CHAPTER – III

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN

TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Religion and religious pursuits are the part of human life even from the dawn of civilization and history.¹ Both science and spiritualism are the twin eyes required for the evolution of mankind. Man, by his spiritual attitude and outlook achieves devotion and peace. They inferred in him many faiths and beliefs. The temples and the images of the deities are the outcome of the imagination of men. They are symbolic, but they contain art and philosophy. Therefore, it is natural but they are sacred. At the same time, it cannot be denied that such supreme are precious and the places where they are available captivate the attention of the people.²

The temples and images of Gods and Goddesses are standing monuments of culture. The Hindus by uniting the natural beauty with man's conceptions and notions created such architectural products. Further, the arts are the products of the free expressions of the artist. They exhibit beauty,

calibre and capabilities. They impose religious themes and ideas over them. So the religion is harmoniously blended with art and architecture and they in turn promote the people to see such things and venerate them.³

The Indian artist assigned greater stress to natural objects as the symbols. Nature itself was the object of common worship during the hoary past. Indian art is linked with the religious life of the people. Therefore, it is obvious that religion, society and art are inter-connected and inter-related. This is a common feature in the art history and architectural heritage of India. The archaeological excavations and the standing monuments testify to the art heritage of India.⁴

**Temple Architecture**

Temple architecture is one of the chief factors to have an estimate of the India cultural heritage. During the early stages the religious faith of the people contributed to the development of cultural heritage. There were no ornamental or decorative elements. Their structures were simple in plan, design, principles and techniques. Among Mauryas, Asoka was responsible for the introduction of Rock Cut architecture. He initiated the carvings of Buddhist Chaityas and Viharas near Gaya. Gradually, their process drifted to the peninsular and western India. The Buddhists were the earliest people who used stone for their art practices. Only then the Hindus and Jains adhered to that. The use of stone for the creation of monuments led them to be long standing. They widened the

---

scope in adopting new and admirable techniques in the future. They centred mostly around religious architecture.\(^5\)

With the beginning of the sixth century A.D., the Hindus and the Jains showed keen interest in accepting stone as the medium for architecture. They started the excavations of rock-cut cave temples. They even concentrated on the creation of monolithic rock temples. Subsequently they stood as models for the structural temples of different ages by various rulers. While the Sungas and Guptas devoted to the temple architecture in the north, the Sathavahanas, Chalukyas, Rastrakutas and Pallavas marked the introduction of temple architecture in the south. The Pandyas, Cholas, Vijayanagar rulers and the Nayaks too developed it.\(^6\) The temples erected during the sixth or seventh centuries survive even today. Though the Hindu temples met with certain unavoidable consequences they were not totally wiped off by the onslaught of foreign invaders.\(^7\) The Hindu rulers, nobles, merchants, artisans and even common public did their best in revitalizing the temple architecture. Many small or large temples came up. They were modified; additions were made and ceremonies as well as rituals continued. Temples became the glorified aspect of life. Such zeal and enthusiasm were more in South India than North India.

---

\(^7\) C. Sethuraman, *op.cit.*, p.91.
Therefore, South India became the paradise of temples and that caused for the development of temple architecture.\footnote{Percy Brown, \textit{op.cit.}, p.43.}

**Significance of Temple Architecture**

The developed temple architecture attracted the attention of the people and this helped the promotion of daily rituals and ceremonies. Because of such developments, a large number of specific \textit{Mandapas} were constructed. Like the \textit{Ardha} and \textit{Muha Mandapas}, the \textit{Nirukta Mandapa, Vasantha Mandapa, Kalyana Mandapa}, Thousand Pillared halls, separated shrines for the consort and \textit{Parivara devadas} were emerged. It paved the way for the development of iconography and icnometry. In the new model, deities were brought out in different postures. In addition to the above, every God is associated with a specific mount. Bull is the mount of Siva; Eagle mount is linked with Vishnu. Subramanian is associated with Peacock mount. Therefore, they got veneration among the people. While executing the rituals, it is also a customary practice to show some sacred objects known as \textit{mangala vastus} such as Conch, \textit{Chakra}, Umbrella, Snake, Tortoise, and \textit{Puranakumbha}. The number varies according to the agamas adopted in that temple. Every Indian religion is associated with specific objects. So they are known for their sanctity.

The temples in Tamil Nadu are constructed in areas, which offer fresh air. The different \textit{prakaras} of the temples contain unpolluted air of fresh nature. The gardens and tanks created around the temples are also beneficial for unadulterated air. In Kerala the roof of the temples are not being flat. They are
slanting and that avoid the stagnation of the rainwater. Therefore, it is evident that the temple architecture stands for the scientific and technological skill of the artisans.⁹

**Hindu Temple Architecture**

In the art history of India, the Guptas of the north were the initiators of the construction of Hindu temples. For the first time, they introduced dressed stones for the construction of temples. Before the Gupta age, the temples were constructed with perishable materials. Hence, they had no permanency. Therefore, it is also necessary to have an idea of those temples. As the Gupta age was one of the Hindu efflorescence, they devoted much to the development of Hindu temple architecture.¹⁰

**South Indian Temple Architecture**

In the peninsular India, the Chalukyas, Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagar rulers widened the prospects of temple architecture. It was a tradition, which grew out of humble beginnings in proto-historic times and reached splendid heights in the Imperial Pandya period¹¹. There were temples and idols in the Sangam Age. Therefore, architecture and sculpture of some sort must have been familiar to them. The *Silappadikaram*, the *Manimekalai* and the *Purananuru* speak of temples and Gods. A three dimensional God was known to them and perhaps was represented in plaster.

---

Temples as well as idols were made of perishable materials. During that time, the entire temple complex of the Sangam Age has now disappeared having no trace behind. The only Public structures of any historical importance surviving that age are the rock-beds out of natural rock formations and for the benefit of ascetics. These do not involve any skill in construction engineering nor do they represent any phase of indigenous art.\textsuperscript{12}

**Chalukyas**

The Chalukyas, being the people belonging to Brahmanical sect initiated and expanded the temples. Pulikesin I, Kirthivarman, Mangalesa and Pulikesin II concentrated more on temple architecture.\textsuperscript{13} There are 70 temples of the Chalukyas at Aihole. The Ladkhan temple was the earliest one of the Aihole group. This square shaped temple has plain pillars and a huge *nandhi*. It is datable to the middle of the fifth century A.D. But it is the largest and significant one of the earliest temples. The temples at Kontigudi, Hucchimalligudi group of temples, Narayana and Tarabasappa temples are the glory of the temple architecture under the Chalukyas.\textsuperscript{14} The Papanath, Jambulinga, Karimatha temples are the specimen temples of Indo-Aryan style. The Sanghameswara, Virupaksha, Mallikarjuna temples are constructed in Dravidian style.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} *Ibid.*, pp.418-419.


\textsuperscript{14} *Idem.*

\textsuperscript{15} Sudesh Lahri, *op.cit.*, p.220.
Pallava Style

The Pallava style comprises the earlier rock cut palace and the later structural palace. The late phase was wholly structural and the first building of this type was the shore temple at Mahabalipuram. Pallava architecture at its best is seen in the temple of Vaikunta Perumal at Kanchipuram.\(^{16}\) From Mahendra Varman I to the end of the Pallava period, we have broad divisions of architectural style. Of first, the rock cut of which the monolithic is a well-known form and the later is structural. Of them, the rock cut style itself has minor variations like the Mahendra style and the Mamalla style. The Pillared Mandapa is a special feature of the Mahendra style. The monolithic temples usually called the Rathas belonged to the later style\(^{17}\).

Chola Style

The Imperial Chola line continued to survive between 850 and 1259 A.D. The period between 850 and 907 A.D. could be treated as the initial period of the Chola architecture. Misumba Sudani temple of Tanjore, Kannasur Balambraman temple, Tiruppurambyiam Adhiteswaram temple, Nataraja Temple of Chidambaram, Koranganatha temple of Srinivasanallur, Mahalingeswara temple at Tiruvidai Marudur, Brahadeswara temple at Tanjore, Gangaikondacholeeswaram, Kempahareswara temple of Tribhuvanam are having their own style. Thus, it is a supreme complex of Indian architecture and was a unique period in the development of temple architecture.\(^{18}\)

---

\(^{16}\) N.Subramanian, *op.cit.*, pp.419-420.
\(^{17}\) Percy Brown, *op.cit.*, pp. 48-58.
\(^{18}\) Sudesh Lahri, *op.cit.*, pp.221-222.
The temple of Nellaiapper and Kanthimathi were two independent structures with space in between. In 1647 A.D., Vadamalaiappa pillaiyan, a great devotee of Siva built the temples and it was popularly called chainmandapam. A beautiful flower garden was originated in 1756 A.D. next to chain mandapam. It welcomes us with many colourful fragrant flowers. A square Vasantha mandapam with 100 pillars is found in the midst of this garden. The pillars in this corridor have beautifully carved structures of the Nayak rulers.\textsuperscript{19} The main feature of the temple is that of a single stone Peacock Vaganam Valli and Deivayanai idols have been carved out magnificently.

When a person goes round the corridors before entering into the temple he can witness the Nandi. It is said that Sivanthappa Nayak is solely responsible for the construction of the temple in 1654 A.D. Next to Nandhi mandapam, the image of Suryadevar is installed.

The musical pillars that attract the attention of every one through their marvel and wonderful music note-placed Manimandapam. Each pillar contains a big pillar in the middle, surrounded by 48 smaller pillars and the entire structure is made out of a single stone. Each pillar produces a musical sound at the time of touching it.\textsuperscript{20} This Manimandapam along with the musical pillar was built by Nindrasir Nedumaran in the 7th century A.D.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} T. Marimuthu, \textit{Musical Pillar in Nellaiappar Temple}, A Research Paper presented two days seminar, held on 19 and 20,1996, M.S. University. Tirunelveli.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Idem.}

In the eastern corridor outside of the Swamy Nellaiappar temple, a small temple has been built for Kanthimathi Ambal by a Muslim named Anwar Mauphizkhan, who was the Commander in Chief of the Nayaks of the Carnatic. Hence, this temple architecture is mixed with Chola, Pandya and Nayak styles. This temple has been placed with a number of stone inscriptions. The most important stone inscriptions are those of Veera Pandyan who reigned about 950 A.D. and those of Rajendran I and Kulotunga Chola.\textsuperscript{22}

Ammainathaswamy temple at Cheranmahadevi is quite ancient and popular among the common people of this area. There are many inscriptions belonging to the days of Rajaraja I on the walls of the temple. The gopuram at the main entrance is a five-tiered one and its height is 63 feet. There are \textit{Ardhamandapa} and \textit{Manimandapa}, which have many sculptures depicting the great efforts made by Cholas and Pandyas for art and architecture.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Pandya Style}

The most conspicuous feature of the Pandya style was the emergence of the monumental gateway or \textit{gopuram}, which dwarfed the towered sanctuary and became the dominating feature of the complex. The gateways were treated with rich plastic decoration.\textsuperscript{24} Dravidian style of architecture reached its pinnacle during the period of Pandyas. In each temple there were a number of

\textsuperscript{22} Swamy Nellaiappar and Sri Kanthimathi Ambal Temple: Short History, Temple Publication, Tirunelveli, 1996.


\textsuperscript{24} R. Venkatraman, \textit{History of Indian Temple Architecture}, New Delhi, 1968, p.211.
prakaras, shrines for different deities and the huge towers. There are the imposing elements belonging to the temple architecture from the seventh century onwards. \textsuperscript{25} Malayadikkurichi inscription and Anaimalai Narasinga Perumal temple inscription reveal the development of temple architecture under the Pandyas. Malayadikkurichi cave temple, the Anaimalai Narasingaperumal temple, Tirupparamkuntram Subramanya temple, the Tenparankuntram Umayandevar temple, the Kalugumalai Subramanya cave temple, the cave temple at Sivalapperi, Sendanmaram, Thirukkolakka, Chokkampathi are renowned examples of the Pandya period. \textsuperscript{26}

Tiruthalinatha temple at Tirppattur, Ambasamudram temple at Erichchamudayar, Valiswara temple at Thiruvaliswaram, Madurai Kudal Alagar temple, Tirukkoshtiyur Sowmiya Narayana temple, Kurrianatha temples are the best examples of the Pandya period on structural stone temples. They adopted Nagara and Dravida styles in their structures. The Pandya Kings devoted their reign for the construction of the Prakaras of Srirangam, Chidambaram, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Tenkasi temples. The decorated pillars, flower shape motifs and the corbels are known for their artistic value. \textsuperscript{27}

Thirukkurungudi Perumal temple is another milestone in the history of Pandya architecture and dates back at least to 700 A.D. The gopuram of this temple is a huge one with five tiers. The sirpamandapam is really a storehouse

\textsuperscript{25} Idem.
\textsuperscript{26} Percy Brown, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 113
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., pp.345-346.
of art and architecture. The *gopuram* is exquisite beauty and feast to the eyes of the art lovers. This *mandapam* with 16 pillars, the figures of dancer at the *rathi mandapam*, gypsy at the *sirpa mandapam*, the magnificent images are the contribution of Nayaks and the Vijayanagar rulers. Particularly, Krishnadevaraya the master builder of South India contributed a lot to the development of this temple. Ambasamudram Thiruppudaimarudur temple has four important styles of temple architecture viz. Pandya, Chera, Chola, and Vijayanagara styles.

**Nayak Style**

The South Indian architecture reached its climax under the patronage of the Nayaks of Madurai. During this period, the *gopuram* reached its pinnacle attained a height of ten to over 150 ft, showing as many as sixteen stories. The decoration of pillars with rearing dragons and fanciful animals became almost an obsession. Further, this style is characterized by a profuse use of figure sculpture and integration of confronted figures with the architectural scheme. This style is illustrated by temples at Srirangam and Jambukesvara, both near Tiruvannamalai, Srivilliputtur and Madurai.

The Venkadachalapathy temple of Krishnapuram is one of few specimen depicting the architectural marvel and grandeur. It is indeed a treasure house of stone sculptures. Many rare intricately carved sculptures made of granite stone are fine exhibits of architectural skill. This temple was built during the reign of

---

28 Idem.
29 Ibid., pp. 349-350.
the King Krishnappa Nayak of the Nayak Dynasty during the latter half of this 16th century (1565 A.D.) It is said that the wonderful collections of sculptures are found during the Nayak King Krishnappa Nayak on his own styles.\(^{30}\)

Another important temple of Nanguneri in Tirunelveli District is Vanamamalai Perumal temple. This temple is famous for the super architectural, the 200 feet ornamental *gopuram*. This is more influenced by the Vijayanagar and Nayak style. The architecture in this temple is a mixture of both Pandya and the Dravidian styles.\(^{31}\)

**Indo-Islamic Architecture**

India is a renowned country known for the development of architecture. It is an indigenous one and developed gradually through the ages. Before the advent of the Muslims, the Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical styles of architecture were so prominent and popular. The Muslim invaders were not mere conquerors but they contributed to the culture, art and architecture. Most of them were builders and they had taste in art and of architecture. The architecture introduced by them comprises of original and mixed elements of both foreign and native styles. They introduced their own themes along with the absorbed Hindu ideas. The Islamic architecture is having massive and extensive buildings. The mosques are having fall minarets, lofts portals and open country.\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\) *The Hindu*, (English daily), 2 December, 1994.


\(^{32}\) Percy Brown, *op.cit.*, p.117.
Qutb-ud-din Aibak was the first ruler of the Slave Dynasty, who introduced the Islamic architecture in India. The rulers constructed Kutub Minar, Quwat-ul-Islam Mosque at Delhi, the Dhai Dinka and Johnpara. They testify to the introduction of Sultanate architecture. The architectural monument stands for beauty, quality and stability. The Jami Masjid is a wonderful outcome of Delhi architecture. The Mausoleum of Iltumish of old Delhi, the Red Palace of Balban are standing for their unique style. The Palace of Hazar Situm, the City of Siri, the Jamaitkhan tomb, the Dargah of Nizamuddin, the Alai Darwazah, the Kutb Minar, Hauz-I-Alai and Hauz-I-Khas are the works of Alauddin. These are the depictions of the Arabic style of architecture.\(^{33}\)

During the reign of Tughlaks, the rulers continued their devotion to architecture. Tughlagabad of Ghiyas Uddin Tughlak, Jahanpanah and Fortress of Allahabad are the works of Mohammed-Bin-Tughlak. They renovated the old buildings and adopted Hindu forms in the pillars, doors, windows and brackets which are known for their simplicity.\(^{34}\)

The Great Mughals were eminent builders and showed zeal and enthusiasm in promoting buildings. In the first phase, the red stones were used in buildings but in the end of the subsequent age, red stones were replaced by white marbles. Shahjahan was mostly responsible for the use of white marbles as decorative elements. The Taj Mahal is an excellent specimen.\(^{35}\)

\(^{33}\) Lavkush Mishra, *Cultural Tourism in India*, New Delhi, 1992, p.115.

\(^{34}\) Percy Brown, *op.cit.*, p.118.

**Indo-European Architecture**

The advent of Europeans also witnessed the development of architecture in India. The Portuguese who came and settled in the west coast of the Peninsular India constructed churches and palaces. They are the specimen of Gothic style of architecture. In general, the Europeans constructed buildings during the 17th and 18th centuries on Islamic style. In the provincial headquarters such as Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta, they adopted the style called the European style. The Indian buildings exhibited the contribution of Gothic, Roman and Victorian architecture. As the westerners had a sound footing in India, their style of architecture began to gain grounds gradually.\(^{36}\) The above styles are associated and witnessed the development of architecture in Tirunelveli District. There are about more than fifty Hindu, Christian and Islamic buildings to worship. And they were constructed all over the District.

After the arrival of Christianity in Tirunelveli District, the Christian Missionaries showed much interest in constructing churches in the European style. In 1826, Rev Rhenius used one of the small houses for conducting prayers, this house was demolished, and a beautiful church was constructed in its place. This church, which resembles the church of Jerusalem, has undergone many renovation works at regular intervals.\(^{37}\)

---

\(^{36}\) P.N. Chopra, *The India Do Not Know*, New Delhi, 1982, p.231.

Holy Trinity Cathedral\textsuperscript{38} church, Palayamkottai, is one of the oldest churches in Tirunelveli, and the scene of several memorable services all through its long history. It is situated on the highway connecting the twin cities of Palayamkottai and Tirunelveli. The church foundation was laid on 3 January 1826 by Munroe, the then District Collector, and completed in 175 days, and then it was opened for worship on 26 June 1826.\textsuperscript{39} The extension works were carried out in 1841 and 1844. It added the lofty tower (155 feet high) out, topping the Pagodas of the neighbouring Hindu temples, which has since been a landmark in the whole District. A porch in Greek style was added in 1846.\textsuperscript{40} Holy Trinity church, Sawyerpuram is the next oldest church derives its name from Samuel Sawyer, an Anglo Indian layman in the employer of the British East India Company. The stained glass windows of its alter are of rare artistic value.\textsuperscript{41} In 1847 Rev. Edward Sergeant who was later the Assistant Bishop of Tirunelveli, worked as Missionary in Suvishesapuram from 1847 to 1854 built a church there in 1847. It has four towers, built it in the Indo European style.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Holy Trinity Church}, Palayamkottai is to the Tirunelveli Christians what the temple at Jerusalem is to the Jews, on this great occasion of the Bicentenary of the Church is welcomes once again to its precincts the thousands who will be Joining in prayer and praise to God who still leads them even as. He did their forfathers in days of old.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{38} R. Caldwell, History of Tinnevelly, 1982, p.281.

\textsuperscript{39} Report from Rev. S.Savaridoss, Incumbent, Palayamkottai., Dated, 5 April, 2008.

\textsuperscript{40} D.S. George Muller and R.S. Jacob, \textit{Bicentenary of the Tirunelveli Church} (1780 – 1980), Souvenir, Palayamkottai, 1980, p.18.

\textsuperscript{41} D.S.George Muller, \textit{op.cit.}, p.22..

\textsuperscript{42} D.S.George Muller, \textit{op.cit.}, p.33.
PAINTINGS

Painting, an important fine art developed in Tamil Nadu. It was a tradition, which grew out of humble beginning in Proto-historic times and reached splendid heights in the Imperial Pandya period.\textsuperscript{43} Natural objects especially flowers, divine damsels seated on flowers and similar themes were familiar to them. Paintings decorated the abodes of the wealthy and possibly of the Gods as well.\textsuperscript{44} The Pandyas, Imperial Cholas, and the Nayaks were the experts in painting and offered attention of the temple and have decorated them with paintings of deities and devotees according to the puranic stories. As well in Tirunelveli District, temples are depicted with great painting works in front of the temples, walls and the pillars.\textsuperscript{45}

Thirukutralanathar Temple of Courtallam dedicated to Lord Siva has a separate \textit{Chithrasabha} (Hall of Pictures) decorated with mural paintings of deities and devotees. This \textit{sabha} is one of the five \textit{sabhas}, where Lord Nataraja is in a cosmic dancing pose. In front of this copper roofed \textit{sabha} a lily pond with a heavily ornamented \textit{gopuram} is there. Nearby, is the Kooththanar temple, said to be the predecessor of the present main temple. The giant compound walls of the temple, the north and south gates and the choultry are testimony to the grandeur and artistic work of yester years.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} N. Subramanian, \textit{History of Tamil Nadu}, Madurai, 1972, p.418.
\textsuperscript{44} A.L. Basham, \textit{Wonder That was India}, New Delhi, 2002, p.81.
\textsuperscript{45} N. Subramanian, \textit{op.cit.}, p.421.
Another important temple is Thirukkurungudi, situated 43 km. from Tirunelveli and to the south of Ervadi from 5 K.M. It is found at the feet of the Mahendragiri peak, which remains as a border of Kerala.\footnote{S.M.L. Lakshmanan Chettiar, \textit{Tirunelveli Mavattam}, (Tamil) Chennai, 1965, p.306.} It is one of the 108 \textit{Divyaksetras} held sacred by the \textit{Vaishnavites}. The temple with more magnificent artwork is dedicated to Lord Vaishnava Nambi. This temple is a milestone in the history of Pandya architecture and dates back at least to 700 A.D. The \textit{gopuram} is exquisite beauty and feast to the eyes of the art lovers. The magnificent images found in this temple are the contribution of the Nayaks and the Vijayanagar rulers.\footnote{Census of India 1961, Vol.IX, Temples of Madras State, Kanyakumari Tirunelveli, Madras, pp. 406-409.} Particularly these temples have many inscription and copper plates, mentioned about the Pandya Kings Maravarman Sundarapandyan, Maranchadayyan, Vijayanagara Sadasivarayar and Thiruvidangur Adityavarmar. The paintings decorated with the story of Ramayana and Mahabharata depicted in front of the temple.\footnote{S.M.L. Lakshmanan Chettiar, \textit{op.cit.}, p.307.}

Thiruppudaimarudur Narambunathaswamy temple brings the beauty of four important styles like Pandya, Chera, Chola and Vijayanagara.\footnote{Ibid., p.313.} In the inner \textit{gopuram}, there are images depicting scenes from Ramayana and
Mahabharatha. In the tower, eloquent paintings which portray the Saivite mythology can be seen. These paintings belonged to the 16th century A.D.⁵¹

HANDICRAFTS

Pattamadai Paai

The village Pattamadai is so popular for its fine mats. It is situated 3.2 km from Cheranmahadevi in Ambasamudram taluk. It is connected by the trunk road between Palayamkottai and Shencottai and lies 22 km west of Palayamkottai⁵². Mat making is a popular handicraft work in this village. This is an important centre of mat making all over Tamil Nadu. The raw material used for the manufacture of paai wild korai grass grows on its banks of the river Tamiraparani. This industry was almost the sole monopoly of about 61 Lebbai Muslim families in the Pattamadai. Even though, there are many Rowther Muslims who engage themselves in making of ordinary mats, fine mats are produced only by the Lebbais. The korai grass "Cyperas" growing wild on the banks of the river Tamiraparani is called Taruvai village.

Pattamadai taruvai is most suited for high count weaving and forms the main raw materials for weaving fine mats. The mats are made of varying sizes and thickness. Fine mats have the weft being of korai grass and wrap of cotton or even silk threads of 80 to 100 counts. The surface of the mat is softer than silk. It can be folded like cloth and carried in a man’s fist, if rolled like a

⁵¹ Census of India, Tirunelveli, 2008, p.18.
stick. Weavers in Pattamadai show great skill and the fine specimen of mats have become famous throughout India and abroad.

Pattamadai is for centuries a world-renowned centre for the production of exquisite quality silk mats, and some of the super fine mats could be folded like a saree. The mats of Pattamadai have won world fame. It had the honour of sending a hand woven superfine silk mat to Queen Elizabeth–11 on her coronation in 1953. The mat, made on a special order, had very cost even in those days it was Rs. 985/-. The skill of the artisans of pattamadai impressed many dignitaries from various countries including the former USSR president Mickail Gorbachev as also the leaders of India.

In 1946, the Governor of the Erstwhile, Madras province, Archibald Nye accompanied by his wife, visited Pattamadai to see for himself how these mats were being manufactured. Some years ago the mat weavers of Pattamadai also got a bulk order from West Germany for the supply of beach mats for sun bathing. The artisans of Pattamadai have also taken part in many all India crafts fair held in different parts of the country and also in the training programmes organized by the all India Handicrafts Board53.

Karukurichi Terracotta

Karukurichi is popular in terracotta centre which forms a part and parcel of handicrafts enlightens the cultural heritage of the people. Made from

the fine clay available locally they speak the artistic value in and out of the
country skill and dexterity of the artisans. Though this centre is a small one has
widespread popularity all over India. It employs few local people mainly
women\textsuperscript{54}.

**Vagaikulam Lamps**

Tamil Nadu was one of the leading states in the Country in the
production of exquisite lamps of different shapes, sizes and designs. Beautiful
artistic lamps and temple bells are produced at Vagaikulam in Tirunelveli
district. This village is a remote place about five km from Ambasamudram.
Many artisans in the village are masters in the art of manufacturing lamps of
numerous varieties with skill that has been passed on from generation to
generation. In unbroken tradition, craftsmen created beautiful lamps in metal,
terracotta and stone. There are lamps for use in worship at home, lamps for
temple rituals and lamps for use as decorative pieces. There are standing
lamps, swinging lamps, pedestal lamps and hand lamps, lamps with birds and
flowers, with a single flame and with many wicks are manufactured here. The
availability of the fine alluvial soil in the Tamiraparani riverbed, situated near
the village, promotes the craft in this part of the district. There are about 60
private brass lamps and other production units in Vagaikulam which cater to
the needs of private business houses\textsuperscript{55}.


\textsuperscript{55} Superintendent, Poompuhar Brass and Bell Matel Centre, Ayikudi, report dated
5\textsuperscript{th} March 1996.
**Palmyra Mats**

Palmyra mats are common in places where the Palmyra tree is plentiful and the women folk of the tapper’s families during the off season employ themselves in making mats, baskets and other useful articles. Mats of a coarse texture are manufactured by Muslim women and sent to Pettai near Tirunelveli for local use mostly for packing goods for transport. Smaller coarse mats are in much demand in Calicut for packing fish. Nadar women also take to the weaving of Palmyra mats.\(^56\)

There were about 77 lakhs of Palmyra trees in the District. About 0.39 lakh of people were engaged in various industries connected with Palmyra trees production, of Palmyra Jaggery, fibre products, palm leaf products, supply of palm seeds and Palmyra candy.\(^57\) The Khadi and Village Industries Commissions sanctioned financial assistance for the development of Palmyra Industry in Tamil Nadu through the Tamil Nadu State Khadi and Village Industries Board.\(^58\) In Tirunelveli over all about 170 Jaggery Manufacturing Cooperative Society was functioned up to 1995. The State Government has undertaken through the state Federation, processing and exporting of palm

---

\(^56\) Report from Executive Officer, The Tamil Nadu State Palmgur and Fibre Marketing Cooperative Federation Ltd., Chennai, Dated 31 March 1995.

\(^57\) Report from Executive Officer, The Tamil Nadu State Palmgur and Fibre Marketing Cooperative Federation Ltd., Chennai, on 22 September 1997.

products to foreign countries.⁵⁹ For the encouragement of the workers the State
Government gave the loan and subsidy were disbursed to the Palmyra artisans
under I.R.D.P. schemes. Now there is no schemes implement relating to
Palmyra with the assistance of the District Federations. Hence it has been
weakened stage in the palm production in the District.⁶⁰

---

⁵⁹ Report from Project Officer, The Tamil Nadu Handi Cratts Development
Corporation Ltd., Chennai, Dated 5 May 1994.

⁶⁰ Interview with the Special Officer, Palmgur Federation, Tirunelveli
Kanyakumari Districts, Dated 14th May 2009.