INTRODUCTION

The present work is an attempt to study the various aspects of temple architecture in the Salem region. Salem region is situated in the northwestern part of Tamilnadu comprising of the present day districts of Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Namakkal and Salem. Of the four districts, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts form the northern part, and Salem and Namakkal districts form the Southern part of the region. This region is situated between 10° 30' and 14° north latitude and 77.28° and 78.50° east longitude. In the present work, for the easy understanding of the subject, the land described above is addressed by the name ‘Salem region’. Salem region is a ‘buffer’ land between the present day Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. Therefore, this region, from the beginning, experienced the political and cultural impacts of the three different states. Salem region is a land where the people of three languages live. Geographical location of the Salem region made it a politically strategic point between the Tamil and Karnataka powers. Political vicissitudes often changed the fortunes of this land.

The northern part of this region is adjacent to both Karnataka and Andhrapradesh. To the west is the Coimbatore district. To the south, Trichy and to the east, North and South Arcot districts are situated. Total area of this Salem region is about 18,262.6 sq. kms i.e. 7051.2 sq miles.

The Salem region, in the present context, comprises of the old Salem district, i.e., the region before its partition into Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri and Namakkal districts, which were previously taluk headquarters of old Salem district. Dharmapuri was separated in the mid 1960s and Namakkal in the 90s. Krishnagiri became a district in 2002. For the purpose of a thorough study of temples, these regions are included under one head, i.e., the Salem Region.
Salem Region is geographically divided into three parts. The first division is the Balaghat, which is a part of the Deccan tableland. It constitutes a large portion of Krishnagiri and about half of the western Hosur taluk. To its south and west are dense forests and the average elevation of this region is about 3000 feet above sea level. Baramahal, which is about 1300 feet above the sea level, comprising roughly the taluks of Dharmapuri, Harur, northeastern part of Krishnagiri and the eastern part of Hosur, forms the second division. The third division is the Talaghat and it differs from the above two. It is a plain region and is about 1200 feet above sea level. Taluks of Attur, Rasipuram and Namakkal are to the east and Salem, Omalur and Tiruchengodu are to the west of this division.

Salem region, geographically, is also varied in its nature. Hilly regions rising up to 3,000 ft and plain tableland rising up to 1,300 ft and also plain regions of lesser altitude are found. The land of this region is fertile and the climate is very salubrious for human habitation. The Cauvery river is the only major river that flows through a part of this region. Apart from this, the region is full of rivulets, tanks and lakes. Therefore, this region was commercially very prosperous. The main connecting route between Karnataka and Tamilnadu passed through this region. Military invasions of the powers of these two states used to pass through this land.

In this context, it is necessary to explain Salem, as a “buffer zone”. Buffer region is a geographical region, which lies between two Imperial seats of political powers. Consequently, the region experiences the shift of powers. Whenever one Imperial dynasty becomes powerful than the other, this buffer zone experiences its influence and gets included into its boundary. This, many a times, results in the change of cultural and social milieu of the society of the buffer region, which are best reflected in the temples of that region. Variants of the known art styles, hybridization of different architectural motifs and decorative members and sometimes even the emergence of the new forms and motifs can be noticed in the monuments and relics of the buffer region.
Political supremacy of various rulers over this region influenced the socio-cultural development of this region. Therefore, a tasteful blend of the two distinctly different traditions is clearly discernible in the art forms of the Salem region. This factor makes the present study more interesting.

The Salem region, as stated above, was a buffer state during the different periods of its history. The political powers of Karnataka and Tamilnadu tried to establish their supremacy over this region. The Tamil political powers that ruled over this region are the Adhigamans, Pallavas, Banas, Cholas and the pandyas. Likewise, the Kannada powers that ruled over this region were the western Gangas, Nolambas, Hoysalas and the Vijayanagara rulers. The impact of different cultures on this land resulted in the development of a cultural idiom that possessed the characteristic features of the Tamil and Kannada cultures. Though the general architectural pattern of the entire south India was basically Dravidian in character, the influence of the local tradition, beliefs, customs and manners played an important role in the formation of local idioms of the Dravidian style. This is very clearly discernible in the art forms of this region.

Religious edifices built under the patronage of many of these ruling powers are found in this region. The earliest shrines of the region are the rock-cut shrines at Namakkal. This was excavated by an Adhigaman ruler, as evidenced by an inscription there. Though it was excavated by an Adhigaman ruler, the influence of the Pallava School of art is explicit in the execution of these rock-cut shrines. Even the sculptures found here exhibit the traits of the sculptural art of the Pallavas. Therefore the beginnings of the architectural and sculptural art of the region may be traced to the Pallava period.

Structural temple art begins from the days of the Nolamba rule and shows a continuous development under the patronage of the succeeding ruling dynasties. About a hundred temples, ascribed to the period between 9th century and 16th century A.D., are noticed, spread all over the Salem region. All these
temples are built in the dravidian style. As this region was a buffer zone between the Tamil and Kannada powers, hybridised form of art can be noticed here. These hybridised features are not generally noticed in their respective heartlands. Therefore, a study of the art forms of this buffer region is not only interesting but also highly informative from the point of view of hybridization and development of new forms.

The period of the present study begins from 7th century A.D., i.e., from the time of the Pallavas to 17th century A.D., i.e., the end of the Vijayanagara period. The beginning of temple architecture can be traced to the middle of 7th century in this region. However, an uninterrupted progress in the development is discernible from the 9th century onwards. During the Vijayanagara period, the temple architecture reached its zenith and the same declined in a short period, after the fall of Vijayanagara Empire in 1565. By the middle of 17th century, clear traces of deterioration and stagnation in the temple art can be noticed all over the region. Therefore, this study is limited up to the middle of 17th century.

Now, coming to the study of the subject done already by scholars and historians, they may be listed as follows:

Extensive archeological and epigraphical surveys have been conducted and recorded in this region, yet not much study on temple architecture and sculpture has been done exclusively. Few works like ‘Namakkal’ by Ramaswamy and the ‘Namakkal caves’ by Vidya Daheja are published. These are handbooks on the subjects. Salem Cyclopedia, is an encyclopedia edited by B. Rajannan, is a work general in nature and the description of temples given in this work is more mythological and traditional in nature. Hence, this study cannot be considered as a scientific study of the subject.

‘The Kongu country’ is a work by Arokiaswami. This work is one of the first research works on this region. But, there are many loopholes in this work. The statistics, the chronology and the dates given are not accurate. The survey of
temples given by this author is very brief. ‘The history of Kongu’ is another work by V. Ramamurthy. This again, is a work mainly oriented towards the political history. ‘Kongu Nadu’ is a very recent research work by V Manikkam. This work concentrates on the political and economic history of the Kongu region. All the above-cited works concentrate more on the political, economical and administrative history and such other aspects, while importance given to art and architecture in them is negligible.

Several scholars have worked on the Mallikarjuna and Kamakshiamman temples at Dharmapuri. ‘Nolambas’ a research work by Prof. M. S. Krishna Murthy gives an illustrated description of these temples for the first time. Likewise, works on Nolamba architecture and sculpture by Scholars like K. Krishna Murthy and Andrew L Cohen give the description of these temples. The EITA volume also describes these temples, but considers these temples as the temples consecrated by the Banas of Perumbanavadi.

‘Hoysalas in Tamil country’ is a work by K R Venkataraman, which concentrates on the political supremacy of the Hoysalas over the Tamil regions. In this work, mention of certain aspects of Salem is noticed, but it is very brief. In this work, the chapter on art and architecture concentrates only on the Hoysaleshwara Temple built in Kannanur, but no detailed study of the temples with the influence of Hoysala art in the region is made.

Research articles of various researchers are published in different journals and periodicals, highlighting new discoveries, such as inscriptions, sculptures, archaeological sites, etc., of the region.

All the works mentioned above are, no doubt, laudable in their own right. Yet, they do not give a clear, complete and comprehensive account of the development of the temple architecture of Salem region. The studies mentioned above, particularly with regard to the study of temples, are limited in their scope. They are descriptive studies of the monuments of the region or of a particular
place. In this situation, the present work forms a concerted study of the temple architecture of the Salem region based on scientific study of the architectural members part by part of the temple, their textual affinity, their development, their variations and deviations from the textual prescription, hybridization, regional talents and also an overall analysis of the development of temple architecture of the region. Hence it is a work, first of its kind, dealing with all the aspects of temple architecture of the region.

In the beginning of the research programme by the author, the intention was to study the origin and development of the temple architecture in the Salem region beginning from 7th century A.D., to the beginning of the Vijayanagara rule. But after conducting a detailed survey of the region, it was found that the culmination of the development of temple architecture of the region is noticed only by the end of the Vijayanagara rule. Therefore, it was felt that the study would be incomplete if it ends at the beginning of Vijayanagara rule. Also majority of the developed and finer aspects of the architecture of the region begin to appear only during the Vijayanagara period. Majority of the temples of the region are not just isolated structures belonging to pre-Vijayanagara period. They, during the Vijayanagara period, continued to be in use with additions made to them during the Vijayanagara period. In that way, they become a part and parcel of Vijayanagara architecture also. Considering these aspects, it was decided to include the Vijayanagara period also under the purview of this study, so that, a clear comprehensive development of all the aspects of temple architecture, from its beginning to the period of decline can be traced in one study.

The nature of art forms of this region is not only extensive in nature but also varied. This is because of the influence of various schools of art on the art of this region. A study conforming to the art of the heartland, generally, limits itself to one school of art. Therefore, knowledge of the aspects of that particular school of art is enough to understand the art of that region. Whereas, for the present type
of study, a knowledge of the elements of different schools of art are necessary for
the analysis of the temple art of this region. The temples of different schools
appear with certain of their salient features in this region. The temples of the
region not only continue the features of the earlier forms of art, but at the same
time accept certain features of the newly arrived art forms. The art forms of such
a transition period can be clearly observed here and the development of those
forms, in the region, is also discernible.

The present study is an approach to analyse and understand the various
scriptural definitions and descriptions, as well as, the morphological studies of the
different architectural forms of the region. To make this study systematic,
various parts of the temples of the region are classified and studied in a detailed
manner. This study includes the definition, the purpose, the function and the
importance of that particular part of the temple building. The vāstu Texts on
Hindu temple architecture are studied and the description given in them are taken
into account. The descriptions of the vāstu Texts are analysed and compared with
the existing architectural forms and the existing forms are compared with the
types of forms given in the Texts. In this effort, the etymology of the terms, used
for such parts and types, are also taken into account for definition and proper
identification. The meaning of the terms of the architectural forms and the types
of motifs is also considered for their description. Sometimes, based on, the
appearance of the forms or the implied meaning of the terms used for them, they
are identified.

This methodology is applied particularly in the identification of the
different types of the adhiṣṭṭhanas, pillars and prāśāda, for which different names
are given in the Texts. The Texts, as such, do not give a clear picture of the
nature of these architectural members, but they provide a number of types and
sub-types of such members. Therefore, to identify the exact name of the type of
such an existing member in the temple, the above said methodology is used.
A thorough study of *vāstu* Texts and *Āgamas* is made to understand the name, nature, function and significance of the different architectural members.

*Vāstu* Texts available for the study of south Indian temple architecture are, mainly, the Mayamata, the Mānasāra, the Kāśyapaśilpa, the Śilparatna, the Īśānaśivagurudēvapaddati and the Tantrasamuchaya.

*Āgamas* like Kāmikāgama, Ajitāgama, Vimānārcanakalpa, Pādmasamhita, Rauravāgama, Kāraṇāgama, Suprabhēdāgama, etc., also deal with the aspects of temple architecture, to a certain extent.

*Purānas* like Agnipurāṇa, and Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa also furnish details regarding the temple architecture and sculpture.

*Samhitas* like Brāhmaṇa, Īśvarasamhīta, Puruṣottamasamhitā, etc., contain a few references regarding temple architecture.

Apart from these, a vague idea of the terminology and application of certain architectural principles are to be seen in Kautilya’s *Arthaśāstra* and the *Amarakōśa*.

In this work, *Kīrtanas* of saints and great composers of music and verses are also used as source for the description of temples and the temple culture. Some of the literary works by ancient poets are also used as source material for the description of certain architectural motifs.

In the present study, the Texts referred to are mainly, Mayamata, Mānasāra, Kāśyapaśilpa, Śilparatna, Īśānaśivagurudēvapaddati and Kāmikāgama, as the prescriptions found in these Texts can be easily applied for the temples of our region. Therefore, the term ‘Texts’ in the body of this work implies to these Texts only. Of these Texts Mayamata is very clear in its description and maintains consistency in its presentation. These Texts agree regarding the description and prescription, with a few exceptions. A feature
invariably noticed in these Texts is the use of synonym denoting the same architectural member mentioned in the other Text.

Though these Texts provide quite an amount of information regarding temple architecture, they are not free from inconsistencies. Certain descriptions and prescriptions in the Texts are quite confusing and not clear. It is also difficult to understand certain aspects of the Textual prescriptions. Different versions of the same Text make contradictory statements. Apart from these, the major difficulty while studying the Texts is the loss of certain parts of the Text itself. As these Texts were written in a perishable medium, i.e., palm leaves, due to the ravages of time and weather, some of the leaves would have got damaged, which has resulted in the loss of certain parts. Likewise, in ancient times the mode of preservation of these Texts was to make an eye copy of the earlier version. In this process, the chances of misspelling and misinterpretation of the original version, omissions, additions and alterations may occur. These again lead to contradictions and confusions.

In the reading of the original portions of some of the Texts, it gives the impression that those portions are a verbatim copy of the Text of an unknown source. Because, the same type of inconsistency, incongruity and vagueness appear uniformly in many of the Texts. Even some of the experts on Āgamas and vāstu of the present day have expressed their inability to understand or grasp the exact concepts explained in the Texts, in the discussions had personally with the author. They have expressed the same opinion, as given earlier, regarding the reasons for the inconsistency and incongruity in the Texts.

In spite of these difficulties faced while studying the Texts, considerable information regarding the essential building components is available. This information is judiciously analysed and studied to cull out the essence of such descriptions, omitting unnecessary details. That means minor aspects are ignored and major aspects are analysed and applied. Texts give enormous information
regarding the measurements of the major and minor mouldings of *adhiśṭhānas*, application of which is difficult. Therefore, measurement aspect is not considered very important in this study. Likewise, mention and description of umpteen numbers of minor mouldings and motifs made in the Texts are also given less importance in this study.

Taking into consideration the etymological sense of the names of architectural members, the morphology of such architectural forms are analysed. This approach has given good results, particularly, in identification of the *adhiśṭhāna* types mentioned in the Texts. It is also to be noticed here that some Texts differ in naming the architectural members differently, though their etymology conveys the same meaning.

Other architectural terms are also explained through etymological approach and their functions, their characteristic feature, physical and aesthetic, the hidden technological factors behind the construction and provision of certain architectural members, are also analysed and explained.

While explaining the origin and development of certain art concepts or idioms and other associated ideas, examples from other areas of south India are also taken into account. The idea behind this is to establish that the same concepts and ideas regarding the general nature of building and sculptural art prevailed in the region of our study also.

The explanation regarding the constructional procedure to be followed in the beginning, is that given in Kāśyapaśilpa. Though other texts also mention about this aspect, these descriptions are unclear and ambiguous, whereas, the presentation of the same in Kāśyapaśilpa is easily understandable. The other architectural members that are visible to the eye, their technical aspects, their function, their necessity, their advantages and such other aspects, are explained with the help of modern civil engineering technology.
While dealing with certain members of the temple and other decorative motifs found in the region, the features of those parts as expressed both in Tamil and Kannada idioms are explained, the reason being, the area of our study is a buffer zone between Tamil and Kannada kingdoms. Therefore, to explain the presence of such motifs in the region, one has to know the place of their origin first and understand the reasons behind the presence of such traits in the temples of our region.

Regarding the use of terminology in the present study, the Sanskrit nomenclature is used first. Its English equivalent is also given there of. In the body of the Text simultaneous use of both Sanskrit and English terms are made to familiarize both the terminologies. Similarly synonymous terms are also used in the narration.

In the region of our study, the beginning of structural temple architecture can be noticed from late 9th century A.D. onwards. The Nolambas laid the foundation for the temple building activity of this region. From this time onwards, a continuous activity of temple construction is observed. Increase in the number of constructions, as well as the patronage for temple construction in the succeeding centuries has been noticed. Though the architectural style of the region can be brought under the Dravidian school of architecture, influence of various sub-styles of the same architectural school, which have affiliation either to a particular dynasty or to a particular period, can be clearly observed. The same statement holds good for the sculptural art also. For example, the general outlay of the temple may be of Chola idiom, but, while studying the architectural members, their decoration and carving may reflect the traits of Hoysala school of art. Such factors are also analysed in this work.

Though the Texts give specific prescription for the carving of different architectural members and decorative motifs, artists of the region have executed them according to their own imagination and skill. This aspect proves that at all
times, the Texts were not followed strictly and even the artists enjoyed freedom of expression. Such aspects have been noticed on various occasions while studying many architectural members and structural additions to the temples and such instances are highlighted in the present work.

Discussions and consultation with Sanskrit scholars and Agamic experts were held for the confirmation of the statements made and the conclusions drawn by the author about textual prescriptions and also their etymological meanings. Likewise, civil engineers were consulted for the understanding of certain aspects of constructional methodology.

In the present study analytical observations regarding the aspects, which are directly concerned with the development of temple architecture of the Salem region have been brought out. Analysis of factors like the availability of material, skilled labour, efficient architects, patronage and the adoption of changing technology have been made. The temples distributed throughout the region are not uniform in nature. Some of them are very simple in their execution and basically utilitarian. Likewise, some of the temples are highly ornate and grand. There are some more temples, which are a mixture of the two elements. These factors are the results of the change in the taste of the contemporary society, the availability of men, material and money, improvement in the technology, acceptance of new ideas, innovations and the change in the socio-religious attitude of the contemporary society.

Ground-plans and line-drawings presented in this work are prepared by the author himself. These drawings and plans are not to scale.

Regarding the use of diacritical marks to transliterate the Sanskrit and dravidian terms into Roman script diacritical marks given in the chart are used. While spelling the well-known names of persons, places and divinities, Roman script is used without diacritical marks. For unfamiliar and lesser-known names of persons and divinities Roman script with diacritical marks is used. For all non-
English words and expressions Italics with diacritical marks are used. Generally, except at the beginning of the sentence, lower case is used for the first letter of the word in Italics, the reason being, that there is no use of lower and upper case in the writing of Sanskrit and Dravidian scripts.

Italics are used for all non-English names, which are also not familiar in the general context. For example, for names of \( \text{lilāmūrtis} \) and the \( \text{avatāramūrtis} \), Roman script with diacritical is used.

In the body of the thesis, while naming the nature of different architectural and sculptural traits, expressions like Nolamba school, Chola school, Hoysala school, etc., are used liberally. The ‘school’ in this context means the characteristic features and traits associated with the art forms produced by the artisans of that society, of that particular region, and under the rule of that dynasty.

Likewise, the expression ‘idiom’ is also used liberally in the Text. ‘Idiom’ in this context means the specific character or form of expression unique to that particular school or region, where that art form was widely prevalent.

After explaining the nature of study and presentation of the subject, it is necessary here to explain some of the aspects connected with the different schools of art, the knowledge of which is essential to understand the nature of the art forms of the region of our study. These are explained chronologically than geographically, so that the study gives a clear picture of the development of the art forms and also the architectural forms found in the temples.

**PALLAVA ART**

The Pallava sculptural art flowered during the beginning of the 7\(^{th}\) century A.D. All the specimens of Pallava art are in relief form. They are both in high and low reliefs. They are mostly found in the niches or on the walls of the rock-cut and structural shrines. A few examples of the Pallava sculptures are
found on rocks in the open air. The Pallava sculptures have anatomical features that are quite unique to them. The Pallava sculptures are physically not heavy and massive in their form. The sculptures of divinities or men or women are all carved in almost a similar fashion. They possess slender, tall forms. They are said, particularly the female sculptures, to possess ‘tubular limbs and globular breasts’. They possess a supple body and natural form. Their stance also looks very natural. They hold weapons and attributes in a natural way. In general, they are slim, tall and neat in their form and contour. Ornamentation is not much on their body. The crowns are generally conical and also short. The facial features, generally, is benign. The faces are almost round or slightly oval. As all the sculptures of the Pallava school are carved on hard granite, they possess little ornamentation and even this ornamentation is not intricate. The themes of the Pallava sculptures are mostly divine and mythological. The Pallavas, like the Badami Chalukyas produced beautiful divine tableaus in stone carved in large niches of the rock-cut shrines they excavated. Besides these sculptures of mythological friezes, socio-religious themes and decorative designs were carved to suit the architectural ambience of the building.

A special feature of the Pallava art unique to that school is the carving of temples both in cut-in and cutout techniques. Huge granite outcrops found in the open fields were selected and they were dressed and carved from outside to give the appearance of a structural temple, and those temples were also, again excavated inside and the interiors were also finished to look like a cella or a hall. Such structures are found at Mahabalipuram and these temples are still standing intact braving the ravages of time and weather. In the opinion of the art historians, these were carved to serve as models of the contemporary architectural forms, for the future generations to follow.

There is a major difference in the carving of sculptures between the Pallava and Badami Chalukya schools of art. It is a known fact that they were contemporary schools and they had cultural interaction. Yet, the sculptors
maintained a definite tradition of their own in the representation of certain themes of mythological incidents. This, particularly, is noticed in the depiction of the Mahiṣamardini theme. The Pallava way of the theme is to depict a battle scene in which the goddess, sitting on the lion, encounters Mahiṣa, in the anthropozoomorphic form. The armies of both the parties are also depicted in the background. The same form gets gradually transformed into a simplified way of depiction found in the sculptures of the later period. In this depiction, goddess Durga holding śaṅkha and cakra, stands on the head of a buffalo (Mahiṣa). These two ways of representation of the Mahiṣamardini theme is referred to as Tamil tradition.

BADAMI CHALUKYA ART

The sculptural art of the Badami Chalukyas dawned during the beginning of 6th century A.D. Almost all the specimens of Badami Chalukyan art are relief sculptures- high or low- carved in the niches or the walls or other surfaces of the rock-cut shrines and structural temples. The Badami Chalukyan sculptural art appears to be more advanced in their techniques and quality of carving than those of the Pallava sculptures. The main reason being that the Badami Chalukyan sculptural art is very much influenced by the art of the rock-cut shrines of the western India. Therefore, in the quality of carving and the wealth of decorative designs, the Chalukyan sculptures are superior to Pallava sculptures.

The Chalukyan sculptures are massive and elaborate in their carvings. The reason for making them huge was that the dimensions of the halls in which they are sculpted are also large. These sculptures are carved in the huge wall niches of the Badami rock-cut shrines excavated at Badami. The medium used was the sand stone, which is more malleable and pliable to the chisel.

The subjects of Badami Chalukya sculptures are religious, mythological, socio-religious, decorative, geometrical and non-geometrical, faunal and floral themes. Of these, religious and mythological themes dominate in number.
These sculptures found in the large niches of the rock-cut shrines have very heavy, yet supple body. The ornamentation is moderate. The crowns of the divinities are very tall, heavy and parallel sided in their form. Likewise, the drapery, particularly, the antariya is also heavy with its long hanging knots and tassels on the two sides. The face of the sculpture is oval in nature. Facial features are benign or ferocious depending on the episodes carved and all are quite expressive in nature. Divine tableaus depicting important incidents of Hindu mythology are quite elaborately carved along with the retinue of the respective gods and goddesses. The sculptures carved on the ceilings of the rock-cut shrines at Badami, particularly, those of the vidhyādharas flying in the air are noteworthy for the action and movement of the body amidst the clouds. The pleats of the drapery flying in the air, the folds of the body limbs and also the angle of the head and torso are all carved to indicate the fast movement of the vidhyādharas couple in the sky. The quality of the workmanship indicates that the Sculptural art had attained a technical perfection to depict certain abstract things like movement, even in the hard medium.

Another type of sculpture of the Chalukya school of art, are the sculptures found on different parts of the temple, like friezes, wall niches, ceiling, etc. These sculptures are not as big as those found in the rock-cut shrines. They are small in nature, compact in form and physique, and very neat in their execution. Though they are relief sculptures, they look almost like the sculptures in the round. Examples of such sculptures are found in the niches of Durga temple at Aihole. They are known for their beauty of form and exquisite workmanship.

In the carving of the theme of Mahiṣamardini, the Chalukya sculptors followed a different way than those followed by the Pallavas, The Chalukya way, of representation of the theme is that the goddess is depicted as trampling down the Mahiṣa with her right foot, holding his head or horn in one of her left hands. Mahiṣa is represented in the form of a buffalo. As she is multi-handed, sometimes, she even holds the tail of Mahiṣa in one of her right hands. Behind
the goddess stands her vehicle, the lion. This method of representation of the goddess, begun by the Chalukyas was continued by the Rashtrakutas, Nolambas, Gangas and Hoysalas. Therefore, this way of representation is described as Kannada/Karnataka tradition.

The Badami Chalukyan artists prodigally carved relief sculptures on the shafts of the pillars of the temples. This type of representation is commonly not found in the Pallava school of art. This tradition of carving of sculptures on the pillar shafts, almost in the round begun by the Badami Chalukyas was continued by the Hoysalas and it even continued during the Vijayanagara period.

Another noticeable feature of the Badami Chalukya sculptural art is the representation of bracket sculptures. The carving of bracket sculptures is as old as the time of the Sanchi stūpa. The bracket sculptures found on the tōraṇa of the Sanchi stūpa are datable to the early centuries of the Christian era. The rock-cut shrine No. 3 at Badami has bracket sculptures of young couples (Shiva and Parvati) as their theme. This tradition gave way to the creation of the sālabhañjikā sculptures of the Kalyana Chalukya and the Hoysala schools of art.

Likewise, the Badami Chalukyas were also experts in the execution of beautiful jālavatāyanas fixed into the niches of the temple walls. The Badami Chalukyas were also the first to carve the divine form of Naṭarāja, Ardhanārīśvara, Saptamātrkās and Ganesha. Carving of the sculptures of the two nidhis namely, padmanidhi and śaṅkhanidhi on the doorjambs, is also a contribution of the Badami Chalukyan school of art. Badami Chalukyas were highly adept in elaborately designing and carving attractive and ornamental doorways of the temples. Very good examples of Badami Chalukyan doorways are found in the Durga temple at Aihole and Virupaksha and Papanatha temples at Pattadakkal. These doorframes consist of multiple vertical śākhas carved variably with faunal, floral, figural and other decorative designs. The pēdyas of
the doorway are adorned by the sculptures of the *dwārapālakas*, Ganga, Yamuna, *nidhis* etc., and the royal attendants.

As the Badami Chalukya kingdom was close to the western Indian rock-cut shrines and also, as Karnataka (Kadambas) had close ties with the imperial Gupta dynasty of the north, the influence from north India was more on the architectural and sculptural art of the Badami Chalukyas. Therefore, one can see the liberal use of the *pūrnakalasa* motif, representation of the sculptures of Ganga and Yamuna on the doorframes or at the entrance, building of *nāgara* types of towers found in the Chalukya school of art.

The rich tradition of sculpting themes of Hindu mythology started by the Badami Chalukyas, was ably continued by the Rashtrakutas, Nolambas, Kalyana Chalukyas and Hoysalas.

Certain parts emphasised while giving the details of the Badami Chalukya school of art is intentional to show that these features are not found in the Pallava school of art. Therefore, the presence of features mentioned above, in the region of our study, obviously suggest their origin to the Karnataka tradition.

**NOLAMBA ART**

The Nolambas were a feudatory dynasty, who ruled the area that lay between the Tamil and the Kannada kingdoms. As they ruled over the parts between Tamil and Kannada speaking areas, the Nolamba art is influenced by both Tamil and Karnataka traditions. The best of the Nolamba specimens of art are datable to 9th and 10th centuries. The Nolambas adopted certain new methods and techniques for the construction of temples as well as for carving of sculptures. The new method followed by the Nolambas in the architecture was the use of a different and fine quality medium for the carving of certain important parts of the temple building. For the carving of the doorways, pillars, *aḍḍadiṃḍhaka* panel in the ceiling, perforated windows, for one particular stone-course of the wall, where the upper part of the pilasters were carved and for the
carving of the sculptures, the Nolamba artists used a fine grained stone. This stone is the greenish blue basalt, available in the region of their rule. This stone is formed of fine grains. It is also hard in nature. Its colour ranges from greyish to blackish blue. Because of the fine texture of the stone used, the Nolamba artists could achieve the intricacy, beauty and polish in the carving of the art forms they created. Nolambas also carved very beautiful and ornate doorways to their temples, known for their exquisite quality workmanship. So also the jālavātāyanas carved by the Nolamba artist. They have attractive figural and floral themes. Rajendra Chola I, enamoured by the beauty of the pillars and perforated windows of the Nolamba temples, took away many specimens of these to his capital as war trophies.

Nolamba sculptures are known for their quality of workmanship and beauty of forms. Nolamba sculptures are more ornate, elaborate and intricate in their design and decoration than the preceding Badami Chalukyas and they stand between the Badami Chalukya and Hoysala school of sculptural art as far as delicacy and detail of carving are concerned. The Nolambas, not only carved their sculptures in a very attractive way but also gave lustrous polish to many of the sculptures they carved. Tall and huge sculptures of Kali preserved in the Madras government museum and at the Hemavati museum are good example to the superior quality workmanship of the Nolamba artist. These Kali sculptures are unique for their form, beauty and size. The size of these sculptures are very huge compared to sculptures of other schools of art, carved in the round. The way in which these sculptures are carved, their concept and creation prove that they are the works of the artists of superior skill, rare to find parallels in any school of south Indian sculptural art.

As stated already, the Nolamba territory lay between the Tamil and Kannada powers. Therefore, the traits of both Tamil and Kannada traditions are reflected in the Nolamba art forms. The Nolambas carved the sculpture of Mahiṣāmardini in the Chalukyan and also in the Tamil tradition. The Chalukya
mode of killing the demon is also found and at the same time Durga standing on the head of the buffalo is also noticed. Nolamba pillars, many a times, contain seated lion motif as found in the Pallava pillars. These lion motifs found are tiny and suggestive of Pallava influence. They are carved on the four corners of the pillar shaft. The Nolamba temples are often decorated with plinths consisting of both the kapōta and the pattika mouldings. Some of the adhisthānas of the Nolamba temples have either the kapōta or pattika or both, used alternatively.

The Nolamba sculptures, in their appearance, have the features of both the Pallava and Chalukya schools. Some of the sculptures are slender bodied and tall like the Pallava sculptures. Some are heavy and hefty with voluptuous forms reminding us of the Chalukya sculptures. The Nolambas, like the Chalukyas, preferred to carve certain mythological themes, which are not found in the Tamil tradition. These are the carving of the sculptures of Ganga and Yamuna on the doorjambs, carving of pūrnakalāśa motif on the pillar shafts, carving of the nidhi figures on the pēdyas, etc.

Another type of decoration of the temple interior followed by the Nolamba artist is the carving of the sculpture of āstadiṅkālaṅkas surrounding Shiva, in the central bay of the ceiling of the gūḍhamantaṇa. The origin of this tradition may be traced to the Badami Chalukyas. Badami Chalukya temples at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakkal have the relief sculptures carved in the ceiling of the mukhaṇaṭṭaṇa and the verandah. This feature was adopted by the Nolambas and they carved in the ceiling of the gūḍhaṇaṭṭaṇa and this feature became more popular during the Kalyana Chalukya and Hoysala times. It is to be noted here that this is a feature not found in the temples built in the Tamil tradition.

CHOLA ART

Chola school of art is a continuation of the Pallava school of art. The Cholas did not give much importance to the carving of sculptures and other
decorative details, connected with the architecture of the temple. In a way, Chola art stands for simplicity of carving of both sculpture and architecture. Cholas made their building grand in appearance than making them attractive through decorative details. The reason also being that the medium being used for construction was hard granite. Their temples are the highest in number and also grandest in their dimensions. The Cholas have built largest number of temples that no other dynasty that ruled south India could build. These temples possess minimum number of sculptures that are sufficient for the prevailing Hindu form of worship. Therefore, only the dēvakōṣṭas of the Chola temples contain sculptural carvings in them. No sculptural decoration on the wall or the pillar or on the ceiling is found in the Chola temples.

The Chola sculptures are very simple in their execution. Yet, they are very elegant and natural in their form. Both relief and sculptures in the round are found. Majority of the sculptures in the round are votive sculptures or the sculptures kept in the dēvakōṣṭa. The Chola sculptures possess a thin and tall-attenuated body with minimal drapery and ornamentation. They are all carved in hard granite, hence, the intricacy of the carving is also less. Generally, the sculptures wear conical kirīta or a karaṇḍa mukūṭa. Ornaments like necklaces, kēyūra, bangles, anklets, etc., are seen. The lower garment extends up to the ankle with neatly arranged pleats and folds. They possess slender and supple body. Often they are smoothened and polished also. The face is generally oval and reminds us of the Pallava mode of sculpting. The Chola sculptures hold the attributes in a natural way. The ends of the two upper hands are normally connected to the shoulder through a band of stone, plain in nature, carved in the same stone to prevent breaking of the hands.

HOYSALA ART

The period of the Hoysala school of art is from the middle of the 11th century to the end of 13th century. This was a period of efflorescence of the
sculptural art of Karnataka. The Hoysalas, who used a soft medium for construction of the temples and for the carving of the sculptures, made their art forms—both architectural and sculptural—exquisitely ornamental, delicately carved and intricately chiseled to make them look like the art of ivory and wood carvings. Each and every part of the temple or sculpture was bedecked with ornamentation and decoration on an unprecedented scale. All these features are found in the temples of Hoysalas built in their kingdom and made of soapstone. But the temples that were built by the Hoysalas in the hard medium like granite do not possess all these features mentioned above. However, an imitation of these elements to a certain degree is found in the temples that were built in granite, under the patronage of the Hoysalas, both in the heartland as well as in the regions outside Karnataka. Our region of study being a part of the extension of the Hoysala kingdom in Tamilnadu, possesses a few temples which were built under the patronage of the Hoysalas, but by the artists of the native land. In these temples, certain imitation of the Hoysala traits are noticed and attention has been drawn to such factors wherever they are found necessary.

VIJAYANAGARA ART

The art of the Vijayanagara period is a continuation of the tradition followed both by the Tamil and Kannada schools. But the former dominates the latter in most of the art specimens of this school. Like the Cholas, the Vijayanagara artists also paid attention more for making the temples magnificent through their size, than making them aesthetically attractive in their appearance. The medium used for the construction of temples, i.e., granite, also did not permit them to make their temples beautiful through decorations. Therefore, Vijayanagara school of art is known more for the monumental grandeur than for its decorative details.

The sculptural art of the Vijayanagara period, as said earlier, reflects more Chola traits in its depiction. The sculptures are simple and to a certain extent
lifeless. The natural beauty and elegance of body and form, found in the Chola sculptures is not found here. Though they contain all the morphological features of the Chola sculptural art, the depiction of the feelings, emotions and suppleness of the body, softness of the skin and such other superior aspects of sculptural depiction are not found in the Vijayanagara sculptures. The sculptures have unnatural anatomical forms, which are particularly noticed in the depiction of female sculptures. The breasts of the women are represented in a hemispherical form. They are too artificially raised up. The facial features are also not elegant. They have wide-open eyes with eyebrows bent like rainbows. The ridge of the nose is very sharp and prominent. The nostrils are rising up and protrude prominently. The tip of the nose is pointed. The lower lips are everted and the chin is round and prominent. These features make the sculpture very artificial and unnatural in their form. The drapery of the sculptures is not heavy. The pleats are neatly folded and arranged. Sometimes they are decorated with flowers and checkered pattern. Some of the minor divinities and attributes of the gods gain popularity and begin to appear in the form of sculptures during the Vijayanagara period. They are the sculptures of Virabhadra, Hanuman, tripunḍra, śaṅkha, cakra etc. The last of these motifs appear separately and prominently as the logos of the Srivaishnava religion during the Vijayanagara period.

Architecturally also, the temples of the Vijayanagara period appear distinctly different due to the construction of certain architectural members. These are mainly the pillars used in Vijayanagara style. Pillar types like vyālakānta and samyukta stambha are the creations of the Vijayanagara artists. They used the citrakhaṇḍa and kōṣṭastambha type extensively, which were the designs created by the preceding Chola and Hoysala schools of art. The Vijayanagara artists liberally used brick and mortar in the construction of the prāsādas of the gopura and also the prāsādas of the vimāna, and parapet and its various other parts.
CHRONOLOGY

A note regarding the chronological framework often mentioned in the body of the text is necessary here. It is often mentioned, while giving the chronology of the temples, that they belong to the Nolamba period, the Chola period, the Hoysala period, etc. An explanation regarding what these periods indicate in the general chronology of the history is given here:

i) Pallava period- from 600 A.D. to 900 A.D.

ii) Nolamba period- from C. 850 A.D. to C. 980 A.D.

iii) Chola period- from C.980 A.D. to C. 1336 A.D.

iv) Hoysala period (overlapping with the Cholas) – from C.1250 A.D. to 1336 A.D.

v) Vijayanagara period- from 1336 A.D. to C.1650 A.D.

Expressions like early, medieval and later periods are also made in the body of the text. In such cases, early period refers to the Pallava, Nolamba and the early Chola (1100 A.D.) period. The middle period refers to period from 1100A.D. to 1336 A.D., and the later period refers to the period from 1336 A.D. to 1650 A.D. The post Vijayanagara period refers to the period after C.1650 A.D.