. From these sculptures, it becomes clear that as early as the middle 7th century Vaishnavism was a popular religion in the Pallava country.

After 7th century AD, there is a gap of about six centuries, after which Vaishnava temples began to appear in the region. However the absence of Vaishnava temples datable to this period does not in any way prove the absence of Vaishnava cult itself in the region. But during this period of gap sculptures of Vishnu do appear but not in Vaishnava temples but in the temples of Shaiva creed. Sculptures of a few selected forms are found in the kōṣṭas and parivārālayas of Shaiva temples. The date of these sculptures range from 10th century AD to 16th century AD.

The sculptures that are carved between 10th and 13th centuries in the Shaiva temples of the region are all alike, the only difference being that they are either in the sthānaka or the āsīna posture. About twenty Sculptures of Vishnu
are available. They can be identified as Sculptures of Mahāviṣṇu (pl-215). They are all four handed and have in the upper right hand- *cakra*, upper left hand – *śaṅkha*, lower left hand- *katihasta* and lower right hand- *abhaya* gestures. Of these all except one are in *sthanaka* posture, found enshrined in the *garbhagṛha*, *kōṭas* and corridors. Only one *āśinamūrti* of Vishnu, as *grīvadēvata* (pl-216) is found at Pillur. These sculptures, in their workmanship vary from place to place. Their general form is typically Chola in workmanship. Of these Sculptures, almost ten Sculptures of Vishnu are known for their exquisite workmanship and their beauty. The Sculptures of Vishnu in the *kōṭa* of Chandrachudeshwara temple at Hosur is attractive for its intricate and elaborate decoration. Though it is Chola in its form and style, the quality of carving, intricacy of decoration, polish etc., indicate the influence of Hoysala craft in the making of these Sculptures. It is a known fact that this temple has ample Hoysala features of architecture and Sculpture. Therefore it is possible that this Sculpture is created under the veil of Hoysala influence.

During the period of the Hoysalas, as said earlier, some temples are known to have been built in the region. All these temples have Sculptures of Vishnu and his two consorts flanking the main image. All the Sculptures are in *sthanaka* posture. As the photography of these Sculptures is strictly prohibited, it was not possible for the author to study the details of these Sculptures. However the general features may be described thus. They possess general characteristic features of late Chola Sculptures and they are very much close to early Vijayanagara art. They are all carved out of granite and quite majestic in their forms and features. They can be classified under the *adhamabhōgasthānakamūrti*. All these Sculptures are in the same posture but called differently by names like Karivaradaraja, Adikeshava, Soundararaja and Chennakeshava.

One of the temples has few *kōṭadēvatas*, which are also the forms of Vishnu like Narasimha, Varāha, Hayagrīva, Vēṇugōpāla and Mahāviṣṇu. They
are all in *sthānaka* posture and possess the features of late Chola Sculptural art. Of these Sculptures, the Sculptures of Narasimha, Varāha, and Hayagrīva are *dwibhujamūrtis*, while those of Vēṇugopāla and Mahāviṣṇu are *caturbhujamūrtis*. Even these Sculptures are cladded with varieties of clothes, hence, not available for a detailed study. In their general outlook, they are not very impressive and hence, not interesting Sculptures from the point of view of a detailed study.

Sculptures of Vishnu of Vijayanagara period are available in fairly good numbers. About twenty temples are known to have been built during this period. All these temples enshrine a sculpture of Vishnu installed in their sanctums. No other sculptures of Vishnu are found anywhere in the temple premises. Two sculptures of Rama and his associates are found carved attached to the shaft of the pillar of the *mahāmaṇṭapa* of two temples of Tenkaraikottai and Ayodhyapattinam.

The sculptures in the *garbhagrha* of the Vijayanagara temples are mostly in *sthānaka* posture. There are few Sculptures of Vishnu in the form of Varadaraja. The Sculptures in the *āsīna* posture are of Lakshminarayana and LakshmiNarasimha. The God is represented as seated with his consort Lakshmi seated on his left lap. An interesting feature of Lakshmi of the LakshmiNarasimha Sculpture from Tammampatti (pl-217) is that Lakshmi is facing the front and is in the *aṅjalimudra* gesture.

Of the sculptures enshrined in the *garbhagrha*, two identical examples of Rama and his retinue are noticed. These temples are of the Vijayanagara period. Rama in the form of *Paṭṭābhīrāma*, is installed in the sanctum. He is seated in *veerāsana*. His right hand is in *jñānamudra* (*vyākhyānamudra*) and his left hand is *januhasta*. To his left is the seated sculpture of Sita. She is seated in *sukhāsana* holding a lotus in her right hand and her left hand is in *jānuhastamudra*. Surrounding them are the standing sculptures of Lakshmana
and Bharata who are shown as holding the *chatra* and *cāmara*. Shatrughna stands in *añjalimudra*. Hanuman is shown as seated near the feet of Rama. He is also in *añjalimudra*. Inside the sanctum itself sculptures of Sugreeva, Jambhavan, Angada and Vibheeshana are kept, suggesting the concept of *Paṭṭābhīrāma*. They are all standing in *samabhaṅga* and in *añjalimudra*. The faces of Sugreeva and Angada are carved as monkey faces, while Jamabavan has the face of a bear. Vibheeshana is shown with a mustache, probably suggesting that he is a king.

A few sculptures called locally as that of Viśvaksēna are found. These Sculptures are represented as seated on a pedestal in *vīrāsana* (pl-218). The Sculpture is four handed of which the upper right hand holds *cakra*, the upper left hand-śaṅkha, lower left hand-*varada* and lower right hand is in the *abhaya*. It has a tall elongated *kirti*. The Sculpturing is not very refined. The workmanship is very ordinary. These Sculptures have all the features of Vishnu but not those of Viśvaksēna. Viśvaksēna, according to the texts, should be in the *tarjanimudra* and he should hold a sword as he is the *sēnāpati*. The Sculptures under study are kept in the *gūḍhamanṭapa* and called as Viśvaksēna.

A Sculpture locally called by the name Hayagrīva (pl-219), carved attached to the *bhadraka* pillar of *prākāramanṭapa* of a Shaiva temple is noticed. It is a life size Sculpture standing in *samabhaṅga*. It is four-handed and holds in its upper right hand *cakra*, upper left hand śaṅkha and the fore hands are disposed in *añjalimudra*. The shape of the head of the Sculpture is of a bull and not of a horse. The ears are stretched sideways unlike those of the horse, which will be at the top of the head. Therefore it is not the Sculpture of Hayagrīva but the Sculpture of Vishnu who comes in the form of Nandi to rescue Shiva from Śani.

Vishnu, coming in the form of Nandi to rescue Shiva from Śani, is a popular tradition in Tamilnadu. And that image is worshipped during pradōṣa.
Incidentally, by the side of this image is the Sculpture of Shiva with Nandi (Vṛṣabhaśahita) worshipped as Pradōśamūrti is also found. Therefore, it can be said that this Sculpture is not of Hayagrīva but of Vishnu appearing in the form of Nandi for Shiva’s help. But no specific name for this form of Vishnu is known.

MISCELLANEOUS SCULPTURES

BRAHMA

Sculptures of Brahma begin to appear from the time of the 10th century AD in the region of our study. Sculptures are found as kōṣṭadēvata and grīvadēvata in the temples of 10th century. The Sculpture of Brahma placed, as grīvadēvata found at Pillur is a relief Sculpture (pl-220). Brahma is seated on a pedestal in ardhapadmāsana. He is four handed and holds in his fore hands pustaka and akṣamāla. The two rear hands are mutilated. He is placed facing north. The Sculpture has archaic features of the early Chola style. Brahma is four headed and wears a jeweled kirīta common to all the heads. The face of Brahma is neatly delineated. He is not depicted as an old man and also has a cleanly shaven face. These features are common to all the Sculptures of Brahma of the Chola idiom.

The other sculptures of Brahma datable to the Chola period and onwards are all sthānakamūrtis. They are all found placed inside the dēvakōṣṭta of the main shrine of the Shaiva temples (pls-221,222). They are loose sculptures carved in a different medium than that used for the main shrine. These sculptures of Brahma are carved on an ornate pedestal as standing in samabhaṅga. They are four headed and four handed. In the upper hands they hold aksamāla and kamanḍalu and their lower left hand is in the katihasta, while their right hand is in abhayamudra. Their treatment in depicting the drapery ornaments and general contour of the body all reflect the typical Chola workmanship. About twenty-five sculptures of Brahma placed inside the
devakōṣṭas are found in the region. The earliest of the sculpture of Brahma is enshrined in a devakōṣta, at Arapallishwara temple at Valarpurnadu (Kollihills) datable to 10th century AD. These sculptures of Brahma, though they belong to different periods, they all look alike and stereotype in their form. Hence, it is difficult to arrange them in chronological order. Only one sculpture of Brahma carved attached to the shaft of the bhadraka pillar of the prākāramantaṇa of the Kailasanatha temple at Taramangalam is noticed (pl-223). It is a life size sculpture of Brahma standing in samabhaṅga on a carved pedestal. Brahma is four handed and his upper hands hold rosary and a pot. His lower left hand holds a pustaka and in his right hand is a small flat unidentifiable object. Stylistically it is datable to Vijayanagara period.

Another form of Brahma, identified as Prajāpati, is carved attached to the shaft of the bhadraka pillar in the temple cited above (pl-224). He is fourhanded and is in aṅjalimudra. Two upper hands have aksamāla and kamandalu. He is represented as having a long drooping mustache and beard. He wears a conical jeweled kirīṭa. He is carved as one among the retinue of Shiva in this temple. The sculpture is in Vijayanagara style.

SURYA

The sculptures of Sūrya begin to appear from 11th century onwards. No independent temple for Sūrya is known to have existed in the region of our study. Though this was under the occupation of the Nolambas for a quite a long time, no inscription mentions the construction of an Ādityagrha in this region and also the sculpture of Sūrya found at Hemavathi and a few preserved in Madras government museum are known for their exquisite quality of workmanship. The region of our study, though being a territory of Nolambas for over a century, does not have even a single temple dedicated to this god or not even a sculpture datable to the period of Nolambas on stylistic grounds. All the sculptures that are found in the region are of those installed in the
parivārālayas or sculptures kept in different parts of premises of Shaiva temples.

Sūrya, as is known, is a member of Śiva pañcāyatana group of sculptures. Therefore, all the Shiva temples of the region invariably possess a sculpture of Sūrya (pl-225).

Earliest depiction of Sūrya is noticed in the Śeṣaśāyi cave at Namakkal. It is not an independent sculpture but relief of Sūrya. Sūrya is shown as standing as an attendant deity for Śeṣaśāyīvīṣṇu. The reliefs of Sūrya and Candra carved in this cave are quite big and impressive in their form.

The sculptures of Sūrya found in the region are in high relief or in the round. However, the latter is more in number than the former. Sculptures depict Sūrya as standing in samabhaṅga. He is always two handed and holds in each of his hands a lotus. He is often attended on by his two associates Uṣā and Pratypsā, depicted through the figures of ladies standing by his side. Most of these sculptures are simple in their execution and their forms are also quite elegant. Of these sculptures the sculpture of Sūrya at Chandrachudeshwara temple at Hosur (pl-226) deserves special mention because of its ornate quality of carving. The sculpture is decorated with various ornaments and drapery including a semi-circular prabhāvalī. The sculpture is in the Chola idiom but the decoration is due to the influence of Hoysala rule during which period this temple was built.

Sculptures of Sūrya found in the region vary in their height. They range from two to five feet.

AŚṬADIKPĀLAKAS

Three examples of the sculptures of Aṣṭadikpālakas are noticed in the region of our study. Two of them are relief panels found in the central bay of the ceiling of the gūḍhamanṭapa (pl-82). They are of Nolamba style of art
found in the temples of Mallikarjuna and Kamakshiamma at Dharmapuri. The central panel has Shiva as Umāsahita and the surrounding panels have Āstadiṃḍaṇḍakas carved in each of the panel. They are carved in their respective directions i.e. *Indra* (east) (pi-227), *Agni* (south-east) (pl-228), *Yama* (south), *Nirūṭti* (south-West), *Varuṇa* (West), *Vāyu* (North West), *Kubera* (North) and *Īśāna* (North East). They are shown with their consorts and as riding on their vehicles. These vehicles are shown in movement.

The third example is an incomplete set of Individual sculptures of the Āstadiṃḍapalakas, carved in the round. They are of *Indra, Agni, Vāyu, Yama* and *Īśāna*. They are found in the temple of Chandrachudeshwara at Hosur. These sculptures are placed surrounding the main shrine in the mālikas built to the inner wall of the prākāra. Only five sculptures amongst the eight are extant. These sculptures do not appear to be of the same date. Carving of two of the sculptures exhibit folkish features and the features of the three remaining sculptures are Chola in character but the ornamentation exhibits the Hoysala traits. *Indra* is shown as seated on the elephant in vīrāsana and is two-armed. In his right hand, he holds the vajra. The left hand is shown as jānuhasta. *Vāyu* is shown as riding his vehicle, the deer. He is also two-handed. *Yama* is depicted as riding on his mount the buffalo. *Īśāna* rides on his mount, the bull. *Agni* is shown as two headed and riding his mount, the Ram. All these sculptures are shown as single. They are not accompanied by their consorts. The height of these sculptures is about three feet.

**DWĀRAPĀLAKAS**

*Dwārapālakas* are the door-keepers of the temples, and sculptures representing them are noticed invariably in all the temples. The sculptures of these *Dwārapālakas* are found carved both in relief as well as in the round. They are always carved in pairs. The forms of these sculptures closely resemble those of the main deity. They are four handed and the attributes they carry vary
based on the creed to which they belong. The Shaiva Dwārapālakas hold the trident and the kettle drum in their upper hands and the Vaishnava Dwārapālakas hold the conch and the discus in their upper hands. The mace is common for the Dwārapālakas of both the creeds, which is held in their lower left hand. Their lower right hand is disposed in various gestures like the Tarjānimudrā, abhayamudrā and swargahasta. But the commonly found gesture is the Tarjānimudrā. Their faces are shown as ferocious, and they wear a kirīṭa, which is occasionally shown with a halo of flames. The ferocity of the face is shown by the carving of the prominent canines. They are shown as standing with one of their legs firmly placed on the ground while the other leg is lifted across the other leg and shown as resting upon the mace. The left leg of the Dwārapālaka to the left side of the doorway is shown as lifted while the right leg of the Dwārapālaka to the right side is shown as lifted. This is a posture common in Tamil idiom, whereas the Dwārapālakas in the Karnatakā idiom is sometimes shown in tribhaṅga or dwibhaṅga.

The Texts prescribe that the Dwārapālakas have to be provided for all the doorways of all the four directions. Dwārapālakas are found carved at the doorway of the gūḍhamaṇṭapa. They are sometimes carved on the pēdyas of the dwārabandha. They are even found in the mahāḍwāras of the temple. The temple of Brihadishwara at Tanjavur has Dwārapālakas carved on the mahāḍwāra.

The Dwārapālakas sculptures are found in almost all the temples of the region of our study. They are found carved in round as well as in relief. All their forms are as described above. Sculptures of Dwārapālakas that deserve mention for their good workmanship are those found at Shukavaneshwara temple at Salem, Kailasanatha temple at Kargudi (pl-229) and the Soundararja perumal at Salem. The mahāḍwāra of Kamanatheshwara temple, considered as one of the earliest mahāḍwāras of the region, has the sculptures of Dwārapālakas. They exhibit the features of Chola sculptural art. A sculpture of
a ḍvārāpālaka is carved attached to the shaft of a bhadraka pillar. Strangely, this sculpture is not carved near the doorway (pl-230).

MANMATHA AND RATI

Sculptures of Manmatha and Rati are found at many temples in the region. They are the representations of love and sexual pleasure. Their grace is supposed to be necessary for the fulfillment of the third Puruṣārtha of a man i.e. Kāma, according to the Hindu tradition. Therefore, for gaining satkāma (love and lust in the right path) they are worshipped. The sculptures of this couple are found in many temples, especially in the Shaiva temples. Texts prescribe that the sculptures of Manamtha and rati should be carved with great luster and ornamentation. They are shown as two-handed. Manmatha holds the bow made of sugarcane in his left hand and the arrows made of five flowers in his right. He must be shown as embracing his wife in the left hand. Rati must be depicted as a young lady with a voluptuous body. She should be decked with various ornaments. The mount of Manmatha is the parrot.

Sculptures of Manmatha and Rati are found in a few temples of the region. They all belong to the Vijayanagara period datable to 16th century. The carving of these sculptures was one of the favourite themes for the artists of the Nayaka dominion. They are found carved attached to the shafts of pillars of the mahāmanṭapas of the temples. Such sculptures found in the heartland of Madura Nayakas are of huge dimensions, their height going up to almost fifteen feet.

Sculptures of Manmatha and Rati found in a few of the temples region. They are found carved in relief as well as in the round. Of these, the sculptures at the Kailasanatha temple at Taramangalam (pls-231,232.) and the Ardhanarishwara temple of Tiruchengodu (pls-233,234.) are noteworthy for their excellent workmanship and intricate carving. The couple is carved separately in these temples and shown as facing each other. In the first example,
Manmatha is shown as riding his mount, the parrot and he is shown with a bow and arrow of sugarcane and flowers. Rati is also carved facing him and she is also shown as riding a parrot and as aiming him arrow set in her bow of sugarcane. They are carved attached to the shaft of the bhadraka pillar of the prākāramaṇṭapa. The sculptures are carved on a high pedestal. The workmanship and the execution of these sculptures are very impressive.

The second example is found carved attached to the pillars of the mahāmanṭapa of the Ardhanarishwara temple at Tiruchengodu. These are also independent sculptures of Manmatha and Rati. Rati is shown as drawing the flower arrow from her quiver with her right hand and she holds the sugarcane bow in her left hand. She is decorated with various jewels like ratnāvatamsa, kēyūra, kaṅkaṇa, kāṅcikā and nūpura. She is bedecked with various hāras. The pleats of her sari are neatly carved. She is standing on a pedestal with reliefs of parrots at its corners. The sculpture of Manmatha is carved on the pillar facing this pillar. He is also drawing an arrow from his quiver with his right hand and holds the sugar cane bow in his left hand. He wears a jeweled kirīṭa. He is also bedecked with various ornaments like the necklaces, udarabandha, kēyūra, kaṅkaṇa, upavīṭa etc. He is depicted as standing on a chariot drawn by parrots. The wheels of the chariot are carved on the sides of the pedestal on which the sculpture is carved. These sculptures have the features of Vijayanagara sculptural art and can be dated to 16th century. The decoration and the intricacy of carving are very neat and impressive. Reliefs of Manmatha and Rati are also found in the region. Of them the reliefs carved on the two sidewalls of the doorway of the mahāmanṭapa of Achaladeepeshwara temple at Mohanur and the reliefs carved in the nābhicchanda of the kalyāṇaṇaṇṭapa in the Kailsanath temple at Rasipuram are noteworthy.

Apart from the sculptures of divinities, sculptures of sages, saints, devotees and the sculptures of the patrons of the temple are also found in the temples of the region. The sculpture of sage Agastya (pl-234a), who is very
revered in the Tamil country, is noticed in two places. One is a life size sculpture carved attached to the shaft of the bhadraka pillar of the prākāramanṭapa. He is shown as standing in samabhaṅga. His short stature and potbelly are depicted very effectively. He holds the kamanḍalu in his left hand the yōgadaṇḍa in his right hand. The second example is noticed in the Kailasanatha temple at Kargudi, which is a small relief. The sage is shown as seated holding a book in his left hand and a rosary in his right hand. He is adorned with jata.

Sculptures of sage Patañjali are found at a few temples in the region. He is considered an ardent devotee of Shiva, for whom Shiva had performed one variety of his Tāṇḍava. This sage is usually associated with another sage Vyāghrapāda. Patañjali is depicted as half human and half serpent. Sometimes, even the hood of the serpent is shown behind his head. A sculpture of Patañjali carved attached to the shaft of the bhadraka pillar of the prākāramanṭapa is noticed at the Kailasanatha temple at Taramangalam. (pl-235) He is shown as wearing a long kirīṭa and is in añjalimudra. He is two handed and his body is of a serpent below his waist. This is a sculpture of 16th century. The height is about five feet. This sculpture is carved on a high pedestal. Umpteen number of bronze icons of this sage are found in the temples of the region. As he is associated with Nātarāja, invariably a bronze idol of this sage is found along with the image of Nātrāja. Apart from these many small reliefs of this sage are found in the temples throughout the region.

Vyāghrapāda is another sage associated with Nātrāja. This sage is depicted in the anthropozoomorphic form wherein his torso is of a human and the portion below his waist is that of a tiger. He is shown as wearing rudrākṣa and has two hands. He is adorned with jata. One of his sculpture carved attached to the shaft of the bhadraka pillar of the prākāramanṭapa is noticed at the Kailasanatha temple at Taramangalam. Many bronze images of this sage are also available in the region of our study.
The sculptures of all the sixty-three Shaiva saints popularly called as the
Nāyanmārs are installed in twenty temples of the Shaiva creed. They are
installed in the prākāra maṇḍapas. (pl-236) Their height usually varies from two
feet to three feet. Of these sixty-three saints, four saints referred to as Nāḻvar
are installed separately in a few temples. They are Tirunāvukkarasu (Appar),
Sundarar, Māṇikkavācakar and Tirunyānasambandar. Appar is depicted as an
aged man wearing the rudrakṣamāla around his head. Sundarar is usually
represented as a sage with matted locks. Māṇikkavācakar is represented as
wearing a turban, as he held the post of a minister. Tirunyānasambandar is
represented as a small boy wearing a dhoti up to his knee and his hairs are tied
to the side of his head. He is supposed to have gained enlightenment as a young
child. The sculptures of these four are housed in a separate cella in the
Shukavaneshwara temple at Salem and their sculptures are carved attached to
the shafts of the bhadraka pillars of the prākāra maṇḍapa at Kailasanatha temple
at Taramangalam.

Of the Vaishnavasaints the sculptures of Vēdāntadēśikar is found in
good numbers. The sculpture of Ramanujacharya is also found housed in the
antṛāla or the ardha maṇḍapa or the gūḍha maṇḍapa of the temple. In the Rama
temple of Ayodhyapattinam these sculptures are housed in the sanctum itself.

Sculptures of patrons are found carved in many temples. They are
usually carved attached to the shafts of the pillars. (pl-237 & 238) They are
sometimes shown as single and sometimes with their consorts. In some temples
the sculptures of the patrons and their consorts are carved separately on
different pillars. They are sometimes associated with their ministers and
preceptors. Some of the Nayakas are shown with their entire retinue and all
their wives. In the mahā maṇḍapa of the Ardhanarishwara temple at
Tiruchengodu, A Nayaka is shown with his four queens. In a solitary example,
the statue of the Nayaka is carved in the round and placed in the mahā maṇḍapa.
This is a life size sculpture about six feet in height. A tiny sculpture of another
man is carved near the feet of this big sculpture. Probably he is an attendant of the Nayaka.

In some temples, there are some sculptures, which are associated with some local legends, the authenticity of which is not clearly known. These sculptures are identified with some persons mentioned in the legends.

**SCULPTURES OF BUDDHA**

Buddhism, it is known, flourished in the regions of Kaveripumpattinam, Nagapattinam and Kanchipuram, but the popularity of Buddhism in Salem region is yet to be studied. *Aimpērnkāvīyam* of Sangam age provides sufficient details regarding the popularity of Buddhism in Tamilnadu. “Buddha-Kanchi” was one of the four Kanchis in ancient Tamilnadu. Huien-tsang, who visited the Pallava kingdom during Narasimha Pallava’s rule, notices the decline of Buddhism as early as seventh century A.D.

Five sculptures of Buddha have been noticed in the region of our study. A description of these sculptures is given here. Of the five sculptures noticed, one is from Salem, two from Deganur (Tyaganur) and two are from Dharmapuri museum of which one is in standing posture.

The two Buddha sculptures from Deganur are noteworthy as they are in good condition and without any damage. Of the two sculptures, one is housed in a newly built small temple (pl-239 & 240) and the other one is kept underneath a tree in a private land. (pl-2341 & 242) Till recently, it was called as “Kongu-Sittar” (a tamil medicant) by the local people. Both the sculptures are seated figures and are identical. Buddha is depicted as seated in *Samaparyāṅkāsana* (with crossed legs) in deep meditation. The hands exhibit *Dhyānamudra*. The lower garment comes up to the ankle and the border of which is carved noticeably. The *uttarīya* is carved over the left shoulder resembling a *Yagnōpavīta*. The cloth is shown as covering the stomach. The naval part is visible. The broad shoulders and the chest nipples give an
impressive appearance to the sculpture. The face is elegantly carved with divine smile and the eyes are slightly open. The eyebrows are long and the ārṇa is neatly carved. There are about five rows of curly hair with the usniṣa on top of it. The ears are long and the lobes are almost touching the shoulders. It may be observed that all the auspicious signs as per the Sāmudrika śāstra are depicted.

The sculpture from Salem (pl-243) has a tilted head, which seems as if it is of a different sculpture but on close observation it can be known that the original head has been replaced improperly. This sculpture is now worshipped as “Muniyandi”. This nomenclature gives way for the thought that perhaps it was derived from “Shakyamuni”, an epithet of Buddha. This sculpture is also a seated figure, having features resembling those of Deganur sculptures.

There are two Buddha sculptures in Dharmapuri museum. One sculpture is a seated figure whose head is broken and missing. (pl-243a) This sculpture was found in Modur, a village near Dharmapuri. The features of this sculpture are very similar to those found in Deganur and Salem. The second sculpture, which is a standing figure, is a very impressive sculpture. (pl-243b) Buddha is depicted as young and sturdy. The lower garment is carved up to the ankle, which gives an impression as if the cloth is transparent. He stands in Samabhaṅga. The pleats of the garment are also carved. His right palm exhibits abhayamudra and the left arm is broken. An impression of a lotus is carved in the right palm. The broad chest, shoulders, stiff nipples and the deep naval carved, add dignity to the sculpture. Three lines, inferring a sign of fortune, are shown in the neck. The face is calm and smiling. The nose is straight and elegant. The eyes are partially open and the eye-brows are long. The forehead is narrower compared to other sculptures. The ārṇa carved has faded. There are about five rows of curly hair and the usniṣa is carved resembling a lotus bud. The ears are long and the lobes stretch up to the shoulders. The halo is carved like a prabhāvali with a row of petals and a puspaṭṭi.
These sculptures can be dated to 10th century and stylistically be assigned to the Chola idiom. Though the sculptures are few in number, they are not inferior to the sculptures found in the popular Buddhist centers of Tamilnadu thus establishing the flourishing nature of Buddhism in this region. Further studies may unveil many more interesting facts regarding the influence of Buddhism in the region.

JAINA SCULPTURES

Few sculptures of Jina are found in the region of our study. Of these, one sculpture is of Pārśvanātha and the other is of Supārśvanātha, deserve special mention. The sculpture of Pārśvanātha is preserved in the Government museum of Salem. It is a sculpture in high relief, which was found at Paruttipalli. (pl-244) This sculpture is about four feet in height. Pārśvanātha is standing in samabhāṅga and is depicted in jānulambibhuja. A seven-hooded snake, which is the insignia of Pārśvanātha is carved behind his head. Above this a chaṭrāvalī i.e. three umbrellas are carved. The prabhāvalī of the sculpture is eroded; therefore details of it are invisible. But the carving of two tiny human figures, probably the yakṣa and yakṣi of Pārśvanātha can be seen. In-between the pilasters of the prabhāvalī and the shoulders of Pārśvanātha, a floral patch and traces of a relief of a conch can be seen. These are auspicious signs, indicating prosperity. But this sculpture is very much eroded and the face is not very clear. This can be recognized as Pārśvanātha because of the seven-hooded serpent. Texts prescribe that Pārśvanātha should be depicted with a three or seven or eleven hooded serpent.

The sculpture of Supārśvanātha is noticed in Adhiyaman kottai. (pl-245) It is kept outside the temple of Shiva, which probably was a temple dedicated to Supārśvanātha. The sculpture is about three feet tall and carved in high relief. All the other features resemble the sculpture of Pārśvanātha described above. But it is identified as Supārśvanātha, because the serpent carved behind the
head has five hoods. The Texts prescribe that a five-hooded serpent should be carved behind Supārśvanātha. The sculpture stands on a padmapītha. The face of this sculpture is completely effaced, but the details of the prabhāvali carved behind are quite clear. The prabhāvali is supported on two pilasters. Above this two makaras are carved facing each other. From the mouths of these makaras, an arch comes out and at the pinnacle of this creeper scrolls, instead of a kirtimukha, thechatrāvali is carved.

Apart from these sculptures, a panel sculpture of two seated Jinas is preserved in the Government museum of Dharmapuri. The Jinas are depicted as seated in samaparayaṅkāsana in dhyānamudra. (pl-246) This must have been a part of a wall of some basadi. The sculptures are eroded. It is interesting to note that both the panels have a nāsi common to both. This nāsi has archaic features resembling the Pallava nāsi, with a horseshoe shaped arch and a shovel shaped crest. Along with this a panel with a relief of the feet is also preserved. These were revived from a place called Tirtham.

Another relief of a Jina is noticed at the Venkataramana temple hillock at Hosur. (pl-247) This is associated with an inscription, which records the death of a Jain monk after performing the Sallēkhana-vrata.

In a maṇṭapa at the foothill of the Chandrachudeshwara hillock, a sculpture resembling a Tīrthaṅkara is found. (pl-248) This is a relief carved on the shaft of a citrakhaṇḍa pillar. This pillar stylistically can be dated to the Vijayanagara period. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether it is a sculpture of Jaina creed or not, because, during the Vijayanagara period, the form of Buddha was misconceived as a nude figure as that of the Tīrthaṅkara, and such examples are found in many Vijayanagara temples. The other reliefs carved on the other sides of the pillar are floral and faunal. Therefore, it is difficult to assign any creed to this maṇṭapa in which the sculpture is found.
Both Buddhism and Jainism were prevalent in Tamilnadu since the Sangam age. Even the Pallavas are known to have patronized Jainism. The famous poet Tiruvalluvar, composer of the *Tirukkural*, is also regarded as a Jain by many scholars. But, during the Chola period, patronage for religions other than Shaivism decreased drastically, as the imperial Cholas were staunch Shaivites. Due to this fact the Bauddha and Jaina religions lost their prominence and Buddhism almost vanished from this land. But the Salem region was under the political rule of Hoysalas for almost one century. Hoysalas patronized Jainism, along with other religions. Therefore a few Jaina relics datable to 13th century are found in the region. To support this view, a surviving Jaina temple is noticed at Vijayamangalam, also called Jinapuram in Erode district. This temple is built during the reign of Ramanatha deva and this place is very near to Salem region.

**NARRATIVE PANELS**

Sculptures carved in relief on the panels that run around the temple are called as the narrative panels. They depict continues incidents selected from the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa*. The entire story of the epics or mythology or selected incidents of are carved on the different places of the temple such as mouldings of the plinth, on the wall surface of the main shrine and the inner walls of the *prākara* of the temple, *Prastara* of the temple or of the *puskaraṇi* or *vāpi*, so that people who go around the temple can have clear view and learn/teach from these narratives. They are usually carved at a height of about three to four feet, so that the devotees can have a comfortable view. During Vijayanagara period such panels were shown as paintings even on the ceilings of the open *mahāmaṇṭapas*.

Only one example of such narrative friezes is seen in a temple in the region of our study. It is of Nolamba period. In this example incidents from Ramayana are carved on the *gala* of the *upapīṭha*. (pl-249 & 250) This is due to
the later renovations done extensively. But the reliefs are clear and the incidents are easily discernible and identifiable. Dasaratha performing the *Putrakāmēśṭi*, his queens with the new-borns, Sitakalyana, Rama’s exile, battle with Ravana and the coronation of Rama are all presented in an impressive manner.

DIVINE TABLEAUS

Sculptures, which depict any one mythological episode is referred to as divine tableau. They are usually carved in high relief. They are carved on the outer walls with or without a *tōraṇa* framework. These sometimes are identified with some of the *liśamūrτis* of the presiding deity. The carving of such tableaus is also known from very ancient times. The temples of Badami Chalukyas and Pallavas have such tableaus carved on the outer walls of the temples. The *Sītāpaharana* tableau carved on the outer wall of the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakkal and the *Tripurasamhāra* tableau at Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi are worth mentioning. The tableau of Ravana lifting the Kailasa found at the Kailasa temple at Ellora is yet another example, known for its impressive presentation and movement. Tableaus of *Gajēndramōkṣa*, Ravana lifting kailasa, Arjuna and the *matsyayantra* and *Kīrātārjunīya* have been the favourite themes of the artists of all times and styles.

Divine tableaus carved on the bhittis are noticed in many places in the region of our study. The earliest divine tableau is noticed at the rock cut shrine at Namakkal. This is a panel carved in high relief of the episode depicting the Vāmana and Trivikramāvatāras of Vishnu. This is datable to 7th century A.D. This is a very impressive sculpture which is very natural in its depiction. Bali offering gift to Vāmana, the sacrificial horse, Śukrācārya, etc., are all depicted in an impressive manner. The sculpture of Trivikrama is carved predominantly. Other tableaus are all of Shaivite themes found on the walls and pillars. Of these Shiva as Naṭarāja and the Kaṇḍappā nāyanar episode are found very frequently.
Apart from the sculptures of different types described above various floral, faunal and figural releifs are also carved to enhance the beauty of the architectural members. Geometric figures depicting certain Yantras are also noticed in the temples. Likewise, the attributes and weapons of the presiding deity like the triśūla, damaru, nandi etc., in case of a Shaiva temple, and śaṅkha, cakra, śrīcarana, etc in the case of Vaishnava temples are found carved at various places like the walls, lintel, doorjambs, pillars, dhvajasthamabhas, mahādwaras etc. Insignia of the religion or the royal emblems are also found carved in the temples. They are usually carved on the bhitti or on the dhvajasthamabha of the temple.

### Table of the sculptures of the region

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**REFERENCES**

1. It states, that this temple was executed for the health of King Veerasomeshwara
2. Kailasanatha temple at Taramanagalam, Omalur teluk, Salem dist.
3. Virattaneshwara temple at Pillur (Grīvadēvata) and Arapallishwara temple at Valarpurnadu-kollihills (koṭadēvata)