

7th Social Science Lesson 17 Notes in English

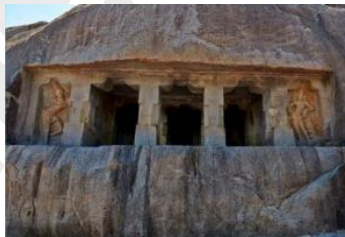
17] Art And Architecture Of Tamil Nadu

Introduction:

Dravidian architecture is of indigenous origin. It advanced over time by a process of evolution. The earliest examples of the Tamil Dravidian architectural tradition were the 7th century rock-cut shrines at Mahabalipuram. The absence of monuments in South India prior to the 7th century is attributed by scholars to temples ought to have been built in wood, which were eventually destroyed by forces of nature. In Tamil Nadu, the evolution of temple architecture took place in five stages: (1) The Pallava Epoch (A.D. 600 to 850); (2) Early Chola Epoch (A.D. 850 to 1100); (3) Later Chola Epoch (A.D. 1100 to 1350); (4) Vijayanagara/Nayak Epoch (A.D. 1350 to 1600); and (5) Modern Epoch (After A.D. 1600).

Pallava Epoch:

The Pallava epoch witnessed a transition from rock-cut to free-standing temples. Rock-cut temples were initially built by carving a rock to the required design and then rocks were cut to build temples. The Pallava king Mahendravarman was a pioneer in rock-cut architecture. Mandagapattu temple was the first rock-cut temple built by him. The rock-cut cave structure has two pillars in the front that hold it. All the cave temples have simple sanctum cut on the rear side of the wall with a frontage-projecting mandapa (pavilion).



Rock-cut Cave Temple, Mandagapattu

On either side are two dwarapalas (gatekeepers). This cave architecture reached its decadent phase after A.D.700 and gave way to the large structural temples probably because the structural temples provided a wider scope to the sculptor to use his skill.

The Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram, also called the Seven Pagodas, was built by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman II. It is the oldest structural temple in South India. The structural temples were built using blocks of rock instead of a whole block as earlier. Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha, built the Kanchi Kailasanatha temple. The Vaikuntha Perumal temple at Kanchipuram was built by Nandivarman II. Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram) is built of cut stones rather than carved out of caves. It has two shrines, one dedicated to Siva and the other to Vishnu.

**Kanchi Kailasanatha Temple****Kanchi Vaikunda Perumal Temple**

The Tamil Dravida tradition is exemplified by rock-cut monuments such as Pancha Pandava Rathas, namely Draupadi ratha, Dharmaraja ratha, Bheema ratha, Arjuna ratha and Nagula-Sahadeva ratha. The outer walls of the rathas, especially of Arjuna, Bhima and Dharmaraja, are decorated with niches and motifs. The niches have the sculptures of gods, goddesses, monarchs and scenes from mythology. The Arjuna's Penance, carved on the face of a granite boulder, is a magnificent relief, measuring approximately 100 ft long by 45 ft high.

**Arjuna's Penance****Pandya Temples in the Pallava Epoch:**

Early Pandyas were the contemporaries of the Pallavas. Unlike the Pallavas, Pandyas installed deities in the sanctums in their cave temples. More than fifty cave temples have been found in different parts of the Pandyan Empire. The most important of them are found in Malaiyadikurichi, Anaimalai, Tiruparankundram and Trichirappali. These caves were dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Brahma. In the Siva temple of Pandyas, the linga is carved out of the mother rock. The figure of Nandhi is also carved out of the rock. The Siva lingam in the sanctum is installed in the centre with enough space all around it. The sanctum also has a drainage canal. The pillars are divided into three parts and are of different sizes. The pillars have no uniform ornamentation. The

back side walls are divided into four niches on which the bas-relief images of Siva, Vishnu, Durga, Ganapathy, Subramanya, Surya, Brahma and Saraswathi are carved out. The dwarapalas figure on either side of sanctum.

Rock-cut and structural temples are significant part of the Pandya architecture. The illustrious example for rock-cut style is unfinished Kazhugumalai Vettuvankoil temple. The Vettuvankoil, a monolithic temple at Kazhugumalai, is hewn out of a huge boulder on four sides. At the top of the temple, sculptures of Uma Maheswarar, Dakshinamoorthy, Vishnu and Brahma are found. Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai and Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli represent examples of Pandyas' architectural style.



Monolithic Temple, Kazhugumalai



Nellaiappar Temple Corridor, Tirunelveli

Sculptures:

The walls of the caves are decorated with the bas relief of the gods and goddesses. In the case of structural temples, the walls of the sanctums are free from image decorations. Instead the superstructures and the pillars have the sculptures. The sculptures look majestic, having elaborate shoulders, slim bodies, beautiful ornaments and high crowns.



Vettuvankoil Temple Sculptures

Tiruparankundram, Anaimalai and Kazhugumalai have the bas relief of many deities: Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Parvathi, Subramanya, Ganapathi and Dakshinamoorthy. These are some

remarkable images of the cave temples. Many early Pandya images unearthed from Madurai and its surrounding areas are now in Tirumalai Nayakkar museum at Madurai.

Paintings:

Caves at Sittanavasal, 15 kilometres away from Pudukkottai, and at Tirumalapuram in Sankarankovil taluk, Tirunelveli district, have outstanding early Pandya paintings. Sittanavasal was a residential cave of the Jain monks. They painted the walls with fresco painting. Unfortunately, we have lost many of those paintings. Among the surviving ones, the lotus pond is notable for its excellent execution of colours and exposition of the scene. The image of lotus flowers, leaves spread all over the pond, animals, elephants, buffalos, swans and a man who plucks the flowers look brilliant.



The Sittanavasal paintings have similarities with the Ajantha paintings. Tirumalaipuram, from where we get early Pandya paintings, are in a damaged condition.

The Early Chola Epoch:

The Cholas came to limelight in A.D. 850 under Vijaylaya Chola and continued to govern the region for about four hundred years. For the Early Chola epoch, the temple at Dadapuram, near Tindivanam in Tamil Nadu, is worth mentioning.

The early Chola architecture followed the style of Sembian Mahadevi. Temples with the increased number of devakoshta (niche) figures can be classified as belonging to the Sembiyan style. Tiruppurambiyam is an illustrious example of early temple that was re-fashioned in the days of Sembiyan Mahadevi.



Tirupurambiyam Temple

Later Chola Epoch:

The maturity attained by Chola architecture is reflected in the two magnificent temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram. The magnificent Thanjavur Big Temple dedicated to Siva, completed around A.D.1009, is a fitting memorial to the material achievements of the time of Rajaraja.



Brihadeeshwara Temple, Thanjavur



Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple

Thanjavur Big Temple:

At the time the Big Temple of Thanjavur was constructed, it was a huge temple complex. The 216 feet vimana (structure over the garbhagriha) is notable as it is one among the tallest man-made shikaras of the world. Due to its massive height, the shikara is called the Dakshina Meru. The huge bull statue (Nandi) measures about 16 feet long and 13 feet height and is carved out of a single rock.

Gangaikonda Cholapuram:

Gangaikonda Cholapuram served as the Chola capital for about 250 years, until the decline of the Cholas and the rise of the Pandyas. The Brihadeeshwara temple of Gangaikonda Cholapuram,

built by Rajendra Chola, is undoubtedly as worthy a successor to the Brihadeeshwara temple of Thanjavur. The height of the temple is 55 metres. The sanctum has two storeys as in the big temple at Thanjavur. The outer wall has many projections with niches and recesses on three sides. In the niches there are the images of Siva, Vishnu and other gods. This temple complex has the shrines of Chandeeshwarar, Ganesa and Mahishasura Mardhini.

Dharasuram:

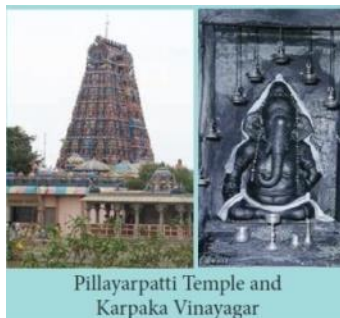
Dharasuram, near Kumbakonam, is a Later Chola period temple, rich in architectural splendour, dedicated to Iravatheswara (Siva as god of lord Indira's elephant). Rajaraja II constructed this temple. This temple is another landmark of the Chola architecture. The Mahamandapam is an elaborate structure. The entire structure looks like a ratha because it has four wheels at the Mahamandapam. The sanctum and pillars have many sculptures, which are miniatures of various mythological figures. A compound wall runs round the temple with a gopuram.



Iravatheswara Temple

Later Pandyas:

The contribution of Later Pandyas to South Indian art was significant. A case in point is the cave temple at Pillayarpatti (near Karaikudi, TamilNadu) belonging to 13th century. This temple is important both for its sculptures and for an inscription. A beautiful Ganesha is carved facing the entrance. The importance of the figure, referred to Desivinayaga in the cave inscription, is that there are two arms with the trunk turning to the right.



Pillayarpatti Temple and
Karpaka Vinayagar

Vijayanagara Epoch:

During the Vijayanagara epoch, a new form of construction emerged. It is the mandapam (pavilion) to where the gods are carried every year. Pillared outdoor mandapams are meant for public rituals with the ones in the east serving as the waiting room for devotees, which adorn the

large temples. These mandapams attract attention for its monolithic pillars. On these pillars are sculptured horses, lions and the gods. The kalyana mandapam at Kanchipuram (Varadaraja Perumal temple) and at Vellore (Jalagandeshwar temple) are notable examples. The most celebrated of these mandapams in temple of Madurai is the Pudumandapam.



Vellore Jalagandeshwar Temple Kalyana Mandapam

The main features of the Vijayanagar and Nayak architecture are decorated mandapas, ornamental pillars, life-size images, gopuras, prakaras, music pillars, floral works and stone windows during the 15th to 17th centuries. Tanks are attached to the temples. Gateways to temple are constructed from four directions with massive gopurams.

The practice of fitting the niches with sculptures continued during the Nayak period. There was an increased use of major sculpted figures (relief sculpture) as found at the Alakiya Nambi temple at Tirukkurungudi (Tirunelveli district) and the Gopalakrishna temple in the Ranganatha temple complex at Srirangam. The southern festival mandapam of Adinatha temple at Azhwar Tirunagari and the porch of the Nellaiappar temple at Tirunelveli are other notable examples.



Mandapam of Adinatha Temple, Azhwar Tirunagari

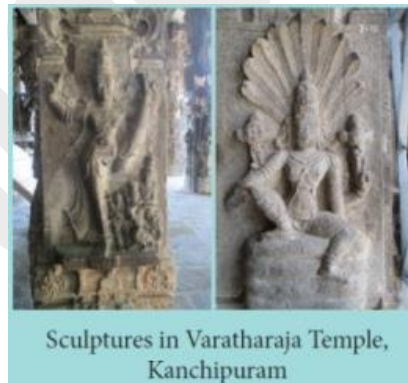
In TamilNadu, the image of deities attached to composite columns gradually freed themselves from the core column. The 1000-pillar mandapam of the Meenakshi-Sundareswarar temple, Pudumandapam at Madurai, Rathi Mandapam at Tirukkurungudi and Vanamamalai Temple at Nanguneri are illustrious examples for the mandapam architecture of this period.



1000-Pillar Mandapam, Madurai Meenakshi Temple

The pillars of this period are more decorative than the previous period. Monolithic gigantic yazhi pillars, horse pillars with life-size portraits of mythological and royal family members, common folk, animals and floral works were made. Musical pillars were the peculiar feature of this time. A sitting lion at the top of the pillars is a common feature in the mandapams. The windows are carved out on the walls of the sanctum and mandapams.

The Jalagandeshwara temple at Vellore, the temples at Thadikompu near Dindugal and Krishnapuram near Tirunelveli and the Subramanya shrine in the Big Temple Thanjavur are most remarkable edifices of this time. Vijayanagar and Nayak paintings are seen at Varadharaja Perumal temple at Kanchipuram, Kudalazhagar Temple at Madurai and the temples of Srivilliputhur, Tiruvellarai, Azhaharkoil, Tiruvannamalai and Srirangam. The paintings mostly have the stories from Ramayana, palace scenes and mythological stories.



Sculptures in Varadharaja Temple,
Kanchipuram

Modern Period (After A.D. 1600):

The Sethupathis, as the feudatories of Madurai Nayaks, ruled Ramanathapuram and contributed to the Ramanathaswamy temple architecture. In the temple of Rameswaram, the predominance of corridors is striking. It is claimed that this temple has the longest set of corridors in the world. The temple has three sets of corridors. The outer set of the temple's corridors has a height of almost 7 metres and stretches for about 120 metres in both the eastern and western directions. The corridors to the north and to the south, on the other hand, are about 195 metres in length. The outer corridor is also remarkable for the number of pillars that support it, which is over 1200 in number. Moreover, many of these pillars are decorated by ornate carvings. The innermost set of corridors is the oldest of the three.



Ramanathaswamy Temple Corridor, Rameswaram

Summary:

In sum, the Pallava period featured sculptural rocks. The early Chola period was marked by grand vimanas. The Later Chola period was known for beautiful gopurams. Vijayanagar period's unique feature was the mandapam and the modern period was when corridors were given prominence.

Glossary:

1.	Indigenous	Native	சுதேசம், உள்ளூர்
2.	Epoch	Era, age	சகாப்தம், வரலாற்றின் ஒரு காலகட்டம்
3.	Sanctum	A sacred place set apart in a temple	கருவறை
4.	Decadent	Corrupt, a state of moral decline	சீர்கேடான
5.	Exemplified	Illustrated, represented	எடுத்துக்காட்டாய் திகழ்கிறது
6.	Niche	A cavity, especially in a wall to display a statue	சிலை வைக்கப்படும் இடம்
7.	Motif	A decorative design forming a pattern in an artistic work	கலைப்பண்புக் கூறு
8.	Boulder	A very large rock	பெரிய கற்பாறை, பாறாங்கல்
9.	Contemporaries	Living or occurring at the same time	சமகாலத்தைச் சேர்ந்தவர்கள்
10.	Hewn	Cut out and shaped	செதுக்கப்பட்ட
11.	Bas-relief	A sculpture carved into a wall	சுவற்றில் செதுக்கப்படும் சிற்பம்
12.	Execution	Carrying out	செயல் திறன், ஒன்றைச் செய்து முடித்தல்
13.	Recesses	Hollow spaces inside the wall or a structure	உட்பகுதிகள், இடைவெளிகள்

Do you know?

The Mamallapuram monuments and temples, including the Shore Temple complex, were notified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.