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CHAPTER 7

POTENTIALITIES OF ART AND ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE OF TAMIL NADU

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Art forms, craft traditions, handlooms, lifestyles and belief systems of Tamil Nadu have taken long years to evolve. Tamil Nadu has its own individual cultural traditions and rich creative expressions. There is no better way to safeguard them, than providing opportunities for performance, and ensuring favourable economic conditions for the artistes and craftsmen who keep these traditions alive. The dances and music of the people of Tamil Nadu encrypt within them the joys and jubilations of generations and hold the imprints of their social and political history. Their hopes and dreams are transmitted through the art forms. The artistes of present generation are aware of this and they reinterpret them and rediscover their eternal relevance.

Prestigious cultural events find a significant place in the calendar of Tamil Nadu. The people of Tamil Nadu strongly believe that, keeping the art forms alive is a magnificent way of paying homage to the ancestors. The contributions of artistes and performers of Tamil Nadu have to be viewed in this context. For, without them and their spirit of dedication, there will be a disconnect with the past. It is certainly the heritage of the state that shapes its distinctiveness. Tamil Nadu has provided the space for its diversity to blossom and flower and be expressed in its fullness.

The economic development takes place in a given social and cultural environment. Therefore, an appreciation of the cultural milieu through cultural tourism is important for the development efforts. The commendable steps taken by the stake holders is of special significance. Cultural diversity is as important to a society as biological diversity. The state has a responsibility to pass on the inherited culture in all its richness and variety to the future generations. The efforts should be to create a favourable environment for the cultural traditions and practices to flourish, realizing that it is the cultural riches which are the assets that make the state proud, beautiful and connected.

Thousands of temples with lofty towers dot the skyline of the entire state of Tamilnadu. The Tamils have been the greatest of temple builders. Temples from the pre-Christian era as well as those from the 20th century exist in this state, where the ancient
rulers have made outstanding contributions to the growth of these monuments of great artistic value. The most ancient temples were built of brick and mortar. Upto about 700 AD, temples were scooped out of rocks. The Pallava Kings (upto 900) were great builders of temples in stone. The Cholas (900-1250 AD) have a number of monuments to their credit. Mention must be made of the Brihadeeswarar Temple in Tanjavur. The Cholas added many ornate mandapams or halls to temples and constructed large gopurams – towers. The Pandya Style (Upto 1350 AD) saw the emergence of huge towers, high wall enclosures and enormous towered gateways. The Vijayanagar Style (1350 AD -1560 AD) is noted for the addition of large prakarams (circumambulator paths) and pillared halls.

Mamallapuram is one of the most exciting and memorable destinations, with rich tradition, history, piety and western annals. It is one of the popular tourist places, known for great architecture much visible in its rock carvings and monolithic sculptures. It also has the famous shore temple, the only one to have survived the wrath of nature. Also known as the Seven pagodas (temples), six of them now lie drowned in the sea. The architecture of the temples at Mamallapuram is inspired by the Pallava Art and were built during the period 830 AD -1100 AD.

At Mahabalipuram, there are about 11 excavated temples, called Mandapas on both sides of one of the hills. A ‘cut-out’ temple, called Ratha is carved out of a big rock standing nearby. There are five more rathas, three big sculptures of a Nandi, a Lion and an Elephant carved out. On the top of the bigger hill there is a structural temple, and at a little distance there is the magnificent beginnings of a Vijayanagar Gopura which are also believed to be survivals of a so called palace. Mahabalipuram also has about forty monuments known for their architecture including an “open air bas relief” which is the largest in the world. For many centuries it has been a centre of pilgrimage, and even today it pulls innumerable devotees and tourists.

The Shore Temple, beside the sea shore is a lovely temple caressed by the sea water and the wind. There is three-in-one abode of God, containing a Vishnu temple and two Shiva temples. It is a visual delight, having wonderful architectural masterpieces. There is sea on either side, having no limits to its extent. Within the compound wall of this temple lies pleasing sculptures of Nandi the bull, while the figure of Vishnu is present in the sanctum sanctorum.
The Mathur Aqueduct or Mathur Hanging Trough is an Aqueduct in South India, in Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu state. Built over the Pahrali River (also called Parazhiyar) it takes its name from Mathur, a hamlet near the Aqueduct, which is at a distance of about 3 kilometers from Thiruvattar town and about 60 km from Kanyakumari, the southernmost town of India. It is one of the longest and highest aqueducts in South Asia and is also a popular tourist spot in Kanyakumari District. The Aqueduct is built across the Pahrali river, a small river that originates in the Mahendragiri Hills of the Western Ghats. Mathur Aqueduct itself carries water of the Pattanamkal canal for irrigation over the Pahrali river, from one hill to another, for a distance of close to one kilometer. This Aqueduct is necessitated due to the undulating land terrain of the area, which is also adjacent to the hills of the Western Ghats. Mathur Aqueduct is a concrete structure held up by 28 huge pillars.

Ravindran, the famous film maker, travel writer and Marxian Aesthetic thinker, in his travelogue series ‘Vazhiyoram’ (Malayalam, 17, Dec, 2010) records how refreshing and revitalizing was for him the journeys through Tamil Nadu, promoted as “Enchanting Tamil Nadu”. He states: “The Brihadeswara temple of Tanjavur, Airavatheeshwaram temple of Dharasiram and many other great temples of Tamil Nadu have evoked the intrinsic aspirational chords in me. The villages of Panthanaloor and Umayalpuram are living symbols of dance and musical heritage of Tamil Nadu – which I crossed to reach the home of famous mathematician Ramanujan at the Temple street in Kumbakonam. I was spell bound while watching the incredibly beautiful bronze artifacts of Tamil Nadu displayed after fine embellishment. The Tamil vegetarian delicacies and non-vegetarian specialities of Chettinad were savoured with much delight. During one of the trips to the great land, I visited Thyagaraja Smrithi of Thiruvayur. At a distance from the village houses, this mandapam is constructed with concrete and iron grills that for me seemed to be incompatible.”

Tamil Nadu is the home of Dravidian art and culture, which is here from the ancient times, may be pre-historic. Manorma Sharma (2007) maintains that Tamil culture existed during Vedic period. The dynastic history of Tamil Nadu is well known as the Cholas, the Pallavas, the Cheras and the Pandyas, ruled and created amazing monuments of impressive proportions. Tamil Nadu has a remarkably pure Indian architecture, hardly affected by any other style.
A distinctive feature of Tamil culture according to Manorma Sharma is that the rural folks have preserved many of the old customs and practices with only minor changes. Tamil Nadu boasts of its purest form of art, dance or music, painting or handicrafts. Bharata Natyam is the purest form of classical dance of India evolved over 2000 years ago in Tamil Nadu. Kolattam and Karagam are some of the popular folk dances. There is a distinct Tamil character in all the dances, puppetry, paintings, drawings and musical compositions which link the most sophisticated form to the tribal and the rural. Tamil is mentioned as Muttamil, which denotes the three divisions. Iyal, Isai and Natakam. It is generally accepted that the concept of Muttamil is “logically accurate, scientifically relevant taxonomically appropriate and culturally sound.” Perhaps it would be true to say that Tamil is the one ancient languages of India that bears the reflection of the life of the people, and not merely the aristocracy of the past. The whole gamut of human experience is here. The Kumari Hall of History in Kanyakumari has rare photo exhibits, artefacts and Tamil Cultural heritage assets. Srirangam stands as the biggest temple complex in the country. The Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu is of absorbing interest to historians, anthropologists, archaeologists and art lovers. The numerous dolmns, stone circles and other forms of megalithic burials indicate the antiquity of this region dating back to pre-historic and historic times. The cultural and archaeological remains at Kodumbalur, Narthumalai, Kudumianmalai, Sittanavagal, Thirumayam and Avudaiyarkoil are pieces of evidence of its rich cultural heritage.

Tamil Nadu in South India is a storehouse of a fairly large number of temples. The temples of Tamil Nadu reflect the typical south Indian culture and they are built in the Dravidian style of architecture. Most of the temples have lofty towers and they are the torch bearers of the glorious heritage of Tamil Nadu. The architecture of Tamil Nadu will enchant the tourist with its divine charm. The plethora of temples with their detailed structural design is indeed a delight for the cultural tourists. Chennai has many colonial buildings most of which belong to the 19th century.

Tamil Nadu is rich in various art forms and each form is unique and has its own merits. The contributions of the state to the treasure house of national heritage is exceptional and invaluable. The different phases of growth and development of a society find their expression in art and culture. They are also measures of cultural uniqueness and accomplishments of linguistic and ethnic groups.
Manorma Sharma (2007) states that, every December, Chennai city has an opportunity of projecting itself as India’s, possibly even the World’s most culturally exhilarating city. Indeed the best time to be here is Margazhi (Margshirsha), the sacred month of the Tamils, extending from mid December to mid January, where one is absorbed in spiritual and aesthetic experience. There are edifying, musically structured religious discourses followed by visually exciting and intellectually stimulating lecture-demonstrations throwing light on the intricate nuances of classical art forms which have evolved down the ages. Margazhi is the month of prayer and it is prayer through song and dance. Naturally, for lovers of the arts the world over, all roads lead to Chennai at this time of the year. A state of ancient history and culture though has undergone many changes, yet has preserved its age-old tradition of dance, music, dance-drama and other art-forms in their original forms and styles. Tamil Nadu is proud of its traditional cultural heritage.

7.2 ARTS OF TAMIL NADU

Dances

Dance and dance –drama of Tamil Nadu are religious in character. Shiva is believed to be the Supreme Dancer or Nataraja. His dance is called Ananda Tandavam, the final achievement by which this Yogi of Yogis brings heaven and earth together, and leads the way to salvation or moksha. The Nataraja image signifies perpetual movement, continuity in change and tranquility. The temple at Chidambaram is revered as the home of dance. In this gigantic temple, on the inside walls of one tower, dance poses are sculptured. The poses are clear in every detail and indicate the different Karanas arranged one above the other to give the effect of pillars projecting from the walls.

Bharatha Natyam

Bharatha Natyam, the most famous classical dance of India originated in Tamil Nadu. According to Janet O’Shea (2009), “One of the most popular and widely performed dance styles in India and around the world Bharatha Natyam has made the transition from its beginnings in the temples and courts of southern India to a highly respected international dance practice” Bharatha Natyam needs to thrive, preferably as more than a museum piece or a respectable avocation. Bharata Natyam is a resolutely global form. In
the recent past its circulation globally has accelerated; its viewers, too, are on the move. Janet feels that dancers need to find new, critical, and reflective solutions to ongoing dilemmas, whether those occur in the devising of dances themselves, in their theatrical presentation, or in the discourse that surrounds them. Changing spectator points of view, shifts in funding structures, patronization and objectives, and more number of dancers mean that choreography needs to adapt in order to continue. It also will need to change – to garner the attention of International audiences. Janet’s view is that choreography need not be simplified in order to accommodate a global viewing public, rather, performers can adapt, strategically, acknowledging multiple viewerships, while continuing to stimulate considered reception. A look to the past may be helpful in examining the strategies deployed by earlier performers in order to make more conscious decisions about what to change, why, and how.

Vatsyayan identifies Bharata Natyam as both reflecting a modern sensibility and engaging with “fragments of antiquity”. Bharata Natyam continues to suggest exotic allure, with performers of the dance form adorning the covers of guide books and travel brochures, their beauty luring tourists to India. The tragedy, notes Sunil Kothari, lies in the fact that there are very less accomplished dancers of Bharata Natyam. Responses from the surface sensibility without proper understanding of hand poses, adavus and jatis of this intricate art does not do any good.

Bharata Natyam is one of the most subtle, sophisticated, and graceful dance-arts in the world. “The miracle”, in the words of Sunil Kothari, “is that it has survived for nearly two thousand years in the country, almost intact, in all the variegated splendour of the forms and moods which it has gathered into itself through the centuries. Naturally it is one of the proudest possessions in the traditional heritage.” It would be great if larger circles of people throughout the world take interest in it. There is every reason to believe that the resurgent efforts to promote Bharata Natyam will prolong themselves into a vital movement during the present generation. It is true that the form has gained unprecedented global popularity. Bharata Natyam encounters subtle shifts in meanings and contexts and a whole new sociology of the form is needed to grasp the complexity of its specificities. As a classical art, Bharatha Natyam in its solo format will continue to co-exist with innovative group work. At the same time, now the danger signals have become evident. The mindlessness and mediocrity accompanying quantification, and promotion in
the name of supporting the art, without the necessary checks and balances, have caused flutters. Sunil Kothari argues that it has led to the factory syndrome of a conveyor-belt production of dancers, followed by pre-fabricated arangetrams, mechanical presentations, and loss of feelings. In the urban centres, performances fail to attract audiences, and their numbers are dwindling except for special events. The false hype and euphoria, especially during dance festivals have to be viewed with caution.

The positive aspect is that few dancers have resorted to innovations, experimentations and explorations and there has been a remarkable change in the quality of the repertoire of Bharata Natyam with inputs from other physical traditions like Kalarippayattu and Yoga. The new directions in Indian dance have given the dance-art a different profile. The fundamental concepts of the Natyashastra have been subjected to re-examination, and the energizing principles have been explored. A corrective to the imbalanced approach have been stretched out by dancers who are concerned about the future. The role of media in the wider dissemination of this art is laudable, but dancers seem to have failed miserably to explore and exploit it. Documentation of Bharata Natyam has entered a new technological phase and its complexities can be understood through the educational aspect of the use of data bases. Among the diaspora of Indians who have migrated or settled abroad and practicing, performing, and teaching the dance, the complexities are increasing as in order to maintain their roots and identity, they have found that Bharata Natyam is a precious legacy. They come into contact with the artistes from abroad and attempt to interact, experiment, and explore fusions and innovations.

Opportunities for serious critique by the mainstream media has been found wanting for new guidance and direction. The media need to provide forums for serious discourses. Young practitioners in various places continue to take interest in the form which indicates a possibility of renewal and regeneration. While the solo dance format seems to be threatened at the moment, fresh directions are opening out in the area of group choreographic works, seeking fresh locations and a nouveau identity for this ancient practice. The future of Bharata Natyam lies in the new culture centres and theatres.

The distinctive feature of Bharata Natyam is the use of expressive hand gestures as a way of communication. Hastas refers to the hand symbols that a dancer use. Many hastas can be used in more than one way depending on the song accompanying the
dance and what the dancer is trying to convey to the audience. Karnas, are the 108 key transitional movements in Bharatha Natyam. Most of the karnas are the static poses. The dancer is usually supposed to stop and maintain it for a very short duration. Abhinaya is the way of communication through facial expressions and gestures. Adavus are the series of steps and execution which may vary from style to style and the combination of adavus is the Jathis.

Bharata Natyam dancers wear an unique set of jewellery called temple jewellery during their performance. The designs are borrowed from the ornaments worn by the temple deities. These ornaments are made of pure silver coated with gold. They contain artificial gems embedded into them.

Bharatha Natyam is a highly specialized science with a traditional background and rigid codes and convenions. Bharata Natyam skillfully embodies the three primary ingredients of dancing. They are bhava or mood, raga or music and melody and tala or timing. The technique of Bharata Natyam consists of 64 principles of coordinated hand, foot, face and body movements which are performed to the accompaniment of dance syllables.

**Popular Folk Dances**

The popular folk dance forms prevalent in Tamil Nadu may be identified as Karaka Attam, Kavati Attam, Kolattam, Kummi, Ali Attam, Kaniyan Attam, Votale Attam, Poykkal Kutirai Attam, Mayil Attam, Karati Attam, Anuman Attam, Risapa Attam, Katuvai Attam, etc. All these dances are directly connected with religious ceremonies. Chindu dance, Podikazhi Attam and Purvi Attam are other popular dance forms. The Dummy Horse dance requires dexterity and great training and skill. A set musical melody accompanies the dance which is provided by the instruments comprising Nadaswaram, a drum and cymbals.

Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu share the tradition of leather puppets known as Bommalattam Pavaikuthu. These traditions of dramas performed through leather puppets are connected with folk dances. Ballads, Pattus, Harikatha, Kurvanji, Veethi Natakam, Therukoothu, Bhagwata Mela and Dziattam are also popular besides these dance forms. (Manorma Sharma, 2007)
Folk songs have a vital role in the cultural aspects such as festivals, rituals, religious ceremonies, etc., of the Tamilians. People are very much interested in songs and hence there are more verses rather than prose. Folk songs are the backbone of Tamil folk-culture. People love to sing a song on every available occasion which may be a festival, fair, procession, ritual, social or some other types of gathering. In oral literature, there are varieties of folk songs to mark all occasions. There are a number of folk songs to mark all occasions. Thus, there are number of folk songs like devotional songs, ritual songs, love songs, lullabys, work-songs, agricultural songs, etc. These are sung in rural as well as urban areas.

Kargam dances are accompanied with the drums and the long pipes. The drums include Pampadi, the Muni and the Thavil. Nadaswaram and thammukku are the wind instruments accompanying them. Kavadi dance is performed to the accompaniment of Nadaswaram and Thavil. The Kavadi songs are rendered in different tunes and meters with very special phrasings. In Kolattams, precision and agility are the keynotes. The musical accompaniment comprises the singing of a whole song i.e., the Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam of Carnatic music. Kummi songs are sung in chorus.

Tamil Nadu is the home of the ballads, the Pattus, the Harikathas, the Kurvanjis, the street plays like Veethinatakam, the Therukoothu and the dance-drama form of the Bhagavata Mela and also Dasiattam and Bharatanatyam that are the folk tribal and classical musical forms which present a varied and vivid cultural scenario. All genres are closely connected with each other and are interdependent, even dance and puppetry cannot be dissociated. The art forms manifest themselves in tune with the mobility of the socio-economic life of the region and they cut across socio-economic stratification (Manorma Sharma, 2007).

Folk ballads have supplied various themes for the street shows. Popular folk tales have been dramatized and presented as street shows. Some historical events already absorbed in folk ballads have been dramatized. Many episodes from Ramayana have also been dramatized, which attract lots of people. These are still in vogue in many areas of Tamil Nadu. Similarly, Mahabharata is dramatized in an abridged form. Apart from the main theme other episodes like that of Nala Damayanti and Shakuntala also form themes for street shows.
Jeru Koothu is the most popular sequential dance-drama based on different themes. In general, these are of eleven kinds, viz. Alliyam, Kodukotti, Pandarangam, Malladal, Thudi Koothu, Kudai Koothu, Kuda Koothu, Pedi Adal, Marakkal Koothu, Paavai Koothu and Kadayam. Kuravanchi Dramas are other popular dance drama forms. The costume of the actor is colourful and appropriate to his role. Towering head dresses of several designs and massive shoulder ornaments are skillfully carved out of light wood by actors or artists and decorated with gold tinsel and bits of coloured glass. The make-up of actors is very simple. They use Aritaram and turmeric powder along with castor oil as the base for applying powder. Musical accompaniment in Jerukkuttu consists of a flute, drum and a pair of cymbal and a vocal chorus in which each line of the songs is repeated by the actors.

**Kolattam**

Kolattam, derived from Kol (a small stick), and Attam (play) is the name of a charming Tamil dance practiced by groups of young girls. A festival connected with this art has both a cultural and a religious significance. Kolaattam is an ancient village art. This is mentioned in Kanchipuram as 'Cheivaikiyar Kolattam', which proves its antiquity. This is performed by women only, with two sticks held in each hand, beaten to made a rhythmic noise. Pinnal Kolaattam is danced with ropes which the women hold in their hands, the other of which are tied to a tall pole. With planned steps, the women skip over each other, which forms intricate lace-like patterns in the ropes. As coloured ropes are used, this lace looks extremely attractive. Again, they unravel this lace reversing the dance steps. This is performed for ten days, starting with the Amavasi or Newmoon night after Deepavali.

**Kavadi**

There are several kinds of Kavadis-the milk and rose-water Kavadi being the principal ones. The central shaft of the semi-circular wooden structure is placed on the shoulders and the pilgrims dressed in yellow costumes and decorated with garlands, undergoes many privations to fulfill vows. They dance their way through the streets and up the hillock under the hypnotic music provided by the drum, the pipes and the tom-tom.
Kavadi-c-cindu, a peculiar folk art of Tamil genius, has blossomed into a literary and technically brilliant form, capable of being rendered in different tunes and metres with special phrasings. Simple in diction, it gives a lilting tune and inspiration to listeners, and relieves the bearer of the Kavadi of physical pain. It is also called Vazhinaai-cindu. The Kavadi-c-cindu is also sung in the temples. In some temples, it is sung on the last day of Navarathri in different metres. In Tiruchendur and Palani, the Cindus are sung with Nadaswaram before the deity starts in procession. In all, there are about 25 Kavadi-c-cindus, the best known being Annamalai Reddiar’s composition.

**Karakam Dance**

Karakam is a folk art developed along with the cult of Mariamman. It is of two varieties-the religious and the professional. The religious type is called Sakti Karakam. A small pot is filled with water and sealed with a coconut. Flower wreaths decorate it and a lime fruit is placed at the top of the Karakam. The professional type is known as Attak Karakam and is performed anywhere by anyone with necessary practice and skill. The Attak Karakam or balancing of the pot on the head is accompanied by peculiar musical instruments called Pampadi, Urumi, Thavi, Nadaswaram and Thamukku, which are among the distinctive components of Tamil music. The Karakam dancers wear a close fitting dress and look like warriors.

**Puravai Attam**

Puravai Attam also known as Poikkal Kuthirai, is a dummy horse show. The dummy horse is made of jute, cardboard, paper, and glass. The show is performed by men as well as women.

The main attraction is the richly decorated cardboard horse. The dancer uses this as his dress. He gets into it through the holes made therein and looks as if he is riding on horseback. Wooden stilts are tied to the dancer’s feet and these can be successfully used only after months of experience.

Dummy Horse Dance where the dancer bears the dummy figure of a horse’s body on his/her hips is made of light-weighted materials and the cloth at the sides swings to and from covering the legs of the dancer. The dancer dons wooden legs which sound like the
hooves of the horse. The dancer brandishes either a sword or a whip. This dance is accompanied by Naiyandi melam or Band music.

**Kummi**

In Kummi, girls sing several songs. Kummi consists of common Kummi and the Oyil Kummi. In common Kummi, the dancers are rhythmical and the girls dance in different postures. The rhythm of both dance and music delights the audience. The word Kummi is said to be derived from Kommai and means ‘dance with clapping of hands’ to rhythms and singing poems in a metre adopted to Kummi dance.

**Oyil Kummi**

This is an ancient folk dance form popular in Trichi, Salem, Dharmapuri, Coimbatore and Periyar districts. No other musical instruments are used in this dance except the ankle-bells. This dance is performed by men only, during temple festivals. Stories and episodes centering around Murugan and Valli are depicted in the songs. As one of the rare folk art forms of ancient Tamil Nadu, this is being practised now by the Telugu speaking people of the northern districts.

**Bommalattam or Pavakkuthu**

This is puppet dance and this art form is used to spread religious stories. The rural folk believe that it is auspicious to have this performance in their villages, and that its performance will ward off evil spirits/epidemics and bring prosperity. The main themes are the stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha. This show is manipulated by strings and iron rods suspended from above. The stage is so setup that the puppets alone are seen through an opening roughly about four metres in height. The puppets are moved by skilled and experienced players who stand behind, unseen by the audience. The puppets are tied to the player's hands with black strings which are not visible.

**Mayil Attam**

This is done by girls dressed as peacocks, resplendent with peacock feathers and a glittering head-dress complete with a beak. This beak can be opened and closed with the help of a thread tied to it, and manipulated from within dress. Other similar dances are,
Kaalai Attam (dressed as a bull), Karadi Attam (dressed as a bear) and Aali Aattam (dressed as a demon) which are performed in the villages during village get-togethers. Vedala Aattam is performed wearing a mask depicting demons.

**Kai Silambu Attam**

This dance is performed in temples during Amman festivals or Navaratri festival. The dancers wear ankle-bells and hold anklets or silambu in their hands, which make noise when shaken.

**Silambattam**

Kol silambam or fighting with a long stick and even with swords is a martial art from the days of Tamil Kings. Fights were characterized by moves of self defence, practice of skillful methods of approaching the opponent, overpowering and subduing, and finally teaching a lesson, all to put an end to violence. A violent fighting art has metamorphosed into a non-violent form of folk dance, adding stepping styles following the measure of time. It also teaches the performer the methods of self defence in the modern day world.

The word silambattam comes from silambam staves that were used in warfare by ancient Tamil kings. The Thandu Padai who were the soldiers of foot regiments armed themselves with Silambam staves. Novices started learning the use of Silambam staves before they graduated to handling other weapons. The Silambam staves are short sticks made of extremely hand wood that can endure blows from swords. In addition to these staves, the performers use swords and deer horns.

**Chakkai Attam**

Teak woodenpieces are held between the fingers which make the noise. Eight to ten dancers stand in a circle or parallel lines. The accompanying songs are generally about gods and goddesses.

**Bagavatha Nadanam**

This dance is performed inside a temple, around a lamp. The purpose is to worship Lord Krishna, and celebrate his frolics with the gopikas. This is performed during Ramanavami and Gokulashtami.
Theru Koothu

Normally conducted during village festivals, during the months of Panguni and Aadi. This is performed where three or four streets meet; in open air, the place being lit by gas lights. A wooden bench is set up to seat the singers and the musical troupe. Here, make-up and costumes are considered of prime importance. Only men take part; the female roles also played by them. The performance consists of story-telling, dialogue-rendering, songs and dance, all performed by the artistes. Thus, the artiste should have a very good performing ability, being an all-rounder. The stories are taken from Puranas, epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata, and also local folklore. The play starts in the late evening and gets over only during the small hours of the night. The performance is so captivating that the audience are spell-bound unaware of the longs hours. Theru Koothu is more popular in the northern districts of Tamil Nadu. The Koothu can be categorized as Nattu Koothu, including Vali Koothu, Kuravai Koothu etc. Samaya Koothu dealing with religious topic, Pei Koothu including Thunangai Koothu and Porkala Koothu dealing with martial events.

Devarattam

Devarattam is a pure folk dance still preserved by the descendents of Veerapandiya Kattabomman dynasty at Kodangipatti of Madurai District. Folklore research scholars have found that Devarattam is a combination of ancient muntherkuruvai and pintherkuruvai of the ancient Tamil Kings.

Today, this dance does not have any songs but only danced to the beat of Urumi Melam, Thappu Melam and sometimes, a long flute. The dancers hold a kerchief in each hand and swing them as they dance. The person leading the dance wears false beard and a mask decorated with shells to look like teeth. He dances the first step, which others follow.

Oyilattam

Oyil means beauty. This dance is hence the dance of beauty. Traditionally, it is danced only by men. Ten years ago women also began to participate. This dance is prevalent in the south districts and Kongu Nadu in particular. First a few people will stand in a row and start dancing with rhythmic steps with musical accompaniment. Intricate
steps are used in martial arts, such as Silambattam. Then gradually the row will become longer as the new comers and guests all join and dance along as they like.

**Snake Dance**

Yet another typical speciality of the southern region is the snake-dance which arises from the popularity of the snake as a protective divinity, safeguarding the health and happiness of the rural folk.

The dancer simulates the movements of the snake, writhing and creeping, at times making quick biting movements with head and hands. The raised hands held together look like the hood of a snake.

**Puli Attam**

Puli Attam is performed by young men with painted bodies in colours yellow and black, complete with fangs, head gear with ears, paws with claws and long tail, simulating the prancing, pouncing tiger in every ferocious move. Widely beating drums add frenzy to the performance. Sometimes, a goat is tied and brought along with the dancers, who pretend to pounce on it and kill it. This dance is regularly performed during temple festivals, drawing large crowds.

**Kali Attam**

Kali means joy or fun and games. This is also known as Koladi, Kolkali, Kambadi Kali and Kolattam. Sticks one foot length are held in each hand and beaten to make a sharp, rasping sound as the dance proceeds with unique steps, twisting and turning. It is danced by both men and women, during festivals, auspicious days and weddings. The special qualities for dance are quickness, alertness, while being careful not to hurt the other dancers by the swinging ‘kol’. Earlier, the ‘kols’ were brightly painted and decorated with brass rings, bells etc. The dancers used to wear ankle-bells.

**Navasandhi**

Navasandhi meaning nine directions is a dance performed to the accompaniment of music at the flag-hoisting ceremony, which heralds the annual festival of the temple at Tiruchendur.
Bhagavatha Mela

Bhagavatha Mela dance-drama is subdued and graceful with mellifluous vocal and instrumental music. Dialogue of high diction and suggestive strained abhinaya and other symbolical action are its hall-marks. Violent scenes of war and killing are not enacted but only narrated. The Bhagavatha Mela dance drama has dramatic interest, aided by classical music and dance.

Arayar Natanam

One of the folk-dance patterns is the Arayar Natanam enacted in December-January in Srirangam and other Shri Vaishnava temples, by groups of musicians and a dancer who are engaged to recite the sacred hymns called the Thiruvaimozhi.

The class of chorists, called Arayar or Chanters, are on the temple-staff receiving allowances and perquisites. They wear a uniform which includes a kireetam or special conical cap as their badge, during the chanting. While chanting the hymns, they also use a pair of cymbals made of bell-metal. One of them assumes the postures. In between their recitations, they utter the glory of the presiding deity, by singing Kondattam. The Arayars practice a certain esoteric system of dance wherein the postures are conventional and present situations associated with Krishna’s juvenile pranks.

Kuravaik-Koothu

This is a type of dance in which seven girls form a circle clasping one another’s hands. This dance is referred to as Alichiyar Kuravai or the dance of the cowherd women in Cilappadikaram. This dance has a peculiar musical significance. The seven notes of the musical scale are arranged in a circle and the seven girls called by the names of the seven musical notes, viz, Kural, Tattam, Kaikkilai etc.

Kazhaikkoothu

This is dancing on bamboo poles. A specimen of this occurs in bas-relief, sculptured in the Sri Andal Temple at Srivilliputtur. The dancer balances himself standing, on two poles, each two metres long, dancing to the accompaniment of a two-faced drum.
Kanian Attam

This consists of descriptive folk-songs sung by two buffoons- a man and a woman – even as they are walking. So there is no stage for this performance. This one-act play is on the decline, even in the temples of the local goddesses, where it was once prevalent in full glory.

Urummi Attam

The whirring sound of ‘urumi’ providing the melody and the beat of the Thappu providing the rhythm, accompany the dance sequence in this kind of temple art form. This is performed especially in Amman temples during the month of Adi. Nowadays, this art form is found only in selected villages in a few districts.

Indian Dance Festival- The History and Splendor

The Government of Tamil Nadu has been organizing Indian Dance Festival, in the beautiful sea shore ambience, to celebrate the spirit of Tamilian arts and their eminent place among the best in the world. The cultural tourists to Tamil Nadu are enthralled by the finesse of arts and architecture, and their numbers are increasing year after year.

It is an event which attracts tourists from all over the world. To offer and showcase the best of Indian art forms to the discerning tourists, the Government brings the best performers from various States of the country.

The Mamallapuram Dance Festival has now evolved into “Indian Dance Festival”, which aptly denotes the variety and the versatility of the Indian fine arts and dance forms. This is perceived by the Tourism Departments of other States and the South Zone Cultural Centre, as an important milestone in the promotion and marketing of Indian heritage and culture in the world stage.

The Arjuna’s Penance, Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu on the shores of Bay of Bengal, is the backdrop of the Indian Dance Festival and it is perhaps the most photographed monument in India. The temples and rock cut sculptures create a unique blend of history and natural beauty. The monuments of Mamallapuram are excellent specimens of Dravidian Temple architecture and Pallava art.
The sculpted panels, caves, monolith rathas and temples lay emphasis on robust earthly beauties, imbued with life. The sculptures are breathtakingly real and artistic. UNESCO has declared Mamallapuram as World Cultural Heritage Site.

The master performers from various parts of India are congregating in the silver sands of Mamallapuram to showcase the nuances of folk arts (Karagam, Kavadi, Poikkal Kudirai, Kolkali Attam, Silambattam, Kaniyan Koothu, Paavai Koothu, Thappattam, apart from other States dance forms.

**Dance Drama – Kuravanji**

Kuravanjis are dance dramas in Tamil. They have a high entertainment value.”(P. Sambamoorthy, 1969). From the point of view of musical excellence, they stand midway between the classical Bhagavatha mela nataka and the rustic dance drama, where as the music of a few songs here and there may rise to classical excellence. The music of the bulk of the songs in Kuravanji is characterized by a certain simplicity and native charm. The ragas used in Kuravanji natakas are all rakfi ragas and have a powerful appeal. Genuine folk tunes also occur. The sequences of Hatis (rhythmical solfa passages) interspersed in between the sahityas at exact places keep up the amazing dance atmosphere. Kuravanji’s, when produced meticulously, will generate a gripping interest. The spicy humour of certain songs keep the audience in good spirit. Some Kuravanjis like the Tirukkuttralak Kuravanji and Azhagar Kuravanji have a literary value as well. Kuravanji is a variety of smaller Prabandha that developed in later Tamil literature. It is one of the 96 prabandhas and belongs to the Natakattamizh. It came to be called Kuravanji, because of the prominent part played by the Kuratti or the gypsi woman in the story. Music and dance are the two live factors in all Kuravanjis. Classical music and light music figure in them. The Kattiyakkaran (court clown) appears at the beginning of some Kuravanjis and announces the play to be enacted with an assumed air of dignity. This aspect reminds of some classic plays of Shakespeare. Azhagar Kuravanji, Viralimalaikkuravanji, Sarabhendra Bhupala Kuravanji, Tyagesar Kuravanji, Devendra Kuravanji, Kumbesar Kuravanji, are some of the famous Kuravanjis.

Many strides have been made in the sphere of musical research. New light has been thrown on the several branches of musicology and musical history. Forgotten compositions of Kuravanji Natakas have been unearthed and published with notation. Still
a lot of stimulus is required to bring back Kuravanji Natakas to the old charm. Bhatt and Gopal (2005) states that Kuravanji is a type of dance-drama distinctive to the Tamils. As an entertainment its emphasis is balanced between the classical and folk arts. There are hundreds of Kuravanjis in Tamil. The earliest patron of this art was King Bajaraja Chola.

Compositions like the ‘Thirukkutrala Kuravanji’ are noted for their poetic value. The Viralimalai Kuravanji is noted for its musical value. In the Azhagar Kuravanji and the Tirumalai Andavar Kuravanji music and literature are equally balanced.

Santa Rao has often incorporated Kuravanji dances into her programmes with considerable success. In her ballets for the Kalakshetra troupe, Rukmini Devi also has used Kuravanji, especially the Thirukutrala. Other choreographers are also expected to follow suit and make use of this interesting dance form.

**Bhagavatha Mela**

Bhagavatha Mela, one popular dance-drama throughout Tamil Nadu, is now confined to a single village, Melathur in Thanjavur district.

Bhagavatha Mela dance-drama is subdued and graceful with, mellifluous vocal and instrumental music. Dialogue of high diction and suggestive strained abhinaya and other symbolical action are its hall-marks.

**Music**

“The ancient Tamils possessed a highly developed culture,” states P. Sambamoorthy (1969). The Muttamizh consisted of the divisions:- Iyal literature, Isai music and Natakam drama. There were musical works in the distant past like Isai marabu, Isai nunukkam, Pancha marabu, Pancha bharatiyam, Kuttanul, Perumkurugu, Perunarai, Mudukurugn and muduriarai, dealing with the science of music. Dance was also dealt with in some of these works. This shows that the ancient Tamils had developed a good system of music. The Cilappadikaram (2 A.D.), throws much light on the music of the ancient Tamils. The Arangetrukadai and Aychchiyar Kuravai are two of the canons in this Tamil epic which give a lot of information relating to the music and dance of that period.
The three principal musical instruments, yazh, kuzhal and maddalam had their parallels in the celebrated vadya trayam: veena, venu and mridangam. The harp was also commonly used. The Kudimiyamalai music inscription in Pudukkotai, Tanjore district is of great importance from the historical point of view. It is the only piece of music inscribed on a piece of flat rod in the whole of India. The four varieties of a note are referred to there in by the names ra ri ru re; ga gu ge etc. The music phrases are in the forms of tanas, and the ragas comprised are the seven suddha jati of the time. The musical exercises in the inscription were intended to enable one to acquire proficiency in playing the stringed instrument, parivadini. Many datu prayogas figure in the svara phrases. The author of the inscription is Mahendravarman I, the Pallava ruler of the 7th Cent A.D.

The Tevaram hymns constitute the cream of sacred music in Tamil. Tevaram is the collective name given to the sacred hymns of the three great saints. Tirujnanasambandar, Appar and Sundaramurti Nayanar. Tevaram belongs to a period when there was a single system of music in the whole of India and the bifurcation into the two subsystems, Hindusthani and Carnatic had not taken place. The Tevaram stands as the finest and the earliest example fo Desi Sangita. The hymns of the Tevaram are the outpourings of the divinely inspired souls. As Sambamoorthy records, even people who do not know the Tamil language feel spiritually elevated by listening to them. Tevara concerts and Tevara bhajans were regular features of festivals of the medieval period. The corresponding ragas in modern music for some of the pans of the Tevaram are, Suddhangu and Layanam, Thala murai and Pan Murai. The music and dance of Tamil Nadu had their beginnings in the temples

Odhuvars, Sthanikars, or Kattalaiyars offer short musical programmes in the temples by singing the devotional Thevaram songs.

The hill-tribes have a natural fondness for music. The Pulayar tribe describe their melodies as talams. According to them, their melodies are derived from the cooling of birds such as kanamayil and kanakkozhi. Talam and melodies are named after their deities. Karaganachi talam, Mangalanada talam, Kundhanada talam, etc. are all specific melodies. The chaya of classical ragas like Sudhasaveri, Saraswathi, Sankarabharanam, Andolika, Brindavanasaranga are to be seen in these beautiful melodies. Their orchestra
is known as Singaram (literally meaning beauty), consisting of two small sized Nadhaswarams or Sathathakkuzhal, two drums or melam and a pair of cymbals or Kaimani, Veelikuzhal (flute) and Maththali (a long drum), are played by them to invoke the gods.

**Intricacies of Folk Music**

Tamil folk music is remarkable for the tala intricacies. Very ancient classical ragas or melodies like Manji, Sama, Navroz, Kalyani, Karaharapriya, Thodi, and Nadanam –k-kria are used in the folk songs. Many instruments are used in folk music.

Nayyandi Melam or Chinna Melam is a rustic imitation of the classical melam or Nadaswaram and is intended purely as an accompaniment to folk dance-drama to cater to the tastes of the unlettered audience. This orchestra consists of two Nadaswarams, two Tavels, a Pambai, a Thammukkum and a pair of cymbals. The peculiarity of Nayyandi Melam is that the instrumentalists also dance while playing the instrument. The troupe is in demand as an accompaniment to Karagam, Kavadi, Dummy-horse show, and gypsy-dance, popularly known as the dance of the Kuravan and Kurathi.

**Some Indigenous Musical Instruments**

*Nagara* is a large hemispherical kettle-drum used in temples, struck with two curved sticks and carried on a decorated elephant. It is played before and after making important announcements.

*Damaram* is a conical instrument with a shell of wood and braces of leather, placed on a bullock and played with two sticks, one of them curved and the other straight.

*Ukuddi* is an instrument held in the left hand and played by the finger of the right hand. It is used in all folk temples and is an emblem of Shiva. Davandai is a large Udukki and is played with a stick.

*Gummati* is a pot shaped drum held in horizontal posture while playing.

*Ekkalam* is an s-shaped horn played with the trumpet and the drum.

*Pambai* is a pair of coloured and painted cylindrical drums used in temple festivals.

**Popular Musical Instruments**

Tamil Nadu has a rich variety of musical instruments, each with a distinct name, shape, structure, technique of playing and quality of tone. The traditional musical
instruments, which are in use in Tamil Nadu are: Veena, Tambura, Nadaswaram, Mridangam, Ghatam, Kanjira or Khanjira, Moursing, Gottuvadyam, Udukkai, Thalam, Kundulam, Nagaswaram, Ottu, conch, Pambai, Thavil, Shruti Box and Flute. These instruments are mostly used to accompany concert music, temple music, martial music, dance music and folk music.

The Tamils knew a number of musical instruments: 1. The wind or pipe instrument, the chief among them and probably the oldest musical instrument was the flute. It preceded the yal. It was made either of bamboo or metal but the former was preferred— it was the veynkulal. Seven holes were made in it. The pipe natasvaram was a late introduction but it became the ideal instrument for auspicious occasions, and it resembles very much an aboe. 2. The Yal was a stringed instrument and it resembled a harp. There were many kinds of yal, the variable being the number of strings. The periyal had 21 strings; the makara yal 19; the cakota yal the cenkottu yal 7; It is supposed that there existed a fabulous instrument played on a 1000 strings. Unlike the horn, the yal was polyphonous! 3. The cymbals, the bow and the long bugle and the conch were also their instruments of music. There were many percussion instruments of which the mirutankam, a kind of drum, used currently in music concerts, is very sonorous. Tannumal, utukkai (tuti), kutamula, muracu, karatikai, tattai, mattalam parai, kinai, tatari, mattari, patalai were some of the other percussion instruments.

The musical instruments of classical Carnatic music are also prevalent at village and tribal levels. Instruments such as Udukkai, the Gummati, the Ekkalam and the Pambai are used both in folk and ritual music, dance and singing. Villu- abow tied by a strong high tension string, played on an earthen pitcher is unique to Tamil Nadu and has been responsible for the special type of bow-string songs known as the Villupattu, literally meaning bow-songs.

**Villu Pattu**

In the words of Bhatt and Gopal (2005), one of the quaint type of simple and catchy folk music, which still stands as a symbol of the cultural wealth of the Tamils, is popularly known as Villu Pattu in Tamil, literally translated as 'bow-song'.

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Apart from the variety of themes and stories, another very interesting feature in the Villu Pattu art is the ex-tempore debate in verse.

According to Lakshmanan Chettiar (2002), the text of the songs of Villu Pattu are simple and flowing and are invariably in ballad style, couched in rural dialect, and abounding in proverbs. The idioms and phrases in use among the villagers have acquired in these songs a new form and have become pregnant with meaning. The running metres of these songs are a sort of counter point rhythm and an internal rhyme based on stresses which serve to enhance the value of music in them. Another important aspect of the text is that almost every couplet or stanza ends with a refrain. The repetition of the refrain enables the audience to follow the bow-song story. The stories are woven round supernatural, mythological, devotional, historical and social themes. The very instrument and the music produced by it are particularly suited for stories set against a supernatural background. In Villu Pattu the supernatural is freely resorted to.

**Lavani**

According to Bhatt and Gopal (2005), Lavani is a musical discussion. It has something in common with the bow-song. It is performed in the months of April-May to herald the coming of spring chiefly in Thanjavur district, the culturally important areas in Tiruchirappalli district, and in Madurai district.

**Sanku Vadyam**

The conch or Sanku is an object of veneration for the folk. Music is produced from a conch to which a silver pipe is attached. The end of the pipe serves as the mouth-piece. Regular music concerts also are given on the conch. For this purpose the conch used is called Dhavala Chank.

**Harikatha Kalakshepam**

This is the art of extempore story telling for three to four hours. It is introduced into Tamil Nadu from Maharashtra by the Maratha rulers of Thanjavur. The exponent of this art commands a stage and audience by his knowledge of many languages, by his scholarships in the epics and by handling of Chappalakkattai (a pair of wooden planks) in one hand controlling the movement and tempo.
The themes are drawn from the epics Meenakshi Kalyanam, Sita Kalynam and Rukmini Kalyanam which are popular subjects. The dialogue is forcefully mono-acted in a modulated voice to give the effect of light and shade.

**Folklore – Ottan Kathai**

Ottan Kathai is the folklore of 18th century AD, found in southern Travancore, written in palm leaf bundles. Ottan, a ‘Page’ engaged in espionage, working as a secret agent, collecting information for his most respected king and dying for him in the end is the story. This is narrated in a very simple way, without any pompous artificiality. In spite of its frank and innocent discussion, it throws a lot of information about history, culture, language and social status of people. The language and style of this folklore is in simple Tamil common to the particular period. The historical ballad Ottan Kathai was written during the reign of king Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) or a little later. The revival of the historical ballad and its analysis would be a substantial contribution to historical scholarship and analytical studies on folklores.

**7.3 ARCHITECTURE**

Jouveau- Dubrevil categorically states that the Tamil art presents a very interesting and very rare picture of an architecture which remained isolated for more than thirteen centuries, which borrowed nothing from foreign arts, but which varied continually by the path of natural evolution, in such a way that one could follow its modifications from one century to another. The existence of a very definite architectural style in the Tamil country and the evolution of the style could be explained easily.

On the whole it could be said that the Pallava period is that of sculptural rocks. The early Chola period is that of grand vimanas, the later Chola period is that of the most beautiful gopurams and the Vijayanagar period is that of mantapams. The modern period is that of corridors. Jouveau-Dubrevil records that there is not any motif of the modern art which does not find, but with slight modification in the Pallava art.

Tamil Nadu Tourism in their promotional campaign ‘Enchanting Tamil Nadu’ ‘experience yourself’ highlights that ‘The best way to know the culture of Tamil Nadu is through its architecture.’ The cave temples of Narthamalai have stood the test of time. Its beautifully carved pillars and statues are manifests of ancient Tamil culture.
Tamil literary references, eighteen hundred years, old speak of temples, residences of common people, forts, warehouses and planned towns. This means that the Tamils had known the art of architecture for more than two millennia at least. Material evidence of their architectural skill is available relating only to the past fourteen hundred years; evidence of all their efforts in that direction has been lost because what they built was of such brittle and perishable material that little of it has survived; unless the megalithic structure one finds in burial sites are considered any kind of architecture (N. Subrahmanian, 1996). Again, it is to be noted that all that their architects created during the past 1400 years has not entirely survived, because even when they learned to build in stone so that the structure could withstand the ravages of time, they did not give that attention to secular structures, but only some to temples which they thought should be preserved. From A.D. 600 to A.D. 1600 there is considerable evidence of their religious architecture, but only secular structures like the Mahal in Madurai or some forts as in Gingee and Velur to indicate the nature of this secular architecture.

It is common knowledge that there were primitive engineering manuals known as Manaiyati Castiram which contained some scientific rules and some astrology and a lot of superstitious ideas. The residential houses including royal palaces were perhaps built according to these rules. The akamic rules of construction of temples up to a point are so rigid that most temples resemble each other, but beyond distant resemblance, in details there is so much variation that each temple may be said to have its own personality. There are references to temples and palaces in the Cankam literature. The temples built in timber and brick and mortar had a certain shape and size which served as models for later day stone structures. The conical shape of the tower above the sanctum is reflected in the wooden cars which carry the deity on religious occasions.

The History of architecture in Tamil Nadu has been that of an evolution of the structure and ornamentation in the details during fourteen centuries. There are five stages in this development; 1. The Pallavar and Pandiyar cave temples of the seventh century; 2. the Pallavar and Pantiyar structural temples; 3. the single central towered Chola type; 4. the Pandiyar massive multi-entrance towered type; 5. the modern style incorporating the Vijayanagar innovations. There were minor variations in between, but they are not of great moment: e.g., the Makentiravarman-Naracimmavarman stylistic variations; the differences between early Chola and late Chola types, the Vijayanagar ornamentation and
increase in the number of towers and the Nayaka renovations; the Indo-Saracenic leading to the modern architectural tradition, however, affected only secular structures. Some of the differences are transitional and not fundamental.

As for the Pandiyar rock architecture, the temple at Kalukumalai (Vettuvan Koyil) is an unfinished structure. Its sculpture is superior to contemporary Pallavar sculpture. (N. Subramanian, 1996).

Drastic changes were taking place in the art of religious architecture in the Pallavar region from the beginning of the 8th century. The Pallava style of architecture is represented by the cave temples in the neighbourhood of Kanchi, at Pallavaram, Vallam and Tirukkalukkunram near Chingleput, Dalavanur, Mandagapattam, Mamandur, Singavaram Melacheri and Kilmavilangai. The Kailasanatha temple of Kanchi is a magnificent example of Pallava architecture. The Tiruvalisvaram temple at Brahmaresa near Tirunelveli is a finest example of the Chola style. The gopuras of Chola times were rather broad, with high storeys (eg. Chidambaram, Tiruvannamalai, Trivenkadu, Jambukeswaram etc.). The Chola temple buildings are dispersed over more than 70 temple towns. The most important ones are those at Tiruvayur, Tiruvadi, Tirukkalukkunram, Kumbakonam, Tiruvallur, Tiruchirapalli, Jambukeswaram, Srirangam and Suchindram.

In the Tamil country, records Herman Goetz (1964), the ancient tradition was better preserved, but likewise underwent great changes. The popularization of the cult led to the construction of vast halls, generally in the second enclosure, and along the principal axis also in the outer enclosures. Here, pilgrims could rest, or look at the processions, or buy horse-idols, lamps, rosaries, or various souvenirs. These mandapas (or chavadi, choultry) are of two types-long corridors flanked by raised platforms, connecting the sanctuary with the principal gopuras or winding round the innermost prakara; and ‘Thousand Pillar Halls (Sahasrastambha mandapa)- with a stage for special ceremonies dances and theatrical performances.

The ceilings of these halls and broad corridors could, of course, not be supported by the traditional pillars. Instead, complicated pilasters were used decorated with successive figural panels, or with bundles of columns, in front of which groups of Pallava-Chola miniature columns were placed or groups of prancing horses, elephants, lions, etc,
or gods and goddesses, donors and devotees. Later the animal groups were transformed into battle scenes, horsemen triumphing over defeated enemies, or led in procession by grooms and foot soldiers. On these pilasters a second storey or colonnade of far-projecting brackets (palagai) was set, thus extending the span of the ceiling, of long stone slabs covering the corridors.

Correspondingly, also the gopuras became higher and higher. The gateways proper became two to four storeys high and so broad that several chariots can pass through them side by side. Their many upper brick storeys, covered with numerous stucco sculptures, rose in an elegant sweep, ending in an over hanging baroque wagon – roof which projects in a mighty curve [set with a row of pointed kalasas] in two fans [nasi] topped by grim demon masks. In contrast, the temples proper remained small, rather adjuncts of the vast mandapas reinterpreting the traditional Pallava-Chola type in a Baroque, or finally rococo spirit.

The Madurai temple reconstructed between the 16th and 19th centuries consists of three adjoining inner enclosures containing within minor enclosures the chapel of Meenakshi and an outer enclosure comprising several huge corridors and Tirumala Nayak’s Thousand Pillar Hall. Every where there are dark corridors on which numerous chapels, dance-hall etc., are opened, eleven gopuras administrative buildings in front of the principal entrance, the marvelous pudu or vasantha [spring] mandapa with the statues of the royal donors and the unfinished Raya gopura. The palaces of the Nayaks of Madurai and of the Nayaks and Maratha Rajas of Tanjavur are of Islamic design though tempered by stucco friezes and innumerable stucco figures of pure Hindu character.

The Jami Mosque at Tiruchirappalli is built of finely chiselled stone, reported to have been constructed by Muhammad Ali Walajah, Nawab of Arcot (1749-95), ranks among the most impressive mosques of South India. It consists of a spacious prayer hall, overlooking an extensive open court, and has a façade of five openings of multifoil pointed arches of uniform size. The roof of the hall, which is vaulted inside and flat outside, rests on arches of similar shape springing from massive columns that divide the hall into five aisless and two bays.

The two front ends of the hall are buttressed with massive octagonal towers from which rise similarly shaped minars having an upward taper, and crowned by domical orbs
placed within inverted lotus petals and capped by pinnacles. A deep cornice supported on close-set brackets shades the hall, while above it runs an arcaded parapet, crenellated with small merlons, interspersed with small finials above the arch-piers, and having a small arched opening in the middle above the apex of the central arched opening. Though simple in design and almost plain in execution, its impressive façade of engrailed arches of not an unpleasing variety, the decorative arcaded parapet and bracketed cornice, the treatment of its substantial minars, which are decorated with shallow arch paneling on their multi-sided shafts, and above all, the fine proportions of these various parts, have converted the otherwise simple structure into quite an impressive monument.

Temple building in the Tamil Zone displays a stylistic consistency, evolving without major interruption over more than four hundred years. Stylistic developments during the Vijayanagara and Nayaka periods are best appreciated in gopuras, mandapas and corridors. Gopuras erected in the 16th and 17th centuries steadily grow in scale and elaboration. Granite walls are doubled and heightened, the pilasters becoming increasingly slender and delicate, often with part-circular, multi-faceted and fluted profiles. Double-curved eaves overhang passage ways and openings in the upper storeys of the towers. Brick and plastic super structures extend dramatically upwards with seven, nine, and eventually eleven superimposed storeys, as at Vatapatrashayi complex at Srivilliputur. Pyramidical profiles are gradually replaced with more gracious sweeping-curves; diminishing storeys and shifting sequence of levels create perspective- like effects by which towers are made to appear taller. This illusionistic quality is a unique characteristic of gopura designs. Long pillared corridors lining the different parts of the temple, creating architectural frames to unify earlier ensembles of structures are a significant architectural invention. Galleries in many temples surround sanctuaries and subshrines on four sides, serving as ambulatory passageways crowded with worshippers, they also create transverse axes within temple interiors, with spacious crossings that act as ritual focal points. Colonnades also define open spaces within the complex surrounding open courts with tanks, flag-poles and altars.

Kalyana mandapas is a typical feature of religious architecture of Tamil Nadu. The Kalyana mandapa in the outer enclosure of the Varadaraja temple at Kanchipuram is awesome. Religious architecture in the Tamil Zone continued to develop without interruption under the Aravidu Rajas. The outermost east gateway of the Varadaraja
complex at Kanchipuram is typical of gopuras erected in the second half of the 16th century. Aravidus have also contributed many columned halls of considerable artistic merit.

The dilapidated Venkataramana complex inside the Gingee fort is large, and well planned, and mostly belong to a single phase of construction; its architecture is simple and massive. The inner enclosure contains the main east-facing shrine which is approached through a sequence of two mandapas. One smaller and enclosed, the other larger and open. Guardian figures are placed at either side of the mandapa doorway. The Bhuvraha complex at Srimushnam, almost 100 kilometres south of Gingee, is perhaps the finest of all projects associated with the Gingee Nayakar. The long building history of Vriddha Girishvara temple at Vriddhachalam, 20 kilometres north of Srimushnam, includes important extensions. Yet another complex that was extensively renovated by the Gingee Nayakas is the Bhaktavatsala temple at Tirukkali Kundram, a sacred site 10 kilometres inland from the Bay of Bengal.

The finest of the Nayaka additions to the Brihadeshwara complex is the Subrahmanya shrine in the north-west corner. This temple consists of an entrance porch, enclosed mandapa, ante chamber and vimana, all aligned on an east-west axis.

Kumbakonam, second city of the Tanjavur kingdom is distinguished by its many large-scale religious monuments. The temples owe their present appearance to the extensive building campaign of the Nayakas. The kumbheswara, with its three concentric compounds elongated along an east-west axis with triple sets of gopuras, is the largest and most important of the Kumbakonam temples. The elongated configuration of the Kumbheshvara is echoed in another monumented at Kumbakonam, the Sarangapani, which is also entered through a succession of three gopuras on the east.

One of the largest projects sponsored by the Thajavur Nayakas in the towns of the Kaveri Delta is that at Tiruvidaimarudur, 12 kilometres east of Kumbakonam. The extensive double temple here consists of twin Mahalinga and Devi shrines.

Rajarajeswaram in the Tanjavur district of Tamil Nadu has often been called 'the temple of temples'. Built around the turn of the first millennium A.D., during the hey day of Chola rule, it is perhaps one of the best expressions of artistic excellence that could be
conceived of (B. Venkataraman, 1985). For the Cholas, temple building was not merely
an outpouring of artistic talent but also a way of life, for the entire fabric of the society was
woven around the temple. Built by the greatest of Chola rulers, Rajaraja, the temple was
named after him as Rajarajeswaram. Later on, it became known as the Brihadeswara
temple. It is a unique monument in many respects. It attracts the curiosity of not merely
the historian, but also the sociologist, connoisseur of dance and art, for it is perhaps the
only temple in the world which carries on its walls, the engraved evidence, in beautiful
calligraphy, of its entire history and the story of the contemporary society. Such an
exhaustive documentation ranging over almost a hundred long inscriptions engraved on
the walls pillars and podium, is rare wealth. The inscriptions give apart from a
comprehensive history of the times, a full enumeration of all the metallic images set up in
the temple. Numbering about sixty-six these icons are referred to with a description of the
minutest details of size, shape and composition. The temple also sports a depiction in
stone of eighty one of the one hundred and eight karanas of Bharata Muni’s Natya Sastra–
the first of its kind – setting the pace for many others to follow. The inscriptive data also
abounds in mention of the jewellery of the period; about sixty-six different types of
ornaments and jewellery are listed. An all stone structure of such stupendous proportions
like the Brihadeswara temple had never been attempted before. In height, elegance and
simplicity of design and plan, the temple has few parallels. The murals and dance panels
that stand revealed on the walls, due to the ravages of time, the late Nayak paintings that
had been superposed on the earlier Chola paintings are more or less peeled off. The
Bharatha Natyam panels have been a source of great attraction.

The two magnificent temples at Tanjore and Gangaikonda solapuram show maturity
of Chola architecture. The temple at Tanjore is the largest and the tallest temple; also, it is
masterpiece constituting the high water-mark of South Indian architecture. The vimana,
the ardhamandapa, mahamandapa, and the large nandi pavilion in front are aligned in the
centre of a spacious walled enclosure, 500 feet by 250 feet, with a gopura gateway in front
on the east. The grand vimana on a base of ‘square 82 feet side and of vertical 50 feet
height, the tall tapering body consisting of 13 tiers and over all the graceful domical finial
towering to a height of nearly 200 feet over the garbhagriha in the west and dominating
everything in its vicinity is the most important feature. The tower is visible many mile
away. A sikhara of single stone was raised to the top by the best engineering talent of
those days. The temple has earned the reputation of being “unquestionably the finest single creation of the Dravidian craftsmen” (P. Brown).

The cell enshrines an enormous lingam. It was originally called Rajarajeswara and later called Brihadesvara. Some yards away in front is the nandi-mandapa containing one of the largest monolithic bulls known in South India. The outer walls of the ardhamandapa contain niches carrying sculptures of gods and goddesses of considerable iconographic and artistic interest. The whole temple is a “magnificent” example of solidity combined with proportion and grace of form.

Nagaraja coil – around which Temple, the present flourishing town Nagarcoil grew is one of the famous Nagar shrines. A distinct feature of the temple is that along with the figures of Lord Muruga, Krishna, Padmanabha and Narasimha, the figures of Mahavira Parsavanath and Padmavathy are also seen. The figures of Jain saints carved in stone, the sculptural figures depicting the characteristic features of Jainism and other epigraphic evidences tend to establish the early association of this Temple to Jainism. Again, the imposing gateway in the South entrance in the Chinese style reminds of a Buddhist monastery. Another outstanding feature of the temple is the mud walled sanctum sanctorum with its thatched roofing.

In Kanyakumari district, part of erstwhile Travancore, could be seen traditional houses still preserving the structures constructed according to architectural treatise such as Vadakkathu, Nellara, Nilavara, Uralppura, Thekkethu, Kaliyal, Tozhuthu, Kalimadam, etc. While some houses are in dilapidated condition, certain traditional houses have been demolished to construct palatial concrete buildings. Historical researchers will be able to find ample number of houses that reverberates with heritage of the bygone era. In Talakulam, the house of Velu Thampi Dalawa is preserved as a heritage home, with out proper support from the State Governments of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In Ilankom Neyyur, traditional homes where Koodiyattom and Kathakali were regularly performed are now just symbols of the past glory. It is very unfortunate that the royal palace at Iraniel is allowed to perish due to sheer negligence. The coming generations are loosing invaluable historical truths that are also vanishing with the heritage structures.

Elegant and towering temples mark the landscape of Tamil Nadu. They remain as preservers of Cultural heritage, and protectors and promoters of the inner urge of people
for eternal bliss and blessings of the divine. Not only that the temples inspired promotion of art and culture. The Nataraja temple built during the eleventh century is the most celebrated of the south Indian saivite temple. The temple is located in an area of 40 acres. Inside the walls are four gopurams embellished with numerous sculptures. They represent various religious scenes and parables. The east gopuram being the main entrance is the oldest and the west gopuram is more attractive and outstanding. The Nrithya sabha, the hall of dance is the most beautiful and interesting part of the temple. The Sivakami temple, the Sivagami tank and the hall of thousand pillars are important features of the temple. Radin, the versatile sculptor of international repute belonging to the modern school highly praised the form and art and the concept of the Divine Dance of Nataraja.

The St. Lourdes Church located near the Rock Fort Teppakulam based on the French architecture is the oldest one of its kind. The Church of Our Lady of Lourdes is the replica of the Basilica of Lourdes, the world famous place of pilgrimage in South France.

The Nadhirsha Dharga in Thiruchirappalli built 1000 years ago stands as a holy place for Muslims. The festival of 'Urs' is celebrated in this mosque.

The excellent architectural design of Tiruvanaikkaval temple near Srirangam maker it a class apart. The Government Museum in Tiruchirappalli contains bronze and granite statues and gracefully depicts the art and architecture, the heritage of the city, history, culture and civilization.

The Thirumayam Kattubhava Darga in Tiruchirappalli is a 17th century Mughal architecture Darga. The Santhanakkoodu festival celebrated here attracts large number of pilgrims.

The memorial to the poet saint Tiruvallurvar at Valluval Kottam is shaped like a temple chariot and is, in fact, the replica of the temple chariot in Thiruvarur. A life size statue of the saint has been installed in the chariot which is 33m tall. The 133 chapters of his famous work Thirukkural have been depicted in bas-relief in the front hall corridors of the chariot. The auditorium at Valluvar Kottam is said to be the largest in Asia and can accommodate about 4000 people. It stands as a modern memorial to the great poet who represents the glorious culture of the Tamils.
Thirukkural is inscribed on the granite pillars that surround the auditorium and it has got no pillars for support. There is a 101 feet high temple chariot structure with a life-size image of the poet in it. This chariot is a replica of the temple car of Thiruvanur in Tamil Nadu. Over 3,000 blocks of stone were used to create this memorial to Tamil culture.

In the annals of the South Indian art and architecture, the contributions of the Pandyas constitute an important and interesting chapter. Not only in the quantity of output but also in the intrinsic qualities of beauty, strength and magnificence, the Pandyan monuments stand out as great landmarks recalling to our mind the long and arduous vicissitudes through which the art-tradition and art-impulses of the Tamils reached their acme of glory during the middle of the 13th century.

The simple caverns with stone beds (with Brahmi inscriptions) used as resorts by the Jain monks and found in the neighbourhood of Madurai were caves naturally formed. Regular attempts at making a cave by cutting into the rock are to be seen in a few examples distributed all over the Pandyan territory, datable from the second half of the 7th century A.D. They continued to revel in rock architecture during the two succeeding centuries till they were overthrown by the rising Cholas of Thanjavur. The Pandyan cave-temples are far more in number than the Pallava ones and are to be found in Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts. Some were dedicated to Siva, some to Vishnu, and some to Jains.

Along with their contemporary Pallava pioneers, the Pandyas initiated the simple cut-in-stone architecture in the far south and soon followed it up with the monolithic cut-out-temples like Vetturan koyil of Kalugumalai and the numerous structural edifices, both of the modest and also of the magnificent varieties.

Examples of the Pandyan Gopuras are to be found in Srirangam and Tiruvanaikka in Tiruchi district, Chidambaram in South Arcot district, and in Tiruvannamalai in North Arcot district, and in quite a few other places in Chingleput district. In the realm of sculptural art and paintings also, the Pandyan artists were a source of inspiration for the later Vijayanagar and Nayak artists. The Pandya rock cut mandapas may be said to be contemporary with the Pallava mandapas for they are of the same style. One prominent example of such a mandapa (with sculptured scenes cut on its walls) can be seen at Tirupparankunram (near Madurai). It is hidden behind the temple of Lord Subrahmanya.
(which serves as the mandapa’s garbagriha). The most beautiful rock-cut temple of the early Pandyas is the Vetturan Koyil at Kalugumalai. It is remarkable for the excellence of its sculpture and iconography. At Kalugumalai there are the sculptures of Uma Sahita Siva, Narasimha, Brahma, Skanda, Chandra and Surya and also of Dakshinamurthi who has been shown as playing on a Mridangam (a unique one not found elsewhere). Also, near Kalugumalai there are the Jain sculptures of Parsvanath Yaksha and Yakshis. Other instances of temples built in front of rock-cut mandapas could be stated, e.g., the one at Singaperumal Koyil in Chingleput district.

The cave and structural temples and other architectural remains of the Pallavas form an important chapter in Hindu art. The Pallava period is the transition from rock-architecture to structural stone temples. Their architecture and sculpture constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of South Indian art. The men who built the temples at Kanchi or Mamallapuram or wrought the sculptures on the rocks at Mamallapuram could not be in their art, but must have been trained in schools with art traditions of centuries and generations at their back. The earlier artists mostly worked in wood and other perishable materials and hence their work has completely disappeared. The style of Pallava architecture set the standard in the South Indian peninsula, besides influencing the architecture of the Indian colonies in the Far East. The sikhara, the characteristic feature of the Pallava or Dravidian type is seen in the temples of Java and Cambodia; but the pillars which form an important adjunct to South Indian temples are altogether absent in the temples of Java and Cambodia. But it is in the elaboration of the pillars that the beginnings of a distinctive Pallava order can be traced, and the figure of a lion is introduced and combined with the Pillar. The pillar and capital was further refined and developed into a column of striking elegance in the productions falling in the second group called after Mahamalla. All the examples of the Mahamalla group are found in the seaport town of Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram). It is a veritable museum of Pallava art and architecture.

There are altogether ten mandapas of the Mahamalla style on various sites on the main hill at Mamallapuram. All of them exhibit much progress from the simple style of the Mahendra caves though they still retain more or less the same general character and proportions as before. None of them is a large structure. Generally speaking, the dimensions are facade, 25 feet wide, 15-20 feet high, depth (including cella) 25 feet; pillars
9 feet high, sides 1-2 feet at their widest, cellas rectangular, each side 5-10 feet. The pillars are the main features. The roll cornice above them in front is decorated with kudus. Above the cornice is a parapet formed of miniature shrines, alternately long and short. In the interior, plasters and mouldings on the walls supply a suitable frame for the sculptural figures of mythological subjects. Some of the more developed pillars like those on the exterior of the Mahishasura Mandapa and in the façade of the Varaha mandapa, look singularly graceful. But the two inner columns of the Mahishasura Mandapa which are both lion pillars, are the best of the whole lot. The fluting and bands of their shafts, the graceful necking (tadi), the beautiful melon capitals (kumbha) and the lotus form (idal) above, with the wide abacus (palagai), combine very well to produce the typical Pallava “Order”. Notable among the sculptures are the magnificent reliefs of the Varaha and Yamana avatars, of Surya, Durga and Gajalakshmi, and two fine groups of royal figures representing Simbavishnu and Mahendravarman with their queens, all in the Varaha cave. The vivid dramatic effect and the sureness in the groups of figures characteristic of these sculptures marks other reliefs also, such as the sleep of Vishnu on the serpent Ananta, and the battle of Durgai with the buffalo demon Mahishasura, both in the Mahisha mandapa, and Krishna raising the Govardhana in the Pancha Pandava mandapa.

The Shore Temple on the sea coast at Mamallapuram seen on a moonlit night presents an extraordinarily beautiful sight. The beauty of the Shore Temple as a piece of architecture is superior to its quality as a sculptured edifice. It has weathered enough of the storms and hurricanes of the Bay of Bengal to be able to survive in the form present.

The Tiger Cave is situated at about three miles to the north of Mahabalipuram. On a piece of flat rock, a small rectangular chamber is scooped out. The dimensions of the chamber are approximately 87 inches long at the back, 84 inches long at the front and 4 feet broad. The side walls slightly converge towards the front. The height of the ceiling is 74 inches at the back and 70 inches at the front. Thus the roof of the chamber instead of being quite horizontal is slightly inclined towards the ground. The edge of the top part is gracefully carved down into a Kodumagai. There are four steps scooped out in the rock leading to this chamber. When one sings or plays on an instrument from the cell, it is heard clearly all round for a distance of more than 500 feet. The tone colours, i.e., the timbre of the voice and the instruments are heard in all their purity. Within the oblong chamber, sitting accommodation is provided for a party of four performers. The back wall
of the chamber is slightly conclave. The chamber faces east and the exotic sea is just about two furlongs. There is a sandy mound running paralleled to the coast close to the concert chamber. People can be seated on this and in tranquil. The music is strengthened by the reflections from the back, the roof and the sides. About 700-750 persons can comfortably sit on the sandy beach and listen to the music in the calm and natural surroundings. There are eleven figures of yali (vyalas), scooped out of the rock along the outer fringe of the chamber and on the top. They are arranged in an arch-like manner – 5 on the right and 5 on the left of the chamber. This place really deserves to be visited by all those interested in art and architecture. This open air theatre was sculptured during the time of Narasimha Varman II.

The Gudiyan Caves is situated near Poondi Reservoir at Alikuzhi ghats. It is believed to be a prehistoric nomad habitation. There are about 16 rock shelters (naturally formed, canopy-like structures) in the reserve forests.

In Mamallapuram could be seen ‘Rathas and Mantapas’. Rathas are small shrines carved out of a monolithic rock. In general ‘Ratha’ is known as chariot used for carrying the image of the deity during religious procession. In Pallava style it commonly refers to a monolithic shrine which contains all the essential features of a temple including domed storey to shikhara.

There are series of seven monolithic temples or Rathas chiselled out of big boulders and are widely known as ‘Seven Pagodas’ at Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram – a city founded on Coromandel coast, with a flourishing port, by Narasimha Varma I Mamalla (630-668 A.D). Each Ratha is a model of religious structure common at that time. Entirely carved out of granite rock, they express a novel form of construction. The five Rathas now known as Panch Pandav Rathas five sons of Pandu, King of Hastinapur, are the most unique in the whole world. These are Dharmaraja Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadev Rathas. There is also the Draupati’s Ratha named after the common wife of five Pandava brothers, the heroes of Mahabharata. All these Rathas highlight the Pallava genius for variety in art forms. The other feature of this style is “Mantapa”. There are about ten Mantapas at Mahabalipuram. The most important are Mahishasura, Krishna Varaha and Dharmaraja Mantapas.
The Mahishasur Mantaps contains Durga’s fight with Mahishasura and his destruction. The two interior pillars of the Mahishasura Mantapa are unique in design. The pillars are resting on sedentary lion’s head. The shaft (stambha) is fluted and banded with refined necking (tadi), the melon (Kumbha) shaped capital supporting a lotus form (idaie) above with wide abacus (palagai) became the most striking element in the order of architecture. The Varah mantap shows Lord Vishnu holding earth to save it from the legendary oceanic floods.

The other mantap worth mentioning is Krishnamantapam representing Lord Krishna lifting Govardhan mountain on his finger to protect the shepherded community of Gokula from the wrath of Varuna, the rain God. It is worth to note that all relief carvings are life-size. The Rathas and Mandapas though small in sizes are known for the exceptional character of their design and execution (G.K.Hiraskar, 2005).

There are many rock sculptures. The rock known as ‘Bhagiratha’s Penance’ or the ‘Descent of Ganga; also called as Arjuna’s Penance as per another school of opinion, is the most outstanding one. It is about 30 m long and 14 m high in which there are many beautiful figures of elephants, birds, serpents, nympha, gods and goddesses-all fitting harmoniously into the theme of the penance of a mythological hero. Bhagiratha or Arjuna who is shown standing on one leg, his hands lifted up. The cleft in the rock indicates the holy Ganga descending into the world.

Amongst the structural or stone built temples, the ‘Shore temple’ at ‘Mahabalipuram built by Narsimhavarma Rajsimha (690-715 A.D) is the most famous one. The temple with two pyramidal towers over two shrines, one on east dedicated to Shiva and one on west to Vishnu is enclosed by a massive wall, its parapet and coping crowned by figures of kneeling bulls and on exterior are boldly carved lion pilasters, a leogryph motif frequently adopted by the Pallavas. The garbha-griha is enshrined with a large lingam. The lingam is made of black marble with 16 sides and perimeter about 2m. The larger vimana or tower over the shrine is about 20m with umbrella-shaped kalasa at its summit. In the verandah behind there is the figure of Lord Vishnu reclining on Nagashesha. There are images of Brahma and Vishnu along with those of Parvati, Siva and Subramanya. The Pallavas were sea faring people and so they carried out religious rituals of worship of the water.
The Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram built mostly in the reign of Rajasimha consisted of a sanctuary with its pyramidal vimana and a detached pillared hall or mandapa in front. The whole set of buildings is enclosed in a rectangular courtyard by a high wall composed of cells. The mandapa and the sanctuary were joined together later on (many centuries after), by an intermediate ardhamandapa. The sanctum and the vimana conform to be type of the Dharmaraja Ratha. There are seven subsidiary shrines one at each angle of the sanctum and one in the middle of each free side. All the main features of the Pallava style have been assembled in this temple in a fascinating way. These add greatly to the beauty of the whole. (i) The cells in the interior of the enclosing wall which bear traces of painting, (ii) the design of the wall itself with its parapet of cupolas, (iii) the sturdy pillars of the mandapa and (iv) the constant repetition of the lion pilaster, all add to the beauty. The vimana is a development over the one at the Shore temple; for, it is substantial and better-proportioned. The entrance to the courtyard is by means of small openings on the sides of a large subsidiary temple, the Mahendravarmesvara, built in such manner as to suggest the beginnings of the gopuram. The builders of the Kailasanatha temple had carefully laid the foundations with granite so that they might carry weight. Sandstone had been used for the sculptured superstructure.

The most mature example of Pallava architecture is the Vaikunthaperumal temple. It is slightly larger than the Kailasanatha. Its principal parts—cloisters, portico, and sanctum—are no longer separate buildings but are a well-integrated structure. The sanctum is a square with sides of nearly 90 feet, and its front is carried forward 26 feet on the east to provide the portico. The whole is enclosed by a high outer wall which is decorated outside with simple and effective ornamental motifs, while inside it are the open ambulatory and the cloisters with a colonnade of lion pillars and sculptures inscribed with the leading events of Pallava history.

The Cholas built numberless stone temples throughout their Kindgom. Till the end of the tenth century the buildings were not very large and these show their limited resources and local developments. The Vijayalaya-Cholesvara at Natramalai was most likely, built in the time of Vijayalaya, the first Chola ruler of the period. It is one of the finest examples of the early Chola style. It has the unusual arrangement of a circular cella within a square prakara. Above the cella and prakara rises the vimana in four diminishing storeys of which the three lower ones are square and the uppermost one is circular, the
whole being surmounted by a dome-shaped sikhara capped with a round kalasa on the top. This is the special feature of this temple.

The beautiful little temple of Nagesvara at Kumbakonam is more or less of the same period and style, but its most remarkable feature is that the sculptures are found in the niches on its outer walls.

The temple of Koranganatha at Srinivasanallur was built in the reign of Parantaka I. P. Brown says that in this temple two changes from the Pallava style are discernible – one relating to the capital itself and the other to the abacus above.

The Muvarkoil (Temple of the Three') in Kodumbalur (Pudukkottai dt.), is another early Chola temple – complex which is notable alike for the fineness of its architecture and the beauty of its sculptures.

One of the most remarkable – (being unique for the wealth and detail of its sculpture) is the Tiruvalisvaram temple at Brahmasam in the Tirunelveli district. Its garbhagriha is square; the yali frieze on the plinth consists of the full figures of the animal, not of the bust alone as found elsewhere. The entire cornice is elaborately embellished by designs of foliage and creepers in the spaces between the kudus which are themselves highly ornate arches.

The temple of Airavatesvara at Darasuram (Tanjore district) a magnificent structure typical of the stage of architectural development reached in the age of Rajaraja II is a beautiful shrine and is on a pedestal conceived as a padmakosa. The sculptures there are abundant as they are pleasing. The superstructures of the vimana has five storeys overhanging the ardhamandapa.

The Kampahareswarar at Tribhuvanam (near Kumbakonam) was built by Kulottunga III. It has architectural and sculptural features in common with those of the Tanjore and Gangaikonda cholapuram temples. A significant feature of the Kampahareswarar temple is the representation of Barata Natya poses. The vimana of this temple is a conical-pyramid of six tiers.

The most important among the early Pallavar structural temples are; 1. The Shore Temple in Mamallapuram; 2. The temple at Panaimalai; 3. The Kailasanatar temple; 4.

The other well-known temple is Shiva temple-the Kailasnath temple at Kanchipuram meaning ‘golden city. The temple consists of a sanctuary with pyramidal roof or shikara, and a massive pillared hall or mantapa enclosed within a rectangular courtyard by high walls.

The sturdy mantapa pillars with square capitals, rampant lion pilasters at the corners, are the most attractive and fascinating features of this temple. The temple of Vaikuntha Perumal at Kanchipuram is also noteworthy. It is square in plan with a side length of nearly 30 m. The front or eastern portion is contracted to 21 m and carried forward by 7m. Attached to it in the front is a portico which measure 15m by 16m with a flat roof standing on 24 pillars. The method of construction of shrines one over the other is special feature of this temple. Inside the outer wall are the pillared colonnade of lion pillars with a wide passage. The inner walls contain stone sculptured panels showing the scenes from great epics.

The temple of great importance is that of Kamakshi the love-eyes Goddess. This one along with temples-Madurai Meenakshi and Kashi Visalakshi- the three well-known goddess of India are held in high reverence by all Hindus.

In the words of G.K. Hiraskar (2005), “To the south-east of the Meenakshi temple, Madurai there is a ‘Swarna Pushkarani’ or ‘Pool of Golden Lilies’ an artificial tank for ritual ablation measuring 36m x 50 m in the second enclosure and surrounded by an elegant pillared colonnade. The reflection of the south side gopuram 46 m high in the tank is worth watching. The walls of the corridor round the Golden Lily Tank are profusely decorated with mural paintings showing the sixty-four ‘Lilas’ or miracles by the God Shiva or Sundershwar.” There are totally eleven gopurams and five prakarams. In one of the enclosures there are musical stone pillars which produce musical sound when gently tapped. Just opposite the eastern gateway there is the famous Pudu-Mantapam built by Tirumala Nayak for lodging the presiding deity Sundareshwar. The mantapam has 124 highly sculptured pillars of black granite about 6m high. The Meenakshi temple has a pride of place in Madurai style.
G.K. Hiraskar (2005) states that the temple of Rameshwaram consists of five prakarams or wall enclosures, the outer most wall is 264 m long and 200 m wide and has four gopurams one on each side, that on the east side rises to a height of 45 m in nine storeys. The two gopurams on south and north sides are unfinished. The gopurams are built up of huge granite blocks but the superstructure consists of coral cut into blocks unlike built in bricks like other gopurams elsewhere.

The glory of the temple of Rameshwaram lies in the magnificent perambulatory corridor calculated to aggregate 915 m long, 6m wide and 9m high, forming an avenue leading to the shrine. Almost in every direction, there is an unending row of columns. But in south and north direction the view is marvelous as the coloumned halls are more than 200m in length. The columns are 3.6 m high standing on a huge platform of 1.52 m high with sculptures and elaborate carvings above. These corridors no doubt create a wonder and surprise at the mere thought of faithful labour involved in its immense construction. There are two large tanks within the temple. In addition there are number of small tirthas’ or bathing ghats each named differently. In the ‘garbha-griha’ there is the ‘linga’ or emblem of Siva under the name of Ramalingaswami.

The Shore Temple in Mamallapuram and the Big Temple in Tanjavur prove the correctness of both the opposite dictum, viz, that ‘the small is beautiful and the big is beautiful. The beauty seems to consist in the isolation which the pyramidal-conical towers of these structures attain. The Sangita Mahal in Tanjavur built more than 300 years ago is an ideal concert hall. This is rectangular in shape. In the Sangita Mahal, there seems to have been an aqueduct underneath the floor and which facilitated the transmission of sound from the stage to the extreme end of the auditorium, but no trace of this exists now.

The temple of Gangaikondasolapuram built by Rajendra I is in much the same style as the Brihadeswara temple. The vimana is 100 feet square at the base and 186 feet high. The temple, which forms a large rectangle 340 feet long and 110 feet wide, occupies the middle of an immense walled enclosure. Brown says, “It is the feminine counter part of Tanjore. It has a voluptuous beauty but not the same masculine vigour”.

Among the cave temples of Tamil Nadu the Lalitankura Pallavesvara –griha, or the upper rock-cut cave temple at Tiruchirapalli, the Lakshitayana dedicated to the trimurti at Madagappattu, the Pancha Pandava cave temple at Pallavaram, the Rudravalisvaran at
Mamandur, the Kailmandapam cave temple at Kuranganilmuttam, the Vasantesvara or larger cave temple at Vallam, the Mahendra Vishnu-griha at Mahendravadi, the Vishnu-griha at Mahendravadi, the Vishnu cave temple at Mamandur, Satrumalleswaraiaya temple at Dalavanur, the Avanibhajana Pallavesvara – griha at Siyamangalam, the Kilmavilangai cave temple of Tondaimandalam the Malai-yadi-k-curichi cave temple at Malai-yakkovil, the upper Siva cave temple at Tirumayam, the cave temple at Mangadu, the Malai-k-Kolundisvaram near Rayavaram, the Jyeshtha, the Gajalakshmi and the Bhuvanesvari cave temples in Tirumayam and two Vishnu cave temple at Namakkal are noteworthy.

The Talagirisvara temple on the Panamalai rock (South Arcot) of the pinkish-red hard granite has an interesting plan. It is essentially square on its base and talas, but its east facing aditala has smaller oblong shrines with cells attached to the middle of its south, west and northern sides over corresponding offset extensions of the adhishtana. The Mukundanayanan temple in Mamallapuram, also built of reddish granite, is a more plain and severe structure, with a dvitala, vimana, square below but with octagonal griva sikhara, and is hence Dravida (K.R. Srinivasan, 2001).

The Muktesvara, Matangesvara, Airavatesvara, Valisvara, Iravatanesvara and Piravatanesvara temples in Kanchi though smaller in proportions, are interesting for their architecture and iconography.

The Gandhi Smarak Mandir on the beach at Kanyakumari was erected as the memorial to the Father of the Nation. A special feature of the memorial, according to V. Meena is that it is so constructed that the rays of the sun at noon on Gandhiji’s birthday (October 2), will fall on the pedestal, through a hole on the roof above it.

The magnificent memorial to Swami Vivekananda is built on one of the twin rocks at the confluence of the three seas. The entire memorial is of granite. Below the dome in the main hall is installed the bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda in his standing parivrajak posture. Adjoining the main hall is the Dhyana Mandapam. V. Meena states that, “Madurai has become the greatest attraction for every tourist who visits the South. It leaves indelible impression in their minds and enriches their knowledge of the Tamilian art, architecture and culture. The soaring towers will continue to attract visitors to the land of culture”.

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The Tiruvalamuli temple near Swamimalai is noted for its architectural grandeur. Its intricate stone windows and exquisite sculptures are noteworthy. The mandapam in which Sri Vinayaka is enshrined is full of architectural splendor. The Tribhuvanam temple is artistic, colourful and attractive. It has an impressive 160 feet high pagoda. The tower is full of sculpted figures relating to various episodes from puranas.

The structure of Tiruvarur temple is of great architectural interest. The dwarapalakas in the eastern gopuram, Arumugar in Kamalambal shrine, the Nandi in the Vanmikanathar shrine are fine works of art. Some interesting paintings are found on the inner walls of the ceilings.

The Chettinad mansions with priceless furniture, intricate wood carvings, metal work, and vast courtyards are deemed to be remarkable treasures.

The Santhome Cathedral Basilica in Chennai derives its name from St. Thomas, an apostle of Christ. It is one of the three Churches that are built over dome of the apostles of Christ. In 1606, the church was re-built as a cathedral in the Gothic style of architecture and in 1896 it was made a basilica. The beautiful stained glass windows at the basilica portray the story of St. Thomas. This basilica is now elevated to the status of National Shrine.

The Marina of Chennai is dotted with the city’s proud architectural marvels like the Senate House, Chepauk Palace, University of Madras and Vivekandar Illam.

Among the interesting relics in the church at St. Thomas mount is an old stone cross (which the apostle is said to have clutched in his hand at the time of martyrdom). On the wall above the altar is an oil painting of the Madonna which was brought to India by St. Thomas.

The Mathoor Thottipalam (Mathoor Trough) is the tallest as well as the longest trough bridge in Asia (a height of 115 feet). Constructed in 1966, this bridge has become a place of tourist importance. The trough has a length of 384 metre and a height of 7 feet with a width of 7 feet and 6 inches. The canal is supported by 29 huge pillars.

The Udhayagiri Fort, built during the regime of King Marthanda Varma is a prominent cultural tourism destination in Kanyakumari district.
The Tanjavur palace, as it is known, has huge halls, spacious corridors, observation and arsenal towers and a shady courtyard. Though many sections of the palace are in ruins, restoration work has been taken up. The palace houses a library, a museum and an art gallery. The Royal museum displays many items from the kings who ruled the place in the past. Eclectic collection of royal memorabilia fascinates visitors. The royal cloths, hunting weapons, the head gears and many more such items are enough to catch the attention. There are two Durbar halls. The Nayak hall of the palace is occupied as Art Gallery. This gallery has an excellent collection of artifacts from the Chola dynasty during the 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} century. The bronze and granite statues reflect the height of craftsmanship obtained during those days. The bell tower which was put under restoration work, has emerged very different from the rest of the structure. Next to the art gallery is the Saraswathi Mahal Library with an amazing collection of manuscripts on palm leaves and paper.

The Sivaganga Palace is called Gowri Vilasam, the palace is situated in the heart of Sivaganga. The only portion intact here is the temple of Sri Raja Rajeswari. At the south of the temple is a huge hall supported with numerous pillars. An interesting feature in the palace is a miniature swimming pool called “Nadai Kinaru”. The tank is said to have direct connections to provide it with fresh water and provisions to fill two huge tanks beside the tank. Paintings on the dome and sides in natural colours are also intact.

Inside St. George’s fort in Chennai are the Fort Museum (with a fine collection of artefacts belonging to the British era and some French antiques), St. Mary’s Church which is the oldest Anglican church in India (with fine marble plaques, tombstones and dedications) and Clive House (called Admiralty House) it has wooden floors and beautifully carved wooden staircases and high ceilings, and the roof is supported by British steel girders. The centre piece of Clive House is a huge wall on the first hall with Corinthian columns.

George Michell (1995) explains, “The Madurai complex is contained within high enclosure walls that create a vast rectangle of 254 by 238 metres; lofty gopuras are positioned in the middle of each side. The towers of these gateways have elongated proportions and curved profiles that achieve a dramatic sweep upwards; that on the south is almost 50 metres high. The lower granite portions have pilasters with slender, part-
circular and fluted shafts many of these define projections without niches headed by shala and kuta pediments. The carvings here are confined to miniature animals and figures at the bases of pilasters and on wall surfaces in between. The brick superstructures have pronounced central projections with openings at each of the nine ascending storeys. The lowest of these openings, immediately above the eaves sheltering the entrance passageways are distinguished by free standing colonettes. Plaster sculptures, reworked and brightly painted in recent years, are applied to almost all of the architectural elements to create vivid polychrome effects. Enlarged yali heads with protruding eyes and horns mark the arched ends of the capping shala roofs; the ridges have rows of pot like finials in brass”. The Meenakshi temple is usually entered from the east through a porch proceeding outwards beyond the enclosure wall. This porch was erected for Rudrapati and Toli ammai, consorts of Tirumala Nayaka. Four columns on either side have carvings of different goddesses; the curved vault above is covered with paintings of recent workmanship. A doorway flanked by images of Ganesha and Subrahmanya leads into a vast columned hall used for shops and stores. Its piers have lion-like brackets carrying suspended beams. At the far end of this mandapa is a doorway contained within a towered gateway. Beyond is a small corridor flanked by columns with sculptured figures. This gives on to the courtyard of the Potramarai Kulam, a rectangular reservoir with stepped sides and a gilded lamp-column in the middle. The north and east walls of the surrounding colonnade are covered with murals, now sadly dilapidated. Royal portraits adorn two columns on the north side of the tank; a painted composition of the marriage of Meenakshi and Sundareshvara covers the ceiling of a small portico on the west.

A long corridor defines the transverse north-south axis of the Meenakshi Sundareshvara complex. The columns lining its central aisle have three dimensional sculptures of deities, heroes and rearing yalis. The Meenakshi shrine, together with several subshrines, stands inside a rectangular compound to the west. A gopura at the northern end of the corridor provides access to the Sundareshvara shrine. To the north is the Thousand Pillared hall, now converted into an art museum. Of the exactly 985 elaborately decorated columns incorporated into this mandapa, some have fully modeled figures, both divine and royal. Yalis line the central aisle that leads to the raised dais at the northern end of the mandapa. At the southern end is a porch with finely carved columns, those at the corners being surrounded by dense clusters of slender colonettes.
Outside the complex, directly on axis with the east gopura leading to the Sundaresyshvara shrine, stands the Pudu Mandapa. This major construction is the work of Tirumala and was completed in 1635; it is now a market for textiles and household goods. Unlike the Meenakshi –Sundareshvara complex, the Kudal Alagar Perumal temple belongs to a single phase of construction that represents the mid-seventeenth-century style at its finest. The central shrine of this monument is an unusual conception, with three superimposed sanctuaries of diminishing size containing seated, standing and reclining images of Vishnu. The Teppakulam at the eastern edge of Madurai was initiated by Tirumala in 1636 as a setting for festivals in which sacred images were floated in illuminated barges. Portrait sculptures adorn the four central columns; slabs cut into the shape of arched openings are placed in between. Smaller but similar pavilions mark the island’s four corners.

Algarkoil in the immediate vicinity of Madurai is known for the Garuda shrine, open mandapa, Vasanta Mantapa and Ramayana paintings. Another place of religious importance in the vicinity of Madurai is the hill at Tirupparankunram, 6 kilometres to the south –west. The core of the complex is a rock-cut shrine dating from the Pandya era. A wide range of deities is carved on to its walls, including Subrahmanya, popularly known as Murugan. As transformed by the Nayakas, this shrine became the focal point of an extensive religious complex. The temple is approached from the north through an ascending sequence of columned halls linked by multiple flights of steps. Nayaka patronage is evident in the mandapa built immediately in front of the rock-cut shrine, where portraits of Tirumala and other donors are carved on to column shafts. A transverse axis links a small Ganesha shrine on the west with a large stepped tank situated outside the walls on the east. An impressive gopura with a lofty pyramidal tower in the typical seventeenth-century style marks the entrance to the temple at the foot of the hill. It is preceded by an open columned hall, the outer piers of which have rearing animals and clusters of colonettes. The Ranganatha complex has seven rectangular enclosures, arranged one inside the other. Each compound is punctuated by gopuras in the middle of four sides; the towers increase in height as the complex expands outward. The largest gopura, in the outermost walls on the south, is an immense structure measuring about 39 by 30 metres in plan. The Vellai Gopura on the east side of the fourth
enclosure has a steeply pyramidal superstructure that reaches a height of almost 44 metres.

The Venugopala shrine in the south-west corner of the fourth enclosure of the Srirangam complex, Thiruchirappalli is the work of Chokkanatha; an inscription of 1674 specifies this Nayaka as the patron. It is an exquisitely ornamented building. The exterior of the vimana and attached mandapa have finely worked pilasters with fluted shafts, double capitals and pendant lotus brackets. Sculptures are placed in the niches on three sides of the sanctuary walls; maidens enhance the walls in between. The elevation is punctuated with secondary sets of pilasters that support shallow eaves at different levels to cap larger and smaller recesses. The sanctuary is crowned in traditional fashion with a hemispherical roof. In the Srirangam complex is the Garuda Mandapa on the south side of the third enclosure. Courtly portrait sculptures, reused from an earlier structure, are fixed to the piers lining the central aisle. A free standing shrine inside the hall contains a large seated figure of Garuda; the eagle-headed god facing north towards the principal sanctuary. Next to the Ranganatha shrine, in the first enclosure of the temple, is the Kili Mandapa. Elephant balustrades skirt the access steps that ascend to a spacious open area. This is bounded by decorated piers with rearing animals and attached colonettes in the finest seventeenth century manner. Four columns in the middle define a raised dais; their shafts are embellished with undulating stalks. The most artistically interesting of the halls that the Nayakas added to this complex is, without doubt, the Shesharaya Mandapa on the east side of the fourth enclosure. The hall is celebrated for the magnificent leaping animals carved on to the piers at its northern end.

The nearby Jambukeshvara temple is the other great religious monument on Srirangam Island. It is a fine example of the monumental style attained under the Madurai Nayakas towards the end of the seventeenth century. The temple consists of five concentric enclosures, with gopuras aligned along the principal east-west axis; a goddess shrine provided with its own rectangle of walls is located within the fourth enclosure on the north side. A thousand columned hall is positioned immediately inside the outermost gopura on the west side of the complex. Its basement is sculptured with prancing horses and wheels. The hall faces south towards a large square tank.
The Nellaiyappa complex of Tirunelveli incorporates local wooden architecture. The timber-vaulted roof of the entrance porch that precedes the main gopura is adorned with carved struts. The free-standing pavilion in the north-west corner of the intermediate enclosure has carved wooden screens, columns and ceiling struts, the last fashioned as miniature deities and attendant figures the pyramidal roof is sheathed with copper tiles. The piers at the corners have groups of forty-nine colonettes concealing the shafts; those in the middle display fully modeled figures brandishing clubs. A large seated Nandi occupies the middle of an impressive columned hall. The Adinatha temple at Alvartinungari, 30 kilometres east of Tirunelveli, displays the same expansive layout, with detached mandapas, some with decorated piers displaying large numbers of slender colonettes. The sculptural treatment of the architectural elements is sometimes richly conceived, as in the Satyavaitgishvara temple at Kalakkadu, an almost equal distance south of Tirunelveli. Balustrades in this monument, for example, are exuberant demonstrations of the carvers art, with fully modeled yalis, with undulating snouts. One of the finest of these complexes is that at Krishnapuram, 12 kilometres east of Tirunelveli. The temple of Venkatachala at this site belongs to the end of the Nayaka period. It is notable for the fully modeled figures sculptured on to the piers: heroes, attendant women and yalis adorn the spacious mandapa that precedes the shrine, as well as the detached mandapa in the outer enclosure. Similar sculptures adorn the piers of the Vishvanatha temple at Tenkasi. Exuberant carvings are found in the mandapa attached to the nearby Subrahmanya shrine. Yalis are carved on the twelve piers that define the central hall space of an open mandapa; the corner animals are angled inwards. The entrance gopura to the complex has finely worked wooden doors with carved panels. The Gokarneshvara temple at the core of the complex consists of a number of shrines, some cut deep into natural boulders, dating back to Pandya times. The most impressive extension was a series of structures that created a ceremonial approach to the temple from the south. Beyond the outer gopura is an extremely long corridor with its ceiling painted with Ramayana panels.

At Ramanatha complex on Rameswaram Island the most extensive work took place in the first half of the eighteenth century under Muttu Kumara Raghunatha and Muttu Ramalinga when the sanctuary and its associated bathing spots were transformed into a coordinated architectural ensemble. These kings were responsible for erecting the outer
most rectangle of walls, with substantial gopuras in the middle of three sides; those on the north and south were never finished. A third gopura in the middle of the east side of the intermediate enclosure is an earlier construction of Sadaikkar Tevan. The gateways all have massive pilastered walls; interior passageways are flanked by jambs with yali brackets above.

Two entrances on the east of the Rameswaram temple, one on axis with the linga sanctuary, the other with the Devi shrine, are approached through columned mandapas that project beyond the peripheral walls. They give access to the spacious corridor which is the most impressive of the eighteenth century extensions. This completely surrounds the inner two enclosures on four sides, and is exceptional for its great length, some 205 metres on the north and south sides; the receding perspectives of piers give the monument its distinctive architectural character. The supports are raised on moulded basement, their shafts adorned with scrollwork and lotus designs, with prominent lotus brackets on crouching yalis above; painted lotus medallions adorn the ceilings. There are two principal shrines within the innermost compound; that on the north houses the linga associated with Rama, the other is reserved for Devi.

In the words of George Michell (1995): “Gingee, the most strategically situated of all citadels in the Tamil Zone, was occupied successively by the Nayakas, Adil Shahis, Marathas, French and British. The site presents an impregnable spectacle of three independent rock forts, each with granite walls encircling a natural outcrop. Among the diverse structures perched on the summits of these triple forts are granaries, watchtowers and shrines.” Substantial walls with part-circular bastions and broad moats run across the level ground between the forts to enclose a vast triangular area, no less than 1 kilometre on each side. Additional walls define a central zone which functioned as a royal enclosure, inside which is an ensemble of palace buildings and storage structures. Gateways leading into this enclosure on the east and north are approached through curving barbican walls that project beyond the line of fortifications.

Palace architecture in southern India, especially that of the Nayakas in the Tamil Zone, develops the tradition first articulated under the Rayas. There is an overall tendency to increase the scale and ornamentation of courtly buildings, and to combine diverse architectural elements into formal and symmetrical compositions. The complex at
Madurai, which preserves only a fragment of what must have been the greatest of all seventeenth-century royal residences, is conceived as an immense complex, with different halls and inner courts connected by colonnades and corridors. Nayaka palaces are focused on sequences of internal spaces articulated by rows of massive columns and roofed by lofty domes and vaults. A distinguishing characteristic of Nayaka palaces in the Tamil Zone, as at Thanjavur and Madurai, are the columns with cylindrical shafts. These columns have no precedent and one of which has an ornamental parapet that may have been places of reception and entertainment. A large tank with a colonnade on four sides is located on the south side of the complex.

Thiruppathisaram temple in Kanyakumari district is a renowned Vaishnava temple. In the words of A. Uthandaraman (1971), the beauty of form and perfection of workmanship attained in the construction of this temple are remarkable. The inner courts the mantapams, the sanctum sanctorum, the column of pillars supporting the massive granite roofs and terraces etc. are monumental masterpieces in the realm of architecture. The polish and beauty of the embellished work of art exhibited everywhere in the temple arrests the attention of every visitor.

Suchindram which is about nine miles north of Kanyakumari and three miles south of Nagercoil, has a temple dedicated to Thanumalayaperumal. Thanu is Siva. Mal is Vishnu and Ayan is Brahma. There is an old Konrai tree in the front portion of the temple adjoining Nadi. Under this tree is a trilinga representing the trinity (Thanu, Mal and Ayan). Inside the temple, there are separate shrines for Thanu lingam and Mahavishnu. There is in the northern corridor a separate shrine for Devi. The temple is about 403 feet long and 233 feet wide. During the principal festival in Maragazhi (December-January), the car festival is celebrated on a grand scale. The Gopuram is about 135 feet high and contains seven tiers. Anjaneya idol in the Northern Corridor is about 16 feet 4 inches high. There are inscriptions relating to Cholas, Pandyas, Naiks and Cheras in this temple.

The unique distinction of the architectural and sculptural works in Suchindrum is that they throw light on distinctive features prevalent in different epochs of Tamilian History. Of the many monumental works, the Natakasalai the Oonjal Mantapam, the Rishabha Mantapam, the four prakarams especially the south, 'Alanjara Mantapam, Chithra Sabha, the splendidly constructed 'Vasanta Mantapam and the most magnificent
and imposing ‘Chembakaraman mantapam’ are outstanding. The gurudalwar and the four figures in the Mantapam, the Kankalanathar and Venugopalar and the other figures in the Chitra Sabha, the Yalis, the musical pillars etc are great master-pieces. These are best specimens that can stand favourably in comparison with the most brilliant products in other Temples. The ‘Prodigious image’ of Hanuman standing to a height of more than sixteen feet carved out of polished single stone is marvelous and it, though strupendous in proportion, is in the characteristic worshipping posture which adds to its sublime beauty.

The Sri Parthasarathy temple in Triplicane is dedicated to Lord Krishna. During the historic battle of Mahabarata, Krishna was the chariot driver (Sarathy) of Arjuna (the Partha), thus giving the deity here the name Parthasarathy. The temple was originally built by the Pallavas in the 8th century AD, though additions were later made to it by Chola and Vijayanagara kings. The tank is a fine example of Pallava architecture.

In Mylapore, not far from Triplicane there is yet another 8th century Pallava temple, the Kalapeeswarar temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, this temple has some beautiful sculptures among which are the bronze idols of 63 Saivite saints (Nayanmars) which adorn the outer courtyard. Also in the courtyard, under the old Punnai tree is a small shrine depicting goddess Parvati in the form of a peacock, worshipping Lord Shiva. It is from this legend that Mylapore gets its name – ‘Myil’ meaning peacock and ‘oor’ meaning town.

Built in the latter half of the 13th century by the Vijayanagara kings, the Vellore fort is one of the best examples of military architecture in this part of the country. Surrounded by a moat which is now used for fishing, this fort has a low outer wall which runs alongside a higher inner wall. The broad wall lying between the two now serves as a promenade. The strong bastions of the fort defended the Vijayanagara kings well until their defeat in 1565. After that the fort was variously occupied by the rulers of Bijapur, the great Maratha King Shivaji and finally by the British who won it in 1768. When Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore was defeated in 1799, his family was imprisoned here and their tombs now lie to the west of the fort. This fort, that houses a temple, a mosque and a church, is a living testimony to religious harmony, prevail in this part of the country. Enclosed within its walls are several buildings and the beautiful Jalakanteshwara temple. Like the rest of the fort, the gopuram is flanked by the sculpture of a dancing parvati and the pillars inside the
temple are beautifully carved with figures on horse-back which are examples of Vijayanagara art at its very best. In the courtyard, Siva’s Nandi looks on in sublime peace. A profusion of sculpted figures adorns the temple and all other buildings in the fort can be approached by the bridge that was built by the British for this purpose.

Gingee is one of the finest forts in South India. Its origin dates back to the 9th century when it was a stronghold of the Cholas but the fort as it looks today is the handwork of the Vijayanagara kings who made it into an impenetrable citadel. The fortified city is built on seven hills, the most prominent of which are Krishnagiri, Chandragiri and Rajagiri. Surrounded by high walls, it was so cleverly planned as to make enemies think twice before they attacked. Strongly guarded by a triple gate beyond which lay equally heavily guarded courts, the summit of Rajagiri could not have been easily attainable to any of the enemies. Today, the summit can be reached after a two hour climb, still a tiring task, but well worth the effort.

Chidambaram is also known as Thillai, since the Place was originally a forest of Thillai (Excecaria agallecha) shrubs. It is an important pilgrim centre and a holy place for Saivaites as the famous Nataraja Temple is located here. Dedicated to Lord Nataraja, this ancient temple of the Cholas is unique not only it is a temple devoted solely to the art of Bharata Natyam, but also it is one of the rare temples where Shiva is represented by an idol rather than the customary lingam. Spread over an area of 40 acres with a gopuram on each side, the temple is distinguished by five sabhas or courts. The gopurams themselves are worth lingering over. The eastern gopuram is 40.8 m. high and carved on it are the 108 dance poses of Bharata Natyam. The western tower has also similar carvings while the northern tower which soars to a height of 42.4 m. is the tallest. The idol of Nataraja is installed in the Kanaka Sabha, the roof of which is covered with gold tiles. The icon is a stunning piece of sculpture that evokes a sense of continuous movement. Though non-Hindus are not allowed inside the sanctum sanctorum, replicas of this idol are easily available in most handicraft emporia and shops selling art and curio objects. The Chit Sabha which is also topped by a gold tiled roof houses the Akasa Lingam or God incarnate as Air. Actually, there is no idol in this Sabha, the lack of which signifies that God exists in open space. The Nritta Sabha or the hall dance is the most beautiful of the five halls. It is shaped like a chariot drawn by horses and has 56 pillars which are sculpted with dancing figures. The Deva Sabha is the hall of festivals and the Raja Sabha which is
the 1000-pillared hall that measures 103 m in length, is the place where the Pandya and Chola kings celebrated their victories over other armies. A shrine to Govindaraja or Lord Vishnu lies adjacent to the main, shrine and has a beautiful idol of the lord reclining on Adisesha, his serpent. There are two other shrines, one dedicated to Subramanya and the other to Ganesha in the courtyard, a large Nandi looks on devotedly at its lord and master through an aperture on the wall.

Velankanni 12 kms south of Nagapattinam is one of the most visited pilgrim spots in India. People of all faiths and religions come to this church to pray at the shrine of ‘Our Lady of Health’. Many bring with them small gold and silver to don a te to the church. Velankanni is particularly crowded during the festival period in August-September. There is a small Church Museum which has a display of the offerings made by those who were cured of their diseases. There are many small shops selling medals and other religious trinkets.

Similar to Velankanni in its popular appeal is the dargah of Hazrat Meeras Sultan Syed Shahabdul Hameed (better known as Hazrat Mian) in Ngore. Just 4 kms to the north of Nagapattanam, the tomb is almost 500 years old and is topped by a golden dome and flanked by five minarets. The tank is called Peer Kulam and is believed to have curative powers. The dargah is visited by people of all religious faiths.

There is a rock-cut cave temple built by Mahendravarman Pallava in Tirukorarnam and an interesting museum which has some rare exhibits in its geology, zoology, anthropology, epigraphy, history and art sections. Not far from here, at a place called Kumaramalai is a hilltop temple dedicated to Lord Subrahmanya.

Situated on the road to Madurai, Tirumayam is one of the most interesting places around Pudukkottai. There are a couple of rock cut cave temples and an old fort, both of which are worth visiting. The cave temples which lie side by side are dedicated to Siva (Sathyagireeswar) and Vishnu (Sathyamoorthi) and were built by Mahendravarman and Narasimhavarman Pallava. The Siva temple has some inscriptions of music. There are two shrines in the Vishnu temple, and the one where the lord is represented in a reclining posture is particularly remarkable as it is the largest of its kind in the country. On the walls behind the idol are beautiful carvings depicting Vishnu and his serpent Adisesha chasing away rakshasas (demons) by spewing fire and poison. Atop the hill is an old fort called
Oomaiyan Kottai where captured rebels were imprisoned by the British. It was built in 1687 by the Sethupathi of Ramanathapuram.

The Siva temple in Kudumianmalai has some interesting inscriptions as well as beautiful sculptures. One of the inscriptions deals with the musical treatise of Mahendravarman Pallava and his experimentation with an eight-stringed instrument called Parivadini.

Nartamalai has some of the oldest structural stone temples, including a rock cut cave temple. This temple has six large skillfully carved statues of Vishnu in the central cell. A 9th century Pallava cave temple dedicated to Siva lies to the south, and in front of this is the Vijayalaya Choliswaran temple. Vijayalaya was the first of the Later Cholas and as such, this Siva temple is one of the earliest Chola creations, not half as grand as the ones that were to follow. However, glimpses of an artistic greatness that was still to come can be seen in the beautiful figures of the dancers in front of the vimana, the elegantly carved dwarapalakas and the figures of other gods.

There are some other early temples at Moovarkoil, Viralimalai and Avudaiyarkoil. Pallivasal nearby is an Islamic pilgrim centre and at Avur (28 kms) there is an old church which was constructed by Father John Venantius Bouchet.

The eight-storey victory tower in Manora was built by the Maratha King Serfoji in the year 1814- to commemorate the victory of the British over Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo. The name 'Manora' is derived from the word minaret (small minar).

Karaikkudi is a small town known for its magnificent mansions constructed by the Chettiar– a caste known as much for their prosperity as their hospitality. Though the owners of these palatial wonders have long scattered, having left for distant shores, the beautifully carved woodwork as well as the stone and mortar work of these houses can still be appreciated. There is also an educational centre here which was founded by the late Dr. Alagappa Chettiar. Not far from Karaikkudi is one of the largest ever temples dedicated to Lord Ganesha or Pillayar. The beautiful cave temple at Pillayarpatti is a fine example of Pallava architecture and the massive Vinayaka statue is one of the best in the country.
The Koodal Alagar temple which was built before the Meenakshi temple is unique because the shrines depict Vishnu in sitting, standing, and reclining postures. There are several finely carved stone windows and a striking panel showing the crowning ceremony of Lord Rama. This is one of the rare temples where the vimanam dominates the gopuram.

Airavateeswara Temple constructed by Raja Raja II, 1150-1173 AD, has now been recognized as a world heritage monument by the UNESCO. It rises to a height of 23 meters.

The inscriptions on the wall of the Kailasamundaiyar Temple contains the earliest known reference to Sankara Bhashyam, a commentary on Sankara’s philosophy, written by Chidaananda Bhattaara. The inscription is in Tamil with a few Sanskrit words in between written in Grantha characters.

Christianity and Jainism have greatly contributed to the architectural wealth and literary heritage of Kanyakumari. Kanyakumari was also under the control of the Cholas, the Cheras, the Pandyas and the Nayakas who were great rulers of south India. The architectural beauty of the temples is the work of these rulers.

There are many Jain shrines, images, and monasteries carved in the hills of Tamil Nadu. Most of these monuments are concentrated in and around Madurai. There are about 26 caves in Anaimalai, Alagarmalai, Tiruparankundram, Muttupatti, Vikramangalam, Karungalakkudi, Kongarapuliyanukulam, Mankulam, Tiruvatavur, and Varichiyur. The stone beds in these caves prove that they were abodes of the monks. There are several flat stones in these caves. These caves are considered important because they are among the earliest stone monuments in these regions. They also contain epigraphic records written in the Brahmi script. It is even said that the Hindu temples in and around Madurai were fashioned after these caves.

The St. Stephen’s Church is one of the oldest churches in the Nilgiris. It dates back to the days of Rt. Hon’ble Stephen Rumbold Lushington, the then Governor of Madras, who keenly felt the need for a cathedral exclusively for the British, in Ooty. The church has a fine pew with a raised chancel. There are stained-glass paintings on the eastern side as well as behind the chancel depicting Mary holding baby Jesus in her arms and the
crucifixion of Christ among others. On the Western wall above the paneled doorways is a large life-like painting of the Last Supper. The vestry is in the cellar down the chancel. The pulpit is on the left of the chancel and attached to it is a small flight of steps. In the attic instead of the big metallic bell, one comes across novel but antique hammer like structures (four in number) tied on to “V” Shaped planks with ropes. There are four thick iron bars on the eastern as well as the western side screwed on to thick wooden beams and they hang from above at different heights in a slanting fashion, and face each other. There are pulleys attached with solid wires, which operate the hammers, and which reach the ground floor through the gaps in between the planks on the floor. The entire structure is housed on a tall, sturdy stool, which is open on all the fourth sides. When the wires are pulled from the floor, a rhythmic musical sound is produced.

The Kailasamundaivar temple in Tiruchirappalli is rated as an architectural marvel and built as per specifications of the Shilpa Shasthra. The Siva temple consists of a central shrine, ardha and Mahamandapas. The presiding deity, the Linga has a square base. Two dwarapala sculptures adorn the entrance of the ardhamandapa.

A unique feature of the temple is the innumerable panel sculptures on almost every stone, which has gone into its construction. Among the most eye catching carving are an image of Bhikshatana, a figure of a lady holding a ladle and a row of pots, Ganesha, Dakshinamurthy and a sculpture of Krishna caught in the act of stealing butter.

The Nageswaram temple in Kumbakonam has a definite magic endowed by the towering presence of many ancient temples, built over 1000 years ago. Built around 1005 A.D., it is an outstanding symbol of Chola sculptures. It draws many foreigners keen to interpret the rock wall edicts and study the sculptures. The main sanctum has a large lingam. The front tower is of moderate height with very lovely sculptures. A peculiarity of the temple is that the Sun rays fall directly on the lingam, every year, for three days. Around the temple prakaram, one comes across some of the most splendid architectural sculptures. Niches in the outer wall of the sanctum contains large, graceful figures in standing postures-both male and female. Their beauty, hairstyle, attire, jewellery and shape are all examples of the supreme skill of the Chola sculptors. A fabulour Brahma and Ardhanariswara are found on the other side of the outer wall. Smaller sculptures can be seen along the temple main walls.
Arthangudi tiles, name after their place of manufacture in Chettinad, come in myriad colors and patterns and are made by a unique process using local soil. These tiles are a testimony to the rich cultural heritage of the Chettiar community, who effectively adapted many influences to their own brand of local craftsmanship. The designs and colors used in Athangudi tiles are still those of a bygone era. The artisans say the charisma of those tiles is due to sand, which is of just the right composition. Cement, baby jelly and sand along with synthetic oxides make the composition of the tile. The art of making these tiles is a traditional activity at Chettinad. Kandanki sarees or the Chettinad cotton saris are thick, coarse cotton, capable of withstanding the roughest washes.

Checks and Temple borders are the favored patterns and earthly reds, oranges, chromes and browns are the most popular colours. Those encouraging the revival now offer the weaves new designs, but the traditional weaving families still produce the patterns most favoured in the villages around. Karaikudi and the neighbouring towns hold excellent examples of Chettinadu architecture. The people of Chettinadu were traders and financiers who valued high living and maintained old taste and love for beautiful things. They brought back Burmese teak and European tiles for their mansions, as well as took inspiration from ceremonial and palace architecture. They incorporated the wealth of wood sculpting and craftsmanship from local craftsmen in their homes, which now stands with pride, even when it has not been properly cared. The minute carvings on the doors; carvings of idols on wooden blocks, placed above the doors, names as Surya Pallakai, is the first greeting to any visitor, who enters in to any chettinad house. The artistic value of these products has no measure, for it is a treasure.

The Chettinad houses are massive high walled structures, often built in compact clusters, back to back, one house stretching all the way along the length of a street. Theoretically, one can stand at the front entrance of one of these mansions and look straight down the main axis, all the way to the back door that leads from the kitchen to the next street. The climb up to one of the terraces is the neat progression of court-yards surrounded by covered verandas, with their tiled and sloping roofs, intersected by the long communal halls that unfold ceremoniously, all the way. The doorways, or entrances to each of these areas are an important part of the Chettiar style. The front ones are the most imposing. The finest Burma teak, the richest satinwoods from Sri Lanka, black marble, and ebony have been used. The carving is unparalleled. As Muthiah points out,
these were executed by the local craftsmen who would normally have worked on decorating the temples in the area. The motifs of swans, lotuses, sun-signs, elephants, etc., are taken from the usual repertoire of symbols. The lintels are carved with scenes from the epics, just as found in a temple. It is only in the later mansions that are found angles and cherubs staring down from the wooden struts of a roof. The earliest type of building was fairly simple. It consisted of an open public area at the covered entrance of the house, followed by a more secluded formal area just at the back of the imposing front entrance that looked across to the courtyard.

As the Chettiar grew in wealth and stature, these areas, the front entrance and the formal public area, grew in size and opulence. English style furniture was introduced in the formal public area. When this was expanded into a main hall the ornamentation exceeded all imagination. As some of the photographs show, these halls would have elaborately carved and painted ceilings, with an opulent chandelier hanging from the centre, the lower walls would be tiled with Japanese ceramics, and the upper edges decorated with a frieze of paintings that reflected images of the Sahibs and ladies hunting or of the newly introduced motor car and train, or damsels lolling around on bolsters, in imitation of the sirens on cinema that was also to have a deep impact on the visual language of the time. Many of the houses, both in their architectural trimming outside, and in the use of cast iron railings and balustrades and imported furniture inside, show a great foundness for the art of Deco style. Some of the traditional elements may still be seen, though in a different context. In the early years, the walls were plastered with a creamy white plaster that had its own porcelain like finish, and was known as Chettinad plaster. These white walls obviously offset the wooden carving on the pillars and the doors. But it is said that the technique of plastering and polishing these surfaces has now been lost. The floors in some of the enormous halls were also covered in surfaces that had a dark mirror like finish. A thriving local industry has come up now that produces colourful tiles made of a local clay, at the village of Athangudi. These tiles in deep red, yellow, green and blue, also at time in black and white, are to be seen in many modern Chettiar homes. The interiors combined elements of the native style with European touches and the outside became veritable monuments of baroque architecture. The closest examples that one can compare them with is the fusion of church inspired architecture with the local stucco traditions that continued in parts of south America.
Kanchipuram is one among the most sacred pilgrimage sites in India. The city has some of the most grand and majestic temples with their striking architectural marvel. These temples are not only sacred sites, but also a study of the architectural evolution within South Indian style of temple architecture. These temples reflect architectural experimentations, restructuring and refinement that underwent under different dynasties that ruled the city. The temples are the epitome of flourishing Pallava art and architecture with the embellishments from the Chola, the Vijayanagara and Chalukyas kings.

*Ekambaranathar Temple* sprawling over 11 stories has one of the tallest temple towers in South India. It has some of the most awe-inspiring sculptures, and features a thousand pillared mandapam

### 7.4 SCULPTURE

Tamiliyan sculpture in the Sangam days was perhaps confined either to the terracotta or plaster medium. But the medium was easily perishable and so none of the specimens of sculpture of those days has survived. Literature however refers to the sculpture of those times. The Catukkapputam of the Sangam age was surely a tall figure made of plaster, lime or similar material. There was such a figure in the cross roads in Pukar, and it was worshipped. There can be no doubt that it was a three dimensional figure. Since all temples and the idols in them were made of perishable material they have all perished unable to withstand the ravages of the equatorial climate. Saiva iconography has a supreme place in the art history of Tamil Nadu. Stone carving is an excellent example for arts of Tamil Nadu. Every temple of Tamil Nadu are resplendent with stone carved walls, pillars and huge tower - the gopuram.

In the early seventh century stone was substituted for wood, etc., in the making of temples. Similary and perhaps at the same time, idols also came to be made in stone. Some of the best Pallavar sculptures are in Mamallapuram as they are seen in the Varaka Mantapam, the Mahisa Mantapam and the vast and massive open air rock front sculpture known as Bhagiratan’s penance (N. Subrahmanian, 1996).

The Santhome Church, the St. Mary’s Church, St. George’s Cathedral, St. Andrew’s Church—all in Chennai and a few mofussil Churches like the St. Joseph’s College Chapel in Tiruchirappali are some examples of European ecclesiastical art in Tamil Nadu.
The caves at Tiruchirapalli have a fine relief of Siva Gangadhara, strongly reminding of the sculptures in the Brahmanical caves of the Western Deccan.

Chennai Krishnapuram Temple, there are plenty of images and idols of sculptural interest, enticing hundreds of visitors.

Built around 1005A.D., the Nageswaran Temple is an outstanding symbol of Chola sculpture. It draws many foreigners keen to interpret the rock wall edicts and study the sculptures.

Krishnapuram is a small village situated in Tirunelveli District at a distance of about six miles from Tirunelveli town. There are plenty of images and idols of sculptural interest in the temple enticing hundreds of visitors. There are many impressive images of ingenious and exquisite workmanship in the mandapam. Krishnapuram’s lithic images are unique in nature than that of others found in other temples. They are very vivacious. Life seems to overflow the river of sculptures. This temple can be referred to as touch stone for art critics.

Among the structural or stone built temples, the shore temple at Mahabalipuram is the most famous one. It is so called because it stands on the extreme shore of the ancient port on the coromandel coast. The temple with two pyramidal towers over two shrines, one on east dedicated to Shiva and one on west to Vishnu is enclosed by a massive wall, its parapet and coping crowned by figures of kneeling bulls and on exterior are boldly carved lion pilasters, a leogryph motif frequently adopted by the Pallavas. Its entrance is from the west side of the courtyard. The garbhagriha is enshrined with a large lingam.

The freestanding monoliths of five Pandava rathas at Mamallapuram has received much acclaim, but it is well known that neither are they rathas, that is, temple carts, nor are they dedicated to the Pandavas. Instead, they are to be viewed as Vimanas, or temple shrines, each apparently replicating a completely different architectural form undoubtedly once common in ephemeral media. Scholars have generally accepted the premise that the buildings were created at roughly the same date, although there has been disagreement regarding the period of their authorship. Normally, they are attributed to the reign of Narasimhavarman I, although it is possible that some work on them may have continued after his reign.
Remnants of fresco paintings are found inside the various cloister shrines of the Kailasanatha complex in Kanchipuram. The Virattanesvara temple at Tiruttani affords a very good example of a single storeyed vimana square in its adishthana and aditala that carries an apsidal griva sikhara super structure. The series of small and elegant all-stone temples at Kaliyapatti, Tirupur, Visalur and Panangudi have square ekatala vimanas. In Alagar Koil there are many mandapams with images and sculptures of exquisite beauty and grace. The mandapam of Tiruvanaikkavu contains many carvings depicting the scene of the elephant’s worship. There is also a fine sculpture of Ekapada in a pillar. The temples of Kumbakonam are admired for their architectural and sculptural beauties. The Adi Kumbheswara contains some wonderful pieces of sculptures. On a single piece of stone in the Navagraha Mandapam all the 27 stars and 12 rasis have been carved out. The Sri Nageswara temple abounds in artistic sculptures. A stone chariot of Nataraja with marvelously chiselled horses is a fine example of wonderful craftsmanship. At the Sri Ramaswami temple which looks like an art gallery, the beautiful sculptures relating to Dasavathara and the frescoes depicting scenes from the Ramayana are worth seeing for tourists.

The sculptures over the outer walls of the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple are of fine workmanship. The story of Chandes, a devotee of Siva, is depicted in a most appreciative manner in a niche in the northern wall and it is called Chandesanugrahamurti. There are excellent bronze images in Vaitheesvarankoil for Nataraja, Angaraka, Jatayu, Somaskanthar, Singaravelar and Bikshadanar.

The temple at Triplicane contains some particularly fine carvings and images of Krishna. All the Alwars and Acharyas are installed in the temple with their utsava images. The Kailasanathar temple in Kanchipuram is famous for the beauty of its sculpture. In this temple there is a remarkable figure of Ardhanareeswarar.

Chitharal in Kanyakumari district is famous for the hillock which has a cave containing rock-cut sculptures of Theerthangaras and attendant deities carved inside and outside dating back to 9th century A.D.

The temple at the summit of the Rock Fort in Tiruchirappalli is where 344 steps are hewn out of rock leading to the top where there are inscriptions dating back to the 3rd
century B.C. Below the Siva temple there are two Pallava cave temples that have beautiful sculptures of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.

One of the most ambitious assemblages of sculptures within a single setting is in the Kambattadi Mandapa at Madurai. Eight piers stand in the middle of this hall, with additional piers at either end and each is provided with one or more large-scale, virtually three-dimensional compositions. Almost all are dedicated to the manifold aspects of Shiva (George Michell, 1995). A group of eight goddesses guards the entrance portico to the temple that stands on axis with the Meenakshi shrine within.

The mix of mythological, heroic and rustic motifs is typical of column sculptures in the Tamil Zone in the early eighteenth century. Carvings in the mandapa positioned between the two principal gopuras of the Vishvanatha temple at Tenkasi, for example, create an impressive figural ensemble. One striking composition shows Shiva dancing with one leg kicked straight up.

According to George Michell (1995), “Yalis and horses find their greatest expression in the temples of the Tamil Zone dating from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, notably in the detached mandapas that stand in the outer enclosures at Vellore and Srirangam. The vitality of these compositions and the virtuosity of the carvings are unsurpassed in the plastic arts of southern India. Horses with riders rear up, crushing warriors who hold up shields for protection. Other figures stab tigers and wild beasts. Some warriors are portrayed as Portuguese, complete with European dress and hats, attacking Indian soldiers. The rendering of the costumes and weapons, as well as the attire of the horses, is precise and accurate. Mounted yalis with stalks of foliation issuing from their open mouths, or with elephant-like snouts, also appear; makaras with upturned beads are positioned below. The fierce nature of the animals is expressed in the budging eyes, tusk-like teeth and curving horns. The piers of the kalyana mandapa that stands in the third enclosure of the Varadaraja temple at Kanchipuram are similarly treated, except here the sculptures of the mounted animals are somewhat reduced in scale. The clocks beneath and above are carved with military figures and fantastic animals, some with bird heads.

The uppermost brackets at Kanchipuram are conceived as crouching yalis. The same motif is common in the brackets of seventeenth-century temple architecture in the
Tamil Zone, especially in the central aisle of mandapas and corridors. Clusters of crouching yalis fanning outwards to support complicated networks of brackets mark the corner piers, especially at the intersection of aisles. A dramatic illustration of this device is seen in the Jambukeshvara temple on Srirangam Island. Throughout the seventeenth century there is a tendency entirely to transform columns into rearing animals, with ever-larger yalis leaning forward to invade the central spaces. That the animals themselves are of primary importance is revealed by the fact riders are frequently omitted, the only reference to battle being the much smaller elephants, makaras or secondary yalis beneath, occasionally consuming human fighters. The yali heads are often augmented, with a corresponding expansion of the manes; the paws are brought together to clutch the falling snouts; the eyes take on exaggeratedly ferocious expressions. The finest examples of these beasts are those in the temple of the Madurai Nayakas, not only within the great complex at the core of their capital, but also in later projects, as in the corridor of the Vaikunthanatha temple at Srivaikuntam, a celebrated pilgrimage site.

Early stone representations are to be met with in miniature mostly, as the crest figure in a niche torana arch in the early Chola temple in Punjai (Thanjavur district) of the time of Parantaka I and on a pillar in the temple in Turaiyur (Tiruchirapalli district) of about AD 940. The early miniatures are found in the Koranganatha temple, Srinivasanallur in the same district, and also in a niche torana in the Tirumaiyachur temple (Thanjavur district). It occurs as a niche sculpture in stone perhaps for the first time, in the devakoshtha of the south wall of the ardha-mandapam in the temple at Konerirajapuram (Thanjavur district) and becomes a usual feature in that position in the other early Chola temples (K.R. Srinivasan, 2001)

In the words of K.R. Srinivasan (2001), “The early Chola temples of Koranganatha at Srinivasanallur (Tiruchirapalli district), Nageswarem in Kumbhakonam, Naltunai Isvara Pujai and Brahmaipurisvara in Pullamangai are other early all-stone temples famous for their sculpture of quality and grace including what appears to be portrait sculptures of men and women. Hundreds of such stone temples were being built in Tamil Nadu in the centuries before and after AD 1000, in replacement of earlier brick and timber structures, and in places hallowed by the memory of the Saiva and Vaishnava saints the Naranmars and the Alvars.
The Brihadeswara temple at Thanjavur closely followed by the Brihadisvara at Gangaikondacholapuram (Tiruchirapalli district) mark the acme of the southern vimana architecture – in magnitude, quality of design, technique and embellishment. The Brihadesvara, truly great in all respects, as its devout and victorious royal builder conceived it to be, is thus a repository of every branch of art-architecture, sculpture in stone and copper, iconography, painting, dance and music, jewellery, etc. The numerous Sanskrit and Tamil epigraphs inscribed on it are in fine calligraphy. Some of them relate to the dedication of metal images of various deities with details of their forms and appearances, their measurements and weights.

The Semmozhi Sculpture Park in Tamil Nadu is the first of its kind in Tamil Nadu. In the sculpture park, each sculpture depicts a significant theme. The thematic sculpture installed in the park are: Drum, Chanku, Veerapandhiya Kattabomman, Soodikkututha Sudarkodi, heroic Tamil women, great saint Thiruvalluvar, ancient coin of Raja Raja Chola, St. Thomas, Yuvanswang, Kudavolai System, ploughing, ancient musical Instruments, King Rajasimhan and Saint Poosalar, Appar and Thirugnanasambanthar, Karaikkal Ammayar, Awaiyar, Mathavi’s eleven category of dances.

Through the ages the best talent in stone craftsmenship went into stone carving of images and structures made for the temples by hereditary sthapatis belonging to the Vishwakarma community, the stone icons are carved by the sthapatis according to the precise measurements, proportions and rules of shilpasasstras. Mailadi, a place in Kanyakumari district has now become very famous for sculptures of deities.

**7.5  WOOD CARVING**

Wood-carving as an item of handicraft is well-developed in Tamil Nadu. The art work done on the massive doors of temples bear eloquent testimony to the ability of the craftsmen in carving very intricate and complicated designs. In later days, this skill found encouragement in Chettinad when the community got their dwellings embellished this way.

There are other exquisite pieces of handicraft like pith - work, shell-work, horn-work, all with their individualistic beauty and charm. The number of craftsmen that live on such crafts is quite large. They are changing their production to modern trends and are attempting to combine utility and art. The festivals that are celebrated by the common
people keep these handicrafts going. The Government has also been taking keen interest in their preservation.

Ornately-carved wooden doors and ceiling beams can be found all over Tamil Nadu, in temples as also in some private residences. Simple and elegantly styled black-wood tables, with legs in the form of elephant heads, with extended trunks are also famous in Tamil Nadu. Temple-cars are, of course, famous for their elegance and artistry.

Another world-famous art of Tamil Nadu is represented by the Pattamadai mats, the weft being of Korai grass and the warp of silk or cotton of 80 to 140 counts. The surface is so fine that one can roll the mat in his palm and carry it like a handkerchief (S.M.L. Lakshmanan Chettiar, 2002).

In Tamil Nadu there are a number of places noted for wood craft. Virudunagar is famous for the traditional style. It has now started making articles for household use. Devakottai and Karaikkudi make traditional panels in different sizes. Small shrines finely carved with wood known as kavadi have exquisite designs and serve as votive offerings to the deity that devotees carry on their heads as they go singing or chanting.

7.6 METAL ART

Metal ware is still another field in which the craftsmen of Tamil Nadu have excelled, from the famous Kuthuvilaku up to the icons of Nataraj and Ganesh, all have an aesthetic concept entirely unique. The types of lamps associated with the hoary traditions of temple culture will easily run to a hundred. Bronze pieces are something peculiar to Tamil Nadu.

The most exquisite depiction of skill in chiseling is seen in the icons and images of ordinary granite. It is perhaps because of the general availability of this talent that the entire horiszon of Tamil Nadu is specked with the rising gopurams of articulate temples. The art and architecture of the temples have kept alive the culture and skill of many thousands of imaginative craftsmen and preserved to posterity the fruits of the native creative genius. Sculpture in temples calls for a deep knowledge of the shastras, nature of different varieties of stone, besides monumental patience.

Other arts include garlands made artistically out of grain sandalwood etc. Pith-work also accounts for many artistic products. In decorating artistically the pandals or festival canopies, Thanjavur craftsmen have deservedly made a name for themselves. S.M.L.
Lakshmanan Chettiar (2002) records that, Tamil Nadu has a long and unbroken tradition of folk art. It is the duty of all to foster it.

The famous brass and copper metalware has a rich and ancient tradition in Tamil Nadu. These metal objects are used for both religious and secular purposes, though utility is a primary consideration. The deepam or lamp are regarded as a symbol of Agni, which is auspicious and is the best known of the State’s metalware. There is a good variety of lamps that includes standing lamps, aarathi (votive lamps), deepalakshmis, hand lamps and chain lamps. Patterned trays and shallow dishes in circular, hexagonal, octagonal and oval shapes are widely used in Tamil Nadu and are made out of bronze or sheet brass. The popular Thanjavur plates feature designs of deities, birds, flowers, and geometric patterns beaten out from the back of copper and silver sheets and subsequently encrusted on a brass tray, kudam or panchpaathra. Metal toys include models of horses, cows or elephants that are made chiefly of brass. A whole range of attractively polished and finished utensils of utilitarian value are also made. The best bronze icons are still made in the old Chola Centres of Swamimalai, Madurai and Tiruchirapalli strictly according to Shilpa Shastra rules.

Nachiarcoil in Thanjavur district is famous for a light brown and called vandal on the banks of the river Vauvery that is ideally suited for making moulds. Owing to the growing scarcity of copper, the bell-metal workers of the state have now switched to brass ware. Some of the articles cast are vases in different shapes, tumblers, water containers, ornamented spittoons, food cases, bells, candle stands kerosene lamps, picnic carriers, and a large variety of lamps. Of these, a few items like tumblers, food cases and milk containers are in bell metal and the rest are in brass. A special jar with a cashew-nut design and names after it has become a kind of hallmark of Nachiarcoil.

Among the Nayaka portraits is a large bronze image of Vijayaraghava (1633-78), now in the Art Gallery, Thanjavur. In the words of George Michell (1995), the collection of the Art Museum at Srirangam includes ivory statuettes of numerous deities, including dancing Kali. The goddess is carved in remarkable detail, particularly the weapon held in the ten hands and the swaying necklace, belts and tassels.

A wide range of steel and brass objects testifies to the remarkable achievements of metalworkers in Southern India. Without doubt, the finest objects of the period are the
chiselled steel weapons used in the formal ceremonies of the Nayaka and Martha courts. The largest collection comes from the Thanjavur armoury and belongs to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; most known examples are divided between museums in Chennai and New York. The Thanjavur weapons include pattar swords, katar daggers and ceremonial ankushas, or elephant goads. While the blades of these weapons are often of European origin, their ingenious handles and hilts are undeniably of local workmanship.

Poompuhar is positioned at the estuary of river Kaveri and was the ancient port of the Cholas. Poompuhar in Sirkali Taluk of Nagai district is also known as Kaveripoompattinam. There are several places of interest in Poompuhar. The Silappathikara Art Gallery is a beautiful seven tired building of great sculptural value. The Magara Thoranavayil at the doorway of the Art Gallery imparts a daunting and beautiful look to the whole structure. It has been done on the pattern of Magara Thorana Vayil, found in Suruli Malai Mangala Devi Koil. The town gateway was built in Danish Architectural style. The Danish Fort, built in 1620 exists to display Danish architecture. The Fort is now under the control of Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department and houses an archaeological Museum. Masilamani Nathar Koil is a temple built in 1305 by Maravarma Kulasekhara Pandiyan which exhibits exceptional architectural skills. Zion Church-Built in 1792, reflects the rich Christian heritage of Poompuhar and is popular for its architecture.

Silappathikara Art Gallery- A beautiful art gallery that is a store house of wonders for all art lovers, this impressive gallery is a recommended must-see while on a tour to Poompuhar for its exquisite architecture too.

7.7 HANDICRAFTS, POTTERY AND CARVING

Vellore in north Arcot district is famous for black and red earthenwares. Usilampatti in Madurai district has black pottery painted over with a special yellow substance which has an old tradition. Panruti in south Arcot is famous for a large variety of clay work that include small and large figures of deities, toys, etc. Karigiri in south Arcot is most famous for its unique style of pottery. The base of this pottery is made with a local semi-vitreous white low fusing china clay with high plasticity known as namakatte – as it has been used for nama—cast mark. The distinctiveness of this type of pottery lies in its highly artistic
shapes, original colours in glazes and excellent ornamentation. Every article of this type of earthenware is distinctive. Even the very common clay pipe chillum is made into a noteworthy item both through its elegant shape and its deep blue or green glaze. Other noteworthy items are water jugs, tableware items including tea and dinner sets, ashtrays, beautifully decorated flower vases and decorative animal figures made as paperweights. Pottetry from Karukurichi in Tirunelveli district is popular for its technical superiority and novel and attractive shapes. Red, black and grey clay are used for the base. This clay body looks brighter after a coating of red ochre. This is done for all common items of use.

The famous art of pottery has been practiced in Tamil Nadu from ancient times, which is expressed in the manufacture of the famous Ayyannar horses. The horses are said to protect each village from evil. The large terracotta horses are made in Salem and Pudukottai. The horses were originally made and fired individually. But with increasing popularity of terracotta art items, the moulds began to be put into use.

Tamil Nadu’s artistically created basketry and fiber products is in demand both in India and abroad. While palm has become a major source of raw material for basketry and related products, bamboo, cane, grasses, reeds and fibres are also used in making baskets, ropes, mats and many items. The main centres of these crafts are to be found in Dharmapuri, Salem, Coimbatore, South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli districts. Stone carving have reached a high degree of excellence in Tamil Nadu very early in history. Granite carving is confined to the areas around Mamallapuram and Chingleput. The famous sculptors here belong to the Vishwakarma or Kammaalar community. A subsidiary form of carving is soapstone or maakal carving, found in the region between Pondicherry and Cuddalore and around Salem. The Tanjore Paintings are a rage across the globe and attract multitude of tourists by the magnificence of artworks. Some tourists also want to be enlightened on how the paintings are done. The state of Tamil Nadu is credited with a splendid age-old architecture that is marked by magnificent temples and splendid architectural edifices that recount the narrative of a bygone era. The relics of the ancient stone carvings are also an important source of historical evidence

Tamil Nadu, the centre of South India’s cultural extravaganza had exhibited a distinctive brilliance in its stone carvings during early periods. This primordial craft achieved prominence because of the generosity of the culturally refined ancient rulers who
patronized the talented local craftsmen and kept the art form alive. Tamil Nadu’s basket and fiber products are aesthetically appealing and very much in vogue all over the country and abroad. Palm trees along with bamboo shoots, cane, grass and reeds form a major ingredient of Tamil Nadu’s wood works and related basket products. Besides the wooden barks, the coconut fibers are used to make common utility products like baskets, ropes, mats and other miscellaneous items. The bow of Villu Pattu is composed of the barks and overhead branches of the Palmyra tree. A number of small and medium-sized handicraft agencies that specialize on woodcraft are mushrooming in the villages in and around Dharampuri, Salem, Coimbatore, South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli districts.

Tamil Nadu abounds in cultural splendor that is manifested in its efflorescent art and culture. The state has reached the zenith of cultural excellence and is noted for its traditional stone-encrusted jewellery that consists of earnings, nose drops, neckpieces, waist belts as well as anklets and bracelets. The varieties of necklaces include the traditional adigai set in cabochon rubies or the maangaamaalai, brilliant combination of stone-studded gold mangoes and peacocks and the popular gold-coin kaasumaalai. It is remarkable that many of these ancient paraphernalia have paved the way for many trendy crockery, ceramic ware and lifestyle products, very much in vogue today.

Tamil Nadu has a distinctive tradition in fine arts and exquisite crafts. Today, the craft traditions of the state have developed into full-fledged industries in themselves. Tamil Nadu is known for its cane weaving and palm leaf products, including trays, flower baskets, shopping bags, folding fans etc. Toys and dolls are also produced from grass, bamboo and cane. This craft is mainly centered at Dharmapuri, Salem, Coimbatore, South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli Districts. Thanjavur is well known for its cotton weaving with several centres around the state. Cotton has long been the mainstay of the textiles of Tamil Nadu and one sees a wide range here. Madurai and Salem specialize in fine gold-bordered Dhotis, with Madurai’s Dhotis considered a little superior in their weaving and zari to those of Salem. Kanchipuram, the Silk Paradise” is world renowned for its hand-woven silk saris. The city does not manufacture silk or any other raw material that goes into its silk saris. The silk industry is entirely made up of handloom weavers and merchants. The exquisite silk saris are woven from pure mulberry silk in contrasting colours and have an enviable reputation for luster, durability and finish. The Kanchipuram silk sari, woven from the mulberry silkworm, evolved originally from the Kornad Sari, which
is India’s most well known sari produced in Tamil Nadu. Along with silk saris, Kanchipuram also specialize in cotton and silk-polyester blended saris with the demand of the current market. Kanchipuram saris are very heavy and gorgeous saris and are used specially for weddings in South Indian region as their traditional wedding sari.

By ceaselessly promoting the various ethnic art forms, simultaneously preserving antique artefacts from Chola and Pandya dynasties by reproducing their replicas, Tamil Nadu has become a world-renowned destination for pilgrims of art in search of fine handiworks of India, such as life-like, stone sculptures, Celestial figures in bronze, brass lamps, rosewood carvings, sandalwood carvings, country wood carvings, Thanjavur art plates, Thanjavur picture paintings.

The Toda women of the Nilgiri region have evolved a very rich distinctive style of embroidery called pugar which means flower. Geometrical patterns are stitched on long shawls called poothkuli that are worn in Roman style by the menfolk. The designs are mostly symbolic ranging from floral motifs to animal and human figures.

There is a unique style of appliqué work done in Tanjore for decoration on temple hangings, specially those adorning the carved chariots used in processions. They are tubular in form as they hang down the side of the chariot, the designs are appliquéd with several traditional signs and motifs including images of gods and goddesses. The Bhawani durries of Coimbatore district dates back to a couple of centuries. They are woven in cotton and silk. On a cotton base, cotton stripes or traditional designs are woven and on silk base, the designs are woven in silk.

Madurai is famous for its rosewood carvings. The style is marked by its bold forms, the details being minutely and painstakingly worked out. Tables with the top covered with floral motifs or lovely parrots or panels with epic scenes are the most outstanding examples of this type of craft.

7.8 PAINTING

In the words of N. Subrahmanian, 1996, “Painting is perhaps the one art which the Tamils least cultivated; possibly because unlike architecture required for construction of temples, and iconography required for idol making and music to sing the praises of the Lord, and dance to express in music and gestures the stories of the Gods, painting had a
necessary religious function to perform in the scheme of priestly things." Traces of prehistoric painting by the primitive native of Tamil Nadu are seen in Kilvalai (South Arcot), Paiyampalli (North Arcot) and Mallappati (Tarmapuri). In the last mentioned place could be found paintings of horned bulls and armed human beings. Some of these paintings are associated with megalithic urn burials also. The horse which is seen painted in some of the pictures could have come with the monolithic culture and is probably not older than 500 B.C. Some of the paintings are erroneously called palaeolithic; in fact they are post-neolithic; for they exhibit objects which belong to the metallic age. At Makarajakkatai (Dharmapuri) there is an example of a Tamil-Brahmi inscription which instead of being inscribed is found painted; this belongs to the 2nd century A.D. It is believed that this is an instance of Sangam painting.

Six stages in painting can be mentioned in the History of that art in Tamil Nadu; 1. The Sangam age; 2. The seventh and eighth centuries (under the Pallavar and Pandiyar rule); 3. The 10th and the 11th centuries under the Chola; 4. The 17th century under the Nayakas; 5. The 18th century under the Marattas; 6. Modern European and Indian painting.

Jouveau Dubrevill discovered traces of painting in the rockcut edifices of the seventh century by the Pallavas in Mamantur and Mamallapuram. In the Kailasanatar temple in Kanchipuram there were painted sculptures also in addition to surface painting. Painting here was done on wet surface in true fresco fashion.

Ancient painting of some dimension is seen in Shittannavasal in the Pudukkottai district. This is usually associated with Jains. These paintings like the Kutumiyanmalai music inscriptions must be credited to the Pandiyars.

There are instances of Chola painting in the Big Temple in Tanjavur, Prof. S.K. Govindasami was the first to discover these paintings in that temple; they belong to the 11th century A.D. Also could be found medieval paintings in many big temples in Tamil Nadu. In Tanjavur the Nayakas were responsible for some paintings which overlaid the older Chola paintings. Nayaka paintings can be seen in the Madurai Meenakshi temple also.
Some fine murals of the 7th century have been discovered in a Jain cave temple at Sittanavasal. Their style can well compare with the best works of the 6th century at Ajanta. The figures through elegant, are strong and healthy, the mood shows a subdued joy of life, the drawing is very sensitive, though sometimes sketchy. Later fragments in the same tradition have been traced in the Kailasanatha at Kanchi, at Tirumalaipuram, Malayadipatti and Tirunandikkara.

In the murals in Rajarajeswaram, the iconographic concepts have been translated into brush-strokes of infinite charm. Two fine specimens are found among them, Tripurantaka in chamber No.11 occupying the entire height and width of the inner wall, and Dakshinamurti in the yogic role set in sylvan surroundings on the inner wall surface in chamber no. 5. The temple of temples is unique in more senses than one. It is a living national art gallery incorporating the best elements of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dancing, jewellery and allied fine arts all in one, with self-revealing contemporary inscriptions, engraved on its walls, a documentation of the highest historical value.

Presently, the Department of Archaeology of the Government of India who are responsible for its protection are undertaking extensive maintenance to salvage whatever has been left undamaged of the murals, besides protecting the edifice from further disrepair. A statue of Rajaraja has been put up by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu outside the temple as a commemorative gesture. As the pilgrim tourists enters the arena of the temple, greeting them first is a standing figure of Arumolideva whose memory will live as long as the srivimana of the splendid temple is shining with glory.

The British who succeeded all the native governments in Tamil Nadu, in 1801 made substantial contribution to painting as they did to architecture, sculpture and even music. Specimens of European style of painting can be found in some of the major churches in Tamil Nadu during the 19th century. In the Governor’s Banquet Hall in Chennai, one sees a number of oil paintings adorning the walls.

The legends connected with the Suchindram temple are portrayed in a series of well executed mural paintings in the inner chambers of the gopuram.

Ramalinga Vilasam Palace of Ramanathapuram built in 17th century has breathtaking mural paintings with natural dyes.
The temple at Thiruvattar is dedicated to Adi Kesava Perumal is the Ananthasayanam posture and is considered one of the 13 sacred places for Vaishnavas. There are inscriptions found inside the temple. Remains of old mural paintings are seen on the walls of the inner Shirine. Wood carving of exquisite workmanship adorn some of the structures in the temple.

The ceiling paintings at Chidambaram typify the Tamil pictorial idiom. The linework consists of thin strokes of black paint, filled with white, brown and blue-green colours. The faces are often shown in profile, with staring eyes picked out in white. The limbs are curved and arranged somewhat mechanically in a limited range of poses. One curious feature is noted in the murals of the gopura of the Narumbunatha temple at Tiruppadaimarudur, on the bank of the Tambarapani. Black linework dominates the compositions here, as do the bright red background which do not always meet the lines, leaving irregular unpainted bands, there is a limited range of colours, mostly red, black, green and some blue.

A fine series of paintings covers the mandapa ceiling of the Venugopala Parthasarathi temple at Chengam, 35 kilometres west of Tiruvannamalai. The ceiling of the mandapa preceding the principal shrine is covered with Ramayana scenes laid out in narrow registers, each incident identified with a bilingual caption. The ceiling paintings at Tiruvalanjuli must have been among the finest examples of sixteenth-century pictorial art in the Tamil Zone. The paintings in the second panel of the mandapa ceiling at Tiruvalanjuli were the best preserved. Other forms of Shiva appear here : the god is seated in his mountain home playing the veena, he rides with Parvati on Nandi. The ceiling panel of the inner gopura of the Tenupurishvara temple at Pattisvaram, 2 kilometres south of Tiruvalanjuli, represents the story of Sambandar. If the Tiruvalanjuli and Pattisvaram cycles epitomize the Vijayanagara idiom, then other examples in this region may be taken as representative of the Nayaka legacy.

Extensive group of paintings are found at the eastern extremity of the Kaveri Delta, in the Tyagaraja temple at Tiruvarur, 25 kilometres from the Bay of Bengal. Paintings survive on the ceiling of the thousand-columned hall added in the seventeenth century to this largely Chola-period foundation. They are unmatched in the pictorial art of the region for their animated compositions and lively detail.
George Michell (1995) records that, an extensive Ramayana cycle survives on the ceiling of the Vasanta Mandapa outside the main complex at Alagarkoil. Ramayana scenes arranged in continuous strips are divided by black bands with white Tamil script. The best-preserved paintings occur on the ceiling of the central pavilion. The paintings are characterized by green and brown hues, with thick black or white outlines - they may be assigned to the early eighteenth century.

The discovery of a remarkably well-preserved set of murals inside the tower of the principal gopura of the Tiruppadaimarudur temple has greatly increased the known repertory of pictorial art in the southern part of the Tamil Zone. A large variety of myths, legends and divinities is painted on to the plaster walls of each of the ascending storeys.

The eighteenth-century palace at Ramanathapuram has the unique privilege of being the only royal building in the Tamil Zone to preserve its paintings (that royal residences were adorned with murals in neighbouring Kerala at this time is demonstrated at Padmanabhapuram, Krishnapuram and Cochin.) The Ramanathapuram murals cloak the walls of the entrance room, audience hall and royal sleeping chambers. The clear linework and vivid tones of red, ochre and blue are typical of the last phase of the Tamil pictorial style. Equally characteristic are details such as the flowered garlands hanging from arches, and the prevalence of facial profiles with only one eye visible; identifying labels are provided in both Tamil and Telugu. The subjects include Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata all of which proceed in horizontal bands around the walls. Royal topics form an important part of the Ramanathapuram paintings.

Figural topics are also used as unifying themes, forging links between architecture, sculpture and painting. Portraits of royal personalities appear as major compositions on granite piers and plastered parapets and towers; they are also cast in metal and then installed in front of temple sanctuaries. Such paintings have been preserved other than those in the Setupati palace at Ramanathapuram. Groups of royal personalities are also incorporated into religious architecture, as is obvious in the elaborate portrait galleries of temple halls and corridors, some of which, as in the Pudu Mandapa at Madurai, present visual dynastic histories. Royal worshippers appear in painted compositions, often as accessory and diminutive characters beside the principal deity.
Enthronement compositions form part of the décor of actual palaces, such as the plaster tableau of Rama over the Nayaka throne in the audience hall at Thanjavur; painted cloths with the same topics were probably unfurled in audience halls on ceremonial occasions. Marriage scenes are similarly royal in character. Carved and painted matrimonial groups illustrating local legends play a significant role in temple art. The marriage of Meenakshi and Sundareshvara, for instance, is repeated throughout the Madurai complex, both on columns and ceilings.

The brightly toned and occasionally encrusted compositions of Mysore and Thanjavur represent a spectacular efflorescence in southern Indian painting. Such compositions are executed on linen mounted on board or on mica, often with glass inlays and gilded paste to create richly gleaming textures.

"Every age and country produces the art peculiar to itself, bearing the marks of its beliefs, hopes and desires. Even in an age of political chaos one notices that creative activity continues and is not abandoned, it would seem to provide solace and inspire faith in times of anarchy and decadence. The Thanjavur school of painting may roughly be assigned to such a period in Southern India. It can be considered as the final expression of a traditional society before it was overtaken by large-scale changes and influences from a completely alien culture. Indeed some extraneous elements had already intruded into that traditional society but the art itself belonged to an older way of life which had not changed." (Jaya Appasamy, 1980)

The Thanjavur styles of painting can also be studied as an interesting problem in influences. In them were adopted various techniques which found a new imagery; the new forms must have been an attempt to satisfy contemporary demands. These innovations evolved from the absorption of foreign ideas as well as from a reorganization of indigenous elements; the syntheses achieved have a distinct pattern or style of their own. Such a development presupposes the diffusion of ideas and techniques from elsewhere, and there was opportunity for the dispersion and realignment of ideas.

Though Thanjavur painting is a late phase of art, its interest lies in its originality and in its compelling syncretic and symbolic forms, the short time span of this school and its limited output can be attributed to its confrontation with more powerful and modern forms of art.
In the words of Jaya Appasamy, (1980), “Culturally speaking, Thanjavur can be considered the heart of the Tamil country; with a civilization that had reached great eminence under the Cholas. It played an important role in attracting talent and in keeping alive a creative tradition through many centuries. Influences from other regions reached here either through travelers and commerce, or through war and reciprocally it was also a centre that disseminated ideas and styles. The Maratha culture in Thanjavur can be described as a satellite culture, in that it was distant from its place of origin and, at the same time, geographically in a permanent relationship with the stronger Tamil culture. All three languages- Marathi, Telugu, and Tamil – were spoken in and around Thanjavur. Eliot has pointed out that a people of a region should be neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to flourish. Ideally, groups or classes should have a community of culture (which will give them all something in common) while, at the same time, each group retains a separateness, which causes some friction, thus providing a creative stimulus. Thanjavur had these characteristics. It was a historical city with a great past of its own, and the Maratha presence there was of value as a source of fresh thought and influences. The matrix of Tamil culture in Thanjavur became the meeting ground for streams from different cultures. The new milieu was inevitably distined to produce an art and expression that was both heterogenous and eclectic. The term Thanjavur painting refers, therefore, to certain styles of painting which reached a characteristic form in the Thanjavur area during the Maratha period. The use of the name of the state may be considered arbitrary since the style or its sister variations occur also in Mysore and Andhra either contemporaneously or perhaps even earlier than in Thanjavur itself. However, the style seems to reach its culmination in Thanjavur and therefore this name may be associated with the group of styles of the period.

Thanjavur was also famous for its highly advanced handicraft industries. Describing the city a British officer, Hemingway, writing in 1906 states: “Thanjore was known as the home of the fine arts under the native rulers who by their patronage attracted to their capital the producers of most articles of luxury. This reputation still survives though in a much modified degree. The Thanjore brass work is deservedly famous and its ornamental pith work and musical instruments are said to be unique.

It is not surprising therefore that the art of Thanjavur is very closely related to the crafts. The sacred icon paintings are related on the one hand to carved and painted wood
and on the other to jewellery with its stone setting and gilding. Painting on a variety of other materials was also in vogue such as painting on ivory, glass and mica.

Tamil Nadu developed a fine tradition of art through the centuries. It was a tradition which grew out of humble beginnings in proto-historic times and reached splendid heights in the imperial Pandya period. Painting was an important fine art in the Sangam age when the motifs were limited and simple. Natural objects especially flowers, some divine damsels seated on flowers and similar themes were familiar. Perspective painting was known. Painting decorated the abodes of the wealthy. Except for stray references to oviyam and oviyar is known little else about their achievements in the field of painting. That the art was quite advanced can be deducted from the fact that they had a manual of painting (oviyanul) to guide the painters.

The paintings are notable for their adornment in the form of semi-precious stones, pearls, glass pieces and gold. The rich vibrant colours, dashes of gold, semi-precious stones and fine artistic work are characteristics of these paintings. They add beauty and culture to a variety of surroundings and décor. Folk Theatre of the northern part of Tamil Nadu is known by the name of Kattaikkuttu or Terukkuthu. The theatre is integrally woven with the life of these rural people. The theatrical shows are thoroughly enjoyable because it is a blend of song, music, dance and drama. The performers adorn brightly colored costumes and put a lot of make up. The instruments that are used are harmonium, two drums, mukavinal and two sets of hand cymbals. A unique feature of the theatrical performance is that the actors sing themselves.

7.9 DRAMA

In the world of Tamil art, dance matured into drama. In drama, a number of actors speak to sustain a story. The speech could be entirely prose dialogue of partly musical or wholly musical. The word nataka did not mean the same thing to the ancient Tamil, i.e. when they spoke of iyal, icai and natakam governing the three parts of Tamil literature. In those times there was more of dumb gesturing and music than speech. The Tolkappiyam in the Meyppattiyal theories on histrionics, the psychology of reacting to dramatic emotions, etc.
A literary composition fit to be called a play was written only in the middle of the 19th century. There was no urban organized theatre as such, but only the traditional street corner theatre which staged repeatedly a few hackneyed mythological themes. Nallatankal, Pavalkkoti, Carankatara, Valli Tirumanam were the more favourite themes. Dialogues used to be in the local cockney. But by the end of the 19th century a qualitative change was coming over the Tamil theatre with the arrival of some dramatic troupes from neighbouring Andhra and Karnataka regions.

The theatre in Tamil Nadu deals with social themes giving a tilt to the cultural movement. The urge for socio-political reform in the Tamil country was so consistent that efforts were made to raise related issues at different levels. The modern theatre, predominantly a new phenomenon with its mass appeal, was certainly instrumental in awakening the masses. In the light of the reform movement it made the people aware of the reality of the socio-political situation in which they were placed. The different reformers and social organizations relied upon theatrical performances in their attempt to depict social evils and their consequences and to convince the people of the need for reform. Reflecting the struggles and inherent conflicts that were at work in the society, modern drama did much to make the people socially conscious. In fact, plays and dramas prepared the ground for social legislations. Evils that more often affected the society such as the system of dowry, prostitution, malpractices in religious institutions and corruption in public life provided themes for the reformist plays. The enthusiasm that the modern theatre evoked resulted in the emergence of a number of performing companies of different categories.

With the growth of a variety of drama concerns, a good number of drama houses, both permanent and non-permanent were constructed taking into account their commercial viability and modern needs. The revival of interest for the study of English drama particularly that of Shakespeare and Sanskrit classics provided the much needed climate, conducive to the growth of this unique entertainment. In consequence it was destined to assume shortly the dimension of an effective medium to take the message of social reform movements to the villages and towns. The interaction of the stage with popular sentiments on matter of social issues moulded popular opinion in favour of changes aimed at the emancipation of the society from evils. The messages on social reform, conveyed through artistic performances percolated down to the villages,
encompassing in the process the articulate sections of the society. In addition to entertainment, the use of the media as an instrument for social reform came to be recognized. In the 21st century due to the overriding influence of Internet, television and cinema, theatre in Tamil Nadu has been pushed to the back seat. The tremendous cultural value and also the capacity for refinement and social reformation of theatre is not given due consideration by art groups and activists. Unlike Kannada theatre which is highly popular owing to some classical dramatic works, Tamil theatre, though it has all the similar potential is to a great extent neglected. Interested artistic groups stage performances in venues with minimal turn-up of audience and insufficient media promotion.

7.10 CONCLUSION

The most noticeable contribution to Tamil Nadu Temples architecture was made by the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Vijayanagar rulers and the Nayakas. Every one of these dynasties believed heavily in innovations and tried not to copy the style of any other dynasty. This gave the architects exposure to different types of temples. And with every passing dynasty, their mastery only grew. Even since, people of Tamil Nadu are known to be the best temple builders in India. The earliest temples were built using brick and mortar. Up till 700 AD, temples were replicated out of caves. The Pallava Kings were the first known dynasty to have given great priority to construction of temples. They also started and perfected the art of constructing temples of stone. The Cholas (900-1250 AD) have a number of monuments to their credit. The most well known temple by Cholas that still stands today is The Brihadeswar Temple in Tanjavur. The carvings on it are simply out of this world. The Cholas added many ornate mandapams or halls to temples and built large gopurams (towers). The high wall enclosures, gigantic towers and magnificent gateway arches were all the contribution of Pandya Dynasty and the carved pillars are the addition of Vijayanagar Dynasty. Today, thousands of temples with rising towers adorn skyline of the entire state of Tamil Nadu. Temples from the pre Christian era as well as those from the 20th century exist in this state, where the ancient rulers have made outstanding contributions to the growth of these monuments of great artistic value. The spectacular architecture of these temples indeed inspires architectural innovation. The Kapaleeswarar Temple in Chidambaram is one of the most important temples in Tamil
Nadu. Chidambaram is the seat of the cosmic dancer Nataraja (Ananda Tandava pose: the Cosmic Dance of bliss).

The stone carvings of Tamil Nadu that are a hallmark of ancient Indian history are also the precursor of several contemporary handicrafts and trendy lifestyle products. Tamil Nadu, the epicenter of South India’s cultural extravaganza is noted for a multitude of reasons ranging from imposing monuments to efflorescent art and culture manifested in its paintings, wood crafts and sculptures. Woodcraft is a burgeoning revenue generating industry in Tamil Nadu. The state whose skilful craftsmen once depended upon the patronage of the ancient monarchs to earn their livelihoods is now teeming with talented local villages and artisans whose expertise is manifested in the variety of indigenous artifacts created by them.

Tamil Nadu, with its budding handicrafts industry is the hot seat of South India’s glorious culture. The state opens up a treasure box of cultural delights replete with abundant wooden and sculpted souvenirs that tourists can pick up as treasured memorabilia. Tamil Nadu, India’s cultural capital is renowned for its splendid temples and other architectural edifices. The state’s claim to fame lies in its magnificent and renowned Thanjavur paintings that thrived in ancient Thanjavur during the chola dynasty. The revered and traditional art form depicting the sacred deities is embellished with semi-precious stones, pearls, glass pieces and gold. The modern Thanjavur paintings however portray floral motifs, animals, birds as well as pretty human figures.

Tamil Nadu’s art and culture also abounds in musical instruments that strike a melodious chord. The Naadaswaram the Silappadikaaram, the Kumbu, Thambhuras and various flutes and percussion instruments add a musical note to the various colourful festivities of the state. Like any other place, Tamil Nadu flaunts its own exquisite and traditional jewellery. Tamil Nadu with its variegated collection of arts and crafts is a treasure trove of cultural delights. The state of Tamil Nadu is credited with a splendid age-old architecture that is marked by magnificent temples and splendid architectural edifices that recount the narratives of bygone era. The relics of the ancient stone carvings are also an important source of historical evidence.

The achievements of the Tamils in music, it may be stated with pardonable pride, is second to none in the whole world. Its immense power for goodness was recognized by
generations of Tamils who used it to delight generations of audience, and made it serve collateral purposes like religion and nationalism. The Cilappatikaram is the earliest Tamil work to give a fairly detailed account of the system of music and dance perfected by the Tamils. The Bhajana Mandirams have played a great part in the preservation and development of the sacred music of Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu is a land of acoustic marvels. The requisites of concert halls and open air theatres as well as the laws pertaining to sound were known and understood centuries ago. The facts relating to the velocity of sound in air and sounds travelling in spherical waves, were known and utilized by Tirumal Naik, who ruled over Madurai in the early 17th century. In the Big Temple in Thanjavur one can witness the phenomenon of intermittent reflections of sound. The tower of the temple is hollow inside. Standing near the peripheral part of the base, if one sings a phrase in Sankarabharanam raga, it can be heard at least six times, the intensity of the reflected sound becoming thinner and thinner till it ultimately dies. In each case, the reflected sound is followed by an alternate period of silence.

Music, the universal language of mankind is mentioned in Tamil literature as Pattu, Patal and Isai. The Tamil literature is rich with notes on music and musical instruments. Music occupied an important place in the life of the Tamil folks. In short, the Tamils consider music as “Uvamai ita inpam”. Dance and music play, an important role in all rituals, festivities, fairs, festivals and social occasions at all levels. The people of Tamil Nadu follow the traditional patterns of life style. Their rites, rituals and seasonal festivals revolve around agricultural functions whereas devotional singing and dancing is dedicated to the deities. There are a considerable number of rituals connected with trees like coconut and papal, and animals like cobra, cow, bull, buffalo, elephant crow and kite. Many rites revolve around the village gods and goddesses. “Of all the fine arts the Tamils contributed to the culture of the land, pride of place belongs to music. In Tamil Nadu it has had beginnings earlier than our earliest sources, an evolution worthy of that art and the people, and gainas currency now which promises a flourishing future too” (N. Subrahmanian, 1996). There is an unbroken but changing tradition of music in Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu the traces of the most ancient system of Tamil music can still be seen in the present day music. Many of the tunes of two thousand and thousand five hundred years ago have been successfully equated with the currently sung ones. The modes of singing have changed but their basic grammar has not seriously altered. This is
also the case with the musical instruments. Some of them have been changed to suit marginally changing patterns of music but the continuity (for example of the present day) veena and the ancient yal, can still be seen. Musical inscriptions have been discovered in the Kutumiyanmalai and the Tirumayam hills in the Pudukkottai district. The epigraphs enscribed on rock in the above-mentioned places give us musical notations as well as some information in the form of colophons.

The noblest art and architecture of Tamil Nadu is a source of unalloyed happiness and perennial inspiration. By rousing deep feeling and giving zest to life, it furthers the process of evolution. The great art forms of Tamil Nadu have a profound and permanent social significance. As regards architecture of Tamil Nadu, the design and spirit is definitely its beauty.

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