

## **Art and Architecture in Tamilnadu**

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### **Abstract**

Architecture planning Vidiyal is especially meant for royal families and Pothuvidiyal is meant for the public. Later on this convention had disappeared. The kings also patronized the art of drawing and painting. All over Tamil Nadu we can see temples, small and big, and almost all the temples are decorated by drawings and paintings. It appears that in the period of Alvars (alvaarkal) and Nayanmars (naayanmaarkal), the native system of music was retained with some deviations. The greatest accomplishments of the Pallava architecture are the rock-cut temples at Mahabalipuram. The first three among the above four temples are titled Great Living Chola Temples among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Pallava art and architecture represent an early stage of Dravidian art and architecture which blossomed to its fullest extent under the Chola Dynasty. Pallava architecture can be sub-divided into two phases - the rock cut phase and the structural phase.

### **Introduction**

Architecture is both the process and the product of planning, designing, and constructing buildings and other physical structures. Architectural works, in the material form of buildings, are often perceived as cultural symbols and as works of art. Historical civilizations are often identified with their surviving architectural achievements.

"Architecture" can mean

- A general term to describe buildings and other physical structures.<sup>[3]</sup>
- The art and science of designing buildings and (some) nonbuilding structures.<sup>[3]</sup>
- The style of design and method of construction of buildings and other physical structures.<sup>[3]</sup>
- A unifying or coherent form or structure<sup>[4]</sup>
- Knowledge of art, science, technology, and humanity.<sup>[3]</sup>
- The design activity of the architect,<sup>[3]</sup> from the macro-level (urban design, landscape architecture) to the micro-level (construction details and furniture). The practice of the architect, where architecture means offering or rendering professional services in connection with the design and construction of buildings, or built environments.<sup>[5]</sup>

### **Dance**

Tamil is broadly classified into Iyal (iyal) „prose“ , Isai (icai) „poetry“ and Nadakam (naatakam) „drama“ . Nattiyam (naattiyam) or Kuthu (kuuttu) is mainly concerned with dance. The ancient Tamils had two kinds of Kuthu: (1) Vetiyal (veetiyal) and (2) Podhuviyal (potuviyal). Vetiyal is especially meant for royal families and Podhuviyal is meant for the public. Later on this convention had disappeared. Since the kings had slowly lost their power the arts patronized by them also gradually lost their glamour. Thus the Vetiyal (veetiyal) type of drama became extinct. The ancient Tamil country is the home of the classical dance known as `paratanaatyam“ “Bharata Natyam.” Drama and dance gradually emerged as two different branches. In 1960s and 1970s cinema has overshadowed drama.

### **Drawing and Painting**

The kings also patronized the art of drawing and painting. All over Tamil Nadu we can see temples, small and big, and almost all the temples are decorated by drawings and paintings. The paintings at Cithannavasal (cittannavaasal) near Pudhukkottai are worth seeing.

Architecture and Scripture Tamil Nadu is famous for huge temples and marvelous gopurams „temple tower“ . Rajarajan, the Chula king, constructed a temple in Tanjavur. This temple gopuram is very tall and it is called Thanjaipperiya Koil (tancaipperiya Kooyil) “the big temple of Tanjavur.” His son Rajendra Chola, who subdued the rulers of the region up to the river Ganges, constructed another big temple in Gangai Konda Cholapuram (kankai konta coolapuram). Except that the Thanjai periya Koil (tancaip periya kooyil) is bigger in size than the temple in Gangai Konda Cholapuram, they are exactly similar. The former was named as “Rajarajeswaram” and the latter was named as “Gangai Kondacholeswaram.” These temples are famous for the huge nandis (bulls) and lingams. The temples of Madurai Meenakshi Amman, Kanchipuram Varadharajapperumal, and Chidambaram Natarajar are worth seeing. The skill of Tamils in architecture and sculpture can be seen in these temples. The five cars carved in rocks at Mahabalipuram are extremely beautiful. There are also other works that show the skill of Tamils in sculpture. The Collections of Vighrahas „ icons“ , statues, drawings and paintings, etc.,

### **Importance of Architecture**

The ancient Tamils had their own music system and musical instruments. They had five kinds of Pan (pan), namely Mullai (mullai), Kurinji (kurinci), Marudham (marutam), Neythal (neytal) and Palai (paalai). Apart from this, they had seven musical notes, viz., Kural (kural), Thuttam ((tuttam), Kaykkilai (kaikkilai), Uzhai (ulai), ili (ili), Vilari (vilari) and Tharam (taaram). These seven notes might be roughly equated with the seven modern musical notes sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da, and ni. They had their famous yazhs (yaalkal) that are comparable with the modern Veena (veena), Periyazh (periyaal), Maharahazh (makarayaal), Sengattuyazh (cenkoottuyaal), Sagottaiyazh (cakootai) and Siriyazh (ciiriyaal) are the names denoting different kinds of Yazhs (yaalkal). We learn through the Sangam works that the Tamils had many other musical instruments.

It appears that in the period of Alvars (alvaarkal) and Nayanmars (naayanmaarkal), the native system of music was retained with some deviations. In the year 1943 the patron of Tamil language, literature and arts, Dr. Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar started the Tamil Music Academy (Tamil icai cankam) at madras and thereby he attempted to restore and enrich the Tamil music.

### **Rock-cut Architecture**

The Pallavas ruled from AD (600–900) and their greatest constructed accomplishments are the single rock temples in Mahabalipuram and their capital Kanchipuram, now located in Tamil Nadu. Pallavas were pioneers of south Indian architecture. The greatest accomplishments of the Pallava architecture are the rock-cut temples at Mahabalipuram. There are excavated pillared halls and monolithic shrines known as rathas in Mahabalipuram. Mention must be made here of the Shore Temple constructed by Narasimhavarman II near Mahabalipuram which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

### **Chola Architecture**

The Chola kings ruled from AD (848–1280) and included Rajaraja Chola I and his son Rajendra Chola who built temples such as the Brihadeshvara Temple of Tanjavur and

Brihadeshvara Temple of Gangaikonda Cholapuram, the Airavatesvara Temple of Darasuram and the Sarabeswara (Shiva )Temple, also called the Kampahareswarar Temple at Thirubhuvanam, the last two temples being located near Kumbakonam. The first three among the above four temples are titled Great Living Chola Temples among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The Cholas were prolific temple builders right from the times of the first king Vijayalaya Chola after whom the eclectic chain of Vijayalaya Chozhisvaram temple near Narttamalai exists.

### **Pallava Art and Architecture**

Pallava art and architecture represent an early stage of Dravidian art and architecture which blossomed to its fullest extent under the Chola Dynasty. The first stone and mortar temples of South India were constructed during Pallava rule and were based on earlier brick and timber prototypes.

Starting with rock cut temples, Pallava sculptors later graduated to free-standing structural shrines which inspired Chola temples of a later age. Some of the best examples of Pallava art and architecture are the Kailasanathar Temple at Kanchipuram, the Shore Temple and the Pancha Rathas of Mahabalipuram. Akshara was the greatest sculptor of their time.

### **Architectural importance of Pallavas**

Pallava architecture can be sub-divided into two phases - the rock cut phase and the structural phase. The rock cut phase lasted from the 610 to 668 AD and consisted of two groups of monuments - the Mahendra group and the Mamalla group. The Mahendra group is the name given to monuments constructed during the reign of Mahendravarman I (610 - 630 AD). The monuments of this group are invariably pillared halls hewn out of mountain faces. These pillared halls or mandapas follow the prototype of Jain temples of the period. The best examples of Mahendra group of monuments are the cave temples at Mandagapattu, Pallavaram and Mamandur.

The second group of rock cut monuments belong to the Mamalla group (630 to 668 AD). During this period free-standing monolithic shrines called *rathas* were constructed alongside pillared halls. Some of the best examples of this style are the Pancha Rathas and Arjuna's Penance at Mahabalipuram.

The second phase of Pallava architecture is the structural phase when free-standing shrines were constructed with stone and mortar brought in for the purpose. Monuments of this phase are of two groups - the Rajasimha group (690 to 800 AD) and the Nandivarman group (800 to 900 AD). The Rajasimha group encompasses the early structural temples of the Pallavas when a lot of experimentation was carried out. The best examples of this period are the Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram and the Kanchi Kailasanathar Temple at Kanchipuram both constructed by Narasimhavarman II who was known as Rajasimha. The best example of the Nandivarman group of monuments is the Vaikunta Perumal Temple at Kanchipuram. During this period, Pallava architecture attained full maturity and provided the models upon which the massive Brihadeeswarar Temple of the Cholas at Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram and various other architectural works of note were constructed.

### **End Notes**

1. Dr.K.rajayyan, History of TamilNadu, Pg. 56
2. Dr.K.A.Nilakanda Sastri, History of South India, Pg. 82

3. Dr.J.Dharmaraj, History of Tamilnadu 1336 A.D, Pg. 38
4. Dr.B.Gomathinayagam, History of Tamilnadu 1565 A.D, Pg. 94