

2. The Pallavas

4. Fine Arts

Architecture-Sculpture-Painting-Music- Dancing-Drama

The Art and architecture of the Pallavas form a very brilliant chapter in the history of South Indian Art. 'Their productions provided the foundation of the Dravidian style.'

The Art of the Pallava may be studied here under the six headings.

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|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Architecture | 4. Music |
| 2. Sculpture | 5. Dancing and |
| 3. Painting | 6. Drama. |

I. Architecture :

Architecture can broadly be divided into *Nagara type* *Vesara type* and *Dravidian type*.

Mahendravarman introduced a revolutionary change by Dravidian architecture. In the pre Mahendravarman period, the temples were constructed with the help of the perishable materials. He carved out the temples from the living rocks. Mahendravarman says it in his Mandagappattu rock-cut cave inscription, that he constructed the temples without using the perishable materials like bricks, timber, metal or mortar. He was a revolutionary in art, because, upto his period stone was avoided for the construction of temples, since the stone is connected with bad omen¹ or used only for the deceased persons.

The Architecture of the Pallava period may broadly be divided into three divisions.

¹ கல்யாணம் கல்வெட்டுப்பு

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|-----------------------|---|----------------------|---------|
| 1. Rock-cut caves | } | (a) Mahendravarman | 600-630 |
| | | (b) Narasimhavarman | 630-668 |
| 2. Monolithic Rathas | | | type. |
| 3. Structural temples | } | (a) Rajasimha type | |
| | | (d) Nandivarman type | 730- |

1. Rock-cut cave temples

The Rock cut cave temples are again classified into (a) —Mahendravarman type and (b) Narasimhavarman type.

(a) *Mahendravarman type* : (upto 630 A.D.) Its first phase, entirely rock-cut, comprises moderate size pillared halls with one or more cells into the back wall. The front facade has a row of pillars and pilasters. The pillars are square at the base and top, with octagonal (eight faced) middle section. The larger halls had an inner row of similar pillars and pilasters. A heavy bracket provides the capital. Dwarapalakas occupied an important position. There are ten such excavations definitely attributable to Mahendravarman and scattered over the entire region down to Trichy. (see the column P 112.)

(b) *Narasimhavarman Group* : The caves carved out by Narasimhavarman are found at Mamallapuram. (See. P. 117) These caves vary in dimensions but generally 24' x 75' or 15'. The cells are rectangular. The pillars are the main feature of the facade.

The base of the pillar becomes a squatting lion or vyala which under Rajasimha gave place to a prancing lion. The pillars are ornamental. The pillars have three parts—shaft, capital and bracket. The base of the shaft is squatting Lion, seems to be bearing the entire pillar on its head. Kalasa, Tadi, Kumba, Padma and Palaka are the parts of the pillar over the shaft. All the mandapas possess kudu arches and

niches with icons inside. Mahisasuramardini mandapa and Varaha mandapa bear very beautiful sculptures.



2. Monolithic Rathas

The monolithic Rathas in the same style as the mandapas are clearly copies of wooden structures. There are ten Rathas, Among the eight found at Mamallai, the most famous five are called Pancha Pandava Rathas. The other three are Ganesa ratha, Pidari and Valayankuttai. The Draupathi Ratha is square and Pyramidal. The roof appears to be a thatched (hut shaped) and plain. There are dwarapalakis at the entrance. The image of Draupathi is on the back wall of the Sanctum. The *Arjuna ratha* and *Draupathi ratha* are on the same platform. Alternatively Lion, and elephant can be seen at the bottom of the plinth as if bearing the entire shrines on their back. The *Bhima ratha* has a rectangular Vimana with a Sanctum in the centre and a circumambulatory path. The *Dharmaraja Ratha* is a three storeyed Vimana with a garbhagraba in each storey. It is a best example of a chaitya. The *Sahadeva Ratha* is an apsidal temple. The *Pitari Ratha* has an octagonal Sikara and the Ganesa ratha has a rectangular Vimana, with an ardha mandapa in the front.

3. Structural Temples

The structural temples were constructed with the help of the dressed stone masonry. Again this group falls into two

divisions the *Rajasimha* group (700-800) and the *Nandivarman* group (C. 800-900)

3. A. Rajasimha Group

(Features of this Group)

(1) Multi storeyed Vimana appears to be in descending order like a chariot, (2) On each end figures of Kalasa and Lion are found. (3) Niches are found with a similar type of Linga, found in the Sanctum, (4) Figures of lion are found both on the outer and inner walls of the temple. (5) They are standing on their hind legs with fierce look. (6) They were made out of marter. (7) The figure of Somaskanda is found almost in all temples. With the above mentioned features the following temples are found.

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|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. The sea shore temple | } | at Mamallai |
| 2. Mukunta Nayanar temple | | |
| 3. Siva temple | | |
| 4. Talakirisvara temple at Panamalai | | |
| 5. Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi | | |
| 6. Vaikunda Perumal temple at Kanchi | | |

The Sea-Shore Temple : This is the earliest of the structural temple found at Mamallai, challenging its survival against nature's fury. The Vimana evolves a higher and more rhythmic tower. The three storeyed Vimana had a Kalasa. The back side of the temple's Sanctum contains Anandasayanavishnu.

Kailasanatha Temple

The Kailasnatha Temple and Vaiguntaperumal temple are the most perfectly integrated and matured example of the style, equally noted for their sculptures.

The Kailasanatha temple is measured 154' × 80'. Inside the sanctam a huge Linga is found.

The most important of the group of Pallava structures is the Kailasanatha temple, which is one of the most remarkable

architectural monuments, forming a complete series of representations of the Principal legends in the Saivite mythology.

The *Cells* were originally occupied by *Lingas*, each with its separate name, and representing a different *manifestation of Siva*. The Pallava Grantha inscriptions on the facade of each, *mandapa* mention the names. The names represent either of the different *Lingas* or titles of the King who executed the buildings. They are all Saivaite appellations.

The temple complex is comprised in a large, and a smaller courtyard. The central shrine is surmounted by a lofty *pyramidal tower*. The entrance to the Central *Vimana* has been from the east. A small separate shrine is found at each corner on each side of the large court, is ranged a continuous series of cells. Each cell has a small tower and *Sikhara* over it. Elephants and Bulls are placed alternatively on the wall head between them. In front of the large central shrine-to the east-is the *Mahamandapa*. It is detached from the central group of shrines.

The Vaikuntaperumal Temple, otherwise known as *Paramesvara Vinagaram* was constructed by Nandivarman II. Each of the three storeyed *Vimana* contains a *Karbagraha* with standing, sitting and sleeping sculptures of *Vishnu*.

III. B. Nandivarman Group

The originality of the Pallava Architecture was slowly vanishing. The *Lingas*, *Dwarapalakas*, *Pillars* etc. are differed from the earlier group. It is very difficult to identify this group with the early Chola temples. The following are the examples.

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|---------------------------------------|---|---------------|
| 1. Muktesvara temple | } | all at Kanchi |
| 2. Matankesvara temple | | |
| 3. Tripurantakesvara temple | | |
| 4. Irvatesvara temple | | |
| 5. Perumal temple at Kuram | | |
| 6. Virattanesvara temple at Tiruttani | | |

7. Vadamallisvara temple at Orakkadam
8. Parasuramesvara temple at Gudimallam.

Matangeswara Temple at Kanchipuram :

The plan is simply a small shrine with massive walls, and entrance through a pillared porch on the west side. The side and back walls of the Porch and shrine have a series of *Panels* on each. A black stone *Linga* is found inside the shrine. The tower, which is hollow, is found over the *Linga*. The porch has four tiers of the Pallava type each with a lion base.

Virattanesvara Temple at Tiruttani is an apsidal temple like the Sahadeva ratha. Siva, Ganesa, Vishnn and Brahma are found here. This temple was constructed during the rule of Aparajita. Perumal temple at Kuram was constructed by Paramesvaravarman.

II Sculpture

Sculpture : Beautiful sculptures are found in the temples above noticed. The early Mahendravarman sculptures are tall; the figures have thick lips because of the nature of the stones. Monolithic animals like Bull, Lion, Elephant and the Monkey family are at Mamallai. The battle scene of Mahisasuramardini, and the Anandasayana of Vishnu; and the Panel depicting Arjuna's penance are remarkable.

At Mandagappattu, the dwarapalaka leans on a massive club- indicating a Saiva temple. The lower part of the club- is unfinished; his feet are left uncut as well. The Varaha mandapa has an elegant facade of *Vyasa*-based pillars and pilasters supporting a cornice with Kudus and arrow of miniature shrines. The lotus rosettes and lozenges of the mandapa-ceiling are painted in orange-red against a pale green background.

Dr. A. Swaminathan, Thirumalin Thiruvuruvangal, (I conography of Vishnu), *Yadavam*, Dec, Jan, Feb-1982.

The composition of the Govardana—Krishna relief following the shape of the boulder, moves inward and upward, swelling to its largest size in the centre, around the principal group and ebbing out against the opposite end. Both end sections consist of wild animals of the forest, among which we notice griffin and sphinxes; they are all seeking refuge. The climatic scene is of course, Krishna lifting up mount Govardhana in order to protect his friends, the milkmaids (gopis), Cowherds and their families and Cattle, from the wrath of Indra who is sending down storm and deluge.

The adjoining pastoral scene is perhaps the loveliest section. A cow is licking her calf while she is being milked; a gopi is carrying *milk-pots* and fodder; another with a child in one arm, salutes a flute-player.

Isolated Rock Panel: "Two Nagas are joyfully playing with the water in the middle of the stream; here a Brahmana goes back home with a large pot of water on one of his shoulders;...a number of ascetics are performing their penances; on the other side of the river, a cat; wishing to imitate those ascetics, takes up the same posture of penance by lifting its whole body on its hind legs and its front paws above its head..." Kailasanatha temple has a number of dancing postures of Nataraja. The Vaikunta Perumal temple has labelled panels of sculptures purporting to trace the history of the Pallava dynasty.

III. Painting: Mahendravarman's taste for the painting is depicted through his title "*Chitrakarapuli*". He was the author of a treatise on painting is also proved by *Dakshia Chitra* an inscription found at Mamandur. Traces of Paintings on the roof of Kudimiyamalai, on the walls of the Kailasanatha temple, Adivaraha cave and Mamandur cave etc., are found.

IV. Music: The rhythm and melody of the verses of the Devaram Trio and the Alvars melted the hearts of every one. Singing of Devaram was practised in the temples Sri Vadya vidyadarh, Sankirnajathi etc., are the titles of Mahendravarman. The *Kudmiyamalai* inscription is arranged

in seven sections; each section has several sub sections. *Thirumaiyam* is another musical note. Yal, Kulal, Kinnari, Kokkari, Chachari, Vina, Takkai, Mulavam, Udukkai Mattalam etc. are the names of the musical instruments found in the Devaram hymns.

V. **Dancing** : The various poses of the Nataraja at Kailasanatha temple speak their taste over Dance. Dancing girls were there in the temples (Later Period). Muktesvara temple itself had 24 dancing girls.

VI. **Drama** : Mahendravarman's Mattavilasaprakasana is a beautiful social drama written in Sanskrit. Perunkathai refers to the dramas in the following lines.¹

Manikkavasakar says, “நாடகத்தால் உணவுயார போல் நடித்து” Nammalavar says, பிறவிமா மாயக் கத்தினைமே” Dance groups also entertained the king in the court. A panel in the Vaikunta perumal temple depicts this.

¹ “கோயில் நாடகக் குழுக்களும் வருகென”
நயத்திற்கும் பொருந்த நாடகம் கண்டும்.