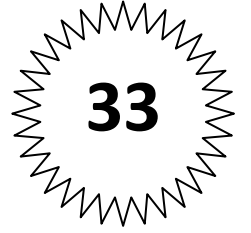


ART AND ARCHITECTURE UNDER THE CHOLAS

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Introduction

A special feature of the Chola architecture is the purity of the artistic tradition. Built in the early 11th century, the two magnificent temples at Thanjavur and the Gangaikonda Cholapuram in Tiruchirapalli District show the best of Chola art and architecture. The Dravidian feature initiated by the Pallavas acquired the classical forms and features under the Cholas such as gopurams, mandapams and vimanas. Initially, the gopuram features were more prominent but in the later stages, the vimanas took the forefront. The sanctums of the Chola temples were both circular and square in size and the walls of the inner sanctum sanatorium were beautified. On the upper side of the sanctum special vimanas are built with dome shaped sikhara and kalasa which were also there on the top of gopurams. The walls of the passage around the Brihadeeswarar Temple sanctum are covered with panels of exquisite paintings which though faint with time show vivid expression. The 108 dance poses of Shiva carved on the inner walls of this temple testify to the heights attained by the Cholas in the field of art and architecture. This temple is known to be the finest creation of Chola craftsmen. The Cholas have a rich history in art and architecture and their specimens still exist among us either in museums or temples. They have acquired fame not only in India but abroad as well. Their style was unique which gave an impetus to the whole style of temple building.

Brihadisvara Temple

Brihadeeswara Temple is located in Thanjavur that has a long history. Though the year of foundation of the city is not known but it is believed that the city existed during the Sangam period that was from 3rd century BC to 4th century AD. It is also believed that in the Battle of Venni, Chola king Karikala fought with Cheras and Pandyas and also faced invasion by Mutharayars. Later on the city was ruled by Cholas. One of the famous Chola dynasty temples, it was built during the reign of Chola king Raja Raja and designed by the famous architect Sama Varma between 1003 and 1010 AD. The Brihadisvara Temple houses the tallest vimanam in the world, a 3.7-meter tall linga of Lord Shiva. The simplicity of the design of the temple has provided inspiration for other buildings not only in South India but also in South – East Asia. It is one of the most prominent temples of Chola dynasty.

Gangaikonda Cholapuram

Built by the Chola Emperor Rajendra I, the Temple of Gangaikonda Cholapuram is described as the feminine counterpart of the Thanjavur temple. The centre of administration and development was chosen as the Gangaikonda Choleswarar Temple in the Chola Empire. The temple houses a 4 meter high Shiva lingam. This lingam is tallest among the other Chola temples. Located in Tamil Nadu, this temple is one of the most revered south india. The Brihadisvara Temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram is a Hindu temple located at Gangaikonda Cholapuram about 70 kilometres (43 mi) from the Thanjavur Brihadisvara Temple. Completed in 1035 AD by Rajendra Chola I as a part of his new capital, this Chola dynasty era temple is similar in design and has a similar name as the 11th century, and sometimes just called the Gangaikondacholapuram temple. It is dedicated to Shiva and based on a square plan, but the temple reverentially displays Vaishnavism, Shaktism and syncretic equivalence themes of Hinduism with statues of Vishnu, Durga, Surya, Harihara, Ardhanishvara, and others. In addition to the main shrine with linga, the temple complex has a number of smaller shrines, gopura, and other monuments, with some partially ruined or restored in later centuries. The temple is famed for its bronze sculptures,



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artwork on its walls, the Nandi and the scale of its curvilinear tower.

Darasuram Temple

Darasuram, the third of the great royal Chola temples dedicated to Shiva, the Airavatesvara, was completed by Rajendra Chola II in 1167, whose capital was at nearby Palaiyarai. Also square in plan, it is considerably smaller in scale compared to the Brihadisvara temples at Tanjavur and Gangaikondacholisvaram, and also differs from them in its highly ornate style, although the inner sanctum is not encircled by a circumambulatory path, unlike its predecessors. This contains a shivalinga, an aniconic representation of the god. Its main tower is considerably lower than the two earlier temples at 24 m in height. The front pillared hall, the agra mandapa, is intriguing in that it is conceptualised as a horse-drawn chariot, a trait inspired by Pallava architecture; its columns are ornamented with representations of stories from the epics and Puranas, such as the burning of Manmatha, Parvati performing penance, Shiva's marriage, the birth of Skanda Kumara, Shiva's fights with the asuras, and other narrative scenes. The base of the outer pillars of the agra mandapa represent gaja-yalis with curled trunks and tails, and this part of the temple has a great number of other representations. The base of the main temple is notable for its stone frieze of panels containing inscriptions of the stories associated with the 63 nayanmars (Shiva saints), and a number of these also depict women in yoga postures, and other scenes from everyday life. This temple also features a separate impressive Amman shrine, the Periya Nayaki, dedicated to Devi. The perimeter wall has pillared cloisters on the inside with cells in between for deities. Carved on a balustrade of a staircase leading to the pillared cloisters is the celebrated 'Rishaba Kunjaram' a stone sculpture featuring a conjoined bull and elephant.

Airavatesvara Temple

The Airavatesvara Temple is in the city of Kumbakonam, South India, completed in 1166 AD .It is one among a cluster of eighteen medieval era large Hindu temples in the Kumbakonam areaThe temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It also reverentially displays Vaishnavism and Shaktism traditions of Hinduism, along with the legends associated with sixty three Nayanars – the Bhakti movement saints of Shaivism.Named after the White Elephant of Indra, this temple is a testimony to the grand temple architecture of the Cholan Empire. It is the last of the three great Cholan temples built by successive generations of kings starting from Rajaraja I. Airavateswara temple was built by Rajaraja II around 1150 AD. One of the striking features of this temple is Rajagambhira Thirumandapam - Royal Courtyard, with intricately carved pillars, long steps made of granite stones and elegant chariots drawn by horse - again hewn out of stone. You will see finer workmanship in this temple than the earlier temples. Darasuram is literally a stone's throw away from Kumbakonam.The stone temple incorporates a chariot structure, and includes major Vedic and Puranic deities such as Indra, Agni, Varuna, Vayu, Brahma, Surya, Vishnu, Saptamtrikas, Durga, Saraswati, Sri Devi (Lakshmi), Ganga, Yamuna, Subrahmanya, Ganesha, Kama, Rati and others The temple was much larger and once had seven courtyards according to inscriptions. Only one courtyard survives; parts of the temple such as the gopuram are in ruins, and the main temple and the main temple and associated shrines stand alone .The temple continues to attract large gatherings of Hindu pilgrims every year.

Vijayalaya Choleeswaram Temple

Vijayalaya Choleeswaram in Narthamalai, a panchayat town in Pudukottai district in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, India, is a temple dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva. Constructed in the Dravida style and rock cut architecture, the temple is believed to have been built during the 9th century by Mutharaiyar dynasty kings,the cardinals of Pallavas, with later expansion from the Cholas. The rock-cut architecture is an early example of Cholan Art, continuing the tradition of the Pallavas. The other portions of Narthamalai house the 8th century Jaina Abode, the Alurutimalai Jain Caves. There are also two rock-cut caves, one of which houses twelve life size sculptures of Vishnu. The temple is considered



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Moovar Koil

The "Three temples" is a Hindu temple complex situated in the village of Kodumbalur, 36 kilometres from Pudukkottai in Tamil Nadu, India. These temples were constructed by the Chola feudatory and Irukkuvel chieftain Boothi Vikramakesari as per the inscription. Only two of the three temples have managed to survive. The place was ruled by Irukkuvel chieftains. Kodumbalur was also the site of a fierce battle between the Pandyas and the Pallavas. According to the chief's inscription, he built three temples in the complex one for himself and the other two for his wives, namely, Nangai Varaguna Perumanar and Karrali. Only the basement survives the northern shrine. The basement is moulded like a full blown lotus flower (padma pushkala adisthanas). The other two shrines, namely the central and southern are more or less intact. Each central shrine is 6.4sqmetres at the base and they all face west. The walls are rich in details and there is a small shrine for Nandi in front of the Maha mandapa. The two circular pilasters with circular shafts on four sides of the vimana indicate the antiquity of the temple.

Thirubuvanam Kampaheswarar Temple

The later kings of the Cheran, Chola and the Pandiyan dynasties completed the work of the temple. It is believed that the temple was the last holy place to have been renovated by the Chola kings. The temple is dedicated to the Hindu god, Shiva. The construction of the temple was started by King Kulothunga sometime in the 13th century. The inner sanctum is a square-shaped structure. The front part of the temple has been built to resemble a chariot that stands 120 ft high. The 130 ft high tower (gopuram) of the sanctum sanctorum boasts several exquisitely carved sculptures. The Vimana has six bases and sculptures of the scenes of puranas on its walls. The walls of the chariot as well as the temple depict scenes from the Ramayana. There are two gopuras and two enclosures, inner sanctum, artha mandapa, maha mandapa and mukha mandapa. Similar to Brihadeswarar Temple, the vimana of the temple is extremely high compared to the Rajagopura. The temple follows the Dravidian style of architecture.

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