ART AND LETTERS

ARCHITECTURE

The study of the Mahratha Society in its varied aspects will be incomplete, without an assessment of its artistic achievements, as they reveal their cultural movements borne out by the progress of art and architecture.

The Mahrathas of Thanjavur had adopted their own style of construction and they had renovated the Nayak buildings. They followed 'Indo-Sarasanic style'. Some of the buildings of the Mahrathas, show that Hindu architecture was influenced by Muslim style. *Indo-Islamic art* was possibly due to the Hindu kings adopting techniques of Islamic tradition. Islamic art or Mughal style was also followed in some forms in the Hindu pattern as is visible in honeycombed, half-domed minaret. The pillars and the arches in their buildings are Muslim in character. Apart from the influence of Islam, one can see the English style brought about by the intimate contacts with the west.

The temples, mosques, minars, minarets and churches constructed by the Mahrathas proves their policy of secularism. Thanjavur was famous for religious art with architectural lavishness and Iconographical extravagance.

There are about thirty buildings within the Palace complex intended for various purposes inside the fort. The buildings, which were built in the later period of the Mahratha rule, exhibit a considerable amount of European influence in their style. King
Serfoji-II followed the English style and with the help of an English engineer Mr. Philips, who was also the political agent of the British in Thanjavur at that time, had designed and executed various parts of the present palace. The memorial tower built by Serfoji-II as a thanks giving structure, for the English victory over Nepoleon in 1814, which is also called the manor tower at Saluvaraya kanpattinam is the best example of secular architecture. This tower stands as an excellent example of fusion of oriental and occidental traditions in architecture.

The Arsenal tower or lakhsmivilas also called the gudagopuram served as the armoury with 7 storeys. It is a fine example of Mahratha construction. The dark passage (dark Mahal) which is zig-zag for a considerable length in the central portion of the main palace, with secret passages and adorned by paintings and sculptures, is also a very good example Mahratha architecture.

The tremendous edifices on the banks of river Cauvery in Thiruvadi (Thiruvaiyaru) is a fine example of river side architecture of the Thanjavur Mahrathas. The beautiful Pushpamandapa ghat at Thiruvaiyaru was built by the Mahratha Kings. The padithurai near the bathing ghat is called ghosapadithurai. Other padithurai buildings located at various places are named chevaikilamai padithurai, mandapa padithurai, Yamunambal padithurai and kalyana mahal padithurai. There are also some other impressive buildings located on the banks of Vadavaru one of which is also called 'Engineer padithurai' The vennaru padithurai constructed by King Serfoji-II is an excellent masterpiece.
The massive fortification walls at the capital were pierced by openings which served as gateways and which were generally constructed in the Hindu style with Muslim style of arches. One of the important gateways was the eastern gateway or the mainuayil or ‘Gateway of Victory’ or sarchavayil. The southern gateway was called ‘kone vahini’.

SCULPTURE

The Thanjavur bronzes bear testimony to the great height reached in metal castings in those days. The sculptors of Mahratha period also produced some wonderful bronzes. Some of the popular bronzes were of Nataraja in various types, Vishnu, Somaskandar, Subramanya, Rama, Sita and Krishna with exquistic sculptural embellishments.

In addition to metal castings, sculptures in stone were also familiar to them. The prominent pillars with a striking designs were an important feature found in Mahratha sculpture. The Mahratha sculpture is rich in decorative designs, floral patterns which add a charm to the Mahratha architecture.

The sculptures carved continuously along the walls by the side of the Mahratha dharbar hall of the palace are in stucco. They were called ‘dark sculpture’ as there were darkrooms with a secret passage leading to the main place of the palace. The main sculptures found here were of Kabilavishnu ie., Panchamuga Thirumal, Varaha, Panchamuga Hanuman etc., These statues are not found in any other part of Tamilnadu. The vehicles, and the palanquin in Thanjavur region during the Mahratha period were built by various kinds of wood and decorted with colour glasses, studded
with stones of attractive colours. These types of vehicles are still found in Thanjavur temples.

The sculptures made of marble were patronised by King Serfoji-II. Such sculptures are found in Thanjavur Art gallery. The marble statue of king serfoji-II with folded hands in the traditional Indian style which was set up in his life time in 1807 by the East India Company is in the Thanjavur Art gallery. The statue which stands on a granite pedestal faces the Saraswathimahal library. It was made by the famous London sculpture Flaxman. The Throne of the King in the Mahratha dharbar hall is in an elevated place with a rectangular platform paved with marble. Protraits or images of the kings found in the temples of Thanjavur district prove that, this art received a new trend and patronage under the Mahratha Kings of Thanjavur. Pratapsingh was responsible for making such images in the temples of Sirkali, Vaitheeswaran koil and Kumbakonam.

MAHRATHA PAINTINGS

Every age and country produces the art peculiar to itself. 'Tanjore school of paintings' can be considered as the final expression of a traditional society. They have a distinct pattern or style of their own. The Mahratha court of Thanjavur played a very significant role in the development of the art of painting. The kings patronised artists even from other states. Hence many artists had migrated from other places like Hyderabad. Thus Thanjavur became a meeting ground and the result was that the school of painting came to be developed under the patronage of the Thanjavur Mahratha rulers which has been called 'Tanjore School'. The term 'Tanjore Painting' refers to certain styles of painting which reached a characteristic form
in Thanjavur area during the Mahratha period. Paintings on new series of media such as cloth, wood, glass, mica and ivory etc., were introduced. The subjects of paintings also changed from purely religious to the secular. A new technique was followed in the painting for decorative effect. The famous Navaneetha Krishan paintings are examples. The Tanjore paintings have an exquistic appeal and effect. These paintings became popular for worship. The painters of Thanjavur were of Telugu speaking origin. Their work was known as ‘Kalamkari Tradition’ which was continued in Thanjavur especially seen in Temple hangings with epic subject matter and was used for the temple car (ratha) and lamps.

Tanjore paintings were dominated by the ‘Iconic style’ (originally symbol of worship). The colours used were mostly deep green, strong blue or red background, while the principal figures are mainly in white or yellow, green or blue. Gold was used for decorative purposes and these ornamental paintings served to embellish the pooja room. These Iconic Paintings were made generally on wooden panels and so they were also called ‘Palagai Padam’ i.e., pictures on wood. The chief example of such type was the child Krishna or the ‘butter thief’.

KINDS OF TANJORE PAINTING

1. Portraits: The earliest portraits at Thanjavur were the off shoots of the Mahratha style. The portraits of Shivaji and Venkoji the first Thanjavur Mahratha kings on a horse-back are the best examples of such types of paintings. King Serfoji-II patronised the art of painting. Paintings on ivory seem to have come into vogue after 1790 A.D., After the contact with the British, the Thanjavur artists came
into touch with western art media such as glass. It became fashionable and even a status symbol to have Oil Paintings as a mark of culture. The Thanjavur Kings had their portraits painted in oils by Indian artists in the western manner. We also come across group portraiture in each of which a large number of people is depicted. One such work is the famous Darbar scene which is found in the palace.

Many such paintings of the Maharatha period are kept in Victoria Museum and in India Office Library - London. Different kinds of portraiture are available in National Art Gallery - Madras with fine varieties of portraits.

The portraits of common man and casual paintings of courtesans with musical instruments and other paintings were also popular. Kings Serfiji-II presented such paintings to his guests. These portrait paintings declined rapidly due to the advent of photography and lack of patronage.

2. Murals: Thanjavur was also famous for mural paintings. Murals are paintings on walls which form a part of interior decoration. It is found in many of the temple walls. As the Maharatha rulers were orthodox Hindus, the temple ceilings and walls were decorated with such paintings. The Darbar Hall of the palace, the temple at Tiruvarur, Tanjaiurpeeswar temple, Mariamman temple, Orathanadu Choultry etc., are decorated with sacred mural paintings. The Maharatha murals were found in panels on the walls or ceilings. The special feature of Maharatha paintings is that they are decorated with jewels and other elements with raised projections. This Maharatha style of murals declined rapidly in course of time.
3. **Glass paintings**: Paintings on glass developed during the Mahartha rule. The paintings of the deities, portraits and epic themes were painted on glass to spread devotion among the people. These paintings were also seen in Thanjavur.

4. **Paintings on Ivory**: Miniature paintings on Ivory were followed by the British. These portraits were mostly bust portraits with religious subjects. The best example was the coronation of Rama.

5. **Paintings on Mica and Playing Cards**: This type of paintings came to Thanjavur from North India. These paintings were small in size and kept in Madras museum. There were also hand-painted cards. The paintings of such type are found in Thanjavur Saraswathy Mahal Library. Most of the collections belong to the time of Kings Serfoji-II.

There is no other separate school of painting like that of Thanjavur school in Tamilnadu with clear identifiable characteristics and which was the unique style of Thanjavur art. The end of the Maharatha period saw the disintegration of Indian visual arts and tradition due to absence of patronage and decline of taste. Thus the traditional art declined and the decline was due to the growth of commercialism. The Thanjavur artists probably migrated to places like Trichy, Madurai and other places for patronage.

**MUSIC**

The history of music as prevalent in Thanjavur during Maharatha period, represents the most remarkable period in the development of carnatic music. Thanjavur became a glorious seat of music. The political struggle and warfare had not penetrated into the
cultural layer of the kingdom. Music, dance and literature flourished during the Mahratha period and it was fondly referred to as 'Tanjore tradition'. The Thanjavur style of singing is a fine tradition in music noted for its purity, variety melody and richness. There were ragas named after the kings like sarabharaga, candrika, sarabha lalita sarabhendira and sarabha kalpam.

Two types of music which prevailed in Mahratha kingdom in Thanjavur were classical music and folk music.

The classical music or the Carnatic music flourished mainly due to the three out-standing musicians who enriched the classical musical tradition. They were called 'Sangeeta mummanigal' (Musical Trinity) They were Thyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshithar and Syama Sastri. They have exhibited styles in their kritis and developed musical form to perfection. These Trinity by their unique compositions and rare talents, enriched the classical tradition in Tamil country in 19th century and it remains unsurpassed even to this day.

FOLK MUSIC

Thanjavur has a rich, hoary tradition in classical arts. It has also a rich heritage of folk arts. Folk songs of Thanjavur can be classified into ten categories-devotional songs, lullaby, childrens' songs, play songs, love songs, songs on society, labour songs, function song, dirge songs and miscellaneous songs. These songs have been handed down from time immemorial from father to son and have survived purely by oral tradition. The songs related to work are: Kulavaippattu (sung by women engaged in agricultural work) Nathumuthu thalattu (lullaby song) Errappattu or picotta song, sung
by men, Themmangu (sung by bullock cartmen) kappal pattu or boat song. The recreational songs like *kummi*, *kolattam* etc., entertainments like ballads and devotional concerts like *bhajan* and *Harikatha kalatshepam*, were prevalent under the Mahrathas of Thanjavur.

**LAVANI**

One of the quaint types of simple and catching folk music which still stands as a symbol of the cultural wealth of the Tamils is popularly known as *villupattu* or the bow-song performed by a group of five to eight singers with a big bow called *villu*.

*Lavani* was another kind of folk music performed chiefly in Thanjavur region. It seems to have come down to the south from Maharashtra. It was a very popular past time among the village folk of Thanjavur. They are in the form of puzzle and answers (it is an interesting and entertaining method of religious instruction).

The kings were themselves musicians and promoted the art of lavani singing in Thanjavur. King Serfoji II's *Tirtha Yatra Lavani* was a magnam opus. It describes the pilgrimage of the king. The last Mahratha ruler Shivaji II was himself a *Savayi*. Many *lavani* singars were patronised by the Mahratha kings. But this art slowly dwindled into insignificance, with the extinction of the Mahratha rule. Apart from these folk songs, there were devotional concerts like *kalakshepa* and *bhajan* widely prevalent in Thanjavur region. The *Harikathekalakshepam* is the art of extempore story telling brought from Maharashtra by the Mahratha rulers of Thanjavur. The exponent of this art, commands an audience by his knowledge of many languages with *Chappalakkattai* or wooden plank in his hands.
The themes are mainly drawn from popular epics. The importance of Maharatha kirthana and the highly devotional songs used by the saints on the South Indian bhajan resulted in a synthetic form of worship. The Mahratha bhajans were a regular feature in the various maths. These devotional songs like the abhangas, pada, dindi, mangala, slokas, mostly in Marathi, were sung in these bajans. The presence of a number of the maths in Thanjavur gave fresh impetus to the promotion of bhajans.

HARIKATHA

Harikatha formed and essential part of the devotional life of the people. The south Indian Harikatha with its present features may be said to have emerged during the Mahratha rule in Thanjavur. The impact of Mahratha culture on South Indian music was primarily responsible for the development of the Harikatha kalatsepam as it is available to-day.

PATRONAGE TO MUSIC

The Mahratha kings patronised music like their predecessors, the Nayaks and the Cholas. King Shaji was a great composer and scholar in sangeeta and sahitya. Music had reached a high level of excellence in his days. He composed hundreds of soul stirring padas in praise of Lord Tyagaraja. The sahendra vilasa kavya speaks volumes about the cultural greatness of the king. The kings singed his songs with Tyagesa or Tyaga Mudra. He introduced a new style of prabandha composition which was a combination of musical and dramatic significance. He brought together the tradition of the literary prabandhas and Yakshagana tradition and created a fusion of
the two in his *kavyas*. The king had to his credit as many as thirty *Yaksaganas* and musical compositions treating a variety of themes such as erotic and devotional etc., The saints of his period like *Tayumana Swamigal* spread *bhakthi* by their devotional songs.

Sarabhoji-I patronised the musicians and presented the Brahmins with *agraharams* called *Sarabhojirajapuram* at Tiruvengadu and Tirukkadaiyur.

Tukkoji gave liberal gifts to scholars, pandits and poets. It was during his period, that Hindustani *sangeetam* became popular in Thanjavur. With the advent of the Maharashtra *bhajan* and *kirtan* style of singing in Thanjavur Hindustani music became more popular in the south.

Sanskrit, Telugu and Marathi manuscripts in Saraswathi Mahal consists of a variety of *padas*, dedicated to *Chandramoliswara* the family deity of the Mahratha kings.

The reign of Tulaja-II was the golden period in the history of music. The trinity of Carnatic music lived during his period. Though politically, his reign was not eventful, he was a patron of musicians and dances. He created a hamlet at Tiruthuraipoonidi and gave *sarvamanya* lands to the musicians and named them Tulajamaharajapuram. It is said that three hundred and sixty vidwans had adorned the Thanjavur court at the time of Tulaja.

By the time of king Amarsingh and Serfoji-II Thanjavur had become the centre of fine musical dramas such as *Bhagavata mela*, *Sangeeta mela* vocal and instrumental music. The manuscripts in Saraswathi Mahal reveal the popularity of the musical compositions during his period.
The musicians considered it a privilege, to perform in the Thanjavur court and received royal appreciation. The musical instruments like veena, gottuvadyam, nagaswaram, violin, sarangi, tavil, mirudangam and clarinet were played in Thanjavur court. The king Serfoji II himself was a scholar and he learnt western music. The notations had been explained with Devanagiri letters. For the first time he organised and played the western tunes on the 'Tanjore band' in the palace. He was chiefly responsible for popularising western music in Thanjavur. About 150 books on western music were preserved in the Saraswathi Mahal Library.

Sivaji II continued the legacy left over by his predecessors. He was a lover of lavaris and extended his patronage to the Marathi folk songs by giving sarvamanyam lands to the musicians. Western music became popular, as he patronised western musicians employed in the services of the palace. When the royal patronage declined after the English annexation of Thanjavur in 1855, the musicians migrated to other states which offered shelter. Thus the music of Thanjavur became popular in different places like Trivandrum, Mysore and Pudukottai.

DANCE

Dance was greatly encouraged by the Mahratha court. There was a dancing hall in the palace called sadar mahdi, where the courtesans and dancing girls performed various types of dances. Excellent dances were performed by both men and women in the Mahratha court. The types of dances performed were 1) Classical and 2) Folk dances.
The classical Indian dance namely *Bharatha natyam* was very much influenced by the dance of Thanjavur. This dance during the Mahratha rule, was largely known as *sadar, dasi attam* or simply *nautch*. The *Bharatha natyam* was known as *Thanjavur natya* around 1800 A.D. The modern *Bharatha natyam* derived great inspiration from the "Tanjore-Quartet"—Chinnaiya, Ponnaiya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu, who were famous *nattuvanars* in the court of Serfoji II. They taught Hindustani music to the *devadasis* of Thanjavur. These four brothers reached great heights in the realms of composition and have made solid contributions to dance repertoire.

During the time of a procession of the chief deity, in the temples the girls attached to the temple performed beautiful dances like *Santhi Kuthu, Sakkai Kuthu, Ariya Kuthu* and *Tamilar Kuthu*. These were some of the minor dances performed during the temple festivals. The *Thanjavur natya* became a wonderful accomplishment of the people. The sculptures in the temples reveal the standard of dancing in the Thanjavur region. A variety of dancing poses of dancing girls depicted in the temples of Thanjavur and in *darbar mandapa* in the palace and 108 *karnams* represented in stone sculptures in the Big Temple, prove that dance was considered as a pure and noble art in Thanjavur and *Bharathanatyam* being encouraged by the Mahratha rulers.

The Mahratha period witnessed the maximum contribution of courtesans to the development of dance. The various dances performed in the Mahratha court included, dance items such as *Dhrupada, Kelike, Perani, Pekkari, Kundali, Kuravanji, Padachali, Jakkin* etc. This proves the existence of different regional dances in the Mahratha court of Thanjavur. Thanjavur region was renowned
for great teachers of dance. They were called *nattuvanar*. They taught the artists both Hindustani and Carnatic dance forms. The ‘Tanjore Quartet’ brothers followed their style known as *Pandanallur* style. There were other famous *nattuvanars* who followed a particular tradition called *Valuvur* style. Hence, a number of dance schools came into existence in Thanjavur. Yet, a common style was followed in the Mahratha court which was called *Thanjavur natyam*\(^1\). Besides Bharathanatyam and other classical dances the Mahratha kings encouraged varieties of folk arts and dances like Kavadi\(^2\), Karagam\(^3\), Puravi attam\(^4\) and Gondhalam\(^5\).

The other folk dances performed were *Pavaikkuthu Arayar Natanam*, *Kuravai-Kuthu*, *Kazhaikkuthu*, *Kanian attam* etc. *Jakkinirnatyam* was another dance which flourished during the days\(^6\) of the Mahrathas of Thanjavur.

**YAKSAGANA DANCE**

The date of the origin of the *yaksagana* type of dance is not clear. However, it is believed that it originated in the Mysore and Karantaka regions. It was also practised in the Mahratha court. Male dancers only took part in this dance and dance-dramas. The troupe of dancers, who participated in this dance, were called *mandali*, which was headed by a *nattuvanar*\(^7\). The comic actor of this troupe was called *kadanki*\(^8\). The theme of this dance-drama was taken either from Ramayana or Mahabrata. Generally, these dance and dance-dramas were performed during the time of Navaratri, Dipavali and harvest season. While dancing, the dancers of this tradition used to wear attractive dresses and ornaments. The *terukuttu* may be identified as the Tamil equivalent of *yaksagana*\(^9\).
Shaji II was the master in *yaksagana* and as many as twenty five such *natya natakas* were written by the Matratha kings, which were performed during festivals. King Tulaja was the author of two *yaksaganas* viz., *rajaranjana vilasa natakam* and *sivakama sundari parinaya natakam*.

**KAVUTTVUVAM**

It was a variety of dance performed mostly during the days of Maharathas. *Kavuttuvams* were special dance items of worship, a regular feature in Thanjavur. Special *kavuttuvams* were composed for being performed before the deity during special occasions, like *Brahmotsava* (annual festival). At this time a special worship was offered to the presiding deities of the nine directions. This was called *navasandhi* (nine directions). It ended finally with the reciting of *jatis*. The dance performed then was called *navasandhi nrtta*. During the time of the 'Tanjore Quartet' the performance of these dances was a regular feature in the temples of Thanjavur.

*Panchamurthi kavuttuvam*, another variety of dance, was a set of five *kavuttuvams* invoking the five gods viz., *Vinayaka, Subramanya, Sambandar, Chandikeswara* and *Nataraja*. This was performed during the month of *Margali* (December-January).

**TANJORE BAND**

It was a combination of Indian and western music, which was started at the time of king Serfoji II. As the lovers of fine arts the Mahratha kings encouraged it. Women artists also played drum in the *natakasala*.
WESTERN AND HINDUSTANI NATYA

Besides the yaksagana dance, the western and Hindustani dances also were patronised by the Mahratha kings. The court of Serfoji II had an appreciable audience not only for Bharatanatyam but also for the Western and Hindustani dances.

Bhagavetamela dance dramas were expounded with music of high class carnatic tradition, dance and abhinaya and dramatic action. Once a popular folk art, it is now confined to a single village Melattur (the main centre of this art in Thanjavur districut during temple festivals). It was enacted in front of temples as an offering to the deities. The seventy one poses of Siva depicted in the Thanjavur palace are best examples of Bhagavata mela natya and participation of men in this dance. King Serfoji II liberally gifted the dancers of Bhagavata mela with presents.

Kuravanji is a type of dance drama which is distinctive to the Tamils. As an entertainment, its emphasis is balanced between classical and folk arts. The Kuravanji performances were held in Kuravanji-medai in the big temple at Thanjavur during annual Brahmotsava festival. The poets belonging to other religions like Islam and Christianity too, have attempted to write kuravanji. Gana kuravanji by Peer Mohamed and Bethlehem Kuravanji by Vedanaya Sastri are very good examples. King Serafoji II had composed ‘Devendra Kuravanji. Thus Kuravanji formed a popular folk art during the Mahratha rule. The Kuravanji dances become very popular under King Shaji II. The Kuravanji dance dramas were developed around the stock theme of a heroine falling in love with a king or the presiding deity of a temple.
SANGITA MELA

Maharatha days witnessed a new dance variety called *sangita mela*. It was a kind of dance and music, performed to the play of various instruments. It held sway under king Serfoji II and was disbanded thereafter. This band performed dance and music whenever distinguished visitors came to Maharata court\(^62\).

PATRONAGE TO DANCE

The Maharatha kings encouraged and gave patronage to dance and other fine arts, and so *nattuvanars* and many dancers migrated to Thanjavur and they enriched the tradition of dance and music in Thanjavur region. King Shahji II - The 'Abinavabhoja' (name given by scholars because of his mastery in several languages and fine arts) was a great patron of dance. It reached a high level of excellence during his reign. Many villages in and around Thanjavur became the strong hold of *Bhagavathamela* and *Bharathanatyam* during his time. He created a village called *Shaharajapuram* and gave it away to the famous dance masters\(^63\). This village flowered into a centre of dance. Sarabhoji-I also patronised dance dramas. Under his patronage dance dramas like *Vidhya Parinayam* and *Mohini Mahesa Parinayam* were enacted\(^64\).

Tukkoji was an ardent supporter of dance and music. It was during his time that *Hindustani Sangita Padhati* became popular in the Thanjavur court\(^65\). He himself wrote a dance- called *sivakama sundari parinayam*\(^66\), *Danvandhiri Vilasam*\(^67\), *Danvandhiri saranidhi*\(^68\), and *Inkularajatjonidhi*\(^69\).
Ekoji -II was a great scholar in dance and music. His composition on dance and music was collectively called Ekoji Sahityamu. As a great admirer of dance, he encouraged dance by giving gifts to dancers. Tullal a type of dance was performed in his court. Pratapsingh the next Mahratha ruler, also patronised dance and music and was famous for his munificent gifts to poets, dancers and muscians. Radika santvanamu the Telugu work gives some useful information about the king.

Tulaja - II was a great patron of dance and music. His reign marks the beginning of the commencement of the golden period in the history of dance and music. His court was the seat of exponents in dance and music, both vocal and instrumental. He was the contemporary of Saint Thyagaraja. He systematised the art of dance in Thanjavur.

Amar Singh brother of Tulaja II, was a patron of arts in general. Unlike the other rulers he gave little importance to dance. But he was famous for the gifts of extensive Sarvamanya lands to the learned and dancers. He composed a lot of padas which were very useful for dance in those days.

With the ascendancy of Serfoji-II in 1799 there started a golden era in fine arts in Thanjavur. He was a highly cultured king. He was a composer and writer of many works. His court was adorned with great artists like Sivakolunthu Desikar and Subaraya Desikar.

He patronised a large number of dance-masters and dancers with great enthusiasm. He encouraged court and temple dances and musicians by profuse gifts. He introduced the practice
of giving salary to the dancers instead of giving food to them in dance schools and made their services remunerative.

Shivaji - II, the last Mahratha ruler, also patronised dance and music. He patronised dancers like Gowri Amma, Kanthimathi Amma and other devadasis. Due to the British influence in the Mahratha court, towards the end of his reign his period marked a dark age in the field of fine arts. Hence, the dancers and nattuvanars went to Trivandrum and Baroda, where they were received by those kings and they settled there. Apart from the Mahratha kings of Thanjavur, some queens also patronised dance and music.

The above evidences, establish the fact that all the Mahratha kings of Thanjavur and their queens were great lovers of dance. Under their liberal patronage, this art made tremendous progress. They invited experts from various parts and took care of them in their settlements.

**DRAMA**

Like the other fine arts, the art of drama also received much royal patronage under the Mahratha rule. The poets, nattuvanars and the Kings enacted a number of dance dramas. These dramas were performed in the presence of rulers on important festivals in temples. The theatres in the temples were the right place for such performance, since people held public meetings and religious discourses in the mandapas or pillared halls of the temples.

Shaji-II was a pioneer among the Mahratha rulers of Thanjavur in the field of dance-dramas. He wrote dance dramas in
Sanskrit, Marat hi, Telugu and Tamil. He had composed five dance-dramas in Tamil.

Tulaja-I wrote many dramas. Of all his dramas, *Sivakama sundari Parinaya natakam* earned for him a reputation as a dramatist.

Under the patronage of Amarsingh many *padas* for dramas were enacted. Serfoji II composed dance treatises in Marathi for *Bharathanatyam*. Tamil dramas like *Bharatha Ammanai* and *Pandikeli Vilasa Natakam* were performed during the time of Sivaji II.

Under the patronage of Pratapsing, *Parvathi Parinayam*, *Rukmani Kalyanam*, *Sita Kalyanam* and *Usha kalyanam* were composed.

King Serfoji II composed special dance treaties in Marathi for *Bharathanatyam* and other dances. It is still continued in Melattur and Saliamangalam in Thanjavur district. *Sarabhoji Raja kuravanji* was enacted during the time of Serfoji-II. These dramas were performed during the festivals like *krishna Jayanthi*. Kottayur Sivalunthu Desikar wrote *Sarabhendra Bupala kuravanji* as a dedication to the king. Tamil dramas such as *Pandikeli Vilasa Natakam* by *Narayanna kavi*, and *Bharata Ammanai*, by Arunnachala Kavi were performed during the time of Shivaji-II.

The Mahratha dance-dramas were in continuation of trend that was started by Vijayanagar rulers and the Nayaks. The dance dramas were based mostly on Bharata's Natya sastra. Though the dramas during the period under survey appears to be stereo
typed, the only solace is that many schools sprang up in Melattur Paluvur and Saliamangalam, for the growth of drama.

The folk drama called terukkuthu or street plays was presented with music dance and speeches at late nights. It was held in connection with annual festivals or to invoke rain in the open theatre in front of the temples. The musical instrument used were flute and mirudangam.

The temple dramas enacted during Mahratha period mostly dealt with religious episodes. Later on different dramas were performed during Mahratha rule.

**LITERATURE**

Thanjavur was passing through a glorious period of literary upheaval at the time of Mahratha rule. A large number of poets flocked to the courts of Thanjavur, where they were received with open arms by the rulers, and the poets in their turn contributed magnificent literature. The huge and valuable collection of manuscripts that are preserved in the Saraswathi Mahal Library bears eloquent testimony that the Mahratha rulers had leisure and fondness for the pen. Some of the Mahratha kings themselves had the gift for literary compositions as may be seen from their works. Telugu, Sanskrit and Marathi literature were at their zenith. Mahratha rulers had written many works on all branches of science and crafts in several languages.

Ekoji himself had some literary abilities as is evident from the Sanskrit samasya which he set to be completed by poet
Jayaram. His wife Deepambal wrote short verses on devotional and philosophical subjects.

The reign of Shahji, was the Augustan Age of Sanskrit and Marathi literatures. Shahji himself was a versatile scholar of Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit languages, besides, being the author of songs and *padas*. He has adopted the pen name of *Thiyagesa, Thiagabhupa*, he being a great devotee of Gof Thiagaraja of Tiruvarur, on whom he has composed hundreds of songs. He composed in Sanskrit *‘Sabtaratnasamanrayam’*, a lexicographical work and *‘Sringaramanjari’* a treatise on erotics.

Sarabhoji I seems to have well kept-up the literary traditions of his father's court. He himself was conversant with Sanskrit and Marathi and some short pieces of verse written by him, lies scattered among the Marathi manuscripts in Thanjavur Sarawathi Mahal Library.

Tukkoji was an eminent scholar in Sanskrit. He was also a great linguist, knowing Sanskrit, Marathi, Tamil and Persian. He was the author of *‘Dhanvantrivilas’* and *‘Sangsgeethasaramritra’*.

King pratapsingh was a distinguished scholar in Marathi. His contribution to Marathi literature is significant. The reign of Tulaja, who succeeded pratapsingh contains little contribution. But even amidst misery and unhappiness, the literary and cultural traditions of the royal court were maintained. Amar Singh even in the midst of his pre-occupations, found time to patronise the poets.

King Serfoji-II who was the greatest king of Thanjavur Mahrathas, was a patron of art and literature. He was a linguist and knew Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, English, French,
Latin and German. He wrote several works in Sanskrit and Marathi. His eight dramas in Marathi are considered to be among the best. King Serfoji-II’s outstanding work in Sanskrit were *Kumarasambhavam* and *Mudrarakasasa Chaya*. He also wrote many works on medicine, music and devotional literature. His son King Shivaji-II was equally a patron of arts and literature. He is credited with the authorship of the Mahrathi drama *’Natesa Vilas’*. Many distinguished court-poets in Marathi lived in his court.

Besides the poets, numerous women scholars and poetesses flourished during the Mahratha period. Prominent among the women were, *Rajayee, Guneyee, Muktayee, Venu Bai, Vita Bai, Renuka, Guna Bai, Nagabai, Tulasi, Bahini*, and *Amanya*, who have contributed songs of the devotional type of *padas, slokas, abhangas, ovyas* and *aryas* on different subjects of absorbing interest.

The Mahratha saints and poets have left their noble and rich heritage of devotional songs in praise of God. There was the growth of the ‘devotional school’ of religion in Thanjavur, which resulted in a rapid growth of ‘bhakti cult’. The school of devotion or *bhakti* became popular. The development of *bhakti* cult had thus paved the way for the radical change in the social order.

**SANSKRIT**

Sanskrit literature flourished more than other languages. The Sanskrit manuscripts still preserved in Thanjavur Saraswathi Mahal Library confirm this.

The kavyas attributed to this period can be classified into *kavyas* in prose and in *poetry, padya* and *Campu kavyas* were
common and popular during this period. The important kavyas were Raja Rama Charithram, Sahendra Vilasam, Bhosala Vamsavali and Dharma Vijaya Campu. The Campu kavyas were critical narratives of the kings. Uttara Campu, Kamalalaya Mahatmeeyam were some examples. The Sanskrit dramas were referred to as 'Rupakam' which can be divided into ten types. These plays can be divided into five groups - historical plays, epic plays, allegorical plays, operas and dance dramas.

These plays, reveal the social life and the aesthetic sense of the people. Habits and hobbies of the people, traditional arts, and festivals etc., The operas written were more or less autobiographical dealing. Many puranas like Kasi Kandam, Arya Ramayanam were written. Books on medicine and works on astrology and astronomy were also written.

There are six classifications of darsanas. They are Nyaya, Mimamsa, Vedanta, Vyakarana, Sankya and Yagam. The scholars during the Mahratha period dealt with these darsanas and they have written commentaries on them.

During the rule of Serfoji-II the Sanskrit scholars compiled the lexicon like Padamani Manhari, Nigandu etc., These lexicons were meant for the development of Sanskrit language.

The alankaras or branch of grammar works were also written in Sanskrit language. Saharajeeyam is one such type of alankaras available in Saraswathi Mahal Library.

The Sanskrit Pandits of the Mahratha period have composed several stotras like Shankara Karuna Gayathri and Ganesha
Thus Sanskrit literature of the Mahratha period, helps us to know all about the kings and subjects, the social history of the period and their cultural contributions. The reigns of Shahji-I and Serfoji-II constituted the Golden Age of Marathi and Sanskrit literature.

MARATHI LITERATURE

Mahratha Kings had contributed immensely to the enrichment of Marathi Literature. Most of the rulers were themselves deeply learned and penned literary works, dramas and dance compositions in Marathi languages. They encouraged Marathi literature as their mother tongue was Marathi. During the period several hundreds of literary works were produced by the court poets also. King Shahji-II had written numerous works covering the subjects of puranas, kavyas, dramas, ethics, music, dance, medicine and astrology and hundreds of devotional songs in Marathi. King Pratapsingh wrote a number of works in Marathi on varied subjects like Puranas, drama, and kamashastra. As many as eleven Marathi dramas, mostly puranic in character are ascribed to his royal pen.

King Serfoji-II, like his ancestors patronised Marathi literature. He wrote hundreds of songs in Marathi and Telugu. His dramas in Marathi were dance-dramas a type of drama much in vogue at his time, intended to be enacted in temples on festive occasions. He himself wrote Marathi version of Palakappaya Munis’ Gajasastram with profuse multi-coloured illustrations. He is also credited with the authorship of the Marathi works like:
Umamaheswara Katha, Kiratharjuniya Nirupana Neelakanta, kulalavara charitra, Neela Bhilla Charitra, Sivarathri Katha, Ganesa Leelarnava Nataka, Devendra Kuravanji Nataka, Mohini Maheswara parinaya Nataka, Gajashastra Bhasa Prabandah (elephantology), Vivedah Karnataka Raga Ragini (dance-music) and numerous other works on medicine, music and devotional literature. Thus Marathi literature flourished well.

TAMIL LITERATURE

When the Mahratha Kings took over the Thanjavur kingdom from the Nayaks, Telugu, the mother tongue of the Nayaks was the court language. The Mahratha kings were also proficient in Telugu language as they had served under the sultan of Bijapur for many years. So the kings, gave great encouragement not only to Sanskrit and Marathi, but also to Telugu. But it is rather sad to note that the Mahratha rulers cared little for the growth of Tamil literature.

Only a few rulers like king Shahji, Saraphoji-I, Tulaja-II Serfoji-II and Shivaji-II gave patronage to Tamil literature. Many Tamil scholars and poets lived in the Thanjavur Mahratha kingdom. There is little proof about the direct help received by the Tamil poets from the Mahratha kings. Though there was less royal patronage, yet Tamil scholars were helped by the Saiva maths and many Tamil works were written during this period. The Tamil works of this period were sthala puranas, sacred literature and a few natakas of inferior quality. The later Mahratha kings like Serfoji-II and Shivaji-II were scholars in Tamil.
Ekoji-I the first Mahratha ruler, patronised Tamil literature\textsuperscript{101}. Shahji though was a linguist, his reign can boast of literary output only in the field of Sanskrit and Telugu and to some extent in Tamil. It is from the reign of Shahji that *kuravanji* dance dramas assumed prominence in Thanjavur. A good number of manuscripts in the Saraswathi Mahal Library owe their origin to this great ruler. King Shahji wrote *Kaveri Kalyanam* in Tamil with Telugu script in 1704\textsuperscript{102}.

*Aindu Tamil Isai Natya Natakam* was written in Tamil manuscripts\textsuperscript{103}. *Shahji kuravanji* was written by poet Muthu kavirayar in Tamil\textsuperscript{104}. *Kumbakonam puranam* was written by Chokkappapulavar. Kavi vasudeva and Rama Bharathi have sung *Singara Pathangal*.

Tamil poets were honoured during the reign of Sarpoji-I. *Siva Ragasiyam* was written by poet Oppilamani in 1918. Tamil literature did not flourish during the rule of Tukoji-I as it was a period of confusion\textsuperscript{105}. King pratapsingh encouraged only Marathi, Telugu and Sanskrit, but did not pay attention to Tamil literature. During the reign of Tulaja, poet Arunachalam wrote *Rama Natakam*, *Sirkali Talapuranam*\textsuperscript{106}.

Amarsingh never encouraged Tamil language and never allowed any poet to sing songs in Tamil. Hence Tamil literature never flourished during this period\textsuperscript{107}.

The contribution of king Serfoji-II to Tamil literature, was equally great. He had carved a permanent legacy in the history of Mahrathas of Thanjavur. Many Tamil poets adorned his court. Kottaiyur Sivakolundu Desikar wrote *Kodichura Kovai*\textsuperscript{108}.
Thanjavur Peruvudaiyar Ula, Sarabendra Boopala Kuravanji etc. Many medical works were also written like Sarabendra Vaithya Ratnavalli.

Shivaji-II the last Mahratha ruler, also patronised Tamil. The important poets of his time were Narayana Kavi, Arunachala Kavi, and Krishna Kavi. Their works are still kept in the form of manuscripts in the Saraswathi Mahal library in the Tamil section. On his pilgrimage to Benares, king Seroji-II bought every valuable manuscripts that were for sale, in addition to what he possessed already, and ordered a host of pandits to fair copy, that were too precious and could not be bought. Thus the largest single collection added to the library was during his time under his fostering care. As a fitting tribute to the great patron and scholar, the library has been named as the Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswathi Mahal Library. If the Mahratha rulers had encouraged and patronised Tamil literature, equally with that of Sanskrit and Marathi, Tamil literature would also have flourished well.

When the British took over the administration of Thanjavur Mahratha kingdom, Tamil and Marathi had been in use for official purposes. When English became the official language of the Madras presidency, Marathi was more commonly used than Tamil in public offices.
MAHRATHA BUILDINGS*

Thanjavur small fort (Sarkarwada and Dewan Wada)
Thanjavur large fort or peria Kottai
Manora fort 1814
Mahratha Durbar Hall
Bell Mandapam
Sangeetha Mahal
Sadar Mahdi
Krishna Vilas
Mangalavilas 1700
Dewanwada 1814
Gateway of Thanjavur Palace 1850
Nilgris Vetai Mahal 1800
Manojipatti Uparigai 1760
Mukthambal Chathiram - Orathanadu 1820
Gowri Vilasam - 1842
Dewan Wada Thiruvaiyaru - 1800
Gosha padi thurai, Thiruvaiyaru - 1800
Kapotapalika (pura kudu) buildings - Thiruvaiyaru - 1815
Chevaikilamai Padithurai - 1815
Odathurai buildings - 1800
Vitobha buildings - 1800
Baiammal Padithurai - 1815
Gujarathi Chathram - 1820
Vennar Gujarathi Padithurai - 1830
Lakshmi Rajapuram Padithurai - 1760
Bhara Rajapuram, Palliagraharm - 1780
Thiruvidaimarudhur Palace Buildings - 1800
Sakwarbai Chathram, Tillaisthanam - 1850
Bridges constructed between - 1760 to 1820

* Though many buildings were constructed during Thanjavur Maharatha rule, only selected and notable buildings are mentioned.
Tharjavur Mahratha Forts
Footnotes

1. The Mahratha Palace in Thanjavur is partly an innovation and partly a renovation of earlier Nayak buildings. Only a part of it was built by the later Mahratha Kings, so there was no systematic plan in their construction.

2. A Field survey was undertaken by the researcher and good many number of buildings have been spotted in various places like Thiruvaiyaru, Trikattupalli, Koilady, Tiruvidaimarudur, Rajamadam, Orathanadu, Nidamangalam, Mannargudi, Sarabhendra Rajapuram, Manora and so on. From this field survey it may be understood that the Thanjavur Mahrathas has done a lot on this field.

3. King Serfoji II was under western influence and interested in Neoclassical art style which reintroduced in his buildings. He has also incorporated modern methods of construction into Nayak architectural style.


The Gunda Mahal, Sadar Mahal palace and Krishna vilas tank were some of the buildings built with imported teak from Burma, Even today, they stand as a testimony to the Mahratha skill.


6. Manora tower lies at about 80k.m from Thanjavur near Pattukkottai with beautiful landscape. The Mahratha buildings found here is an excellent example for the engineering skill. But at present it is only a small hamlet.
7. Probably, this Ghosa *Padithurai* was meant for bathing and it was exclusively used by the Mahratha ladies of Tiruvaiyaru.

8. It is an excellent master piece in Indo-Sarasanic decorative art and British Classical motifs and styles. From these constructions one can notice that elevated places have been chosen for the performance of rituals etc, which prove the aesthetic sense of the people of those days.


10. The Marble statue of king Serfoji II with folded hands in the traditional Indian style was set up during his life time in 1807 by the East India Company. This statue stands on a granite pedestal which faces the Saraswathi Mahal Library. It was made by the famous London sculptor, Flaxman. *Last Days of Bishop Heber*, 1829. p.32.

11. All the paintings were carried out in the Chitra Mahal or painting department. *Modi Records*, Bundle 102, (T.M.S.S.M. Library, Thanjavur,) p.22.


13. It is now preserved in Saraswathi Mahal Library.

14. In the collection of the Madras Museum there are exquistic examples of paintings on glass portrait of a musician in typical Tanjore style,
15. They can be seen in Saraswathi Mahal Library in King Serfoji’s collection.


17. The paintings of the royal procession of king Amarsingh and the religious procession of king Serfoji II are preserved in London Museum.


21. Even now, one can hear some of the finest devotional music during the annual festivals held in Thanjavur.


23. *Nattumuthu Thalattu* The peasant women sang a lullaby a kind of folk song while planting the paddy as they assumes the plant as a child. One cannot find this sort of lullaby anywhere in Tamilnadu, except in Thanjavur region.

24. S. Ranganathan, “Folk Music in India”, *The Bulletin of Traditional culture* (part II, Madras, 1962), pp227-228. It is a common sight even today in Thanjavur district to see long rows of
carts moving in a row in the still night. The cartmen sing *Themmangu*.

25. Kummi is said to be derived from Kommai to mean dance with claping of hands to time and singing songs *Somalay, Folk arts of Tamilnadu* (Madras, 1961) pp989-990.

26. The original performers of the lavani were Mahrathas. With the advent of the Mahratha rule in Thanjavur, it became popular in Thanjavur reaching its zenith during the time of king Serfoji II.

*South India Mahrashrians Silver Jubilee Souvenir* (Madras, 1960) p.162.

27. The term *Satwaji* is used to denote the relative excellence of performance....

M.P. Dhond, *Marathi Lavan*, (Bombay, Manjaprakasham 1956) p.72

28. *"Bhajan"* means the worship of God through the medium of song and devotion. Sri Thyagaraja conducted *Uncchavrithi Bhajans*. Such Bhajans are still conducted annually on the Aradhana Day at Tiruvaiyaru.


33. The lands were utilised in founding a Brahman Agraharam.

*Tanjore Records* dated August 11, 171.

34. The MSS containing *Savarakari* in honour of Pratapasingh by the court poets of Thanjavur (T.M.S.S.M. Lib. Thanjavur).

D.No. 847, Catalogue of Telugu MSS.


36. Issac Johnson was the fiddler and Francis was an expert western musician in the palace during Sivaji II’s rule.


39. King Serfoji II endowed the Tanjore Quarters with land and houses opposite to the Big temple called *Nattuvan chavadi*.

*Personal interview with Tulajendran Bhonsle*, (Prince Thanjavur Palace) Thanjavur.


Even today most of the dance performances draw their pedigree to some dance master or school from Thanjavur district.

42. Kavadi - Chchindu - a peculiar folk art. It is also called *Vazhinadai - Chchindu*.

43. Even today Mariamman is worshipped with fear and respect with propitiation and offerings of karagam.

44. *Puravi Attam* it is also called *poikkal kutirai* a popular folk art of Thanjavur from the Chola period. There was mention also as Markkal attam (Dance with wooden legs.)

45. *Gondhalam*: It is also a folk art. The Gonmdhalis performed this dance with the musical instrument called Gondhalam.


47. Ibid., p.133.


50. Ibid.


53. Ibid.
54. On the request, from the then governor of Madras Serfoji II sent his Orchestra from Thanjavur to Madras. Since then, it came to be known as 'Tanjore Band. S. Seetha, Op.cit., p.150.


59. Kuram + Vanji = Kuravanji - Kuram means fortune telling, Vanji = woman (gypsy). The Kuravanji dance, drama was performed as an entertainment.


60. V. Chokkalingam (Ed) Tanjai Vellai Pillayar Kuravanji (Tanjore, 1967) P.36.


62. The descendants of the sangita mela troupe could be seen, even now, in Thanjavur.

Many artists and nattuvanars from Bhagavata mela, traditions came and settled here in this village.


67. **D. No. 1166-1169, Ibid.**

68. **Ibid, D.No - 11069 - 72.**

69. **Ibid, D.No 11323 - 26.**


71. **Ibid., p.96.**

72. Mudhu Palani was the poetess and the authoress of this work. She was a highly talented dancer at the time of Pratap Singh. *Ibid.,* p.97.

73. **Ibid., p.99.**

74. King Serfoji II patronised Sundari a court dancer of exceptional qualities. He also gave 21/2 chakrams to a temple dancer Venkatalashmi for performing dance in the palace. *Ibid.,* pp.113-114.


77. Rajarajeswara Natakam was staged in the month of Vaikasi in the Big Temple in Kuravanji medai *A-R-E No. 55 of 1895.*

Sarabendra Bhupela Kuravanji Natakam was enacted regularly in the Big temple on the occasion of Brahmotsava *S.I.I. Vol.II.* p.306.

78. He wrote ten Yeksagana dramas in Telugu and 12 dance dramas in Marathi and 500 kirthanas in Telugu.


79. They are Kuravanji natakam, Chandrakasi Vilasa natakam, Bulaho Dancdra vilase natakam, Kavari Kalayan and Vishnu sharabaja vilase natakam.


80. The palm leaf M.S.S. of this dance dramas are preserved in T.M.S.S.M. Library, Thanjavur (D.No. 633-635, of Telugu MSS. T.M.S.S.M. Lib. Thanjavur).


89. Pada Kavyas were written with kings of as their heroes - These kavyas are available in T.M.S.S.M. Library. Des. Catalogue of Sanskrit M.S.S. Vol. 7. No. 4229.


   Jatakabhatadi - D.No. 11460.


97. Stotra - Type of worship - D.No. 22698 T.M.S.S.M. Lib, Thanjavur.

98. King serfoji II was the pioneer in lar nessung a printing press,
   Published sanstrict works in Devenagiri script.

99. Krishna Manjari, Ramadinecharya, Madana Sanjeevane (eroties)
    are some of his outstanding Marathi works. These works are
    pressed in T.M.S.S.M. Lib. Thanjavur.

100. Saraya Doshi, *Shivaji and facts of Mahratha culture*.

     Ilakkiyam”, (Vol.II Thanjavur, Tamil University, 1988) p. 56.

N. Ramanathan, *Tanjai Marattia Mannarin Tamil Natakappani*, 40th Annual Conference Souvenir, (Maya Marathi

102. S. Gopalan, *Peeps into Saraswathi Mahal* (Kumakonam.


104. Mutha kavirayar, Shaji Rajavin Kuravanji in Telugu script with Tamil language translated by V. Venugopalan from Telugu to Tamil.

Thanjavur, T.M.S.S.M. Lib.


Krishnasamy Raja Madik, (Ed) *Sarabendra vaithya Ratnavali*, (Thanjavur, T.M.S.S.M. Lib.).

109. *Ula* - Hero goes for a walk. God Siva is the Hero.
