INTRODUCTION

1. General

Pudukkóttai has a hoary past and is rich in arts right from the prehistoric period. Pudukkóttai is indeed a museum of South Indian Art and Architecture and can be called an archaeologists paradise.

Pudukkóttai District has the largest number of monuments in Tamil Nadu. There are more than a hundred temples and sites of ancient renown built by various dynasties that ruled this part of the territory. Every one of them has a special feature for itself. Most of the ancient temples and sites are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Remains Act and are under the control of the Archaeological Survey of India. Some of the ancient temples are open for worship even to this day.

But except for a few monuments most of them are little known. The architectural forms in the District range from the cave temple phase to the karrali stage of the early pallava, Pándyas and Cholas and continue in different styles dating up to the 17-18th centuries. The development of temple architecture in Tamil Nadu can be studied conveniently through these monuments. These monuments carry more than 1000 inscriptions, a glimpse of which gives a picture of the socio-political conditions of the region. They are a repository of our cultural heritage, unfortunately not visited by many. It is the cherished aim of this book to popularise them.

In its small area, Pudukkóttai has all the main representative of Dravidian architecture. The Pallava, Pándya, Chola, Vijayanagar and Náyák, styles are all present here at an optimal level of excellence presenting an open ground to all these dynastic styles for experimentation, demonstration and comprehensive display.
The development of Cave temples originated in Pallava period found its extension in Pudukkóttai District. The monolithic cave temples of regular plan and shape, the largest in number compared with other districts, are found in Pudukkóttai they are found at Śittanavášal, Thirugókarnam, Thirumayam, Malayakkóvil, Narthamalai, Kunnandarkóvil, Malyadippattim, Devermalai, Puvalaikudi and Mangadu. Sittannavasal is 16 K.M. from Pudukkóttai. Śittanavášal paintings is world famous.

2. Need for Research

Tourism Department of Tamil Nadu, registers every year, nearly 6000 to 7000 tourists from all over India and abroad, who visit Pudukkóttai. Nearly 25% of them are from Asian countries like France, Jermeny, Japan etc. The purpose of their visit is not merely Tour but also Research work.

The abundance of megalithic burial monuments as well as the jana movements. Art and Architecture attracted them to visit Pudukkóttai to discover more information regarding them. Through tourism visit Pudukkóttai all through the Year, their inflow is high during February, March Especially, Money, Economy of Pudukkóttai does increase in proportion to the increase of the visitors to the District.

It goes without saying that there has to be cultural exposure as well as cultural exchange due to the visit of Tourist. There should be considerable in come of Foreign exchange to India due to the Visit of foreigners to these Tourist resources Apart from these foreign. The findings of this Research work will encourage and enhance Tourism in Pudukkóttai District and also expose our cultural highness to the outside world.
3. Aim of Research work

Very few know that the Pudukkóttai, a district of TamilNadu State in India, is a treasure house of archelogical and cultural monuments. The Department of Archeological Survey of India, and the Department of tourism of Tamil Nadu pay special attention to the monuments found in this District.

The Present thesis makes an attempt to study all the important monuments of Pudukkóttai, and try to bring out their comparative value. The First Chapter brings out the important events in the history of Pudukkóttai, The Second Chapter compares all important cave temples, The Third Chapter compares all important structural temples, The Fourth Chapter compares sculptures of all important temples and the last and The Fifth Chapter evaluates the special features of paintings found in the temples of Pudukkóttai. The thesis consists of an introduction and a conclusion.

4. Research Method adopted

More than one method are used in this Research work. The Field Survey Method used to study all the temples of Pudukkóttai. Every Temple is visited personally by the Researcher and necessary material including Photography are collected during the field Survey. The observation method adopted to Identify the details of Sculpture and paintings with their distinguishing features. Analytic method is used to study the earlier research works done on the subject and to incorporate necessary details in the present work. Thus integrated Methodology is adopted in this Research work.
5. Special contribution of the Research

Abundance of innovations and Research work have been done consistently for a long time in and around Pudukkōttaí. Valuable information’s and findings are brought to light continuously, from time to time with regard to its artistically and cultural wealth. The common feature of all these Researches in local and particular. That is to say that these Researches are concentrated towards, either localised area such as Neolithic burial Grounds or towards one or few temples together. Some works are done on cave temples alone, or structural Temples or Jaina, Vainava, Śiva Temples Separately.

This present research work, differs from alone mentioned works in its theme that it aims at the general as well as distinguishing features of almost all Temples of Pudukkōttaí. It compares various aspects of cultural and Artistically elements of the All Temples of Pudukkōttaí are brought under two heads namely structural and Rock-cut cave Temples and compared and contested for the same way.

The comparative value of sculptures and paintings found in the temples are also brought to light I am short, the thesis is a compendium with a comparative status of Art and Architectural elements present in the temples of Pudukkōttaí.