

# **Chapter I**

## **Genesis**

---

# CHAPTER I

## GENESIS

### History of Temples

Sangam architecture can be divided into three major categories Temple, Palace, and other buildings. Koil, Niyamam, Nagar, Kottam, Palli are found in the Sangam literature. There are also special names like Thali and Danam. Inscriptions refer to the temples dedicated to Lord Shiva as Echuram (Isvaragruham) and the Vishnu temple as Vinnarkaram (Vishnugruham). A temple built in brick is called “Manthali” and a temple built in stone is called “Katrali”.<sup>1</sup>

The hut-like temples are called “Gutsai koil”. The sanctum sanctorum is on the upper floor instead of the lower floor and it is called “Madakoils”. Temples, shaped like a sleeping elephant, are called “Thunkanaimadam”.<sup>2</sup> It is divided into three divisions, namely, Dravida, Vesaram and Nagaram, based on the Sikhara system of the vimana. If the peaks above the Vimanas are eight banded, they are called “Dravidian”. Four banded is called “Nagaram” and a round one is called “Vesaram”. Some texts refer to the temple system, in the northern part of India, as Nagaram, in the southern part, as Dravida and in between, as Vesaram.<sup>3</sup>

Many kings have erected temples to commemorate their victories. Vijayaditya II, a Chalukya king, won 108 battles with his sword, in about 12 years. To celebrate this victory, this king had built temples in 108 places where he fought. Inscriptions indicate that Vijayalayan, who was responsible for the revival of the Chola Empire, captured Tanjapuri and built a temple for Nisumba Suthani there.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Nagaswamy R, Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.1

<sup>2</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.9

<sup>3</sup> Srinivasan K.R, Temples of South India (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.29

<sup>4</sup> Stein Burton, South Indian temples (New Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1978), pp.32-35

Rajendracholan I was the most successful of the kings of Tamil Nadu. He crossed the sea and conquered Gadara and many islands. He built a city as an example of this great victory and created an immortal temple of victory there. That is Gangaikonda Choleechuram. Similarly, Kulothunga Chola III also established a great temple at Tribhuvanam as a monument to his victory.<sup>5</sup>

Queens also have built great temples. Rangapathagai, consort of Rajasimha, the Pallava king, who reigned in Kanchipuram, built a magnificent temple in front of the Kailayanathar Temple, built by Rajasimha. Vikramaditya II invaded Kanji three times. In honor of this invasion Lokamahadevi, the queen of Vikramaditya II, built a Shiva temple at Pattadakal. The name of the temple is “Lokamahadeveichuram”, now called ‘Virupakshar Temple’. Chola Emperor Rajaraja’s sister, Kundaivai Pratiyar, encouraged Rajarajan in building temples. This was attested by Rajarajan who maintained that “we have given, our sister has given, our girls have given, and they have given”, in the construction of the Big Temple. This king had a queen, named Thandishaktividangi, who also had another name as Lokamahadevi. She erected a shrine in the Iyarapar Temple in Tiruvaiyar. It is called “Lokamahadeveichuram”.<sup>6</sup>

It is a southern tradition to erect stones in memory of the elders who died and also the soldiers who died in battle. It is customary to build a temple there. This is called “Palli”. There are many such cases of Palli in Tamil Nadu. Adita Chola I died in Thondaimanadu near Kalahasti. His son, Parantaka Chola built a temple there. In Thirunallam and Konerirajapuram, temples were built in memory of Kandaradithan by his wife, Sempiyar Mathewiyar. Similarly, temples were built for many kings like Sundaracholan,

---

<sup>5</sup> Balasubrahmanyam S.R, Later chola temples (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1979), p.17

<sup>6</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.39

Vikramacholan etc. It is a tradition of hero stone worship for wives, who died along with their deceased husbands.<sup>7</sup>

### **Vastu Sastras**

There were Vastu Sastras, which were systematically compiled during the Sangam Period. Literary texts such as “Mukil Thoi Madam of the Nulors”, indicate that there were books on sculpture and sculptors at that time. There were scholars, who knew architectural texts, to design such temples and palaces.<sup>8</sup> Nedunalwadi calls them “Nulari Pulavar”. In many inscriptions, there is evidence that the temples were built according to the Vastu texts.

### **Agamas**

Agama texts are books, that refer to the methods of consecrating deity images in temples and performing ceremonies. Man considered that what he wore, ate, and enjoyed were due to the grace of the Lord. The worship consists of many parts, such as asking the gods to be present in images, offering asanas, offering water, sandalwood, putting garlands, delicious food, listening to music, chanting etc. The Agama scriptures also indicate the way various festivals are held annually. In the Tamil text ‘Paribadal’ these are marked as “Vithinool”.<sup>9</sup>

### **Sculpture books**

Sculptural texts are books, that provide guidance for carving the images of deities as sculptures, at various levels, making them with clay and painting them with colour. There are many sculpture texts like Kasyapam, Sarasvatam, Brahmiyam etc. The Chalukya king, Vikramadityan, composed a great book, called Manasollasam.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Subramanyam S.V, Heritage of the Tamails (Madras: International Institute of Tamil studies, 1983), p.7

<sup>8</sup> Nagaswamy R, Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.59

<sup>9</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.53

<sup>10</sup> Arnason Harvard, History of modern art: painting, sculpture, architecture (New Yoke, USA: H. Abrams, 1977), p.9

## **Temple Structure**

Temple has many parts like Vimana, Intersection, Munmandapam, Mahamandapam, Thiruchuttu, Parivarakoil, Gopuravail. The supporting parts of the building are 1. Aditanam (pedestal), 2. Suvar (leg), 3. Prastram (roof), 4. Neck (grivam) 5. Sikaram (head), 6. Kudam (stupa). These parts are likened to human body parts like feet, legs, shoulders, neck, head and hair.<sup>11</sup>

## **Selection of Place**

The science of building temples, palaces and other habitations had developed among the Tamil people since the Sanga Period.<sup>12</sup> Generally, a Shiva temple should be located in the center of a town. Tirumal temple should be located in the west, Amman temple in the north and Ayyanar temples should be located in the south. This can be seen in many towns.

## **Soil Testing**

One square foot pit should be dug in the selected area and filled with water in the evening. The next morning, if the water is not completely absorbed, or if it is muddy, the soil is fertile. If it is completely waterlogged, then the land is not suitable for building a temple.<sup>13</sup> The smell, taste and surface of the soil in the selected place should also be tested and known. Colour, taste, smell, growing plant, tree, sound, hardness, softness should be explored.

---

<sup>11</sup> Nagaswamy R, Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.31

<sup>12</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p. 134

<sup>13</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Op. Cit., p.135

## **Measurements**

Before constructing the temples, they calculate the measurements in several ways. This is called Ayadi Matching. Some measurements are beneficial. Hence the beneficial measurements are chosen.<sup>14</sup>

The Tamil people had a unique system of measurement for the three scales, namely, length, balance weights and fluid volumes, from ancient times. Especially the sculptors who built temples, had their own standards. It is called 'Tacha Muzham'. Chitambaram Temple, Kanchi Varadaraja Perumal Temple, Tenkarai Moolanathaswamy Temple and many other temples have such criteria engraved in stone.

## **Architects**

Temple builders are nowadays known as Sthapathis. They function as a team. They are respected in the hierarchy as Stapati, Sutragrahi, Vardhahi, etc. Sthapathi is revered as the leader and preceptor of the Silpa shastra.<sup>15</sup> The person who constructs the building, by arranging the stones and sculptures according to the specified dimensions, is called the Vardhahi and the one who holds the thread and marks the required dimensions on the stone is called the Shudragrahi.<sup>16</sup> Sculptor is one who carves various figures in stone.

## **Importance of Temples in South India**

Indian temples are not mere places of worship. Temples were designed to suit the regional needs and religious requirements and within the context of interaction or an exchange of ideas.<sup>17</sup> In their early stages of development, the organised religions of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism spread beyond the Vindhyan mountains of the South

---

<sup>14</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Op. Cit., p.140

<sup>15</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.139

<sup>16</sup> Adam Hardy, The Temple Architecture of India (New Jersey, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), p.51

<sup>17</sup> Nilakanta Sastri K.A, A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.10

India and their as well as social patterns, traditions, religious beliefs, and languages, were incorporated into our literature.<sup>18</sup>

Architectural and sculptural forms in stone were first practised by Buddhists, then by Hindus and Jains. In the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D., the Hindus and Jains of the south started excavating rock cut cave temples and carving out rock cut monolithic temple forms, and eventually built their temples out of stone. Thousands of these monuments are still standing today, especially in South India.<sup>19</sup>

The earliest Hindu and Jain temples were built with royal support, represented by the Chalukya, Pallava, and Pandya Empires. The thriving nobility, mercantile firms, agricultural trade, and guilds of artisans quickly caught up with the spirit of the times. As a result, the south was covered with a network of both large and small temples, giving the area the nickname “Land of Temples”. The history of temples is recorded by thousands of expressive and intricate inscriptions. A treasure trove of the finest architecture, sculpture and other arts can be found in temples of the Chola Period (9<sup>th</sup> Century).<sup>20</sup> It reflects rural and urban lives of the people, in their religious, cultural, social, economic, and educational activities.

Buddhism is mentioned in modern literature with other religions, particularly Hinduism and Jainism. Even at the end of the First Century A.D., there are references to the Ajivikas. It is possible that they merged with Jainism, which was predominately Digambara and had strongholds in the southern Mysore or Kannada region.

---

<sup>18</sup> Srinivasan K.R, Temples of South India (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.59

<sup>19</sup> Rasamanikkanar M, Tamilaga kudaivarai kovilgal (Chennai: Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1984), p.51

<sup>20</sup> Nilakanta Sastri K.A, A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.57

## Open Temples

The popularity of the megalithic cult is evidenced by the worship and veneration of funerary monuments, particularly the nadukal or stone erection (menheir or megalith), with offerings such as toddy and animal sacrifice, keeping lamps lit, and oblations of large quantities of boiled rice offered in heaps (Perumchoru or pavadai). According to literary evidence, the dead were believed to have changed into stone itself, which had attained divine properties. A stone could stand for a hero, a warrior, a king, or even a regular person.<sup>21</sup> Women who committed suicide by burning themselves to death with their deceased spouses, were given memorials in the form of Sati Stones, when the cult of chastity and faithfulness was quickly taking root. These stones were later referred to as Toru or Masatikkal in inscriptions (maha-sati-kal). These memorial or sati stones, also known as Chhaya-Khabas or Chaaya-Khambas, are found with inscriptions and sculptural reliefs in Andhra sites, particularly at Nagarjunakonda. They are traced to the Second to Third Centuries A.D. These have been common since the Fourth Century in the Kannada region and across the border, in the far reaches of the Tamil nation. In the early Tamil literature, the names and accomplishments of the deceased person, were inscribed on a stone erection, known as a Nadukal.<sup>22</sup> In front of this enclosed object of worship, a shield and spear were set up, along with food and toddy offerings. On the Rangasami Peak (The Nilgiris) in the Coimbatore region, there is a similar ancient structure, with an upright stone menhir, a trident or trisula planted in front, and a rubble wall surrounding it. This building is an illustration of a hypaethral temple.

---

<sup>21</sup> Srinivasan K.R, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.15

<sup>22</sup> Nagaswamy R, *Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal* (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.35



## **Early Rock Architecture**

Rock architecture was preferred because the softer trap rocks were more workable than the harder granite or gneiss found in Gaya. The Jain caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri in Orissa serve as examples of such places of worship, that were cut into the softer rocks on the Eastern Ghats, which are in the southern districts of Orissa and the northern coastal districts of Andhra.<sup>23</sup>

## **Later Rock Architecture**

At the beginning of Second Century A.D., the Brahmanical and Jain communities also began to build their temples, using the rock-cut method. This quickly gained popularity and numerous such temples were built throughout the southern region.<sup>24</sup> The beginning of three major empires on the peninsula the Pallavas of Kanchi on the eastern coast, the Pandyas of Madurai in the far south, and the Chalukyas of Vatapi (Badami) in the Deccan region, with their collateral branch, the Chalukyas of Vengi (or the Early Chalukyas) on coastal Andhra, continued this style of rock-cut temples. The best and greatest output in this area occurred during the three centuries between A.D. 550 and 850, when these three kingdoms were fierce political rivals as well as fierce rivals in the patronage of art, architecture, and literature.<sup>25</sup>

Because of the long standing local association of stone with funerary erections, there had been a persistent tradition of a taboo on sacred and secular structures. The Chalukya King, Mangalesa and the Pallava King, Mahendra I are believed to have broken this almost simultaneously.

The building of “this brickless, timberless, metalless, and mortarless abode of Lakshita for Brahma, Isvara, and Vishnu” was ordered by King Vichitrachitta. The

---

<sup>23</sup> Srinivasan K.R, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.8

<sup>24</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, *Koil Kalai* (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.43

<sup>25</sup> Mahalingam T.V, *Studies in the South Indian Temple Complex* (Dharwar: Kannada Research Institute, 1970), p.12

inscription is significant because Mahendra's construction of a stone temple, without using conventional building materials like brick, wood, metal, or mortar, broke with tradition of the period.

The Pallavas and Chalukyas thus created two parallel traditions in the south. The succeeding dynasties in the Chalukyan region of the Deccan, North Mysore, and coastal Andhra, continued to choose and use soft stone rocks for their cave temples and later for their structural temples.<sup>26</sup> People in the south continued to choose and use comparable hard rocks for their rock-cut and structural temples in the wake of the Pallavas and their contemporary Pandyas, who also dug into the region's hard rocks.

These two parallel traditions continued in the respective southern regions until the Vijayanagar Empire was founded. The distinctive regional designs and traits that had previously emerged in either region was generally maintained, but the northern region's soft stone tradition all but disappeared and hard stone was used almost exclusively to construct temples.

Significant changes were made starting in the Seventh Century, and the Bhakti Cult appeared after Hindu revivalist movements. In Tamil land, the Nayanmars and Alvars, Saiva and Vaishnava hymn singer saints, became devoted to the Vedic customs and travelled the entire area, visiting shrines and energising the populace while singing hundreds of Tamil devotional hymns. As a result, the extreme Saiva cults of the Kala Mukhas, Pasupatas, Mahesvaras, Saktas, and others were revived, Jainism's hold on the populace was weakened, and Buddhism almost perished.<sup>27</sup> Jainism had a stronghold over

---

<sup>26</sup> Soundararajan K.V, *The art of South India Tamilnadu and Kerala* (New Delhi: Sundeep prakhasan, 1978), p.25

<sup>27</sup> Rowland Benjamin, *The art and architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p.12

the Telugu and Kannada regions due to the support it received from the kings and wealthy mercantile groups.<sup>28</sup>

### **Pandya and Other Non-Pallava Cave temples of The South**

The well-known Sittannavasal rock-cut temple in Pudukkottai, which houses the renowned early mural paintings in fresco, is a Jain cave temple from the Eighth to Ninth Centuries. According to a lengthy verse inscription associated with it, this was improved by a certain Ilan Gautaman alias Madurai Asiriyar, and a structural mukha-mandapa was added in front during the reign of Avanipasekhara Sri Vallabha Pandya (c. 815-862). Jain tirthankaras are depicted in bas-relief sculptures on the shrine's back wall and in niches on the lateral walls of the front mandapa.<sup>29</sup> With taranga corbels on the facade pillars, this cave temple is a typical Pandya version of a cave temple in the Mahendra style.<sup>30</sup>

Five niches are surrounded by pilasters on the rear wall of the mandapa in the lower rock-cut cave temple at Tiruchirapalli (Pandya), with Brahma occupying the central niche and Ganesa, Subrahmanya, Surya, and Durga occupying the other four. Siva and Vishnu are honoured in the shrine cells on either side of the room. Along with Siva and Vishnu, these would comprise the gods of the Shanmata grouping, that Sankaracharya is said to have restored after reforming the existing ritual practices. Saiva, Vaishnava, Sakta, Kaumara, Saura, and Ganapatya are the Shanmatas. Sankara is regarded as the Shanmata sthapanacharya.<sup>31</sup> The placement of the gods in this cave temple also suggests that Mahendra Pallava superimposed the Shanmata gods over the Trimurti concept of Siva, Vishnu, and Brahma in his first Mandagaputtu cave temple.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Rowland Benjamin, *The art and architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, Op. Cit., p.53

<sup>29</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons, 1956), p.62

<sup>30</sup> Srinivasan K.R, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.51

<sup>31</sup> Ramaratnam N, *Sankara and Shanmata* (Madras: M.L.J. Press Private Ltd, 1969), p.5

<sup>32</sup> Nagaswamy R, *Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal* (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.39

The larger cave temple, at Tirupparankunram, houses five of the six deities, with Surya being the exception. The two main lateral shrines are dedicated to Siva and Vishnu, while a third shrine, for Durga, has been carved out of the back wall in the centre with sculptures of Ganesa and Subrahmanya on either side. The standing, seated, and, more frequently, reclining forms are encountered as the main sculptures in the relatively few dedicated exclusive Vishnu cave-temples and in the Vishnu shrines of other cave temples.<sup>33</sup> The standing form can be found in the lower cave temple of Tiruchirapalli, the sitting form in the larger cave temple of Tirupparankunram, and the reclining form in the cave temples of Ramanathapuram District's Tirumayam, Malaiyadippatti, and Tiruttangal, as well as the Ranganatha cave temple at Namakkal (Salem District). In the sanctum of Namakkal's another cave temple is a statue of Narasimha.

The label Parivadini, inscribed on them, indicates that the Melaikkovil Siva temple at Kudumiyamalai, the Satyagirisvara or Siva cave temple at Tirumayam, the upper Siva cave shrine in the same location, the Gokarnesvara cave temple at Tirugokarnam, and the eastern cave-shrine at Malaiyakkovil, are associated with inscriptions on musical notations. In the first two cases, it is still possible to see the actual notations or remnants of them, but they have vanished in the others.<sup>34</sup>

The colophons, that have survived, demonstrate that a Gunasena, a great Saiva or Parama Mahesvara and a disciple of Rudracharya, practised the Vidyaparivadini (a stringed lute) art, and a king had the notations inscribed for the benefit of the votaries. The musical inscription thus links the Satyagirisvara cave temple at Tirumayam to the others above, but it also has portrait sculptures of kings or chieftains flanking the shrine entrance, which are also found in the cave temples at Kunnandarkovil and Devarmalai thirty miles away in

---

<sup>33</sup> Srinivasan K.R, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.51

<sup>34</sup> Mahalingam T.V, *Studies in the South Indian Temple Complex* (Dharwar: Kannada Research Institute, 1970), p.12

Tiruchirapalli District. The Siva cave temple at Virasikhamani in the Quilon District of Kerala as well as the cave temple at Kaviyur in the extremely southern Tirunelveli District also contain it. These would indicate a similar time frame and a Pandyan origin. The remains of ancient fresco paintings from the same period of Sittannaval and Tirumalapuram of Pandya vintage, can be found in the cave temple at Tirunandikkara.<sup>35</sup>

According to their inscriptions, the Atiya king, Gunasila of the Adigaiman line, who had previously been mentioned in Tamil literature, was responsible for excavating the two Vishnu cave temples at Namakkal, one of which was dedicated to Ranganatha or Anantasayin and the other to Narasimha.<sup>36</sup> They are lovely sculptures from the first half of the Eighth Century. Atiyendra Vishnugriham, an inscription found in the Ranganatha cave, is unique because it describes each of the figures, that make up the iconographic cluster, that surrounds Anantasayin. The sculpture's sharp delineation, forceful poses, and flexions set them apart from their Pallava counterparts.

### **Chalukya and Rashtrakuta Cave Temples of the Deccan**

The majority of Chalukyas were followers of Hinduism, whereas the Rashtrakutas and a large portion of the Western Gangas were devotees of Jainism. As a result, one could discern a consistency of goal, method, and the raw material chosen to maintain Hinduism and Jainism's traditions at the expense of Buddhism, which had until that point had a stronger hold on the wealthy, lay, agricultural, and mercantile sections of society.<sup>37</sup>

While the Jain cave temple from a later period is full of Jain sculptures and cameos, the other three are known for some of their daring wall sculptures, which are mostly later

---

<sup>35</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, *Koila Kalai* (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.80

<sup>36</sup> Dr. Vidya Dehejia, *The Namakkal Caves* (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2014), p.6

<sup>37</sup> Srinivasan K.R, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.41

additions. A range of Hindu and Jain works are now visible on the high trap ridge at Ellora.<sup>38</sup>

### **Monolithic Vimana**

The Chota Kailasa is the name given to the Jain monolithic Kailasa vimana, a smaller version of which was constructed much later at Ellora, during the Rashtrakuta Period.<sup>39</sup>

### **Structural Stone Temples - Early Phase**

#### **Pallava and Pandya Series**

In the southern Mysore region, the western Gangas of Talkad have left behind a few smaller modern hard stone temples. The oldest are the two tiny ekatala vimanas on Chandragiri Hill in Sravanabelagola, which function as a wing of a later Jain temple in Hassan District. The Chamundaraya Basti, a Jain temple constructed around 982-85 A.D., is the more impressive Jain temple on the same hill with a three storeyed, east facing vimana, a closed mandapa and an open porch in front. Its two square lower talas have Tirthankara forms, enshrined in their sanctums and they are of the superposed sanctum type. They are also functional. There is a space between the walls created by a square sandhara aditala, with two walls. It has a free-standing nature and polished granite finish.

Hoysala Vishnuvardhana's minister, Gangaraya (1110-52), built the granite maalgai that surrounds the colossus base and another minister, Baladeva, built the mandapa next to the lower part of the colossus from behind in the Twelfth Century. The intriguing feature of the Jain Ganga Temple at Kambadahalli, close to Sravanabelagola, is that it has three main vimanas, each of average size and made entirely of granite, which open into three sides of a common mandapa. The common outer entrance, or trikuta, is

---

<sup>38</sup> Burgess James, *The Cave Temple of India* (London: W.H. Allen & Co, 1880), p.504

<sup>39</sup> Burgess James, *The Cave Temple of India*, Op. Cit., p.377

located on the fourth side of this mandapa, which faces north. The three squared vimanas, each with a griva sikhara, that represents one of the three varieties of Nagara, Dravida and Vesara as they are described in the Silpa texts Square, Octagonal and Circular.<sup>40</sup> Two additional lateral vimanas have been added to this complex, which is in front of the common mandapa of the trikuta nucleus. The Arunachalesvara appears to be essentially a developed form of the Bhoga Nandisvara. The ruined temples, soft stone, built with at Hemavati in Anantapur District, which are renowned for their beautiful sculptures, are examples of pure Nolamba architecture and art.

### **Chalukya and Rashtrakuta Series**

Jain temple in Pattadakal has essentially a three storeyed vimana. These are typical northern style temples. The Meguti of Jain temple, which has an inscription from 634 A.D., is more developed. A closed mandapa in essence, it has nine bays divided into one central and eight peripheral ones, four central pillars, and peripheral walls on all sides, that extend over the edge of the plinth. The walled central bay, which also supports the roof shrine above it, forms the main sanctum. The central shrine was designed in the Chaturmukha style, like in the Karkala Chaturmukha Jain Temple.<sup>41</sup>

### **Structural Stone Temples - Middle Phase**

#### **Chola and Later Pandya Series**

These were built, next to or inside the grounds of already existing temples, such as the Thanjavur Brihadisvara. It is a unique vimana with a sala sikhara dedicated to Devi, who receives equal importance in worship rituals and festivals, as the divine consort of the presiding deity in the main vimana. It has a specific location within the complex. The Devi

---

<sup>40</sup> Percy Brown, Indian Architecture (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons, 1956), p.88

<sup>41</sup> Srinivasan K.R, Temples of South India (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.41

consort, therefore, has a name that is suitable for the regional names for the principal deity, such as Brihadisvara Brihannayaki or Sundaresvara Meenakshi.<sup>42</sup>

Due to their larger size and frequent outstripping of the main vimana in height, in both the front and the back, as well as frequently on the sides of the numerous prakaras, the gopuras of the temple complex become more noticeable. Numerous gopuras were added to preexisting temples by the Later Cholas, the Later Pandyas, Modern Pallavaraya Chieftains, and others. The Hoysalas also invaded a portion of Tamil Nadu in the final years of the Later Cholas, leaving behind some illustrious gopuras like the Ballala Gopura in Tiruvannamalai.<sup>43</sup> The sculptures on display in the Ko-Perunjinga Pallavaraya gopuras in Chidambaram, Vriddhachalam, and other places are renowned, especially for their depictions of the 108 dance poses with the appropriate Natyashastra verses engraved as labels.

The pilaster gives the impression of emerging from a full pot or pitcher of plenty, symbolised by foliage flowing out of its mouth. The corbel shapes also change, and the early Chola temple's simple beveled corbels have a central tenon, that roughly resembles a pendentive in the shape of a bell. The developing madalai, or curved stalk, of the recognisable pushpa potika of the Vijayanagara period and later, is foreshadowed by this pendentive as it gradually becomes floral and extended.

The Pallava and earlier Chola period's large, thick, square abacus of the pillar and pilaster capitals are replaced by one, that is thinner, smaller, and polygonal.<sup>44</sup> While square and circular shapes are occasionally seen as well as the apsidal style, which is still less

---

<sup>42</sup> Harle James, *Temple Gateways in south India* (London: Oxford, 1963), p.166

<sup>43</sup> Crispin Branfoot, "The Tamil Gopura: From Temple Gateway to Global Icon", *ARS Orientalis* (Vol. 45, 2015)

<sup>44</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu* (New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors, 2005), p.77



common, the octagonal griva and sikhara of the southern style, which were more typical in earlier times, are now the more typical shape of southern temples.<sup>45</sup>

### **History of Tamil Nadu Temples**

Temples have been built, for pujas to be performed by kings and people in Tamil Nadu since Sangam Age. Temples were initially built of perishable materials but later evolved into stone temples. Among them, there are various designs such as cave temples, single stone temples and structural temples. Pallavas, Pandyas, Chola and Velir family like Athiyar, Mutharaiyar and Irukkuvelir have built many temples in Tamil Nadu. These have greatly influenced the cultural history of Tamils.<sup>46</sup>

### **Cave Temples**

It was introduced in the Third Century B.C. More than 1200 caves have been found in India of which about 900 caves are related to Buddhism. The remaining 300 are Jain, Saivite, Vaishnava and other religious caves. Guptamaras, Kalachuris, Chalukyas, Pandya kings, Pallava kings, Mutharaya dynasty, Adiyaman, Ai kings have been the proud builders of cave temples, belonging to Saivism and Vaishnava religion. At Tanthonri Hill in Karur District and at Namakkal in Namakkal District are the caves of the Atiyaman family and at Tirunandikarai, near Pechiparai Dam, in Kumari District, are the caves of the Ai kings.<sup>47</sup>

### **Trichy Caves**

During the reign of Srimara Srivallabha Pandyan, at the base of Trichy Hill Fort, on the southwest side of the mountain slope, cave temple has been built for the six gods Vinayaka, Murugan, Bramma, Surya, Durgai, Thirumal and Shiva. In this cave temple, the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Shiva is facing east and the sanctum sanctorum of Tirumal is facing west. On the back wall of the south facing hall, standing from east to west, Pilliyar,

---

<sup>45</sup> Srinivasan K.R, Temples of South India (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.84

<sup>46</sup> Nagaswamy R, Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.34

<sup>47</sup> Nagaswamy R, Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal, Op. Cit., p.36

Murugan, Surya and Kotavai are depicted. Murugan is standing in an equilateral posture with four arms. Bramma is depicted with his four arms, a garland in the back right hand, a lotus flower in the back left hand, and the front left hand resting on his hip. Behind the head of Surya is shown a circle of light belonging to the Sun. There is also a sculpture of a warrior offering his head to the mother goddess.<sup>48</sup>

The artistic cave temples of Atiyaman family can be found in places like Namakkal and Thanthontri Hill. On the hill in the central part of the town at Namakal, a king named Athiyaman Soman built a temple for Aranganathar towards the west and a temple for Narasingha Perumal towards the east. The temples were built around the Eighth Century. In the sanctum of the Aranganathar Temple, which is halfway up the hill, Aranganathar is depicted as Yogasayana Vishnu and Ananta Sai.

On both sides of Narasimha, the sun and the moon are seen. Bramma and Shiva are standing and worshipping Narasimha. The cave temple, which is in Thanthondrimalai, around three km from Karur has a six feet high relief of Thirumal.

### **Monolithic Temples**

Single stone temples are the temples, which are created by choosing a hill and carving the rock or a part of the rock from top to bottom of the temple.<sup>49</sup> Vimana is the focal point of a temple. Above the sanctum sanctorum, the most beautifully set up area, up to the stupa is called Vimana. This Vimana will be made up of six parts, namely, bearing base, wall, roof, grivam, peak and stupa. Kalukumalai Vetuvan Temple, Mahabalipuram Panchapandavar Rathas, Ganesharatham, Pitariratham, Valayan Kuttairatham are significant examples of this temple structure.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.18

<sup>49</sup> Sivaramamurti C, Mahabalipuram (New Delhi: Archaeological survey of India, 1992), p.7

<sup>50</sup> Sivaramamurti C, Kalugumalai and early pandyan rock cut shrines (Bombay: N. M. Tripathi Private Ltd, 1961), p.33

## **Structural Temples**

Structural temples were made by bringing stones from another place, carving them to the required size and layering them on top of each other, wherever hills were not available for cave temples. Various parts such as sanctum sanctorum, antaralam, artha mandapam, mahamandapam, mukha mandapam, Nandi mandapam, flag post, altar, tower gate, compound wall and thiruchuttu, were designed, with the available materials.<sup>51</sup>

## **Pallava Temples**

The temples of Narasimha Pallava II are among the ones, that have survived the times and they are seen as complete ones till date. By building the Kailasanathar Temple in Kanchipuram, Shore Temple in Mamallapuram, Thalapurieshvarar Temple in Panaimalai and Veda Purishvarar Temple in Thirukkalukkunram, Rajasimman earned a special place for himself in the history of Tamil Nadu temple architecture.

## **Shore Temple**

There are temples known as Kshatriya Simha Pallavekara Griham and Rajasimha Pallavesva Graham in Mahabalipuram. In between the temples, there is a “Pallikonda Perumal Temple”, also called Narasimha Pallava Vishnu Kriham.<sup>52</sup>

## **Panaimalai Temple**

Pallava period wall paintings have earned this Panaimalai Temple a special place in the history of painting. Lord Shiva’s dance and Parvati standing in trance have been beautifully displayed. Above the crown of Mother Parvati is a blue umbrella. Parvati Devi’s face is painted pale yellow, her body is pink, and her flower embroidered dress is intricately decorated in red and yellow.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Nagaswamy R, *Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal* (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.52

<sup>52</sup> Sivaramamurti C, *Mahabalipuram* (New Delhi: Archaeological survey of India, 1992), p.30

<sup>53</sup> Nachippan C, *Magnificent Mural Paintings: Sittannavasal Panamalai Tanjavur Early Chola Paintings* (Chennai: Kalakshetra Publications, 2004), p.31

## **Vaikuntha Perumal Temple**

The Vaikuntha Perumal Temple has an Ashtanga Vimana, with three sanctuaries. It was built by Pallava king, Nandivarma Pallavamallan, in the 8th Century A.D. It has the distinction of being one of the oldest Ashtanga Vimana temples in Tamil Nadu.<sup>54</sup>

## **Uttara Merur**

The Sundaravaratha Raja Perumal Temple is a three storied brick structure on a stone foundation, facing east at Uttara Merur.<sup>55</sup>

## **Work of Pandyas**

Like the Pallavas, the early Pandyas also built Cave temples, single stone temple and structural temples.

- Thirukurungudi Nambi Temple,
- Ukkiran Kottai-Varayil Amarnthan Temple and Chokkalingeswarar Temple
- Koilpatti Bhuvananathaswamy Temple,
- Tirupattur Tiruthalinathar Temple,
- Ambasamudram - Erichavudayar Temple,
- Thirumulanathar Temple,
- Enathi Shiva Temple,
- Mannar Temple Gopalaswamy Temple,
- Ambasamudram Tennazhagar Temple,
- In Nanguneri Vijaya Narayana - Manonmaneeswarar
- Temple at Sivalapperi - Alaghar Temple,
- Uma Maheswarar Temple in Uttara Gosa Mangai,
- Thirkoshtiyur - Saumya Narayana Perumal Temple,

---

<sup>54</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.76

<sup>55</sup> Ambujam Anantharaman, Temples of South India (Chennai: East West Books, 2006), p.175

- Alaghar Temple Tirumaliruncholai Alaghar Temple
- Sri Villiputhur- Vadabhadra Sai Temple, Kottai Karunkulam - Rajasimmeswarar Temple
- In Srivaikundam, Perungulam Thiruvalluvar Temple, Arulmigu Thirukutralanathasamy Temple, Courtallam,
- Madurai - Kudalazhagar Temple

### **Northamalai Temple**

Vijayalaya Chozhichuram was built by Chatham Bhuti, a Mutharaiyar king. The temple, built by Anganam Chatham Bhuthi, got damaged due to rain. After that, it was renewed by Thennavan Tamilathiaraiyan.<sup>56</sup>

### **Kodumbalur Moovar Temple**

Moovar temple is the best example of the well designed construction work of the Irukkuvelir family.

### **Chola Temples**

Vijayalaya Chola conquered Thanjavur and Vallam and established the Chola Empire, with Thanjavur as his capital. Thiruvallankadu copper plate tells the story of Vijayalaya Chola. He built a temple to Nisumbasuthani, the goddess of victory, in his capital city of Thanjavur. It is believed that a sculpture of this Nisumbasudani Temple, has been installed at the eastern gate of the old Chola fort. It was found at Kuyavar Street in Thanjavur. The goddess is seen sitting on a pedestal with her right leg folded. People today worship this goddess as “Ukrah Magali”.<sup>57</sup>

It is said that during the period of Adita Chola, many brick temples were modified into stone temples. Balasubramaniyar Temple in Kannanur, Sundareswarar Temple in

---

<sup>56</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.82

<sup>57</sup> Sivaramamurti C, The Chola Temples (New Delhi: Archaeological survey of India, 2004), p.17

Thirukattallai, Avanikandharpa Eesuvaram in Melapappaluvur, named Keezhaiyur, Kuranganathar Temple in Srinivasa Nallur, Moolathana Temple in Thirukkalukundram are notable among the temples of the Chola king, Aditya-I.

The Parantaka Chola-I was the Chola king, who ruled the region from Kanya Kumari in the south to Nellore in the north. Many temples like Thiruvallandurai Mahadeva Temple in Keezhai Paluvur, Brahmasureeswarar Temple in Pulla Mangai, Kadambavanesuvarar Temple in Erumpur, are examples of Paranthakan Period Temples, in the history of temple art of Tamil Nadu.<sup>58</sup>

Chola queen, Sembianmadevi lived not only during the time of Kandaradithya Chola but also after the time of Kandaradithya Chola. Thirunallam in Koneriraja Puram, Thiruthurthiyana Courtallam, Thirukkodikka, Vridhachalam, Sembian Mathevi, Aduthurai, Tiruvarur, Thiruvanjantheri, Anangur, Thiruveeney Nallur, Tirunaraiyur, Kandaraditham, Thiruvakarai are the notable temples of Sembianmadeviyar.

King Rajaraja Chola I started construction at Thanjavur around his nineteenth regnal year (1003) and completed it in his twenty fifth regnal year (1009). Tirukkattali Rajarajeswaram is the great temple of Thanjavur, hailed as Southern Meru. It is a unique temple, with 13 floors and about 207 feet high vimana. This temple holds a unique place in the history of Tamil Nadu temple art.<sup>59</sup> Shiva Lingam was erected before the sanctum sanctorum was built and then a square sanctum was built around the Shiva Lingam.<sup>60</sup>

On the inner wall of the sanctum sanctorum, paintings of the Chola period and paintings of the Nayaka kings of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, have been found. In the paintings, Dakshinamurthy, the sitting as Lord, images of dancers, Sundarar, sitting on an elephant, Cheraman Perumal Nayanar on a horse, Sundarar sitting and worshipping in front of

---

<sup>58</sup> Douglas Barret, Early chola architecture and sculpture (New Delhi: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1972), p.9

<sup>59</sup> Dr. Rasamanikkanar M, Thamizhaga Kalaigalum Kalvettukkalum (Chennai: Pavai Publications, 2011), p.170

<sup>60</sup> Kramrisch Stella, The Hindu temple (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidars, 1987), p.113

Nataraja shrine, Rajaraja and Karuvurth Devar are found. On the inner wall on the second floor, 108 Bharatanatyam mudra sculptures were in progress, out of which 81 sculptures were completed.<sup>61</sup>

The tradition of erecting two tower gates of the main gate of the temple, in front of the sanctum sanctorum, was introduced during the reign of Rajaraja Chola. Thus, this tradition of erecting two tower gates at the main gate, in front of the sanctum sanctorum continued until the end of the Chola Period, which can be seen at Gangai konda Cholapuram, Darasuram and Tribhuvanam. The first gopura gate seen while entering the Thanjavur Periya Kovil from the east, is named Keralantagan Gate, followed by the inner gopura gate, called Rajarajan Thiruvasal.<sup>62</sup>

Rajendra Chola I built a grand temple called Gangai Konda Choleechuram, at the famous Gangai Konda Cholapuram, the new capital city. The temple is very majestic, with a wall about 185 meters long, 130 meters wide and about 4 feet deep, two storeyed circular towers and two main entrance towers.

Kulothungan I was the son of Ammanga Devi and the King of Eastern Chalukya, Rajarasa Narendra. In the forty fourth year of his reign, Kulothunga Chola built a huge temple, dedicated to Surya under the name of Kulothungachola Marthandadevar. Suryanar Temple is situated about three kms from Aduthurai railway station. He also has the honor of building the first temple for Sun worship in Tamil Nadu.<sup>63</sup>

Chidambaram temple renovations of Kulothunga Cholan II are described in detail in Ottakoothar Kulothunga Cholanula. In Darasuram, which was built under the name of Rajarajechuram, is today given the name of Airavadeshwaram. The temple has very majestic constructions such as sanctum sanctorum, artha mandapam, mughamandapam,

---

<sup>61</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.95

<sup>62</sup> Srinivasan K.R, Temples of South India (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.142

<sup>63</sup> Henry Whitehead, The Village gods of south India (Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2006), p.29

akkira mandapam, known as Rajakambeeran Mandapam, compound and entrance tower.

About four km east to Kumbakonam, Kulothunga Chola III has built the temple of Gampahreswarar at Tribhuvanam.

### **Later Pandya temples**

Many temples were built in Tamil Nadu, during the rule of the Later Pandyas.<sup>64</sup>

- Thiruchunaikum - Alagapperumal Vinnakaram
- Karungalakkudi – Vanji Nagaram
- Mukuntheeswaramudayar temple built at Keezhadi
- Kallangattu - Akalanga Easuvaramudayar Temple
- Subramaniam Temple, at Kambam
- At the foot of Branmalai
- The Shivalayam, built by a group of merchants.
- In Thiruvegamba - Natarajeeswaram,
- Airatthenmesuvaram and Srivallabha Vinnakaram in Mangalam
- Thiruthangal Perumal Temple
- Chera Narayana Vinnakaram, at Vadavenganagar
- Kallidaikurichi Nalayara Vinnakarazhwar Temple Krishna Temple
- Manappadai Mundeeswaram - Nayanar Temple
- Narasinghamudiyar Temple at Angamangalam
- Pasuvantana Valangai
- Meekameeswara Mudai Nayanar Temple
- Aruppukkottai Kural Mani Eesuvaramudayar Temple Sukanathaswamy Thirukoil
- Melamangalam Mayamanmari - Iswaram

---

<sup>64</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.80



The work of expanding the temples, by creating mandapams, compound, gateway entrances, was also widely carried out during this period. The East Gopuram at Madurai Meenakshiamman Temple, is about 153.3 feet tall, with nine tiers, built by Satayavarman Sundarapandiyan.<sup>65</sup>

### **Contribution of Vijayanagara Kingdoms**

Under the guidance of a priest called Vidyaranya, Hariharan and Bukkan formed the Visayanagara Empire. In 1336 A.D., Vijaya nagar was established on the bank of Tungapatra river in front of Anaikunthi. As the territories of the Vijaya nagar had expanded, the territories of the Vijayanagaras in Tamil Nadu were divided into Vellore, Senchi and Thanjavur.

During the Vijayanagara Nayakar's period, temple architecture also reached various stages of development. Best examples are Sringeri Vidyasagar Temple in Kadur, Chikmagalur area of Karnataka, Vitthaladathar Temple in Hampi, Pattabiramar Temple in Hampi, Ananta Sayana Swamy Temple in Alantasayana Gudi, near Hospet, on the way to Hampi, Hazara Rama Temple and Virubatchar Temple in Hampi.<sup>66</sup>

In the existing temples, Thousand pillared halls, hundred pillared halls and Sixteen pillared halls in front and behind the towers, Kalyana Mandapam, Unchal Mandapam, Neerazhi Mandapam, Aranga Mandapam, Utsavar Mandapam, Nandi Mandapam, Navagraka Mandapam, Nirutha Mandapam, Vyakarana Mandapam, Ankara Mandapam, Agama Mandapam, Madaip Palli Mandapam, Ratha Mandapam and Thiruchutru Mandapam, have been built along the wall, Thermutti for the chariots, have been added and the temple premises expanded.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Raman K.V, Pandiyar varalaru (Chennai: Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation, 1977), p.8

<sup>66</sup> Venkata Ramanayya N, Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2010), p.148

<sup>67</sup> Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.62

Such mandapams are widely used to celebrate various temple festivals like Rama Navami, Krishna Jayanti, Mahashivarathri, Diwali, Navratri, Thaipusam, Chitirai Festival, Vasanthotsavam, Theppathiruvizha, Therthiruvizha in the temples.<sup>68</sup>

During this period, pillar structures, known as joint pillars, were also widely used in mandapams. Stem shaped portion in the middle and several slender ones are found on the outside of the pillar.<sup>69</sup> A type of animal, called Yali, is also displayed on these pillars, which have carved legs and form a compound pillar. Yali is like a lion and a tiger combined. The depicted elephant's tusks are bent upwards, while the yali's tusks are downwards, and the two tusks are shown intertwining with each other. Some Yalis have carved stone balls, with great precision so that they cannot be taken out of their mouths. Uttarakosamangai, at Taramangalam and Shankaranayanar Temple and Temple at Branmalai are the best examples.<sup>70</sup>

This period also introduced the tradition of setting up pillars of different diameters in the same stone so that each pillar plays a different kind of music, if one were to knock on them. Such pillars can be seen at the Ayrangal Mandapam and near the north gateway in Meenakshiamman Temple, Madurai. Nelayapar Temple also has such musical pillars. The artistic technique of long stone chains, hanging downwards in the temple halls during this period, is also stunning in their execution.

The Srivilliputhur Gopuram, which is the symbol of the Tamil Nadu government, is about 192 feet tall and it is a majestic structure, built during the Nayakar Period. In Tiruvannamalai, about 217 feet tall tower, is taller than the Srivilliputhur temple tower,

---

<sup>68</sup> Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.116

<sup>69</sup> Percy Brown, Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu (New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors, 2005), p.62

<sup>70</sup> Poongundran R, Tharamangalam Temple (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1979), p.1

which was built by Thanjavur nayak king, Sevvappan in A.D. 1530. About 236 feet tall tower built recently at Srirangam with 13 tiers is the tallest tower in Tamil Nadu on date.<sup>71</sup>

Kanchipuram, Kalathi, Kumbakonam, Thiruvarangam, Tiruppati, Thiruvannamalai, Chidambaram, Thiruveezhimilai, Thiruvarur, Omalur, Thanjavur, Madurai, Thirukurtalam and Srivilliputtur temple paintings are the best example of Nayaka Period.<sup>72</sup> In Kanchipuram, Varadaraja Perumal Temple, displays the story of Kannan, Rathi and Manmadan in the upper circle, Kaliyamarthan's appearance in the canopies above the hall, Thirumal with the goddess, and Vidyadhara on the palanquin.<sup>73</sup>

### **Important Temples in Tamil Nadu**

1. Rock-cut Cave Temple, Mandagapattu
2. Kanchi Kailasanatha Temple
3. Kanchi Vaikuntha Perumal Temple
4. Nellaiappar Temple Corridor, Tirunelveli
5. Monolithic Temple, Kazhugumalai
6. Vettuvankoil Temple
7. Tirupurambiyam Temple
8. Brihadeeshwara Temple, Thanjavur
9. Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple
10. Iravatheswara Temple
11. Pillayarpatti Temple and Karpaka Vinayagar
12. Vellore Jalagandeshwar Temple
13. Adinatha Temple, Azhwar Tirunagari
14. Madurai Meenakshiamman Temple

---

<sup>71</sup> Crispin Branfoot, "The Tamil Gopura: From Temple Gateway to Global Icon", *ARS Orientalis* (Vol. 45, 2015)

<sup>72</sup> Nagaswamy R, *Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal* (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.15

<sup>73</sup> Srinivasan K.R, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.93

15. Varatharaja Temple, Kanchipuram

16. Ramanathaswamy Temple, Rameswaram

### **Hindu Temples in Kongu Nadu**

1. Sri Patteeswarar Temple, Perur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu

2. Kailasanathar Temple, Tharamangalam, Tamil Nadu

3. Arulmigu Avinashi Lingeshwarar temple, Avinashi, Tiruppur, Tamilnadu

4. Sangameswarar temple, Bhavani, Erode, Tamilnadu

5. Ardhanareeswarar temple, Tiruchengode, Namakkal, Tamilnadu

6. Pashupatinath temple, Karur, Tamilnadu

7. Sri Thirumuruganathaswamy temple, Thirumuruganpoondi, Tiruppur, Tamilnadu

8. Sri Magudeswarar temple, Kodumudi, Erode, Tamilnadu

9. Sri Kalyana Vigirtheeswarar temple, Karur, Tamilnadu

### **Jain temples in Kongu Nadu**

1. Ayirai Mali (Ivar Malai Kugaikoil), Thathanaickenpatti North, Dindigul, Tamilnadu

2. Ancient Jain hill, beds, and music inscription, Arachalur, Erode, Tamilnadu

3. Shri 1008 Bhagwan Chandraprabhu Swami Digambar Jain Temple, Vijayamangalam, Tamilnadu

4. An ancient Jain Temple at Alangadu, Tiruppur, Tamilnadu

5. Veerasangaatha Perumpalli - An ancient Jain Temple at Alathur, Tiruppur, Tamilnadu

6. An ancient Digambar Jain Temple at Kunnathur, Tiruppur, Tamilnadu

### **Bakthi Movement (800 – 1600 A.D.)**

There was an extraordinary amount of devotional poetry written in mediaeval India, which was not only influenced by one religion but also by other religious movements.<sup>74</sup> These movements believed that complete devotion (bhakti) to God could deliver man from life's pitfalls and secure his salvation. It was also held that since God is omnipresent and resides inside every person, one does not need to visit temples or carry out rituals.<sup>75</sup> The Bhagavad Gita inspired the proponents of Bhakti cult, by arguing that the path of bhakti marga (the path of bhakti) is superior to the two other religious approaches, namely, the path of knowledge (jnana) and the path of rituals and good deeds (karma).

Around the Seventh Century A.D., the Bhakti Movement or the revival of devotional practices began in Tamil Nadu. It included reciting the deity's name, singing hymns in praise of them, wearing religious symbols or carrying personal identifiers, and making pilgrimages to holy locations connected to the deity. In both Islam and Hinduism, several mystical religious movements freely incorporated elements from other religions into their teachings. Haridasa said, "There is only one god, though Hindus and Muslims refer to him by different names."

### **Devotional Movement in Tamilnadu (Azhwars and Nayanmars)**

The Nayanmars, who worshipped Siva and called Saivites, and the Azhwars, who were Vaishnavite Bhakti sages and the founders of the Bhakti Cult, wrote Tamil hymns of devotion to their respective gods. Tamil and other South Indian languages like Kannada and Telugu were used to write poems to Siva and Vishnu, particularly to Krishna.<sup>76</sup> To

---

<sup>74</sup> Havell E.B, *The Ideals of Indian Art* (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1972), p.107

<sup>75</sup> Rajendra Kumar, *World-Famous Religions Doctrines and Sects* (Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 1994), p.30

<sup>76</sup> Manavalan A.A, *Bhakti Movement in Tamilnadu, Dimensions of Bhakti Movement in India*, (Ed) Marulasiddaiah H.M, Akhila Bharatiya Sharana Sahitya Parishat, Mysore, 1996, pp.74-75

make it strong enough to withstand the assault of Buddhism or Jainism, these saints criticized caste based social status and supported gender equality.<sup>77</sup>

Based on Vishnu's avatars (incarnations), particularly Krishna and Rama, Vishnu Bhakti or Vaishnavism is a religion. The immortal hymns of the 12 Tamil Azhwars are very famous cases of poetic outpourings of devotion to god. Two Azhwars stand out particularly in the Bhakti Movement. The 1,102 stanza, Tiruvaimozhi, is the source of Nammazhwar's fame. The 4,000 poems by Nammazhwar were collected by Nathamuni and published as Divya Prabandham. Another is Andal, the sole female Azhwar. Periyazhwar, formerly known as Vishnu Chittar, composed numerous songs about Krishna, substituting himself for mother Yashoda. According to legend, Periyazhvar discovered and protected Andal when she was abandoned, as a baby in the tulusi garden of the Srivilliputhur Temple.<sup>78</sup> She was raised in the Srivilliputhur temple town and rose to power under the name of Andal. Her most well known works include The Thiruppavai (The Path to Krishna) and The Nachiyar Thirumozhi (The Sacred Songs of the Lady). Her poems about Ranganatha, the Vishnu incarnation revered in a temple at Srirangam, are read during Vaishnava wedding rituals in Tamil Nadu.

### **Adi Shankara**

Around 700-750 A.D., Adi Shankara or Shankarachariar preached the Advaita school of thought. This philosophy's central idea is that knowledge leads to the union of the individual soul (atma) with the universal soul (brahma). At Badrinath, Puri, Dwarka, and Sringeri, he founded mathas (mutts), places of learning and worship. These locations are now well-known centres for pilgrimage. Without considering the Bhakti Movement of his day, Shankara enthusiastically worked to restore the orthodox Vedic tradition. His

---

<sup>77</sup> Kumar Sisir, A History of Indian Literature: From Courtly to the Popular (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005), p.27

<sup>78</sup> Manavalan A.A, Bhakti Movement in Tamilnadu, Dimensions of Bhakti Movement in India, (Ed) Marulasiddaiah H.M, Akhila Bharatiya Sharana Sahitya Parishat, Mysore, 1996, pp.74-75

commentary on the Brahma Sutra, a key text in the Vedanta school, is considered to be his greatest work. His analyses of the main Upanishads are regarded as being equally significant.<sup>79</sup>

## **Ramanuja**

The most important thinker in Vaishnavism was Ramanuja, a Vaishnava saint who lived in the Eleventh Century. His Vishistadvaita school of thought asserts that even after joining with Brahma, the soul retains its identity. Ramanuja settled in Srirangam, following a protracted pilgrimage. Ramanuja advocated social equality and denounced temple entry restrictions, based on caste. He started centres to spread the Srivaishnavism religion, which is devoted to the god, Vishnu and his consort, Lakshmi.<sup>80</sup>

India witnessed the spread of Vaishnavism in the 16th and 17th Centuries. At first, the Vadakalai Vaishnavism flourished in and around Kanchipuram, a well known hub for Sanskrit education. The centre of Thenkalai Vaishnavism was Srirangam. Vedic literature, which was written in Sanskrit, was the focus of the Vadakalai Sect. The Divya Prabandhams, which were written in Tamil by the 12 Azhwars, were highly valued by the Thenkalai Sect.

## **Genesis of God's Worship**

### **Origin and Development**

Hinduism is one of the most ancient religions of the world. A variety of beliefs, customs, rites and philosophies have amalgamated into an organic system.<sup>81</sup>

### **Origin of the Name**

The word, Hinduism, is derived from the Sanskrit name for the river that runs across the northern boundaries of India, known as the "Sindhu".<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Gangolli D.B, Adi Shankara (Bangalore: Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, 1991), p.10

<sup>80</sup> Rajendra Kumar, World-Famous Religions Doctrines and Sects (Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 1994), p.30

<sup>81</sup> Rajendra Kumar, World-Famous Religions Doctrines and Sects (Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 1994), p.11

<sup>82</sup> Karan Singh, Essays on Hinduism (New Delhi: Ratna Sagar Pvt. Ltd, 1987), p.1

## **Worship of the Mother Goddess**

In the Indus Valley, no temples, shrines, altars, or specific cult objects have been found. Mother Goddess, however, was one of the main deities revered by the populace. The Divine Mother's cult was widely practised. The Mother Goddess has been depicted on numerous pieces of pottery, seals, and amulets. People used to think that all creation came from a female energy.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to Mother Goddess, a male god was revered. On one seal, a figure with two horns and a headdress, can be seen sitting upright in a meditative or yoga pose while being surrounded by wild animals. This partially explains how Shiva was conceived later. The identification of the male god with Shiva is further strengthened by the discovery of stone pieces, that exactly resemble a "Shivalinga," the form in which Shiva is currently widely worshipped. Lord Shiva is regarded as the "Mahayogin" and styled as the "Pashupati," or the Lord of the Beasts. Worship of Lord Shiva, Thirumal, Murugan, Balarama, Kotravai is in practice since the Sangam Period.

## **Animism**

People also practised animism, or the worship of rocks, trees, and animals, in the conviction that they were the homes of either good or evil spirits, in addition to the worship of Shiva and Shakti (both in human and symbolic forms). In addition to being worshipped in material form, trees were given human features and characteristics.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps people held the "Pipal" tree in high regard. Some animals, including bulls and tigers, were revered. The depiction of the "Swastika" and the wheel on some seals, suggests that although there was no actual worship of the sun, it was represented by the "Swastika" or wheel on some seals.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Ramaratnam N, Sankara and Shanmata (Madras: M.L.J. Press Private Ltd, 1969), p.27

<sup>84</sup> Nilakanta Sastri K.A, A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.128

<sup>85</sup> Rajendra Kumar, World-Famous Religions Doctrines and Sects (Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 1994), p.13



## **Beliefs Pertaining to Shiva**

Shiva is typically found alone, appearing as a “Yogi.” His long, intertwined locks represent his all encompassing existence, the moon represents nectar, and Ganga represents the eradication of profanity. He defeated the snakes, a symbol of death, and became known as “Mrityunjay.” His trident represents his victory over ignorance and darkness as well as the eradication of physical and natural ills. His drum represents the sound that gave rise to all languages. His bowl represents the entire cosmos. His lion skin clothing symbolizes mental dominance. Nandi, a bull represents religion. The ashes, that were applied to his body, stand for the passing of the world.<sup>86</sup>

## **Dakshinamurti**

Dakshinamurti is a form of Guru, who exudes peace and wears a crescent moon on the matlock.<sup>87</sup> He represents the Supreme Bliss, that comes from absolute peace. The crescent moon, which is gradually growing in jnana(wisdom) and the luxuriant growth of the matlock, both indicate agelessness. The youth appearance represents the completeness of Isvara. Only when something is desired does the mind become anxious about getting it, and when the mind becomes anxious, the body ages. The Dakshinamurti symbolizes the Ultimate Reality, which is blissful, unconstrained by time, space, or matter, and unhindered by desires or wants. There is nothing above Him or below Him because He is All.<sup>88</sup>

## **Half-Female form of Shiva**

Shiva and Parvati are both present in this manifestation of Shiva. According to Shaivite texts, Shiva is like a corpse without Uma or Shakti (strength). Half-female gods have long been known to Hindu theology. According to the Atharvaveda, the universe was

---

<sup>86</sup> Gopinatha Rao T.A, Elements of Hindu Iconography (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publication, 1985), p.52

<sup>87</sup> Srinivasan K.R, Temples of South India (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.114

<sup>88</sup> Ramaratnam N, Sankara and Shanmata (Madras: M.L.J. Press Private Ltd, 1969), p.109

created from a seed, that was half male and half female. Shakti is Sanskrit for “power.” Brahma’s power is known as Shakti. Shakti is the Divine Mother.<sup>89</sup>

### **Worship of other Deities**

In addition to Shiva, Vishnu, and Shakti, four other gods are revered. Ganesha, the son of Shiva, is worshipped before any auspicious event because he removes obstacles. Hanuman, Rama’s devoted follower, is revered by many as a representation of strength and knowledge. The South Indian god, Ayappan, is thought to be the offspring of a union between Shiva and the female form of Vishnu. In South India, Kartikeya, the younger son of Shiva and Parvati, is revered as Subramanian. Arupadai Veedu is a group of temples of Tamil God, Murugan, located at Thiruthani, Thiruchendur, Swamimalai, Pazhamudirsolai, Thiruparankundram and Palani. These are the most holy Murugan shrines, as described by the poet Nakkeerar, in the Thirumurugatrupadai, a classic of the Third Century A.D.<sup>90</sup>

### **Ayyanar Temples**

At the entrances to the villages in Tamil Nadu, one can see enormous terracotta horses and demon like figures. These temples are those of Ayyanar. The heavenly commanders known as Ayyanars are regarded as the village’s guardians. As a result, the village has a shrine where these guardians are housed and worshipped. These locations are also thought to be home to the ancestral spirits, who are frequently invoked during family celebrations. The temples of Rasa, Annanmar, Appichimar, Kuppiyannan, Karuppanan in Kongu Nadu are the temples, built for Nadukal (Hero Stone) worship.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Rajendra Kumar, *World-Famous Religions Doctrines and Sects* (Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 1994), p.23

<sup>90</sup> Rajendra Kumar, *World-Famous Religions Doctrines and Sects* (Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 1994), p.24

<sup>91</sup> Murugaraj A, *Vijayamangalam* (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.85