CHAPTER V
TOMB ARCHITECTURE

By the time the Muslim society was created in India, the Islamic architecture came into existence with the construction of tombs and other buildings especially in Tamil Nadu. The Islamic architecture, the product of Muslim rule established in 1206 at Delhi was carried to other regions and Tamil Nadu was not an exception to adopt it. As to the construction and decoration of all buildings whether religious or secular, it was very close to that of classical buildings. Afterwards the classical heritage became stultified, until it was no longer recognisable. The distinctive Islamic stamp of architectural forms was emphasised as ancient models were forgotten and new local influences made themselves felt. The geometric decoration spread in all the places despite regional variants which appeared here and there and it became associated more and more with a new type of abstract ornament derived from diverse forms of calligraphy. A true Islamic society was formed whose unity could not be questioned and whose decorative style appealed more to intelligence than to sensibility.

But despite this spirit which always animated it, this art did not cease to evolve in the course of centuries as it reflected successive or simultaneous aspects of the civilisation which it expressed. The most characteristic example is, without doubt, that of the great tombs which presented a little later, new plans appropriate to the Persian and Turkish types of this essentially Islamic building. The appearance at almost the same movement of other distinctive architectural creations, in response to the need for increasing numbers of buildings to shelter some institutions is another
example of this. The face of the places was thus transformed while these various buildings experienced local variations corresponding to the taste and building techniques peculiar to each region. This is true of the mosaics which adorned and still adorn, the walls of the tombs, panels of admirable composition, which according to tradition, had been executed by local artists trained in Islamic art. The Islamic art, however, developed very quickly certain features of this decor, notably an ornamentation which accentuates the stylisation of floral motifs, accords a new place to purely geometrical elements and restricts or even suppresses representations of living beings.

There were many elements of observation hardly touched on here which would contribute to place the artistic manifestations among the evidence revealing traditions which were evolving gradually in the course of time and were assuring the individuality of the different centres of civilisation existing in the world of Islam. The fact has often claimed the attention of historians who have studied the arts in question by emphasising, for some years, their diversity as well as the strictly national links of this or that school. Nevertheless it does not seem that they have succeeded in giving it its right place amid other factors, as numerous in their influence in this domain as in that of thought and also as dependent on historic as well as on religious realities.

It remains to underline a multiplicity of aspects which vary with each centre and which as regards architecture as well as the sumptuary and furnishing arts, join up with the Muslim vocation of buildings or objects which their inscriptions often made sacred in their sense. And it cannot be

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forgotten that the spread of Islamic culture to the countries like India also happened from the different centres to which its various manifestations had spread out. If it is not in our remit to deal even briefly with the modalities of this influence nor the ways which it has assumed, this influence remains one of the best proofs of the vitality of a civilisation which stirred up reactions in medieval Europe which were sometimes contradictory, according to the aspect of them which was presented, but which continued none the less for their past to evolve, following their own laws until the new encounters of the modern and contemporary period.\textsuperscript{210}

Islamic building traditions are found to have been more or less firmly established and a swiftly developed and vigorous style of architecture came into being. The architecture of Islamic period is marked by a fully developed style both in building technique and architectural forms as well as in ornamentation. The usage of arch and dome was now established once for all. The most representative feature of this new style which has earned the reputation of being a treasured gem of Indo Islamic architecture forms part - the only complete one - of the ambitious domes. Its exquisite symmetry of form, perfect shape and the smoothness, the technique of the dome, the quench system of its support and the workmanship of the stone masonry have made it one of the most outstanding examples of architecture.\textsuperscript{211} When the tombs of Islamic saints grew in large number, architectural activities acquired new dimensions. Apart from their number, the monuments that have come down to be known are found to have made a

\textsuperscript{210} \textit{Ibid.}, p.178.

great impact on the architecture of certain regions particularly on the coastal line. The austere and simple phase of its architecture especially in seventeenth century when building activities had considerably increased under various Muslim philanthropists may be judged from the fact that use of stone came and at a later period walls were built of well dressed stone slabs or rubble coated with thick plaster and rich surface decoration with elaborate ornamentation which were marked features of the Muslim monuments and it gave way to simple and conventional patterns such as inscribed borders, medallions in arches, spandrels, etc. Encaustic tiles gilding and decorative painting on plaster were also used quite freely in the later building.

In general character, the architecture from seventeenth century is heavy and massive. Typical of it are thick and battered or slopping walls, quench arches as well as triangular pendants for supporting domes, battlemented necking and cresting, multi domed roofs and tapering minaret like buttresses or supports at the external angles of buildings. Some features of the earlier period such as the pointed arch, spear-head like fringe decoration, etc., are still there but not as a rule, a lintel with or without brackets is put across the lower part of the arch of the entrance. As domes are the most visible features of major religious structures they became remarkable in their fine proportions and if they do not possess qualities of charm and elegance, they are expressive of strength and virility. One of the best feature, the system of intersecting vaulting, which at a later date became an important structural feature of Indo Muslim art, appears to have been employed in many monuments. The intense building activities in Tamil Nadu region indicate a marked change in style as well as in building
material. For example, instead of the finely dressed and well finished high quality sandstone masonry, the walls were built of rubble with a coating of plaster and roughly dressed local stone wherever necessary. Consequently, the buildings were generally built thicker at the base than at the top with tapering bastion-like round towers at the corners to create an impression of strength. On the ornamental side, these buildings were not devoid of surface decoration, which was chiefly confined in gilding and painting on plaster which gradually disappeared leaving the buildings bare. But on the whole, the architecture of this region, despite its austere aspect, is remarkable for perfect proportions of the buildings and the vigour and straight-forwardness of its purposeful and serviceable style. One of the notable features of its fortifications is the appearance, for the first time in Tamil Nadu of machicoulis and absence of any raised galleries leading to the double line of its loopholes.

In Tamil Nadu region tombs have played a significant role in Islamic architecture. The tomb of a Sufi saint is generally contained in a square room covered by an impressive dome, the whole interior and exterior having been generally stucco and painted, jails having curtains and floor covered by durries, in some cases carpets. A wooden pavilion was built around the tombstone of the saint providing it with a dignified canopy as are there at the tombs of Shaikh Muinuddin and Hazrat Nizamuddin. The decorative features of these tombs consist of the use of coloured enamelled tiles enhancing the colour effect and elaborate and refined surface ornament incised on plaster and painted in colours. These as well as other new features like the lotus motif crowning the dome and some important features

\[212 \text{Ibid.}, \text{p.10.}\]
of decoration like the blind melon design of parapets and some decoration motifs considerably influenced the style of the subsequent period. The square considerably influenced the style of the subsequent period. The square plan tombs of Islamic art remarkable for their strength and dignity represent a new and distinctive type by themselves and were obviously inspired by the Muslims and their buildings. Like any type, they do not have any batter or slope and are particularly remarkable for the diversity of design in their exterior which is generally so designed but with no storied buildings. The whole of the square or rectangular central portion of each side containing a large lofty archway is slightly projected forward with the remaining space taken up by shallow arches sunk into rectangular panels. The plan of the upper portion including the parapet, if any, is almost the same as that of the octagonal type. Other features common in both the types are their granite or tiled walls, beam and bracket doors within the central arched entrances, enamel tile work, ornament incised on plaster and embellished in colours, etc. Some of these tombs have no walled enclosures or roofing but in some instances, mosques are found attached to them and in some of them, mosques are found a few feet away from the tombs. There are quite a few tombs of sufficient architectural interest in the square as well as octagonal variety, for example, the tomb of Sultan Ala ud din at Madurai and the tomb of Kattu Bava at Pallivasal.

Being the important feature of Muslim architecture, the construction of a series of strong mausoleums in various strategic places of the region are fine examples of religious architecture and each of them apart from its great strength and impregnability but some in small size contains some

\[\text{Ibid., p.15.}\]
outstanding architectural feature, as for example, the Nathar Wali tomb of Tiruchirappalli. This Islamic style of tombs architecturally and typically is the import of foreign but mixed with local style as indicated by their thick walls having a sharp slope, their round shaped domes and the squint system of supporting them and the parapet of arch heads with small fluted minaret like finals at four corners. Very limited surface decoration seems to have been employed in the tombs. Here it is believed that the Persian influence of art has been used and the Pasipattinam dargah is an unusual multi-domed and gabled building, some of whose original features are not generally met within Indian tombs. Though built in usual plan of a courtyard surrounded by cloisters, the originality of the Nagore dargah's main hall lies in the treatment of the courtyard which instead of being open is covered in the same line with the rest of building and also in the design of the arches of its cloisters which are wide spanned and supported on low piers. The Persian influence may also be seen in its stilted domes and narrow entrances. Another interesting feature of the tomb is that the main dome which is placed on a lofty base above the inner shrine is found in the dargah of Nathar Wali. This is one of the finest of its class in Tamil Nadu and constitutes a landmark in the Tamil Nadu style of Islamic architecture with the base supporting the dome. In most of the tombs in Tamil Nadu, the jambs of main door ways are made of polished black stone carved in Hindu fashion and the beautiful brackets supporting the cornice also point to the same influence. The profuse stucco and plaster-cut-ornament seen above the arch heads in the spandrels and painted in bright colours in the interior of the tomb recalls Persian influence. Most of the dargah buildings have succumbed to the ravages of time but their remains are sufficient to indicate their magnificence and grandeur on the one hand and strong Persian
influence in their stilted arches, surface decoration in various colours, paintings etc on the other. However, despite these buildings being strongly Persian in character, they bear definite traces of Hindu influence especially in their carvings. Remarkable for its architectural style which consists of a large prayer hall divided into a large number of aisles by massive circular columns, and the roof is crowned by a majestic dome of fine shape, raised on a high clerestory with windows of fine perforated screen work in different geometrical patterns is found in the *dargah* of Nagore.

The building art of this region as far as it can be judged from its few extant specimens differs little in the beginning from the later phase of the Tamil Nadu style under the later Muslims but it soon developed a character of its own deriving inspiration both from indigenous sources and from the other regional styles. This influence is largely reflected in the fine quality of its building material as well as other architectural and decorative features. As regards general architectural designs, the secular buildings like tombs appear to have been built in the same style as in the other provincial capitals in South India. As the *dargahs* of which few original specimens have survived, there are some features in the general treatment of its various parts, which are somewhat different from those of its counterparts at regions other than Tamil Nadu but which have some affinity with those in the early Tamil Nadu tombs. Architecturally the tomb of Kattu Bava is remarkable for fine proportions and almost perfect shapes of their arches and domes. The workmanship is also of a fairly high order, while the ornamentation shows a greater use of carved panels of stone. It has been built on an extensive and lofty octagonal stone terrace and is also octagonal in plan. Built of stone it is the *dargah* of Goripalayam with its square plan and is roofed by a
hemispherical dome. But this first typical tomb in this style was constructed some time in the fourteenth century. Of modest dimensions it conforms to the square variety and is crowned by an impressively shaped dome placed on the terrace. The tomb of Pasipattinam has at its four corners flat roofed square kiosks. This small gem like building of neat design and fine workmanship consists of a single prayer hall having two arch shaped entrances. The most arresting feature of the tomb is the unconventional design of the centrally placed dome at usual place which is taken by a full-fledged square tomb-like structure with all its features of eaves, parapet, corner kiosks, etc. and it is finely found at the mausoleum of Goripalayam. Any dargah monument is simple in design as far as Tamil Nadu tombs are visited but the plainly bulbous form of its dome indicates the development in the treatment of the structural part. Typical of the Persian influence in the tombs is the greater tendency displayed by the builders towards ornamentation. A small but pretty building in which an amazing amount of delicate work in stone has been achieved between the arches or kiosks can be the tomb of Syedani at Vellore. With the richness of its lace-like wall and the minute tracery work of its small kiosks, the dargah of Fazil Shah looks like a small and beautiful monument.\textsuperscript{214}

**Tamil Nadu Style of Tomb Architecture**

The dargah architecture of Tamil Nadu was a mixture of Saracenic or Persian with the local Muslim art. The local Muslim art of buildings was borrowed from the indigenous style of architecture. The famous buildings constructed for a purpose which does not appear very clear to us today, was

\textsuperscript{214} Personal visit to the Dargah at Nagercoil on 25.03.2007.
more than any other, a replica of neighbouring or imported style. Although certain mausoleums or commemorative buildings might be connected with it, it must be seen rather as the end of a tradition or a transitional form, since the copied style of art became, at a later stage, a constant one. The Tamil Nadu style of art with the imported style is best reflected on the tomb of Nathar Wali at Tiruchirappalli. This *dargah* monument of medieval period, the first of its kind on Tamil soil drew its architectural attention from eleventh century. As the burial places of Muslim missionaries of seventh or eighteenth century were not given much care for their construction of big sized mausoleums, the tomb of Nathar Wali, being the first great missionary in Tamil Nadu, became the popular centre of religious and saintly reputation among the Muslims.

The tomb of Nathar Wali presents a majestic appearance to the city of Tiruchirappalli with a building structure in remarkable architecture and a differently style dome. The entrance of the *dargah* premises faces east while the inner shrine faces south. The square type chamber where the grave of the saint is located might be simple without proper measurement until it was renovated and embellished under the orders of the Nawabs of Arcot. The renovated square structure measuring about 40 feet long and 40 feet broad was erected around the main graves. This unpolished granite chamber has its walls which are about 20 feet high and there are no pillars inside the chamber. The verandah running east and south of the chamber has nine and six pillars respectively.\(^{215}\) The dome rises from the cross beams placed from the corners of the wall of the chamber. The dome measured about 30 feet in diameter is one of the biggest ones in Tamil Nadu and it is

\(^{215}\) Personal visit to the *Dargah* at Tiruchirappalli on 04.11.2004.
surrounded by a pedestal base with lotus figures which is a typical Bijapurian style. A wall surrounding the pedestal has four minarets and eight ones smaller than them are raised in between them. A parapet wall runs around the ceiling of the main chamber and it is ornamented with arched insets in between minarets. The walls have niches on three sides but closed at later days. Most of the parts of the building bear the architectural styles of Hindu temple as it was the custom to make the Saracenic styled buildings with the local designs. The site outside the main cell where the celebrated saint Shahul Hameed of Nagore observed penance for forty days during his visit to this tomb is still preserved with an elevated portion to mark the spirituality of his and the spiritual reverence he showed to this dargah. On the left side of the entrance of the main cell, Muhammad Ali Wallajah, the Nawab of Arcot has been buried. Just outside the northern wall of the dargah but in the burial ground, the headless body of Chanda Sahib, the political rival for the Nawabship lies buried. Within the main shrine, the grave of Nathar Wali is found at the middle of the room. The grave of Shams Goya, the khalifa of the saint is found nearby it at the eastern side. There is no religious significance to preserve the graves of the saint's foster daughter and her parrot but to keep the social harmony people of Hindu faith since she belonged to it. At the back side of the dargah, a pillar structure stands to show that one saint, Syed Khaja Ahmadullah Shah Hussaini who is interred at Khajamalai on the outskirts of Tiruchirappalli observed penance for forty days to pay spiritual reverence to Nathar Wali

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217 Headstones at the graves at Tiruchirappalli.
"Thable Alam". The flag hoisting pole which stands a few yards from the *dargah* premises is the best specimen for the architectural importance.

The tomb of Syed Ibrahim at Ervadi should have been erected only during the eighteenth century with the present inner shrine even though the saint lived during the twelfth century and the *dargah* reverence with open air or thatched shed came into public mind during the thirteenth century. The present inner chamber was the creation of one *huqdar* and descendant in the family of the son of the saint; namely Nalla Ibrahim who was endowed with the land grants by the king of Ramanathapuram for the purpose of the development and the construction of the present inner shrine should have been started by him who was religiously enthusiastic to protect the death place of his forefather. The inferior room was built facing south as a square shaped structure. This chamber has four side walls with six pillars on the east and west each, four pillars on the south and two pillars on the north. The inner room is surrounded by a corridor on four sides which is used by the visitors for performing *fatiha* or reciting Quranic verses. The grave of the saint, Syed Ibrahim is dominant structure in the room and his grave is flanked by his mother's at left side. The dome placed on the top of the inner shrine shows the resemblance of the domes as seen at other *dargahs*. It is surrounded by a parapet wall which adds artistic look to it. Outside the inner chamber, nine stone pillars on the east and eleven stone pillars on the west stand to make the whole main building look like a rectangular structure. At the southern side of the inner chamber, a vast space is provided for *khadims* to observe *fatiha* and for the public. This portion of the shrine has four pillars on the south and four parallel lines each having four pillars towards the north. The northern end of the shrine's building has
two pillars with wall closed whereas other three sides have no walls but with covered ceiling as verandas. Outside the main shrine, the decorated parapet wall is found. But it does not go around the visitors' hall. The main shrine has four minarets raised above pillars with four small minarets in between them. As the back portion of the shrine is seen from the entrance of the premises, the first two minarets at the corners of the wall have been erected above the pillars. This is architecturally different from other dargahs. At the front entrance of the main shrine, we find no specific minaret as at the other mausoleums. A separate flag pole stands in front of the shrine for flag hoisting during the festival. At the eastern side of the main shrine it is found the grave of Nalla Ibrahim, the descendant of the saint who is revered with sainthood for he was the person in the family of Syed Ibrahim to receive the land grant from the king. The small building where the grave of the saint's sister, Rabi is located at the eastern corner of the main shrine has no architectural designs. The shrine of the saint's wife found on the west of the main shrine bears a little artistic design. The medical practitioner, Yusuf who accompanied the saint on his spiritual entourage lies buried on the north of the shrine with no building art.\footnote{Personal visit to the dargah at Ervadi on 30.12.2006} The first and main entrance of the dargah precincts facing the north is an additional structure to the architectural beauty of the mausoleum. The entrance has three way path with four pillars without any design or cutting. The upper part of the gate entrance is an attractive architectural structure with three equal distance arches. The arched structure has three domes with the eastern dome being little small and all the three domes are surrounded by a parapet wall with four very small size minars at four corners with small knife shaped...
structures in between them. The arched structure is surrounded by a parapet wall with holes on it and cornered with minarets at four ends and four minarets smaller than them are found with equal distance between the big ones.

The saint's associated members of his religious entourage lie buried at Kattupalli just one km from the main dargah. Among many small mausoleums, the shrines of Ameer Abbas who was one among those who accompanied the saint to India in the capacity of a minister, Hakeem, a popular medical attendant and Sara and Sabura the close family members of the saint. All the dargah buildings bear no significant architectural skill except a visitors' hall at the shrine of Ameer Abbas. The constructors of the main shrine and at Kattupalli failed to make finest artistic designs on any building or there might not be given significance or care to building styles. Even though many tombs, mosques or any other buildings came into existence during the seventeenth century in Tamil Nadu only designless structures were created more particular on coastal Tamil Nadu.

Architecture of the Muslims in those days represented a happy mingling of extra Indian as well as Indian elements. The characteristics of Indo-Persian and Indo-Arabian were assimilated, mingled and combined during the time of Muslims who came and settled down in different parts of India. The Muslims brought cultural and social aspects along with architectural aspects. We could see most of the buildings constructed by Muslims which reflect the Hindu style. This style of art flourished in different parts of Tamil Nadu and the dargah of Sultan Ala ud din has possessed some features of the Indo Islamic architecture.
architecture mainly consists of arch, vault, minaret, dome, truss and framed structures. Among all the features, the best examples are the minaret and the dome.

The **dargah** ground with its area of one acre and 17,460 square feet with the building of Sultan Ala ud din the second king of Madurai Sultanate stands as a mausoleum built in the Indo Saracenic architectural style. At the entrance of the premises, the gate has two minarets of medium size with an average of twenty five feet. At each side of these two minarets there is one more small-sized minaret with an average height of seventeen feet. These small and medium size minarets are connected with a small wall on which, the figures of Islamic buildings are usually painted. All the four minarets have niches on them and painted with different colours. The two medium size minarets are connected with a wall above the iron structure. In the middle of this wall, a niche bigger than others is found. On the top of the wall, small structures made up of stone with flower like figures are found. These structures have a curved shape. On the top of four minarets, there are small pot sized domes with different colours. From the main gate to the **dargah** building the pavement is covered with tiles. At the end of the pavement, we see three big graves of either camels of horses, the saint used but it can be said that these graves of animals have gained no architectural significance but for a memory that they were used for travel by the saint himself. The measurements of the main building at its length and breadth are seventy feet each. The front door of the main building is made up of thin iron bars. At the right side of the door, there are three stone pillars with a gap of seven feet between each other. At the left side of the door there are

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219 Report of Assistant Commissioner of Madurai, Dated 30.5.1956.
four pillars with the same gap. Each pillar is of an average height of seven feet. As the height of the pillars and the gap between them are the same in measurement, it is said to be a planned construction. At the end of both the sides, there are two tall minarets with an average height of thirty six feet each. All the pillars are connected one with the other with iron bars. In front side of the main door, we find two narrow pillar like structures made up of metal. Above the pillars a wall has been constructed which forms as the front wall of the dargah’s main building. This wall has eight arches which are the best examples for the Islamic architecture. On the top of the wall, seven small minarets with the height of eight feet each have been erected. These minarets with this wall are in between the big ones. In the gap between the small minarets, flower like structures of small shape are found. On the top of every small minaret, dome shaped earthen pots painted with colours are also found. All the minarets have been made of bricks and polished.  

Entering the door, we see a corridor which can be said as the first corridor at the breadth of ten feet. Its length is sixty four feet. This is as long as that of all the seven pillars standing. Behind this corridor, we find a wall which gives more safety to the dargah’s interior room. This wall has three pillars at the right side and four pillars at the left side attached with it. This wall has been built with five windows. Above the windows, colourful glasses could be fixed for decoration. In the middle of the wall a gigantic door at a height of ten feet is standing. This is a very strong door made up of wood coated with brass. Behind this corridor, there is another one at a breadth of fifteen feet. This second corridor is sixty one feet long. This

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220 Personal visit to the dargah at Madurai on 07.01.2007.
goes around the inner shrine within the building. There are thirty eight pillars on this corridor including those attached with the walls. In all the corners of the corridor, patients and visitors are allowed to perform rites and to read Quranic verses. At the southern side of the corridor there is a door through which also, the visitors can go outside but this way is always kept closed. In the middle of corridor, we find the inner shrine on a five feet elevated platform with four doors in four directions. There are seven steps in front of the main door to enter the inner shrine facing the east. On the steps two or three khadims perform fatiha on the request of the pilgrims. This front door of the room has two iron gates. Back door facing the west is open only in the evening. Though the doors in the west, north and the south are elevated from the floor, there is no step to enter the doors. When we enter the elevated room through the first way in the east, we find inside the room two graves, one is of Sultan Ala ud din and the other is of Sultan Sham ud din who is supposed to be his brother and sixth Sultan of Madurai Sultanate. This inner shrine is a square of twenty five feet long on all the four sides. The inside measurement of this room is of nineteen feet long on all the four sides. The graves of brother Sultans found in the dargah building occupy nearly eight feet of space inside. The height of the grave of Sultan Ala ud din is three feet and that of Sultan Shams ud din is three and half a feet. As the grave of Sultan Ala ud din which lies first near the entrance and relatively smaller than his brother is, it helps the visitors to see both the graves at a glance and the traditional view is that it was the desire expressed by the Sultans when they were alive that both of their graves should be seen at a glance by the visitors after erection. So the architects fulfilled their wish expressing artistic skill in the sizes of the graves. Space has been left behind the two graves and this remnant space according to the
tradition meant for their third brother Habib ud din. As his tomb is not there, it is true that Habib ud din must have died somewhere far away from Madurai. Entry to the inner shrine is allowed with entrance fee. Above the inner room it is found a big dome. It is unique that the dargah building with its domed roof of inner shrine which is as much as twenty two feet from base to apex and sixty nine feet in circumference. It is made of one single block of stone. This monolithic stone was brought by the Pandia king from Anamalai and given to Ala ud din during his life time. The saint had planned to construct a few tombs with dome. This stone was later shaped as dome and placed on his mausoleum after his death.221 This monolithic dome of the dargah signifies the then prevalent friendship between the Hindus and the Muslims in the fourteenth century. On the top of the dome there is a vertical and decorated structure made of metal. In front of the dargah building there is a small shrine where the graves of Syed Hussain Thusilla Sarahil Aziz and his wife are located. As in the main shrine, this small shrine also has a dome. They are supposed to be the followers of Ala ud din. At the south side of the dargah building we find a room in which the graves of three saints namely Sadabir, Bala Masthan and Muhammad Abdullah are there. They are supposed to be the sons of Syed Hussain Thusilla and followers of Sultan Ala ud din. The unique feature of this small shrine is that it is round shaped with a dome. The Muslims employed Hindu craftsmen for the construction of monuments. These craftsmen used some stones inscribed with Hindu names and some of them are found at the bottom of western and northern walls of this main dargah. But as these inscribed terms are irrelevant for understanding and have no continuity of

221 R.Caldwell, A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevelly in the Presidency of Madras, Madras, 1881, p.35.
events, it is sure that these stones might have been brought from somewhere. This mausoleum bears architectural style with Hindu influence which has dominated the *dargah* in the decorated carving in front of the inner room and made of thin metal with brass coating. This carving is similar to that of Hindu temples in the Madurai city. The niches, columns and brackets found at this *dargah* are influenced by Indian art. The niches were used by the Indians to light lamps. This practice of lighting lamps in the niches was later followed by the Muslims in Tamil Nadu. The fusion of Indo-Islamic style of art and architecture reflected on the Muslim monuments in Tamil Nadu with no exception of the shrine at Madurai. From different styles found at this *dargah*, it is certain that the building was not completed within a particular period. The inner room where the graves are found might have been erected at the first phase. The other portions might have been expanded at a later period.222

The mosque attached to the *dargah* is a stone structure which exists still today but must have been built by the saint himself or a few years after his death. The front portion of it was a pool which was in those days used by the missionaries but only during the last quarter of twentieth century, a prayer hall in addition was raised over it as a part of expansion of the mosque and the pool was shifted to the north of the mosque. This shrine, the construction of which began in the fourteenth century must be the first popular shrine to have the dome which is considered to be the first dome in Tamil Nadu. This monument not only speaks the services of the saint to Madurai, religious or kingly, but also stands as one of the best specimens for Indo-Saracenic architecture.

222 Personal visit to the dargah at Madurai on 07.01.2007.
The mausoleum of the saint Shahul Hameed at Nagore whose death took place during the second half of the sixteenth century could have emerged from seventeenth century but shot into prominence from eighteenth century. It was due to the patronage extended by the local Maratha kings and Muslim leaders who, by their visit to the death place or thatched mausoleum, exposed the greatness of the saint and his miracles to the people. A rough structure made of wood and bamboo which existed at the beginning stage of the saint's mausoleum was the voluntary creation of the fishermen living on the seashore of Nagore as a reward for the miraculous benefit they availed from the saint's death place.

The wooden structure, when it lost its strength, was replaced by a loosely erected wall by the same fishermen community. During the early part of the seventeenth century, one Muslim businessman, Rayakunjali Maraikayar, by name, who was medically cured with the blessings of the saint during his lifetime voluntarily offered the construction of the present room of the inner shrine around the grave with a domed roof. Surrounding the wall, a corridor on all the four sides was also erected. Further, the development of the shrine showed gradually with the expansion of additional structures like minarets. The first of its kind was built by one, Ibrahim khan from Ginjee who sought the benedictions of the saint at his mausoleum and fulfilled his offer by constructing the first minaret which on stands on south west direction of the main shrine. It is, certainly known that two favourites of this Ginjee based businessmen namely Meera Rowther and Madhar Rowther came to the dargah and started the construction. The seventy seven feet high minaret might have been completed in the year 1645. The significance of this

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minaret is that its completion occurred during the seventy seventh anniversary of the saint's death and therefore the tower got its height of same number. It was called "Sahib Minar" to repute a common Muslim name and also the then hierarchical head of the saint's family. They further constructed a *mandapam* located at the middle of the premises and thus got its name as "*Nadumandapam*". Second minaret was erected by Nalla Syed Maraikayar, an export businessman at Nagore. This ninety three and a half feet high tower should have come into existence in the year 1680. The tower which stands on the northwest direction of the main shrine which is also the head side of the dead saint, it is called "thalaimattu minar". The third one was the gift in the form of a tower donated by one, Peer Nainar, a close friend of Nalla Syed Maraikayar. This tower standing on the northeast of the main shrine measuring ninety three feet in height is called "Mudubak Minar" to remember the spot where the saint had preferred to perform prayer daily. This minaret might have been completed in the last decade of seventeenth century. The shrine got its fourth minaret on the southeast which was built by one Dawood Khan who hailed from Porto Novo. This should have been built during the first decade of the eighteenth century. The eighty feet high minaret is called "Ottu Minar" since the earthen tiles were fixed on some portions of the minar which existed for many years but removed at later years with usual concrete materials as on other minarets. Fifth minar was erected by the Maratha king, Pratab Singh who sought the blessings of the dead saint at his burial place for the birth of

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224 Inscription on the Minaret at the *Dargah*, Nagore.
225 *Idem.*
226 *Idem.*
227 *Idem.*
a son. The king should have started the building of this minaret in 1752 and completed in the year 1755. As this minaret is one hundred and thirty one feet high and tallest among all the minarets, it is called "Periya Minar" meaning Big Minaret. Other four minarets stand independently at four corners a few feet away from the main shrine, the tallest and fifth one stands on the roadside, a few yards from the western and main entrance to the dargah premises.\textsuperscript{228} The Big Minaret which was used by the British as their flag staff for some time but objected by the Maratha king turned to be the prominent flag pole for the dargah’s urs festival. Though flags are hoisted on all the minarets, the dominance of the big Minaret seems to be different since the dargah visitors and road goers too look to have a glance over it. The architectural designs of all the five minarets are more or less the same except a few designed dots on them. While the Big Minaret has ten layers, the other four have seven layers. The minaret is the original contribution of Islamic art and it is usually round in shape. But the towering minarets in this dargah are square in shape. It is a clear deviation from the conventional Islamic style. This is a new form introduced in this region by the dynasties that ruled this territory, particularly the Marathas in those days with the help of local artisans who were trained in the construction of Hindu temples and gopurams that could influence the Islamic art on its buildings.\textsuperscript{229}

The entrance of the dargah premises from the west is the main entrance for the visitors. The front mandapam of the entrance is with ten high pillars and this pillared entrance with extended portion from it to reach

\textsuperscript{228} Idem.

\textsuperscript{229} Personal visit to the Dargah at Nagore on 28.01.2007.
the main shrine was built by Abdul Qadiri, a local resident of Nagore in 1879. No other dargah in Tamil Nadu has so many mandapams as in the Nagore dargah complex. The dargah's main shrine has a small dome and to give a better appearance to the tomb, a mandapam with a big dome was erected on the roof of the main shrine covering the original small dome. This domed structure is surrounded by octagonal parapet with small minarets in each corner of the octagon. The mandapam with these two domes is supported by eight main pillars and five thin pillars in between the two main pillars. The Nagore dargah has one Peer Mandapam which is with sixteen round pillars with arches connecting them all round. The cornice of the ceiling is moulded in typical Dravidian style. A dome at the centre is found and its bulbous portion is vertically ribbed. This is the mandapam where faqirs or peers use to sit for penance. There is another mandapam which is also called Peer Mandapam but has the importance that the saint's dead body was washed here and even now it is considered to be a sacred one.

The Nagore shrine with its total area of 1,94,790 square feet has many buildings including the main shrine. This popular dargah in Tamil Nadu has four entrances in four directions. The Eastern Gate only permits the visitors to go to bathing purposes. The western Gate is the main entrance from the roadside to enter the dargah's premises. During the annual urs festival this entrance is given specific importance for decoration and therefore it is called 'Alankara Vasal' meaning the gate of decoration. The 'thalaimattu vasal' located in the north of the premises is so called as the dead body of the saint lies buried with head in that direction. The southern

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230 Inscription on the pillar at the Dargah, Nagore.
entrance is called 'kaalmattu vasal' as the saint lies buried with his legs in the south.\textsuperscript{231} The saint's main shrine has seven doors, which according to traditions, reflect the seven behaviours of a man to be neglected - illegal sex, anger, enmity, lie, jealousy, physical suffering and the old age attitude due to ill health. Pilgrims believe that a human being would attain enlightenment only if he crosses all these misfortunes. To the south of the inner shrine, a pillared hall is there for the convenience of the pilgrims and a part of it is used for fatiha performers and the rest is used by the visitors for their stay during night. A Hindu philanthropist, Govindasamy Chettiar laid in 1923, a two feet broad specially made stone to form a length path from the eastern entrance of the premises upto the pillared hall.\textsuperscript{232}

The shrine of Kattu Bava at Pallivasal village has distinctive architectural designs. Both the dargah premises and the dargah building face the southern direction. The southern entrance to the premises has twenty pillars and four minarets. A veranda running along the pillars is supported by a wall the back side of which has one more veranda supported by the same number of twenty pillars. The eastern side of the dargah precincts has twenty pillars as in the south but only three minarets. The west and north of the premises have no pillars but covered with a highly raised walls. The main shrine is faced with a hall for visitor's stay. This hall has four lines of pillars each line having six pillars. The dargah main chamber has three sections. The first wall along with a corridor of about nine feet breadth has its door to enter. It has six pillars on each side of the door which

\textsuperscript{231} Syed Khaja Mohideen, \textit{Karunai Kadal} (Tamil), (Sea of Mercy), Sulaimania Publishers, Chennai, 2005, p.154.

\textsuperscript{232} Inscriptions at the \textit{dargah}, Nagore.
is ten feet high. Behind it there is another wall which too has a door of ten feet height. Each wall has three niches found at the middle of it and the top of the wall is octagonal in shape with eight niches. The third wall is wholly octagonal on four sides from bottom to top with a height of nine feet and eight small windows and its top is covered with a wooden dome visible only within the chamber not from outside the shrine and this inside dome is not found in any other dargah. The grave of the saint is found in this inner chamber which is very small. The whole dargah's main structure has a concrete dome as found at other dargahs. The main shrine has four minarets. The mosque attached to it runs the administration of both the dargah and the Muslim Zamath of the village. A distinctive feature of the architecture is that both the dargah and the mosque have four minarets each. Both the dargah building and the dargah premises are square types. One more distinguishing artistic feature at this dargah precincts is that it has one pond located at the northern side of the main building which is also octagonal in shape. It is surprising that the second wall of the main shrine above the middle portion, the third wall of the main shrine as a whole and the pond have been shaped into eight sided ones. Eventhough we cannot find any specific reason for this style, it may be presumed that this reminds us the eight directions of the nature.²³³

The shrine of Naina Muhammad Wali at Pasipattinam with its little architectural beauty attracts the pilgrims to visit the seashore dargah. The dargah and its main chamber which face south has the adequate space inside the building for the visitors stay. The hall in front of the main chamber is wide having twelve pillars in two rows. Another hall which

²³³ Personal visit to the Dargah at Pallivasal. on 06.11.2004.
widens the first one near the main chamber has seven pillars and six arches with the main door to enter the building. The shrine has two domes on a single building, one as usually found on the top of the grave's chamber and other on the top of the dargah at the southern side. The specific reason for this second dome is not known but it can be presumed that the entrance to the dargah building should be looked architecturally beautiful since this dome is found on the top of the entrance which faces south. The whole building has twelve minarets - four at the four corners of the building, two at the middle of the eastern wall, two at the middle of the western wall and the remaining four are found at the four sides of the second dome. It is provided a corridor used separately for women to enter the building with a separate door at the eastern side. Likewise, the inner chamber has two doors - one at the eastern wall for women and the other at the southern wall for men. It is praiseworthy that entry for women from eastern door only is strictly followed.²³⁴

The two century old mausoleum located at Sammattipuram, the then suburb of Madurai was a very small structure only around the grave. The old one erected in 1808 by one, Sheikh Imam, had not had any architectural designs but with only four walls and roofing to protect the grave of the so called 'wali' Yusuf Khan, popularly known as Khan Sahib. The old one was pulled down and a new structure was erected and completed in the year 2007. The two century old 'shrine' structure has been replaced by a concrete building which is thirty eight feet long and fifteen feet wide. The new one has two domes - one above the grave as found in other dargahs and the

²³⁴ Personal visit to the Dargah at Pasipattinam on 21.01.2007.
other above the entrance of the building. The newly erected building though not architecturally designed gives a new look to the shrine.\textsuperscript{235}

The open-to-sky \textit{dargah} at Kottar, Nagercoil is a square type monument with the length of thirty four feet and width of thirty two and a half feet. At the four corners of the open building there stand four pillars with a height of eight feet and in between two pillars there are four small pillars measuring five and a half feet in height each. The space between these small pillars is decorated with niches and above them flower like designs are found. On the top of every pillar, a small dome with a circumference of one feet is found. The \textit{dargah} premises locate the graves of Chav Mian and Nav Mian, the two, who helped the saint during his life time. It is peculiar that these graves have two pillars at the head sides each having the height of ten feet and these pillars with hollow have kerosene lights installed in those days. It is a special feature that no grave inside or outside the \textit{dargah} structure in Tamil Nadu has such a pillar at the head side.\textsuperscript{236}

A memorial erected in the name of the world renowned saint at Pottalpudur is in a dilapidated condition. The shrine as it is called \textit{dargah} is a stone structure but has to be renovated. The shrine's main building faces east but its precincts face the north. The memorial at its eastern side has two raised platform each having twenty six pillars on both sides with a footpath in between the platforms. Thus the two platforms have totally fifty two pillars. Such a platform runs from the memorial to the northern side but with

\textsuperscript{235} Personal visit to the Mausoleum at Sammattipuram, Madurai on 11.03.2007.
\textsuperscript{236} Personal visit to the \textit{Dargah} at Nagercoil on 25.03.2007.
forty pillars on both sides. Thus the two northern raised platforms have totally eighty pillars. The raised platforms are conveniently used by the visitors for their stay since the platforms are covered with ceiling of stone slabs. At the end of the two platforms outside the interior room of the memorial two tall sized minarets are standing. The main structure of the memorial has two rooms. The first room is a big hall where the pilgrims could sit and perform *fatiha*. This hall has four rows each having seven pillars. The interior room has four rows each having five pillars. One specific feature of the shrine is that it has no dome on the top. The reason for this may be that the non existence of a grave does not need a designful cover like a dome. A small water tank was built by one lady, Fathiammal Beebi in 1998 and she dedicated it to the shrine in memory of her father Resavu Mohideen.\(^{237}\) The shrine's authorities owe their responsibility to make repairs or construction of new walls or platforms from being further damaged.

The river bed *dargah* of Syed Ali Fatima at Attankarai is an open-to-sky shrine erected in the memory of a female saint. The neatly built small structure facing the east has twenty six feet in width. The total length of the mausoleum with forty two feet consists of two portions - first one treated as visitors' hall is also used for *fatiha* performance by the *khadims* and pilgrims. This part being covered on the top and with four walls, the back portion is not covered on the top since it is perceived by the followers of the female saint that she did not like her grave to be covered after her death. The front wall of the *dargah* has totally four minarets - two at both the ends of the wall each with a height of twenty four feet and other two stand in

\(^{237}\) Inscription at the shrine at Pottalpudur.
between them each with a height of twenty eight feet. The back of the dargah has also four minarets but with a little difference in height. The minarets at two ends of the wall are twenty three feet in height each and the other two which stand in between them are twenty four in height. This small but neatly designed without too many artistic models shrine should be improved with additional buildings for the pilgrims' stay during the urs festival since more number of them attend the annual festivities specially from the neighbouring state. The present tiled structures maintained by the dargah administration do not add architectural beauty to the shrine.\textsuperscript{238}

A small shrine which stands in the heart of the Vellore town for the female saint, Syedani Beevi was built only in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The grave which had no tomb structure till the year 1909 was given construction permission by the then District Collector. One merchant, Lakshman Mudaliar, from Kalas Dadavathiar Street, Vellore took the responsibility and collected some money from local merchants and philanthropists and started the construction on 18th October 1909 and the work was completed on 21st September, 1927. It is not known why such a small building's work was prolonged for nearly eighteen years. It might be due to the lack of fund or busy engagements of the fund raisers and builders. It came to be known that one, Kuppusamy Mudaliar of Salavanpet and Duraisamy Naickar of Kosapet worked as builder and stone cutter respectively. Though being small in structure, it has some architectural designs. The dargah bears its building art only at pillars and small domes attached with these pillars. At the entrance of the dargah there stand two pillars which connect the door and the pillars have small domes over them.

\textsuperscript{238} Personal visit to the dargah at Attankarai on 28.05.2007.
The shrine has four tall minarets at four corners with equal distance forming a square type monument. On the terrace each minaret is surrounded by four small sized domes and thus sixteen such domes are there around the four minarets. At the middle of the terrace, four minarets shorter than the corner minarets are standing and around each one but at bottom two small dome like structures are located. In the middle of these four minarets, there is one minaret which bears a dome on the top. All the minarets at this **dargah** bear one round shape structure like dome on their top but the **dargah** has no separate dome on the terrace as found at other **dargahs**. The minarets are connected with a parapet wall above the building along with ornamental designs. A modern **dargah** building but looks like an ancient one without any renovation or addition stands as a symbol of religious unity for all with a single building but the visitors have to stay on the ground because of non availability of other structures. If the **dargah** management takes steps for the construction of resting houses, pilgrims could be attracted in large numbers.\(^{239}\)

In Tamil Nadu, though the process of Islamisation started very early, Islamic architecture was introduced with slow process. The invasion of Malik Kafur in early quarter of fourteenth century and the subsequent establishment of Sultanate of Madurai did not bring much towards the construction of Islamic buildings except a few. Islamic architecture at large with all its true character was developed from seventeenth century and till then only a few monuments existed here. Since a vast majority of early Muslims of Tamil Nadu were converts from Hinduism they recognized the Dravidian style of art as their own and satisfied themselves in constructing

\(^{239}\) Personal visit to the **dargah** at Vellore on 23.09.2007.
the mausoleums with this style. Further the early Arab Muslims had no architectural ambition since they indulged in trading activities rather than building art except a few mosques they built for prayer and that too without architectural designs. Though many saints lived on Tamil Nadu soil from eleventh century, their burial places were marked by very simple ornamental conical pillar and the construction of tombs came at a later period.

When the dargah construction started, the erection of a dome played dominance. In Some of the dargahs, multi dome culture came into existence whereas in some dargahs like in Tenkasi single dome is shaped as double dome structure. The attempt to interpret the dome as an Arab invention shaped after the water melon is invidious. A new type of decoration and the Persia enamelled tiles introduced by the Muslims are not found at dargahs in Tamil Nadu but it is commonly seen at dargahs and other Islamic buildings in Northern India. A curved style on the pillars is found at most of the dargahs in this region. Some architects worked in more eclectic style borrowing forms and decorative motifs. But it is not certain that Persian or Arab artisans worked at the monuments in Tamil Nadu. Though the conception is Indic, the form is Islamic and probably derives its symbolism from medieval style mentioned in various records including poetry. It is a compromising form in Indo-Islamic art. It is an uniformity that most of the dargahs in this region are square type in structure. The Indian masons and even foreign artisans, if any, too applied this type to identify the dargah monuments with a distinguished pattern. The significance of the niches at the dargahs is not only to give a fairly look but also to place the lamps for lighting purpose. When these mausoleums
entered modern period a total Islamisation in architectural style is attempted.

The existing structural buildings of Islam in various parts of Tamil Nadu right from eleventh century show that the building materials were procured and designed to suit the needs of such buildings. Readily available materials from the spoils of different buildings and forts might have been used in the course of construction of dargahs in certain cases but it was also not the rule or universal. The local Hindu masons well trained in their own style of construction and stone works, who had to be engaged for the construction of Islamic buildings had no knowledge about Islamic style. Therefore, they applied their style on the Islamic religious buildings also. But pillars, beams, cornice and other parts of the dargahs, though built in Dravidian style were designed in accordance with the precepts of the Islamic religion. The absence of idols, sculptures or printings in any of the Islamic tombs or even in mosques is noticed. The Tamil culture which became the culture of Muslims in Tamil Nadu was never neglected to be followed. Hence the Tamil Nadu Muslims erected their religious buildings as their fellow brethren. It can be believed that the spoils of other religious buildings were not used or converted for the construction of Islamic religious buildings. The diverse cultures worked together for peaceful co-existence and the art became the unifying force of the communities. The age old Islamic structures prove that they have cherished the unity of humanity in Tamil region, an unique cultural feature of this land. Thus the Islamic architecture in Tamil Nadu can be rightly called as Indo Dravidian-Islamic architecture which ranks a honoured place in the history of art in India.