temples of south india

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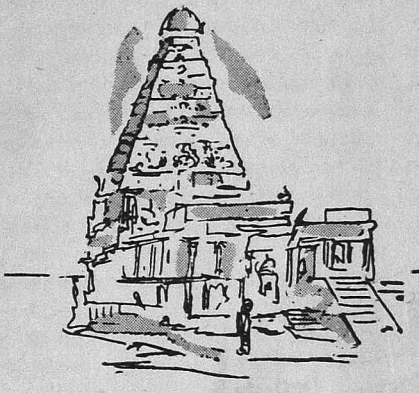

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly everyone who visits South India returns with the impression that it is a land of temples. North India, too, was as much a land of temples, but having been relatively free from repeated foreign invasions, the country south of the Vindhyas was able to preserve a larger number of its religious monuments from wanton destruction or calculated negligence. This historical circumstance accounts for a more continuous development of the art of temple-building in the south, free from the arresting influences of alien cultures which came to dominate North India from the thirteenth century.

South India is dotted with thousands of temples, many of them old and some in ruins. Apart from the famous temple-towns, a good number of villages and towns have two or more temples, some so ancient and venerated that they have become places of pilgrimage. A large majority of the existing temples are simple, unostentatious structures with no great artistic merit. The really great ones are monuments of considerable antiquity, the oldest of them dating back to fourteen centuries. Besides their antiquity and artistic excellence there is the interesting fact that these temples have gone through a long evolutionary process documenting, as it were, the history of South Indian culture.

Visiting the great temples, one is struck by their massiveness of proportion and the excellence of craftsmanship found in their pillars, figure sculptures, ceilings, towers and frieze-laden walls. We stand amazed at the superhuman patience which generations of artisans have bestowed [illegible] construction, and the princely munificence which made them possible. Beneath these architectural achievements lay the urge of the Hindu mind to subordinate life to religion and seek in it the motive and ideal of all human endeavour. The temple became an aesthetic formulation of an essentially theistic religion. Through the temple, men sought to make accessible to their sense-perception all that their beliefs symbolised. These beliefs indeed influenced and commanded individuals in the privacy of their conscience. But as a visible emblem of the religion, philosophy and ethics of the people the temple played a role far more vital than any other institution. It became a symbol of 'dharma' for all—kings, nobles and laymen alike. To provide for its construction and maintenance became an act of merit here and hereafter.

The great builders and artists sought self-expression through conformity to tradition rather than originality of expression. They generally preferred to remain anonymous. While we admire the elegance and beauty of the temples of Mamallapuram (also called Mahabalipuram), the stately grandeur of the Tanjore vimana and the Madurai gopurams or the rich and exquisite carvings of the Belur and Halebid temples, we know very little about those who designed these structures and carved their details. They did not conceive of art as secular and religious. All art was one, basically religious and symbolic. Religion was in fact a synonym for civilised existence. The architecture of the tem-

ple only conveyed in spatial terms the intensity of their longing for a "life of release." The deity to whom the structure was dedicated symbolised the Supreme Principle which controlled the affairs of the world, and gave direction to the spiritual urge.

On this account the temple became the centre of all civic and social life. Its structure dominated the surrounding both by its location and size. Its solidity and mass gave a sense of permanence to all other institutions whose main function, like that of the temple, was preservation of traditional values. Every village and town grew round the temple, which was the hub of all activities. Its influence extended beyond the purely religious and spiritual realms and made the temple an important factor in the economy of the village. The deity was a leading land-owner, thanks to frequent donations from kings, nobles, and lay devotees. This made temples rich enough to function sometimes as banks, lending money to needy agriculturists.

The construction of a temple usually took many years and it gave employment to hundreds of artisans and engineers. The finest craftsmen from neighbouring provinces found patronage, and a whole generation of talented sculptors and builders were trained by them during its construction.

The daily routine of rituals in the temples gave assured employment to a large number of people—priests, Brahmins learned in the Vedas, musicians, dancing girls, teachers, florists, tailors, clerks and accountants, and functionaries of various kinds. Scores of extant inscriptions record in considerable detail the budgetary provisions for stipulated rites and rituals to be observed in the temples.

A temple festival was an occasion of great social rejoicing and people gathered from surrounding towns and villages to participate in the general merriment. These festivals ended up as fairs, often lasting two or more days. Merchants and petty traders from places far and near went there to barter or sell goods.

The age of the temples was essentially an age of faith. Scholastic learning was considered the highest intellectual pursuit and the standards set for assessment of individual attainments were very high. Debates and discourses were held in the temple premises among scholars who sought recognition and renown. These provided an important forum for the canvassing of various creeds and philosophical schools.

The precincts of the temple were often the only venue for public entertainment. Wrestling matches and music and dance-recitals enlivened the special occasions of temple ceremony. The rich and poor alike had the benefit of these entertainments. During the temple festivities travellers were given free lodging and food in the rest-houses or *choultries* attached to the temple.

Attached also to the temples were schools or 'pathasalas' where pupils learnt everything from the three R's to theology, philosophy and ethics. Often hospitals were located in the temple premises. The local assembly or *panchayat* met there to discuss municipal affairs or adjudicate personal disputes. The very conduct of elections or the hearing of civil disputes in the presence of the deity invested the proceedings with an atmosphere of solemnity.

The typical South Indian temple as we see it in its architecturally complete form is the product of centuries of growth and evolution. It is a complex of structures some of which had functional utility while others had no more than architectural and decorative value. The various structures constituting the temple were added to the main shrine by stages, often unsystematically and with little architectural effect. But they subserved the requirements of an elaborate ritual which on festive occasions became even more so. To the devotees the temples themselves were objects of adoration being "the residence of the gods"—'devasthanam.' So they had to be not only big and imposing but beautiful and permanent. The evolution of temple architecture from its simple unostentatious beginnings as a shrine of worship into an agglomeration of structures conformed to the growing emotional demands of the devotees. The fully evolved architectural form with its sanctuary (Garbhagriha), vestibule (Antarala), the pillared halls (Mandapam) the tower over the cella (Sikhara), the cloisters or the rectangular range of cells, the imposing gopurams or towers on the gateways, the innumerable niches, alcoves and recess, are all developments which were beyond the conception of those who designed the earliest temples.

The great era or temple-building which started on modest lines about A.D. 500 and culminated in the great temple at Madurai or Rameswaram, for instance (About A.D. 1600), corresponds in many respects to a similar movement in Europe during the Middle Ages. With the revival of Brahmanism in the seventh century the entire sub-continent craved for new art forms based on familiar themes from the epics and the Puranas. This gave aesthetic content to the religious and spiritual aspirations of the common people and at the same time satisfied the ruling monarchs and nobles who sought popularity and renown as upholders of 'Dharma.'

Tracing the beginnings of temple architecture in South India on the basis of extant examples we are led to a group of stone-built shrines in Aihole (in the Bijapur District of Mysore State) which are about the earliest. These temples, most of them Hindu and others Jain, were built by the early Chalukyan rulers between about A.D. 450-600, corresponding to the period when the Gupta and Vakataka shrines were built in northern and central India. These Aihole temples are the architectural ancestors of what is commonly known as the Chalukyan school in South India, whose evolutionary process continued right up to the middle of the 13th century. Though temples belonging to this school are largely confined to the Kannada-speaking country, the influence of the style is to be found as far north as Mt. Abu.

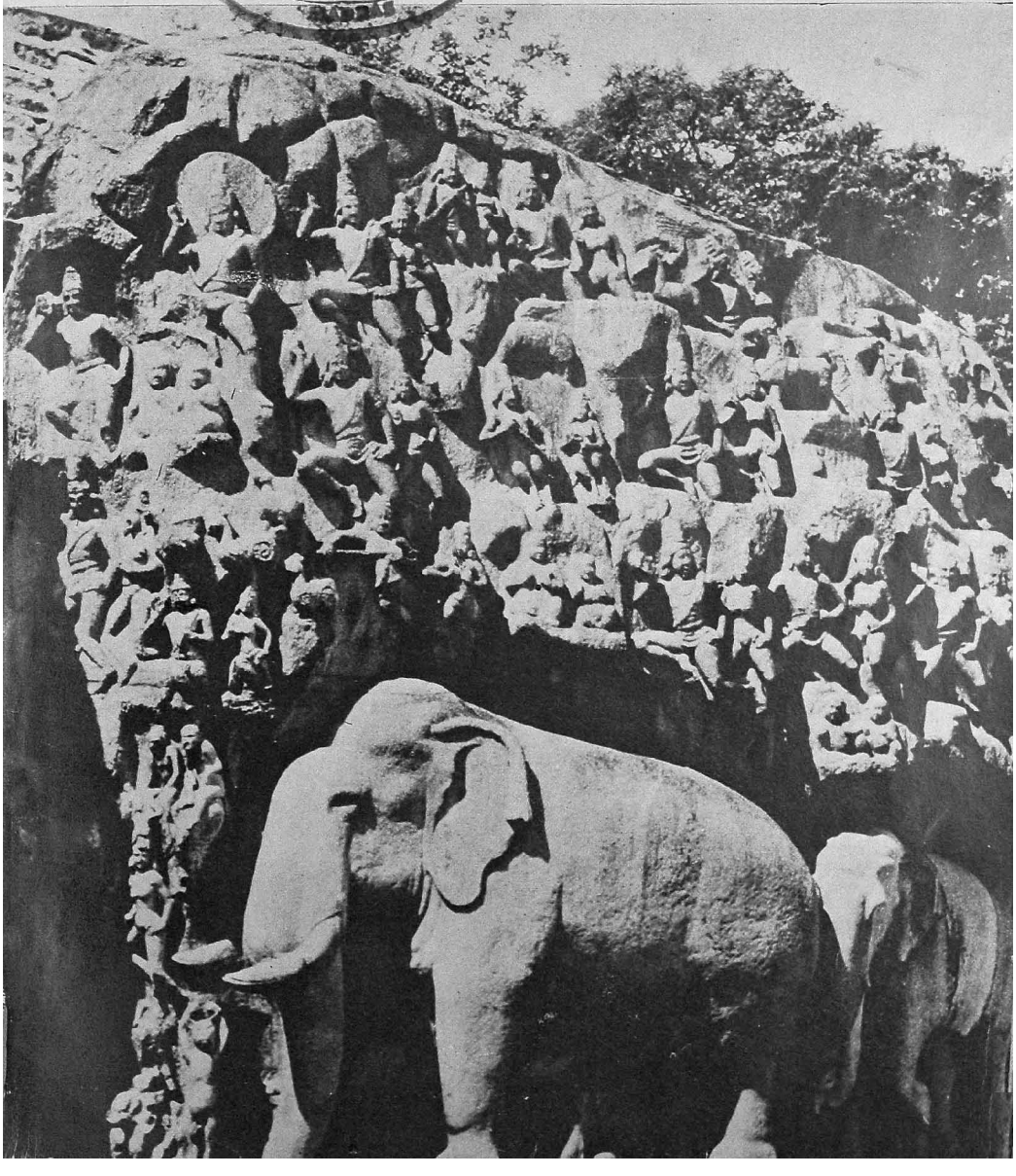
In the south and south-eastern parts, consisting mainly of the Tamil-speaking districts and parts of Andhra Pradesh, a different style of temple building evolved which is commonly named as the Dravida or Dravidian school. To this belong the well-known temples of Tanjore, Madurai, Srirangam, Chidambaram, Rameswaram, etc. As we see them today with their many concentric enclosures, imposing towers and ornate "halls of thousand pillars", they are the composite products of a long evolution over a thousand years. The earliest of the

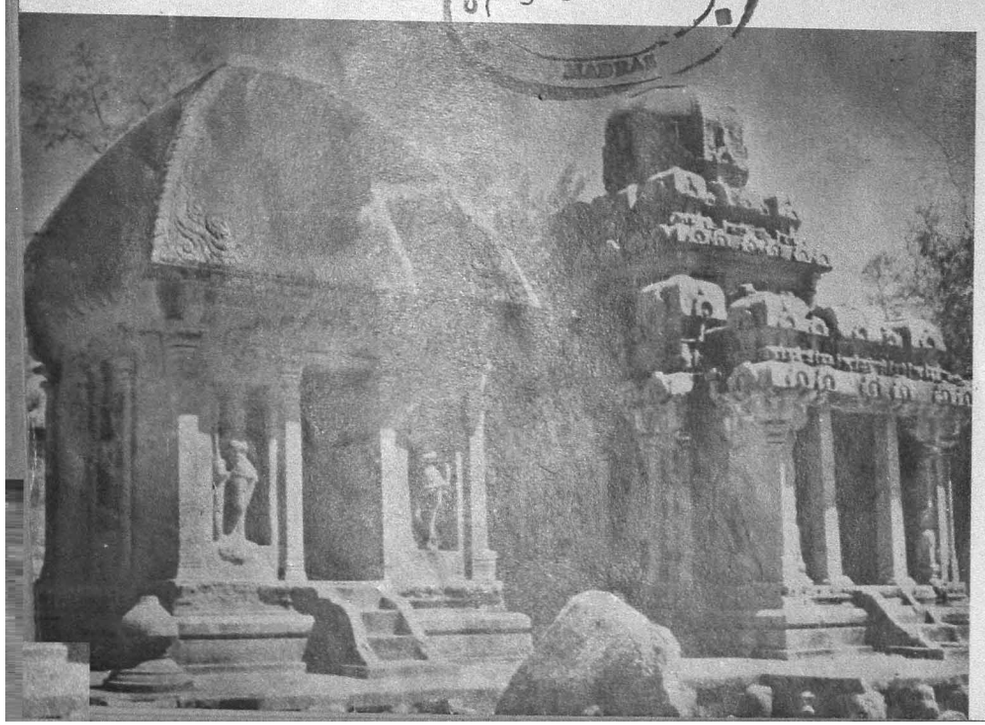
surviving examples which belong to about A.D. 600 is the Mamallapuram group of temples (58 kms. south of Madras) constructed by the Pallava rulers. We find in these rock-cut and stone-built structures not the crude efforts of craftsmen still struggling to comprehend the purpose and principles of architecture but the work of a fairly advanced school of builders who conformed to practices long established by tradition. Obviously, the Mamallapuram group of temples had its architectural forbears which have failed to survive the ravages of time. This might be due to the perishable nature of the materials with which they were constructed. There is a large gap, therefore, in our knowledge of Dravidian temples prior to the seventh century.

To some extent light is shed on the subject by the Buddhist monuments, all in ruins, which have been unearthed in the deltas of the Krishna and Godavari rivers in Andhra Pradesh. The zeal of Emperor Asoka was responsible for carrying the message of the Buddha into the heart of South India in the 3rd century B.C. This we know from the numerous edicts which he left engraved on rocks. But the full impact of Buddhist art from the North was not noticeable till quite sometime later. The Buddhist monuments, some rock-cut and other structural, which have been found in the Krishna and Godavari deltas are architecturally the southern counterparts of the Buddhist stupas of the North. They are traceable to the post-Asokan period, namely about 200-150 B.C. With the break-up of Asoka's vast empire after his death, South India passed into the hands of a dynasty of local rulers known as the Andhras who were also Buddhist. Their earlier capital at Srikakulam and the later one at Dhanyakataka or Amaravati, on the banks of the Krishna, were the first scenes of religious architecture in South India. The remnants of these monuments tell the story of imposing structures, not very different from the Stupa of Sanchi, which adorned this region. The Buddhist monasteries cut into rocks, as at Guntupalle (Krishna District) and the Sankaram Hills (Visakhapatnam District), together with the great Stupas at Bhattiprolu, Amaravati, Jaggayyapeta and Ghantasala, introduced the tradition of religious architecture to South India which centuries later Brahmanical Hinduism was to transform into an altogether new architectural style.

The building art which developed in India during the early centuries of the Christian era developed more or less independently in the west, south and north of the sub-continent. But the basic inspiration for all of them was the same and the principles on which their construction was based were derived from a common text, the Vastushastra.

"The Descent of the Ganga", also called "Arjuna's Penance". A sculptured panel on one of the granite outcrops at Mamallapuram

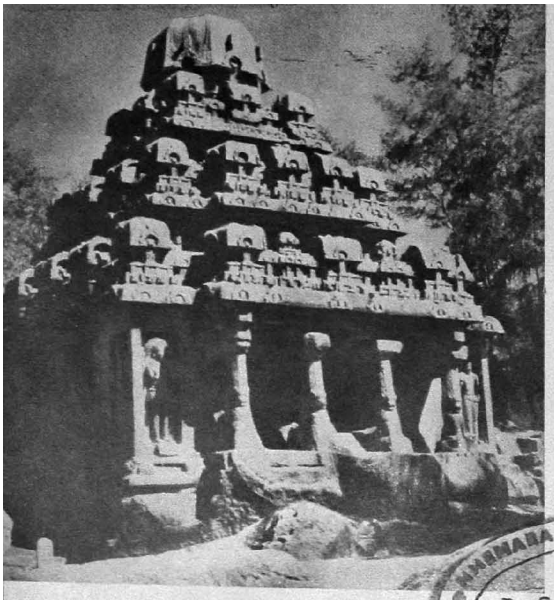




Panel showing Durga chasing Mahisha, the demon with a buffalo-head. Durga Mandapa, Mamallapuram

Left top The facade of the Varahamantapa, Mamallapuram (7th century)

Left : Two of the monolithic Rathas, Mamallapuram. In the foreground is Draupadi's Ratha.



The Dharmaraja Ratha, the largest and the most complete of the monolithic shrines

The Shore Temple, Mamallapuram. Dedicated to Siva, the temple was built by Narasimhavarman II.

THE DRAVIDIAN STYLE

PALLAVA TEMPLES (600-850)

As we have seen, the temples of South India may be broadly classified into the Dravidian and Chalukyan styles of architecture, the former being confined mainly to the Tamil-speaking region and the latter to the Kannada-speaking areas. Kerala in the south-west and far south came under the influence of the Chalukyan and the Dravidian styles though many of the temples there have characteristics which are distinctively indigenous to the region.

The imposing temples of the Dravidian group which have exercised compelling influence on generations of devotees and onlookers are products of a long, unbroken development. Five great ruling dynasties namely the Pallavas (600-900), the Cholas (900-1150), the Pandyas (1100-1350), the Vijayanagar (1340-1565) and the Nayaks of Madurai (1600-1700), were intimately associated with this process of development.

The Pallava era of South Indian history which synchronises with the post-Gupta period in the North represents a transition from the ancient to the medieval. In a very real sense the Pallava laid the foundations of the Dravidian style, as evidenced by the Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) group and the earliest of Kanchi temples. By now south as well as north India had broken away from the earlier Buddhistic traditions. During the three centuries of Pallava rule the far South produced two main forms of temple architecture, the rock-cut and the structural.

Of these, the earlier one was the rock-cut style (about A.D. 600-700) which consists again of two groups of monuments—the pillared mandapas (halls), and the more elaborate monolithic shrines familiarly known as 'rathas'. These mandapas are simple open pavilions excavated into rock with one or more cellas deeply cut into the rock wall. The pillars of these rock-cut shrines which belong to the reign of Mahendravarman, are massive. The shafts are octagonal and the upper and lower parts square in plan. Its facade consists of a row of pillars 2.13 metres high with heavy brackets of immense size. These early rock-cut shrines found in South and North Arcot, Tiruchirapalli, Chingleput, Krishna, Guntur and Nellore Districts suggest a primitive structure without even so much as a cornice above the pillars. But this elementary design was soon improved upon, with roll cornices and decorative motifs resembling the Buddhist Chaitya arches.

We then come to the second group of rock-cut temples known as the Mahamalla group (640-690 A.D.) found in Mamallapuram where the distinctive characteristics of the Pallava style began to take form. In this period cave-temples were still in fashion, but free-standing monolithic shrines came into vogue side by side with cave temples. The heavy, massive pillars of the earlier period are replaced by more slender and ornamental ones, supported by squatting lions. These temples evidence a new trend in

temple architecture in which the pyramidal design becomes prominent with several of the pillared halls being mounted one upon the other. Another group of rock-cut temples of a slightly earlier period, found at Bhairavakonda (North Arcot District), show a different kind of development in that their pillars and capitals are more sophisticated in design. In these pillars we notice the beginnings of the architectural character of the later Dravidian temples.

Rising from sandy surroundings with nothing to indicate its ancient glory but a group of rock-cut and stone-built shrines, Mamallapuram is now a place of pilgrimage to students of art and an important centre of tourist interest. For over thirteen centuries the waves of the sea have lashed against this ancient Pallava seaport, and the ruthless sea-borne winds have obliterated the fine texture of its lithic monuments. Rising from a bed of sand on the sea-shore was a large hill of granite about a kilometre long, half a kilometre wide and about 30 metres high. To the south of it was another granite outcrop about 75 metres long and 15 metres high. These two rock formations constituted the material from which this famous group of Pallava monuments was chiselled. The latter of the two formations is covered over on one side with the famous sculptured panel known as "Arjuna's Penance" or the "Descent of the Ganga." It is a remarkable portraiture in relief of the cults of River and Naga worship prevalent in those days.

The entire group of monuments at Mamallapuram is an exquisite example of early temple architecture, unrivalled by any other of comparable antiquity in India. There are ten 'mandapas' or excavated halls besides the monolithic rathas known also as the 'Seven Pagodas'. The two illustrate altogether different forms of architecture. The mandapas are no higher than 5 or 6 metres, being on that account the more remarkable for the architectural effect they convey. The speciality of these mandapas lies in the shape and design of their pillars, roll cornices and the harmonious blending of figure-sculpture with the architecture. The pillars, particularly those on the facade of the mandapas dedicated to Durga and Varaha which have the lion motif for their base, are remarkable for their elegance and beauty. The fluted shaft and the beautiful curves of the 'melon' capital, the lotus motif above and the wide abacus have all been skilfully moulded to produce an effect of harmony and strength.

We see in these temples, as in those of Ellora, the artists' attempt to combine sculpture with architecture to great effect. The panel of sculptures enclosed within pilasters and mouldings on the interior walls of the Durga and Varaha mandapas, are the finest of their kind. The more notable among them are those which depict the Varaha (Boar) and Vamana (Dwarf) incarnations of Vishnu, Durga slaying the buffalo-demon Mahisha and the two secular groups representing the Pallava rulers Simhavishnu and Mahendra with their consorts.

The architecture of the monolithic rathas is based on an entirely different idea. They are derivations from the older Buddhist Viharas. The only exception is the Draupadi Ratha, dedicated to Draupadi, the queen of the Pandavas, the heroes of the Mahabharata. It is the simplest and

smallest of them being an artistic replica of the hermit's hut containing only a cell. The rathas, fashioned after the Vihara or monastery, are all square or oblong in plan and pyramidal in elevation. There are five of this category varying in size and minor details. The largest and the most complete of them namely the Dharmaraja Ratha, combines the characteristic features of the Pallava temple—the pillars in the portico with rampant lions, the pyramidal tower and the turreted roof. The Bhima, Ganesa and Sahadeva rathas are oblong in plan and are based on the architecture of the Chaitya hall. Two or three storeys high, they are surmounted by a barrel roof with the Chaitya gable at the ends. In this multi-storeyed structure with its barrel roof we see the beginnings of the great Dravidian gopurams which were to develop nearly six centuries later.

The excellent quality of figure sculpture in the Mamallapuram group of temples set the tone for the development of plastic art in later years. This movement was soon to blossom into the great classical art of Java and Cambodia. Percy Brown observes that "these figure subjects of Mamallapuram are endowed with that same passionate spirit which pulsates in the Christian art of Europe of the corresponding date but with even finer feeling for form and more experienced craftsmanship."

The second phase of Mamallapuram architecture which followed the rock-cut technique belongs to the last quarter of the seventh century. This new movement patronised by Narasimha II or Rajasimha, favoured structural architecture, an opportunity which the talented masons must have greatly welcomed because of the added facility it gave for the display of their skill. The pillars of these masonry temples are slender and are supported not by squatting but rampant lions. Of these structural temples the most outstanding examples are the shore temple at Mamallapuram, and the temples of Kailasanatha and Vaikunthaperumal at Kanchipuram. They all belong to the period 700-800 A.D., the earliest of them being the Kailasanatha temple. The solidity of the masonry of the shore temple which was built soon after, is vouched for by the fact that for over twelve centuries it has withstood the pitiless onslaught of the monsoons, the battering of sea waves and the treachery of drifting sands. A massive wall originally enclosed the temple, whose architecture in principle conforms to the Dharmaraja ratha. The approach to the temple is from the west—a rather unusual feature—instead of the east. Two additional shrines are attached to the cella, one of which has a smaller vimana or tower which, along with the bigger one on the cella, creates a most pleasing effect. The structure of the tapering vimana, which is light, elegant and rhythmic in proportions, is an improvement on the earlier Buddhist vihara.

Kanchipuram, (about 75 kms. south-west of Madras), the most ancient of all cities of the south and renowned for its universities and temples and viharas, has two temples of the same category. From the profusion of ancient monuments which this city still boasts of, Kanchipuram may be aptly described as the cradle of the Dravidian style of architecture which found its culmination seven centuries later at Vijayanagar. Of these

two temples the Kailasanatha is the earlier, having been commenced about 700 A.D. by Rajasimha, and completed by his son Mahendravarman III. Except for some later additions to the east of the enclosure, the temple had been conceived as a whole even before construction, incorporating all the characteristics native to the Pallava style—the pyramidal tower, a pillared hall and the vestibule, all enclosed by a wall surmounted by a parapet of cupolas. We find in it the rampant lion pilaster, so characteristic of the Mamallapuram group, being constantly repeated on the exterior of the structures to great effect. We also see in it further development of the tower on the sanctum or vimana which is now substantial, massive, well proportioned and elegant in its outlines. We see in the Rajasimha period the early beginnings of the gopuram (tower on the gateway) which is dwarfish and architecturally not very conspicuous.

The other temple at Kanchipuram dedicated to Vaikunthaperumal is a more mature example of the Pallava style. It was built by Nandivarman II (About 717-779). Here we see the principal parts such as the cloisters, portico and the sanctuary, making an organic composition. This unity of conception is in greater evidence here than in the Kailasanatha temple. Its vimana is square in plan and rises to a height of 18 metres from the ground.

The examples of the final phase of Pallava construction which are found in Kanchipuram and elsewhere are mostly smaller replicas of these great temples and are not comparable to them in aesthetic quality. However, the Pallava builders paved the way for a great movement in temple architecture which in subsequent centuries was to produce some of the most imposing edifices to be found anywhere in India.

TEMPLES OF THE CHOLA PERIOD (900-1150)

The ninth century saw the decline and fall of the Pallavas. With the defeat of Aparajita, the last of the kings of this dynasty, in A.D. 897 by Aditya I, and his death, the ascendancy of Chola power was assured. The succeeding two hundred and fifty years of history in South India were dominated by political conflicts among three ruling dynasties—the Cholas, the Chalukyas and later the Rashtrakutas—who were all great builders in their own right. From this conflict the Cholas emerged to political eminence on a scale unattained by any other power so far in South India. Almost the entire country south of the Tungabhadra came under their influence. They were in addition a great maritime power, a factor which helped to extend India's cultural influence beyond the shores of India.

As builders the Cholas improved on the excellent architectural traditions of their predecessors. India owes to them two magnificent temples, one at Tanjore and the other at Gangaikondacholapuram, which embody the genius of two successive generations of architects. The Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjore which is the earlier of the two is the better known. Nearly two and a half centuries separate this structure from the last of the Pallava monuments. Although structures of outstanding excellence belonging to this long interregnum have not survived, we are left in no doubt that the older Pallava traditions were undergoing positive transformation both during the time of Aparajita, the last of the Pallava rulers, and the early Cholas.

The Korangunatha temple at Srinivasanallur (Tiruchirapalli District) built sometime about A.D. 930-40 is a distinctive example of early Chola architecture. This is a beautiful but unpretentious structure, but of modest proportions. The lion motif, so characteristic of the Pallava school, is abandoned, and the pillars and capitals are moulded with greater refinement. The treatment of the exterior is strictly architectural and exhibits a healthy preference for plain surfaces. Its tower of vimana is 15 metres high from the ground and is built in three storeys. The surfaces of the vimana have a number of figure-sculptures, about half life-size and set within recesses.

The culmination of the Chola style was reached over half a century later in the Siva temple at Tanjore. The compelling sense of power and masculine dignity which its 68 metres high tower invokes recalls in stone the might and earthly splendour which the Cholas attained under Rajaraja the Great (A.D. 985-1018). Its great physical proportions were conceived by a monarch who was aware of his own greatness and strength.

The Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjore consists of the vimana (the towered sanctuary) the ardhamantapa (compartment in front of the sanctuary), the mahamantapa (large enclosed hall in front of the main shrine), and a large pavilion in front known as the Nandimantapa, all of which are aligned in the centre of a big walled enclosure 152 metres by 76 metres. The gateway of the temple on the east is surmounted by a gopuram or tower. A pillared corridor runs along the inner side of the enclosing wall connecting a number of minor shrines built at the cardinal points and at intervals. There is a second and outer enclosure to the temple with a gateway in front of the inner one which is also surmounted by a gopuram.

The most striking feature of this temple is its imposing vimana which rises perpendicularly from a square base to a height of 15 metres and thence tapers off to a total height of 58 metres. A cupola of pleasing proportions and design rests on the topmost tier. The vertical disposition of this tower is broken by thirteen diminishing tiers with pronounced horizontal lines. The result is 'an architectural texture of great beauty' hardly surpassed by any other temple in South India. On the square formed by the topmost tier is poised the rounded cupola, said to be of single stone, which is ornamented on the four sides with winged niches. The inward curve of its neck from which the cupola itself emerges contrasts effectively with the vertical and horizontal lines of the tower, adding elegance to strength and sensitivity to mass.

The vertical base of the vimana is in itself a great architectural achievement, the treatment of its exterior surface blending harmoniously with its total composition. The base is divided horizontally into two sections by massive cornices which recall those of the rock-cut temples of Mamallapuram. A range of pilasters runs round each of these storeys, emphasising their vertical effect and boosting the upward sweep of the whole pyramid. The compartments into which the surface is broken by these pilasters enclose niches which are occupied by figure-subjects of fine workmanship.

The Cholas no doubt built many temples, but they did not leave behind many monuments comparable in beauty to the Tanjore temple. Even if it were the only legacy of the Cholas they would have deserved the fullest approbation of posterity as generous patrons of art. We have another Chola contribution to South Indian temple architecture, an edifice as great and noble as the Siva temple at Tanjore. This is the temple at Gangaikondacholapuram, 61 kms. north-east of Tanjore and 27 kms. from Kumbakonam. All that remains of the one-time glory of this Chola capital is this temple, built about twenty years after its Tanjore counterpart with obvious

intentions to surpass its predecessor in beauty. It is in much the same style, a little larger in plan, and with a greater elaboration of architectural details. The temple is enclosed by an immense wall resembling a fort. An important feature of this structure is its assembly hall (Mahamantapa), a low structure 53 metres by 29 metres containing over 150 pillars of relatively ordinary design. In this many-columned hall we see the beginnings of the "thousand-pillared halls" for which the great Dravidian temples of later periods are celebrated.

The vimana of the Gangaikondacholapuram temple is built on the same principles as the Tanjore temple and is shorter by 12 metres. The tower rises on a square base 30 metres wide and possesses some features which are distinctive. In place of the strong straight lines of the Tanjore vimana this has a concave appearance, its mouldings at the corner and on the sides being somewhat curved. The resulting effect is somewhat voluptuous in contrast to the masculine strength of the Tanjore tower.

During the century that followed the construction of these temples a number of other temples were built, but none comparable to them in beauty or size. The Airavateswara temple at Darasuram (Tanjore District) and the Kampahareswara temple at Tribhuvanam (near Kumbakonam) can be considered as among the best of this period.

The Chola contribution to Indian art did not merely consist of temples. Their achievements in figure-sculpture and metal casting were equally great. Most of the statuary which consists of iconographic figures are to be found in the panelled niches along the lower exterior of the vimana. The Chola builder used this statuary to great effect, providing to the architecture an embellishment that gave both rhythm and harmony. Some of the finest bronzes of this period can be seen in the Art Gallery at Tanjore.

UNDER THE PANDYAS (1150-1350)

The power of the imperial Cholas began to wane rapidly from the middle of the 12th century. Though temples of minor architectural value continued to be built in many places all over their dominions during this period, they come nowhere near the Tanjore and Gangaikondacholapuram temples in artistic merit. The later Cholas were succeeded by the Pandyas who held sway over the Tamil country for nearly two centuries until the great kingdom of Vijayanagar was founded in A.D. 1336.

The Pandyas, while they contributed little to the building of new temples, exercised a decisive influence on the evolution of the Dravidian style. It had so far been the practice of the Dravidian builder to display all his genius on the main structure of the temple itself, in particular the vimana, which housed the sanctum. The architecture of the gopuram whose beginning we notice in the later Pallava temples at Kanchipuram received greater attention at the hands of the Cholas. But as an element in temple composition they continued to be squattish and small in

comparison with the magnificent edifice on the sanctum. With the advent of the Pandyas, the builders began to expand their skill on the architecture of the main gateways and the superstructure above them.

This new trend was perhaps due to a growing awareness that temples of great antiquity and sanctity already existed in sufficient numbers to require any fresh construction, and that instead of adding to their number it would be more appropriate to improve the architectural surroundings of a select few. Any structural alterations to the original structures which were ancient and venerated, naturally did not fit into this reasoning. Their pristine sanctity and unpretentious appearance were therefore preserved, but high walled enclosures and enormous towered gateways were added to the original shrines. While the enclosure walls were treated as a plain structure, the gateways, built of stone, received considerable architectural embellishment. On the solid foundations of these gateways were raised massive multi-storeyed pyramids built of brick and mortar.

The gopurams make their appearance in the 13th century in their fully mature form. It is obvious even from extant examples of the later Chola period that the idea of a gopuram being taller and more imposing than the vimana is a superimposition on the older style. We see in the superstructures of the gateways of the famous Chalukyan temple of Virupaksha at Pattadakal (c. 750) and the Kailasanatha at Kanchipuram (c. 700) the rudimentary beginnings of this dominant architectural feature of the Pandya epoch.

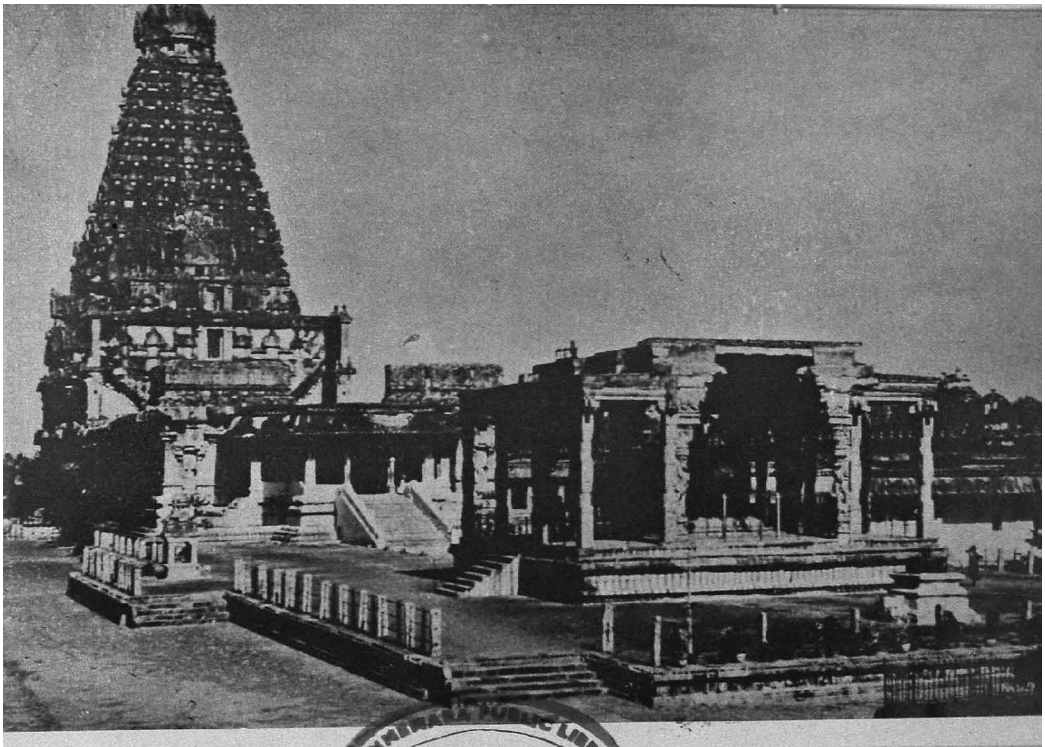
The typical gopuram of a South Indian temple is oblong in plan, with an enormous rectangular gateway in its centre. Being a huge mass of stone-masonry, these vertical, pylon-like gateways form the stable foundation of the tapering tower which rises above it. It goes up, tier upon tier, in a diminishing upward sweep, often to a total height of about 50 metres. On the flat summit of the tapering structure rests an elongated, barrel-vaulted roof with gable ends that remind us of the keel roof of early Buddhist Chaitya halls. A minor variation in the contour of these gopurams is that some of them have straight sloping sides resembling the pyramid, and others have sloping or concave sides which give them a greater soaring effect. Both these types are heavily decorated on their surface. In the former type the decoration is predominantly architectural while it is florid in the latter. The entire exterior of the concave gopuram is a pulsating mass with a bewildering variety of images drawn from the Hindu pantheon illustrating familiar themes from the Puranas and epics. A bold vertical rib consisting of miniature mandapams rising one upon another runs from the bottom of the tower to its top, bringing into prominent relief the centre of the front exterior. This has the effect of adding to the mass of the gopuram and heightening its vertical character.

The Pandya gopuram which set the pattern for all the later Dravidian towers was of the simpler variety. Its decoration was essentially conventional and consisted of pillars and pilasters arranged in such a manner as to conform to the architectural pattern of the structure. An early example of the Pandya gopuram

The Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchi, built by Narasimhavarman II (early 8th century). This temple incorporates all the characteristics native to the Pallava style—the pyramidal tower, a pillared hall and vestibule, all enclosed by a wall surmounted by cupolas.

The Vaikunthaperumal Temple, Kanchi. Built by Nandivarman II (A.D. 717-779), this temple is a more mature example of the Pallava style and shows a greater unity of conception than the Kailasanatha Temple.

A pillared corridor, with sculptured panels on the wall of the Vaikuntha-

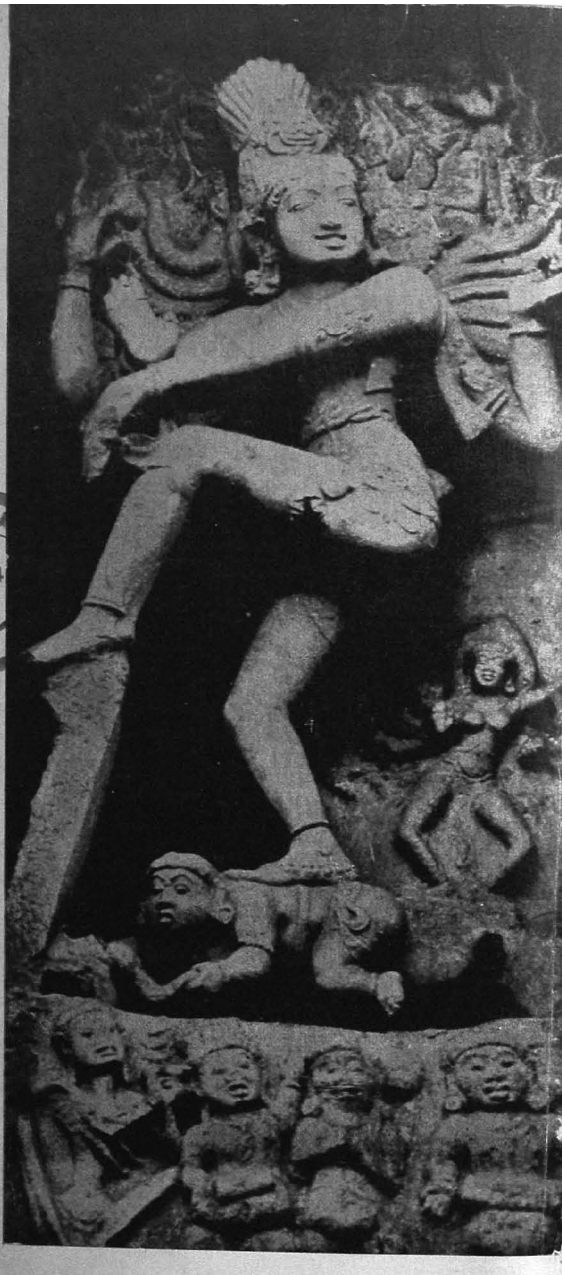


Above : The Brihadeeswara Temple, Tanjore—general view

Left : Vimana (towered sanctuary) of the Brihadeeswara Temple. 190 *feet (nearly* 58 *metres) high, this tower is the greatest achievement of the Chola builder. It has a compelling sense of power and masculine dignity. The temple was built by Rajaraja the Great (A.D.* 985-1018).

Right : Vimana of the Siva Temple at Gangaikondacholapuram. It was built by Rajendra Chola in A.D. 1025 *to commemorate his victorious expedition to the River Ganga.*

Below: Tripurantaka, a Chola bronze of the 11th century—the Tanjore Art Gallery. Cast by what is known as the "lost-wax" process, most of the ancient South Indian bronzes were the creations of highly specialised craftsmen known as Sthapatis. These images were used as Utsava Murtis or festival deities.



Above: Nataraja, a sculptured panel from the great temple at Gangaikondacholapuram

(12th century) can be seen on the second enclosure wall of the Jambukeswara temple at Tiruvanaikkaval, near Srirangam. We notice here many characteristics of the earlier Chola tower still preserved. The eastern gopuram of the Chidambaram temple is an example of the later Pandyan style (A.D. 1250) built during the time of Sundara Pandya. The other well-known gopurams of the Pandya period are the eastern gateway of the inner enclosure at Tirumalai (A.D. 1300) and the gopuram of the great temple at Kumbakonam (A.D. 1350).

Another noteworthy contribution of the Pandyas to the Dravidian style was the design of the pillar and the capital. They introduced the flower-motif to the design of the capital and gave to the corbel of the bracket overhanging the capital the shape of a moulded pendant or drop.

The growing expansiveness of the Dravidian temple which we find so conspicuously in the later structures started as a movement during the time of the Pandyas. This took the form of series of concentric walls running round the main temple, the innermost of which happens to be a Pandyan contribution.

VIJAYANAGAR PERIOD (1336-1565)

The birth of the fourteenth century marks a 'great divide' in the history of South India, and has an intimate bearing on the further evolution of the Dravidian style. The years that followed saw cataclysmic changes in the political life of the Deccan and the southern plains. The new peril which convulsed life in this ancient region came in the form of Muslim invasions from the North. The strength and suddenness with which Ala-ud-din Khilji and his able commander, Malik Kafur struck, brought defeat and disgrace to the long established, mutually warring kingdoms of the South. Between 1296 and 1311 the Yadavas, Kakatiyas, Hoysalas and Pandyas were subdued one after another and their pride and power lay humbled in the dust. By 1328 practically the whole of South India was brought under the sway of the Delhi Sultans.

These events had disastrous consequences on the life of the people who now found themselves bereft of protection and leadership. Institutions and usages sanctified by a thousand years of history faced the distressing prospect of extinction. People everywhere awoke to a new danger of which they had not dreamt. What they needed was a new, bold leadership which could salvage from this smouldering chaos the cherished values of their ancient culture. This was supplied with the establishment of the Vijayanagar kingdom in 1336. Civic life now came to be restored on the old pattern. The sanctity of the long established religious and charitable endowments which had so far been the chief instruments of social well-being was revived. The resurgent spirit of a defeated but defiant people informed all activity, social, literary and artistic, and provided compelling incentives to excellence. Temple architecture under Vijayanagar rule bore the full impress of this new awakening and reached the

farthest limit of florid magnificence. The temple now came to symbolise the fervour of a resurgent people, and princely patronage came in ample measure to add a new sense of romanticism to its architecture.

Another significant factor which came to influence the Dravidian style was the elaboration of rituals observed in temple worship. Besides the shrine of the main deity which occupied the middle of the enclosure, separate shrines for other deities belonging to the theistic scheme were also put up. Chief among them was the shrine for the goddess, the consort of the main deity. Pavilions and pillared halls were added to provide for special rituals of which the most colourful was the symbolic celebration of the wedding of the deity with his consort. The structure dedicated to this ritual was the Kalyanamandapa—an open pillared pavilion executed in a highly orante style. Raised on a low platform, it had a "throne seat" in the centre on which the processional deities were placed for worship.

The florid character of the Vijayanagar temple was achieved largely by converting the pillars and piers into highly complicated statuary with human figures, rearing animals, and divine and semi-divine beings dexterously chiselled in solid blocks of stone. These pillars are a conspicuous part of the architectural scheme of the pavilions. Another common type of Vijayanagar pillar was one in which the central shaft was surrounded by a group of slender, miniature pillars, all emerging from the same ornamented base. Still another type was the one in which the main shaft consisted of a series of miniature shrines rising one upon another as in a tower, but without its tapering quality. Whatever the moulding of the pillar, each was provided with ornamental brackets which formed part of the capital. These brackets had below them elaborately carved flower pendants resembling an inverted lotus bud.

Temples belonging to the Vijayanagar type are to be found all over South India where the Dravidian type predominates. The most exquisite examples of this group are to be found in the deserted capital of Vijayanagar itself now popularly known as Hampi. Hardly 8 kms. from Hospet, the present site of the Tungabhadra dam, Hampi presents the forlorn look of a city in ruins. The surviving structure which consist mostly of temples and a few secular buildings are the only mangled remnants of what was, according to contemporary chroniclers, the finest and the most populous of the cities in sixteenth century India. Rocky and barren, with huge boulders sticking out singly or in heaps from the ground everywhere, this deserted "City of Victory" hardly recaptures the green verdure of fields and gardens with which it is once reputed to have been clothed.

But Hampi is not altogether devoid of charm. Like Mamallapuram it retains its unique importance for the tourist and the historian. By far the finest monuments of this ruined city are the Vithala and Hazara Rama temples, built in the 16th century.

The Vithala temple, dedicated to a form of Vishnu, is the more ornate of the two. Its construction was begun by the Vijayanagar king, Krishnadeva Raya, in 1513 and continued during his successor's time. It was still incomplete when the capital city was sacked and pillaged

by the victorious Muslim coalition in 1565. The temple is a unified structure standing in a courtyard 152 metres by 94 metres. A triple row of pillars surrounds the courtyard. The three entrances leading into the courtyard, east, south and north, are surmounted by gopurams. The central building dedicated to Vithala consists of one storey, 7.6 metres high.

The temple has three components: the garbhagriha (sanctuary), the mandapa (closed assembly hall) in the middle, and the ardhamantapa (open pillared portico in front). The visitor is first attracted to the portico with its voluptuous double-flexured eave. It is a columned pavilion of considerable dimensions built on a plinth 1.5 metres high. Its 56 pillars, each 3.7 metres high, are hewn out of solid blocks of granite to form intricate compositions of sculptures.

The designs of which these piers consist are basically the same in conception, but they have been so skilfully employed that they produce an unusual effect of rhythm. The piers are each one or one-and-a-half metres across and each face contains a group of sculptures which consist of different and alternating compositions. These alternating designs rise from a common ornamented pedestal and terminate in a single massive capital. The sculpture compositions on the shaft of the pillar take the form of a cluster of delicately carved pillars, or figures of divinities in their various animated forms, or rearing animals half-natural, half-mythical. Over these piers are bracket-supports of immense size combined with heavily carved entablatures. On these rests the ceiling ornamented like an enormous lotus flower sunk into its surface.

There is not the same uniform display of the carver's skill on all parts of the pier; some are in bold relief, some are moulded to appear almost like detachable members, and others are only engraved. The resulting effect is one of bewildering intricacy which happily does not diminish the dignity of the columns. Fergusson's remark that "the boldness and expression of power" displayed in the design and carving of this columned portico is "nowhere surpassed in the buildings of its class" is an apt assessment of its character. The architectural quality of this porch left an abiding impress on future Dravidian temples like those at Chidambaram, Vellore, and Madurai which are even more remarkable for their size and the exuberance of carving.

Another structure of superb workmanship within the enclosure but detached from the main temple is the Kalyanamandapa or marriage pavilion. It consists of an open pavilion resembling the porch in front of the temple, but much smaller in size. It has forty-eight pillars each one of which is an extraordinarily beautiful piece of workmanship.

Facing the eastern entrance of the porch is another unique structure, shaped like a ratha or temple car, built entirely of stone. It has stone-wheels which revolved and are highly realistic. The entire ratha is an exquisite specimen of Vijayanagar craftsmanship and adds to the beauty of the main building both by its location and size.

The Hazara Rama temple whose construction was commenced in 1513 by Krishnadeva Raya is a structure of modest dimensions. It appears to have been built mainly for the use of the imperial household—a sort of Chapel Royal.

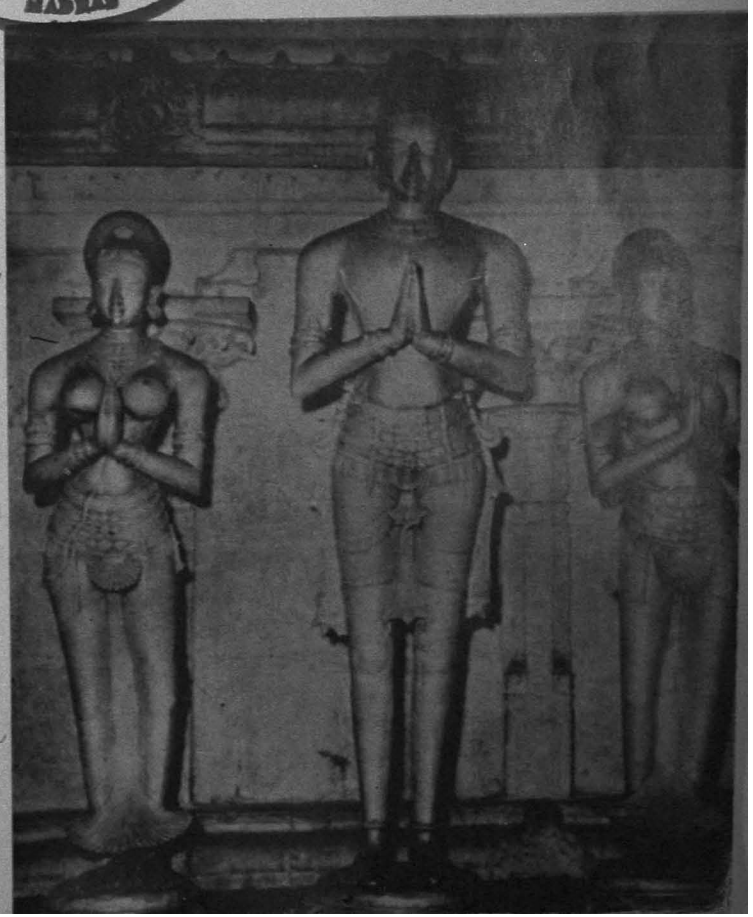
The main as well as the subsidiary structures of the Hazara Rama temple follow the same designs as the Vithala temple. Special mention must however be made of the four central pillars in its mandapa or assembly hall for their unusual size and design. Their shafts have geometrical mouldings "a cube alternating with a fluted cylinder, all copiously carved, while each capital is a very substantial four-branched foliated volute terminating in the characteristic knop." The vimana or tower over the main building which occupies the centre of the courtyard is rather unusual in that its lower storey is of stone and the tapering tower is of brick. Its architectonic character consists of the design of the sikhara itself being repeated in regular groups one upon another in three tiers terminating in a cupola at the top.

Other famous temples of this style, more or less contemporaneous with the Hampi examples are the ones at Vellore, Kumbakonam, Kamelipuram, Tadpatri, Virinjipuram and Srirangam. The Kalyanamantapa of the Vellore temple is remarkable for the ingenuity and exuberance of its carvings. We find here the revival of the lion motif, common to the early Pallava group at Mamallapuram, displayed in the centre pillars of this pavilion. The Varadaraja and Ekambaranatha temples at Kanchipuram have pavilions executed in the same style. The famous "horse-court" of the Ranganatha temple at Srirangam belonging to the late Vijayanagar period represents the culmination of this extravagant style in the sixteenth century. We have here the perfect specimen of the rearing horse motif. The steeds, nearly nine feet high, are ferocious beasts rearing aggressively, and beneath their raised hoofs is a composite statutory of soldiers with drawn swords and extended shields. We see in these pillars the Dravidian craftsman turning into fantastic and bizarre statuary the original Pallava idea of a rampant animal as a decorative feature of the pillar. The technique of chiselling employed on the pillars of the horse-court is remarkable for the metallic finish it has given them.

About 100 miles south-east of Hampi is Tadpatri which is known for its two temples, the Chintala Venkata Ramanaswami and the Ramalingeswara, both built in the same style during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. They have been cited here for the striking qualities of their architecture which are rather unusual. While it was common practice to leave the perpendicular base of the Dravidian tower relatively plain—all the ornamentation being reserved for the pyramidal portion—in this case the base itself is covered with extravagantly sculptured panels. For sheer wealth of ornamentation they stand comparison with the twelfth century temples of Mysore.

Pampapati Temple, Hampi

The open pillared portico (ardhamantapa) of the Vithala Temple, Hampi. Begun by King Krishnadeva Raya in A.D. 1513, its construction was still incomplete in 1565 when the Vijayanagar capital was sacked by the victorious Muslim coalition. With its voluptuous double-flexured eave and huge monolithic pillars carved into intricate compositions of sculptures and miniature pillars, the portico represents the skill of the Vijayanagar builder at its best.



Copper images of King Krishnadeva Raya and his royal consorts—Venkateswara Temple, Tirupati.

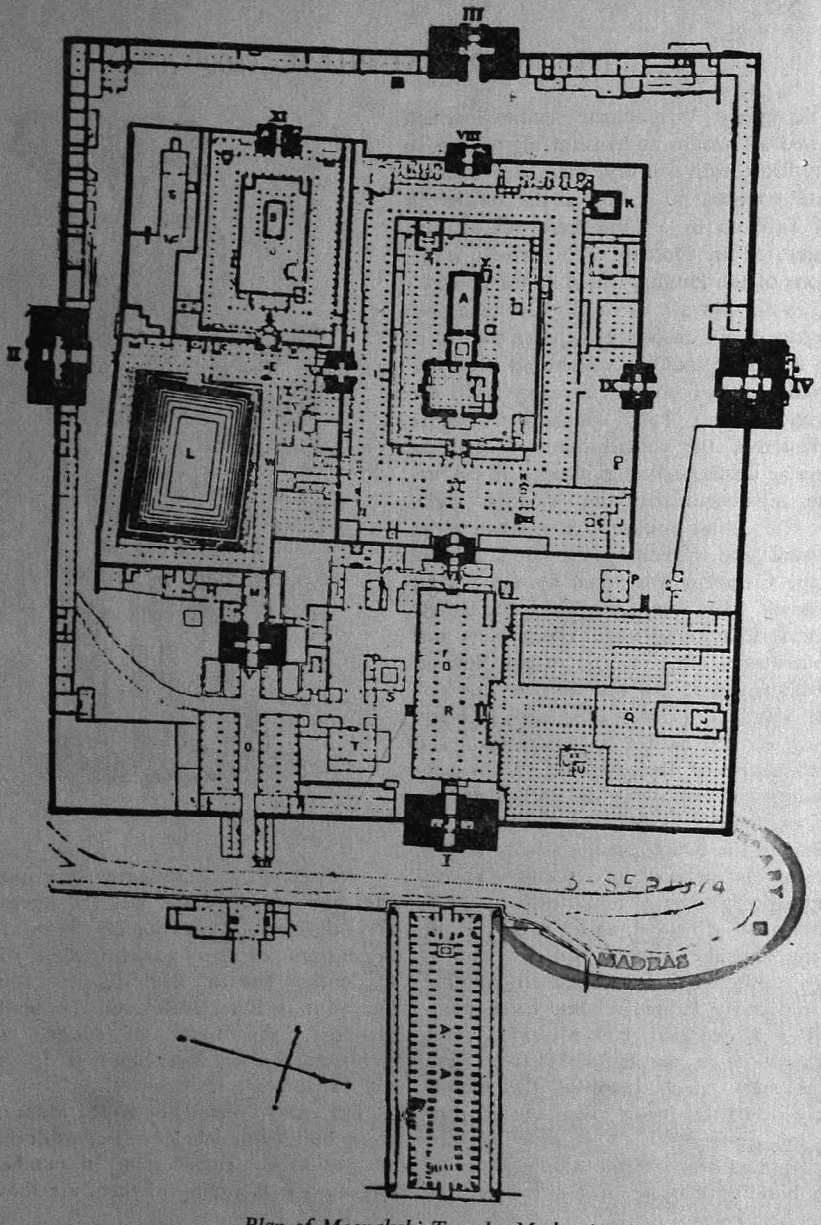
THE MADURAI PHASE (1600-1700)

The great Vijayanagar empire which owed its origin to Muslim aggression in the fourteenth century, was itself defeated and eclipsed in 1565 on the battlefield of Talikota by a confederacy of Muslim rulers of the Deccan. The artistic traditions of the Hindus which so far flourished in the warmth of royal patronage now depended for encouragement on the rulers of new principalities which had been originally united under Vijayanagar. Of the several states into which the empire splintered, the contribution of Madurai was by far the most significant for the further advancement of the Dravidian style.

The Tamil country with Madurai as capital and extending as far south as Cape Comorin was ruled by the Nayak dynasty. The final form which the Dravidian style assumed under these rulers and flourishes to this day is, in principle, a continuation of the building methods of the Pandyas (1150-1300) who lavished most of their skill and resources on the architecture of the gopuram and on extending and improving the shrines already in existence. Under the Nayaks of Madurai the temple came to be developed into a vast network of structures having imposing gateways and towers. The scheme of growth in most cases can be chronologically traced into its various stages although examples are not wanting of the entire temple scheme being planned and executed had witnessed great elaboration in the temple festivals and ceremonies which involved the temple deity or deities being taken out in procession quite often. This had in turn necessitated considerable amplification in the building scheme of the temple.

This complex of structures grew round the main shrine which was the nucleus, and developed occasionally into the dimensions of a minor township with residential houses and bazars being located in its outer enclosures. Naturally, therefore, the unity of design and architectural effect were sacrificed to size and expansiveness.

The temples belonging to the Madurai group built either wholly or in part during the period are considerable in number. The most outstanding of them are those



Plan of Meenakshi Temple, Madurai
(*from* History of Indian and Eastern Architecture *by Fergusson*)

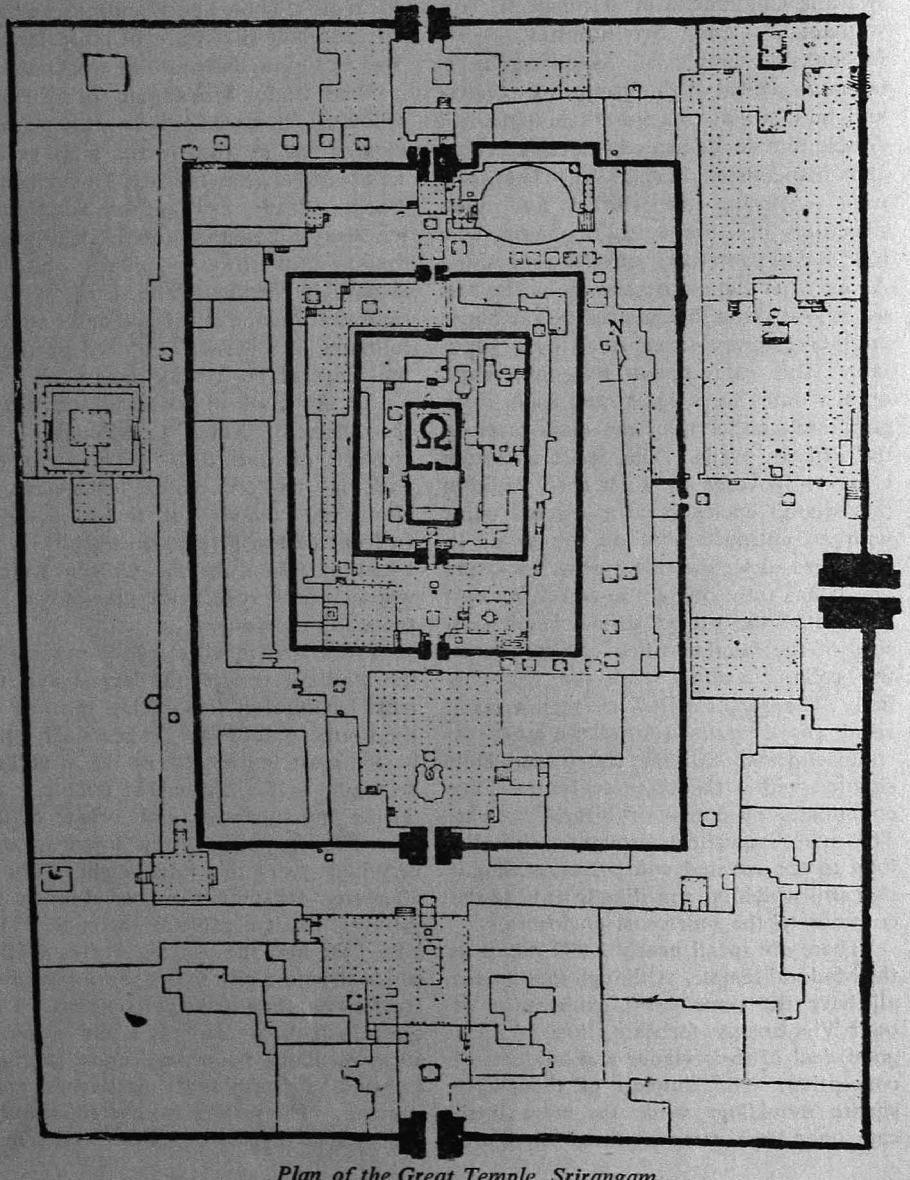
at Madurai, Srirangam, Tiruvarur, Rameswaram, Chidambaram, Tirunelveli, Tiruvannamalai and Srivilliputtur. The Meenakshi temple of Madurai can be taken as typical of the group. Conceived and built all at one time it is actually a double temple, dedicated to Sundareswara and his consort Meenakshi. The outer walls enclosing the shrines and other structures measure 259x221 metres with four large gateways on the four sides. As we enter the main gateway by the east we are led through a pillared corridor into another gateway surmounted by a gopuram. This gateway has its counterparts on the other three sides, and each has a gopuram smaller than the main ones on the exterior walls. This inner enclosure is mostly covered by a flat roof. Within this second enclosure is a covered court with an entrance only on the east. In the third and the innermost enclosure which has only one entrance on the east is situated the sacred shrine which consists of the familiar three compartments, the cella, vestibule and the assembly hall. The sanctum has a small vimana rising above the flat roof of the other two compartments. All the courts and halls situated within the three enclosures have colonnades of pillars of bizarre designs. The most exquisitely wrought pillars belong to the covered court (Swami Singothanam) which is immediately outside the entrance to the innermost enclosure.

There are in all nearly 2,000 pillars in the Madurai temple. Although they do not all have the same florid exuberance of their Vijayanagar forbears, they retain a good deal of their vigour and boldness of conception. The simplest of them have square mouldings while the more intricate ones have rampant dragons, figures of deities or sculptures of their patrons for motifs. These figure-sculptures attached to the main shafts are of more than life-size and quite elaborate in workmanship.

The Pudu Mandapam or Tirumalai Choultry situated outside the main enclosure and in front of the main gateway was built between 1626-1633 by Tirumalai Nayak. It is a beautiful addition to the temple complex and is distinguished for its four rows of pillars which are elaborately carved. The shafts of pillars centrally situated in the hall have, attached to them, ten life-size statues portraying the kings of the Nayak dynasty.

To the south of the main sanctuary is the shrine dedicated to Meenakshi, the consort of the deity. This structure with its two concentric enclosures, is about half the size of the main shrine. In front of the Meenakshi temple is the beautiful "pond of the Golden Lilies", whose waters reflect the great tower on the south entrance.

There are in all eleven gopurams to the Madurai temple, the largest and the most beautiful of them being the one on the southern doorway. Taken singly, this is the most impressive of the structures belonging to the Meenakshi temple. By far the most massive and ornate of the Dravidian gopurams, this tower is also very high, rising to a total height of about 60 metres. Its summit is a barrel roof with the usual Chaitya gable at the ends. The lofty base and the concave curves of the whole structure give to it a soaring quality greater even than its height suggests. The central rib of the tower is a pile of miniature pavilions rising one upon another and adding greatly to its massiveness and strength. The surface is covered all over with plastic figures of deities and semi-



Plan of the Great Temple, Srirangam
(*from* History of Indian and Eastern Architecture *by Fergusson*)

divine characters freely drawn from the inexhaustible Hindu mythology and presents the appearance of a pulsating mass of masonry.

Two and a half miles north of Tiruchirapalli is Srirangam, an island formed by the two branches of the river Cauvery. It is famous for its Ranganatha temple, the largest of the Dravidian temples, and is dedicated to Vishnu in his recumbent form. Unlike the Madurai temple, this has only one sanctuary, an ancient structure small in size and architecturally insignificant. As we see it today with its seven concentric enclosures, twenty-one gopurams, bazars and residential colonies laid out within its walls, it looks more like a township than a temple. While the sanctuary dates back to about the 11th century, the surrounding enclosures and the pavilions inside were put up in the 17th and 18th centuries. The sanctuary is a square apartment of no great architectural merit and the cella within has the unusual quality of being circular, resembling a Chaitya hall. Of the thirteen gateways which lie axially to the main shrine (north-south) at least six are notable for their size and workmanship.

Architecturally, the finest part of the temple is the "hall of thousand pillars" situated within the fourth enclosure. Its pillars are carved of granite monoliths, a stupendous undertaking which impresses one not only by its size but the quality of craftsmanship. The 'horse-court' which we have noticed earlier is the best part of this pillared hall.

Within the third enclosure are to be found the Garuda Mandapam which is another beautiful pillared hall, and adjacent to it is the 'Surya Pushkarani', a covered pond named after the sun. At the northern end of this enclosure is the 'Chandra Pushkarani', the 'moon-pond'. The second enclosure has a covered court with pillared pavilions.

Belonging to the same period and style, but much smaller in size is the Jambukeswara temple at Tiruvanaikkaval situated about a mile away from the great temple, at Srirangam. It has four concentric enclosures of which the two inner ones have covered courts. Although not comparable in size to the Ranganatha temple it far surpasses it in the beauty of its architecture.

Another well-known example of this style and of the same period is the Rameswaram temple near Adam's Bridge which separates Ceylon from India. The site is hallowed by legendary associations with Rama, the epic hero who defeated Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. This temple, like that at Madurai or Tanjore, was built on a settled plan, but with results which are very different. While the Tanjore temple which is hardly half the size of the Rameswaram temple produces the effect of an unified architectural entity, the latter fails to convey that impression. Like the Meenakshi temple, the Rameswaram temple also consists of two shrines which are enclosed by three concentric walls. The outermost enclosure which measures 268 metres in length and 205 in width is a plain wall six metres high, and has four gopurams. The gopuram which crowns the eastern entrance is imposing, being 46 metres high. It is built in the best traditions of the 17th century.

By far the grandest part of the Rameswaram temple are the pillared corridors which surround it. They extend to nearly

1,220 metres, in length, the breadth varying from 5.2 to 6.4 metres. Their height from floor to roof is about 9 metres. The pillars, about 3.6 metres high each, are enormous blocks of granite, richly decorated and well-proportioned. Set close to one another, they run along the entire corridor. The perspective presented by these richly carved pillars running uninterruptedly to a length of about 210 metres is a breath-taking sight. The devoted patience of thousands of skilled craftsmen and the labours of many more apprentices which have gone into this stupendous structure is a testimony to the religious fervour which characterised the builders of the sixteenth century.

Equally venerated and no less remarkable for its architectural merit is the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram (in South Arcot District), whose growth into its present dimensions extended over a period of nearly seven centuries, from the 10th to the 17th century. Tradition has it that early in the 10th century Parantaka, the Chola King, saw on the sea shore a divine vision of Siva who, attended by Parvati, danced with his Damaruka (a small drum). The King instantly decided to construct a 'Kanaka Sabha' or golden hall at Chidambaram to commemorate this unique vision.

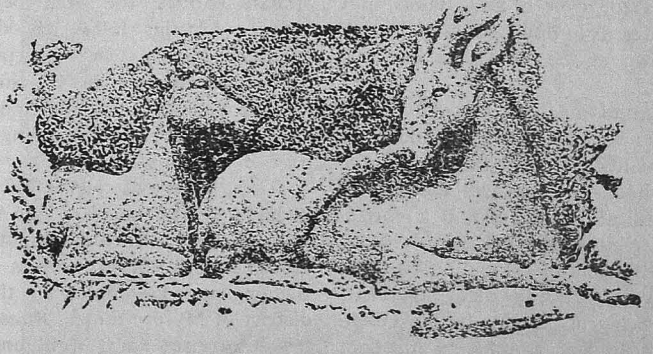
The Nataraja temple consists of a number of structures apart from the main shrine. Although these were put up at various times as structural accretions to the main temple, they retain a surprising element of symmetry in plan, and functional unity in their disposition. The centre of the large enclosure is occupied by the sacred tank (Siva ganga) around which other structures are grouped in an orderly manner. The 'hall of the thousand pillars' (the Raja Sabha) for which the temple is famous was built in the 17th century. It consists, as elsewhere, of pillars carved out of granite monoliths. The finest part of this temple, however, is its porch which consists of fifty-six pillars, each 2.4 metres high—all delicately carved. The stylobate on which they rest is ornamented with gracefully carved female figures in various dance poses.

A few more comprehensive examples of the later Dravidian style are to be found, among other places, at Tiruvarur (Tanjore District), Tiruvannamalai and Srivilliputtur (Tirunelveli District). The original shrine at Tiruvarur dates back to the 9th century and its deity has been the subject of praise in innumerable compositions of great poetic excellence produced by the saints of Tamil Nadu. The temple consists of twin shrines dedicated to Siva and his consort Parvati. They are placed side by side in a cloistered court and three concentric walls enclose the entire complex of structures. The three-storeyed eastern gateway, built in the 18th century, is the finest part of this temple. Here we see the pilasters, the sunk recesses, the rearing hippogryphs and the pillared niches enshrining sculptured images employed to maximum aesthetic effect.

The other temples are more or less repetitions of the same style with minor variations. Tanks, pillared pavilions and towering gopurams, and concentric compound walls are their main characteristics. The temple at Srivilliputtur is famous for its massive gopuram which is about 60 metres high. It is built in thirteen storeys exclusive of its barrel-shaped roof.

There are many temples of the 19th

century built in the Dravidian style, structures which conform to the same pattern but which come nowhere near their predecessors in size or architectural effect. The art of temple-building is still known to many families in South India to whom it is a bequest from generations of ancestors. Proof of their inherited talents is to be found in the innumerable towers and gopurams which have been, and are being renovated by them although new constructions are not rare. Religion is still a living force with the people and it is not unusual for wealthy persons to demonstrate their piety by patronising construction of new temples.



THE CHALUKYAN STYLE

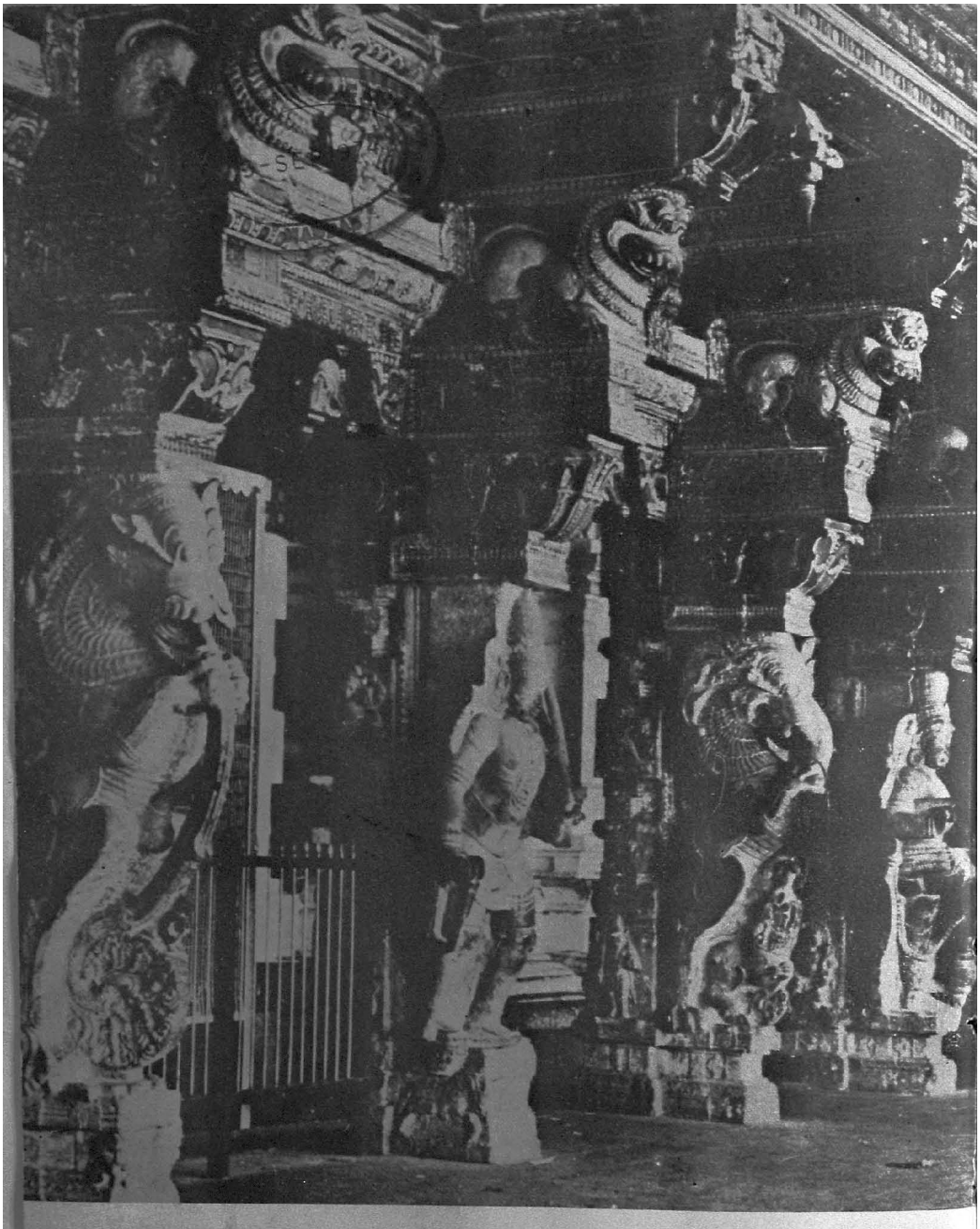
THE AIHOLE GROUP (450-700)

WE HAVE to go back to a period earlier even to the Pallava group of temples at Mamallapuram for the beginnings of another style in South India which is familiarly known as the Chalukyan. The Dravidian and Chalukyan styles, prevalent broadly in the eastern and western regions of South India had the same source of inspiration and subserved the same ideals. The same cultural current which fashioned the religion and aesthetics of the Hindus for over a millennium split into two streams in South India and came to be known as the Dravidian and the Chalukyan.

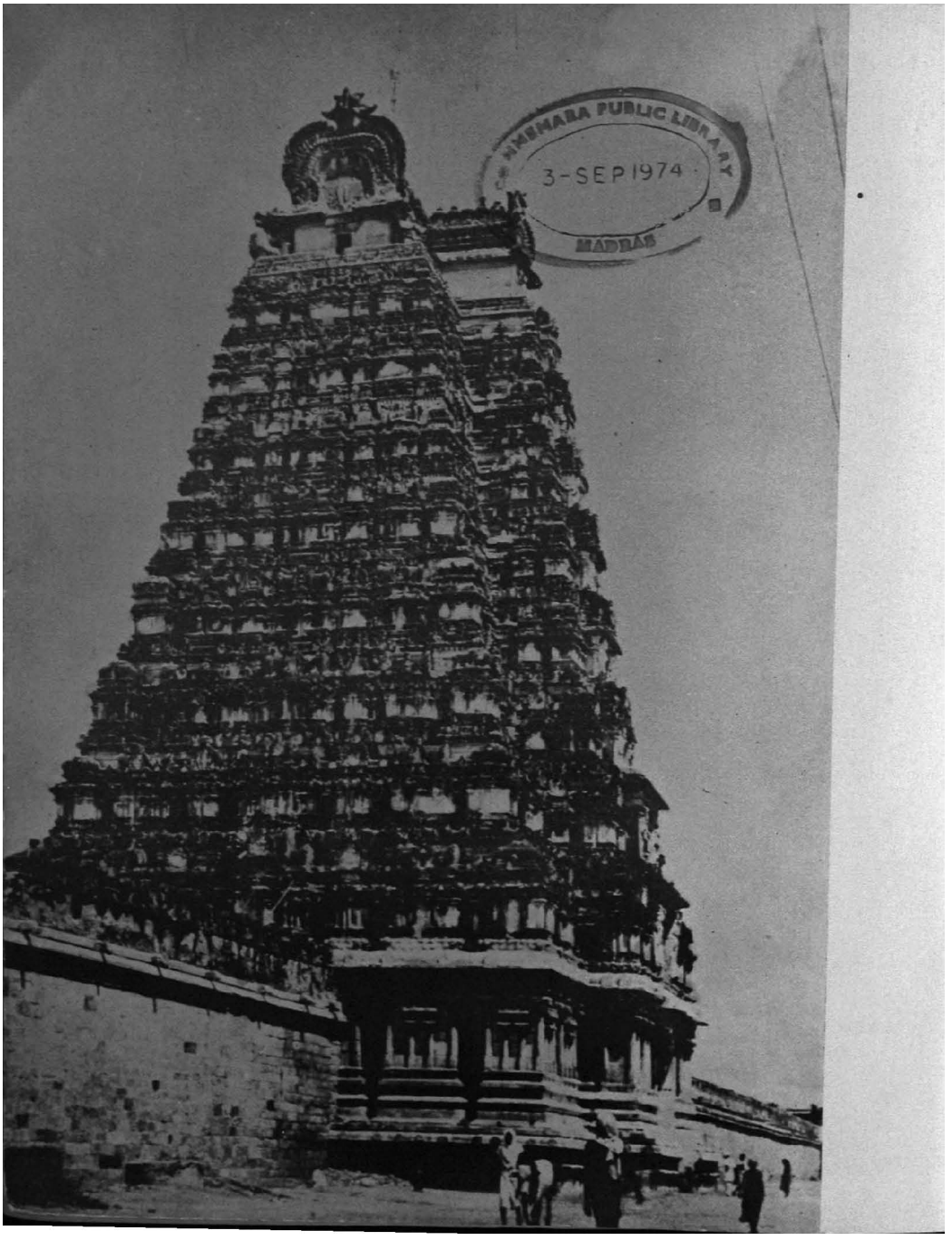
The outstanding characteristic of the art of India between A.D. 400-600 is its classical quality. During this period the country witnessed a gradual ascendancy of Brahmanical Hinduism and a corresponding decline in the influence of Buddhism. In the field of art and architecture particularly, we notice the older Buddhistic traditions being taken over by the Hindu artists and builders, adapted to suit their ritualistic and emotional needs. In northern India this period is famous for the Gupta art. The image cult which in the earlier Kushana period (about A.D. 50 to 320) was still primitive, takes on a serene, spiritual and voluptuous form in the Gupta art, and becomes the focal point of a new architecture, still struggling to assume form and purpose. We see in the early 5th century structures and excavated halls, the widespread prevalence of older Buddhist styles like the Stupas, the Chaitya halls and Viharas. To these were added new 'caves' and structures, essentially Brahmanical in purpose but largely Buddhist in technique. The apsidal temples at Ter or Jagar (Sholapur District) are, for instance, an adaptation of the Buddhist tradition for a Brahmanical purpose. The Gupta contribution to the growth of Hindu architecture were the flat-roofed temples and the Sikhara shrines, the latter beginning to appear in the later period of this dynasty's history. In the typical examples of the Sikhara variety found in the Ganges Valley, the tower and the cella are a composite unit, forming the main part of the temple.

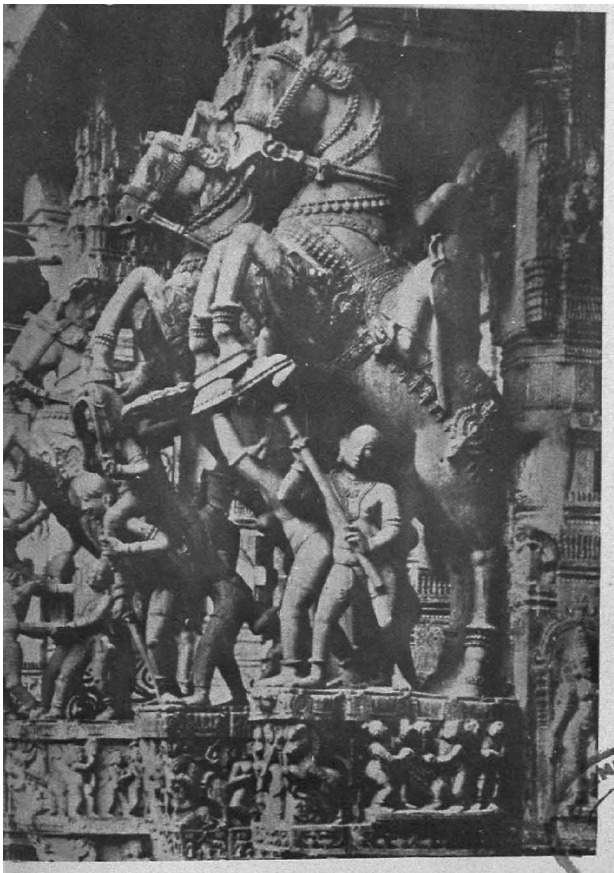
These facts are relevant if we are to understand the origin of the Chalukyan style as we see them exemplified in the remarkable group of temples at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal in the Bijapur district of Mysore State. Situated only a few kilometres apart from one another, Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal are places which are usually overlooked by the ordinary tourist as they are located in an unfrequented interior of the State. But those who seek to know how the ancestors of the great temples of the 11th and 12th centuries of Mysore looked like, will find a visit to these places highly rewarding. They are as important for our understanding of Chalukyan art as the Mamallapuram group of monuments are for the

The southern gopuram, Meenakshi Temple, Madurai (17*th century*)



Pillared corridor, Meenakshi Temple, Madurai. The rampant animals, figure-sculptures and portraits of royal patrons sculptured on the shafts of pillars are often bigger than life-size and highly elaborate in workmanship





Above: *"Horse-Court", Ranganatha Temple, Srirangam (Vijayanagar, 16th century)*

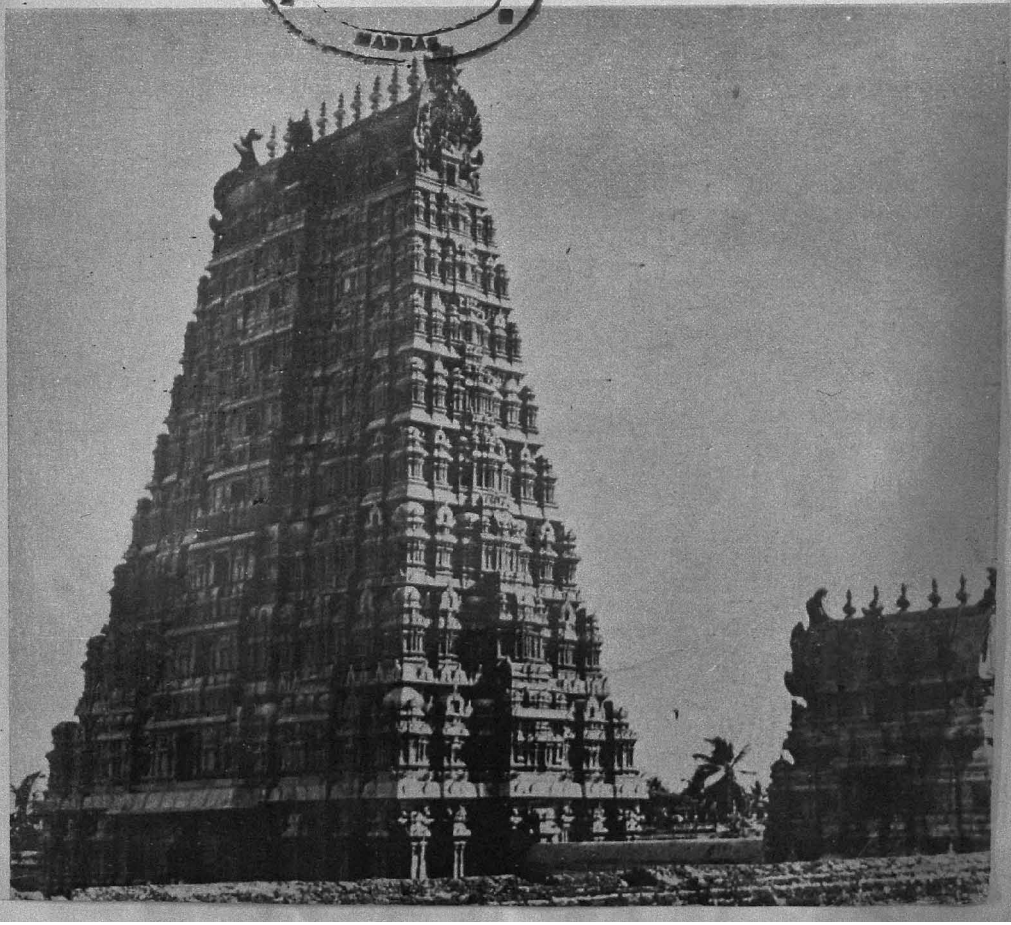
Left: *A gopuram, Ranganatha Temple, Srirangam (17th century)*

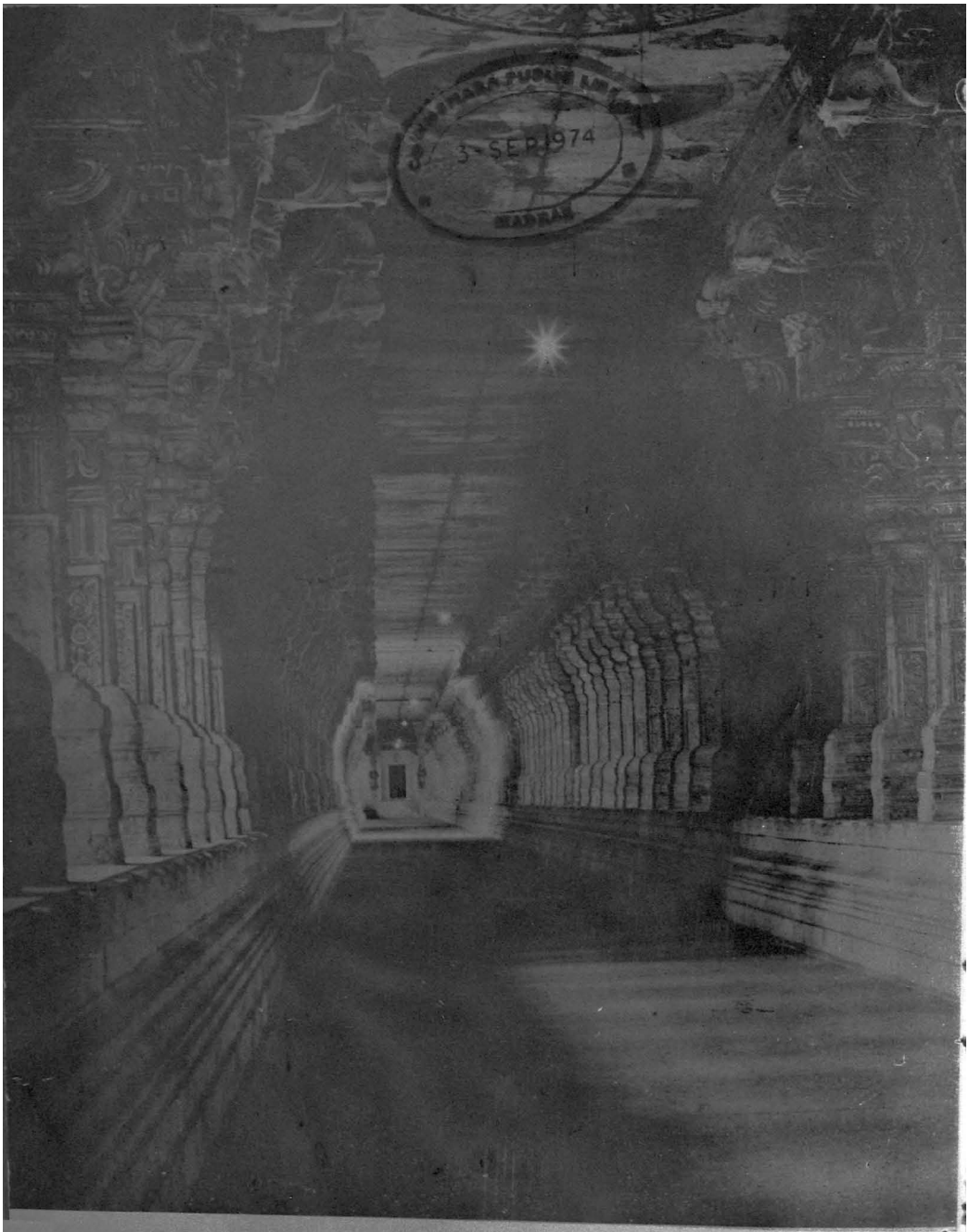
Right : A fresco in the ceiling of Meenakshi Temple, Madurai (modern period)

The Nritya-Sabha, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram

(*Left*) *Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram—general view. The construction of the temple in its present dimensions extended from the* 10*th to the* 17*th century. Though the temple consists of a number of structures built in various periods, it retains great symmetry of plan.*

Eastern gopuram of the Great Temple, Rameswaram. Its construction was begun in the 17*th century and completed in the* 19*th.*





The Corridor, Rameswaram Temple

Dravidian style. It is an interesting fact of history that the Pallavas and Chalukyas who almost continuously fought each other from about the middle of the 6th to the middle of the 8th century initiated two parallel movements in the art of temple-building which in subsequent centuries produced some of the greatest monuments of Hindu art.

In A.D. 538 the Kadambas lost the northern half of their kingdom to Pulakesin I, the founder of Chalukya power. Quite a few of the temples at Aihole in which we see the early experiments in temple-building, therefore, belong to the pre-Chalukyan times. Aihole alone contains as many as 70 temples which shows that it must have been a place of considerable importance. Later the main scene of building activity was shifted to Badami and Pattadakal, both within a few kilometres of Aihole. We see in the Aihole group clear evidence of the fact that their builders were undecided about the form which the structure should take. Of these, the Ladh Khan and the Durga temples belonging to about A.D. 450 are well-known examples.

The Ladh Khan* is a low, flat-roofed structure consisting of a pillared hall and a cella. It has a square plan, 15 metres wide, and is enclosed by walls on three sides. On the east side is a porch with pillars on which are carved the figures of river goddesses. The interior of the temple consists of a pillared hall. It has two square groups of pillars enclosed within one another so that a double passage is provided all round. Since the circumambulatory passage which goes round the sanctum is dark, the architect has sought to provide light through the novel expedient of fixing perforated windows into the side walls. In these windows we see the beginnings of the highly ornamented pierced stone screens which are so characteristic of the Hoysala temples six centuries later.

The Ladh Khan temple is a unified structure, all its parts having been conceived and built at one time. But as a structure it is too elementary to satisfy the functional requirements of a 'Hindu house of God'. Architecturally, the temple is significant for two main reasons. We see in the pilasters at the exterior angles of the structure the beginnings of the later Dravidian order with the tapering upper end of the shaft and a capital with an expanded abacus supporting the bracket. Another feature which stayed on and influenced later Chalukyan temples is the flat roof which consists of stone slabs grooved at the joints, and held together by long narrow stones which fit into the grooves.

The Durga temple at Aihole is an interesting experiment which the early builders tried and later abandoned. Built about the same time as the Ladh Khan, or perhaps slightly later, the Durga temple is a Brahmanical adaptation of the Buddhist Chaitya hall with an apsidal or rounded end. The entire structure is built on a high moulded plinth, and is surmounted by a sikhara, probably a later addition. Massive square columns with heavy brackets run round the plinth, forming an ambulatory passage. The sikhara is curvilinear in shape, and on that account is

*So called because a Muslim by that name had put up a hut close by and lived in it.

much closer to the Northern than the Dravidian style.

Another temple at Aihole known as the Huchchimalligudi temple is much smaller than the Durga shrine, but contains a new feature, namely, a vestibule or antarala which is an intermediate chamber between the cella and the main hall. In later years the vestibule came to form an essential part of the Chalukyan temple, as it did of the Dravidian.

The Huchchimalligudi temple is in all probability one of the earliest in the Aihole group, and comparable in beauty to the Gupta temple (No. 17) at Sanchi built in A.D. 400. The structure is built of large blocks of stone and the roof is made up of enormous slabs set together. The heavy pillars of the porch are crude to the point of being primitive, but give the structure a solidity and ruggedness recalling the rock-cut shrines of the period.

Representing the final phase of the Aihole group is the Meguti temple situated on top of the small hill into the side of which a Brahmanical cave has been cut. It is a Jaina shrine built in A.D. 634 and we see in it distinct progress having been achieved in the art of construction Masonry work is superior since smaller blocks are used and the capitals and pilasters are more ornate and delicate.

Badami Temples

Badami, or Vatapi as it was known in the ancient days, was the capital of the Chalukyan rulers. Nestling at the foot of steep hills, this insignificant modern town contains several temples of the early Chalukyan period, both of the structural and rock-cut varieties. Into the sides of the hills situated adjacent to the town are cut a group of four pillared halls, three of which are Brahmanical rock-cut halls excavated about A.D. 578 under orders from the Chalukyan king Mangalesa. These rock-cut pillared halls show a high standard of workmanship and are uniformly of the same appearance. In each there is a pillared verandah, a hall with columns, and a square cella. The external appearance of these halls is quite unassuming and shows little architectural effect. The interior, however, is very different. The walls have panels of sculptures of excellent quality like those of Vishnu seated on the serpent Ananta, and Narasimha, the lion-headed incarnation of Vishnu. The pillars in the main make for the architectural effect of the interior. They are mostly square in section and only a few of the inner colonnade in Cave No. 3 are many-sided. In some of the capitals the bracket is the chief feature. There are also combinations of the bracket and 'cushion type' capitals, the brackets containing boldly sculptured figure-compositions. Over these capitals are "massive entablatures with cross beams supported by gryphons having a curious resemblance to Gothic gargoyles." The ceilings between these beams are "sunk panels like coffers each containing a carved pattern replete with symbolical devices".

For the early beginning of the distinctly Dravidian character in the temples of this region where the Chalukyan style eventually matured, we have to look for a small group of shrines near Badami. Of these, the Mahakuteswara, an insignificantly small temple, built in A.D. 600 is the most typical example. Its tower, the most distinctive characteristic of the

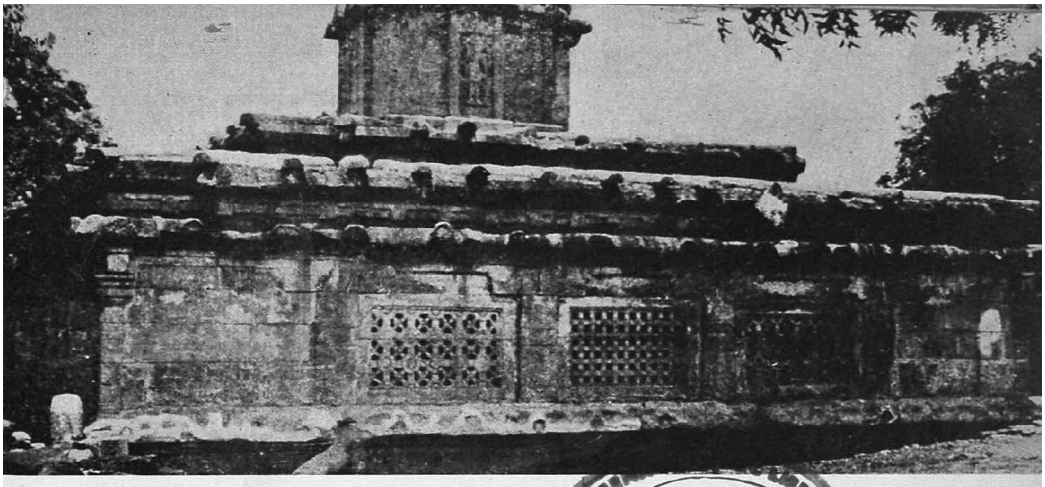
South Indian order, belongs to the early phase of the Dravidian sikhara, with its octagonal domical finial, and tiers of miniature shrines. Another more developed example, undoubtedly of a later date, is the Malegutti Sivalaya which is built on a hill overlooking the town of Badami. This is a massive and solid structure but not very large, and consists of a cella, an assembly hall and a porch. The tremendous influence of the rock-cut technique on structural temples of the time is borne out by the heavy monolithic columns, the ponderous bracket capitals and overhanging roll cornice found in this temple. The panels, borders and niches of the Malegutti Sivalaya have claimed a fair measure of the sculptor's skill. These and the other excavated shrines described above clearly indicate the Chalukyan architect's preference early in the 7th century for the rock-cut technique.

Temples at Pattadakal

Towards the middle of the 7th century the scene of building activity shifted from Badami to Pattadakal, situated at a distance of 16 kms. from the former. Among the ten temples found in this place, four are in the Northern or Indo-Aryan style and the rest in the Southern style. They belong to a period when the Chalukya dynasty attained the height of political power and bespeak of the full bloom of Chalukyan abundance. More remarkable still than the construction of temples in the two styles is the fact that structures of one type contain features which are typical of the other. Of these, the Papanatha temple (c. A.D. 680) of the Northern style and the Sangameswar (c. 725) and Virupaksha temples (c. 740) of the Southern style are the best known.

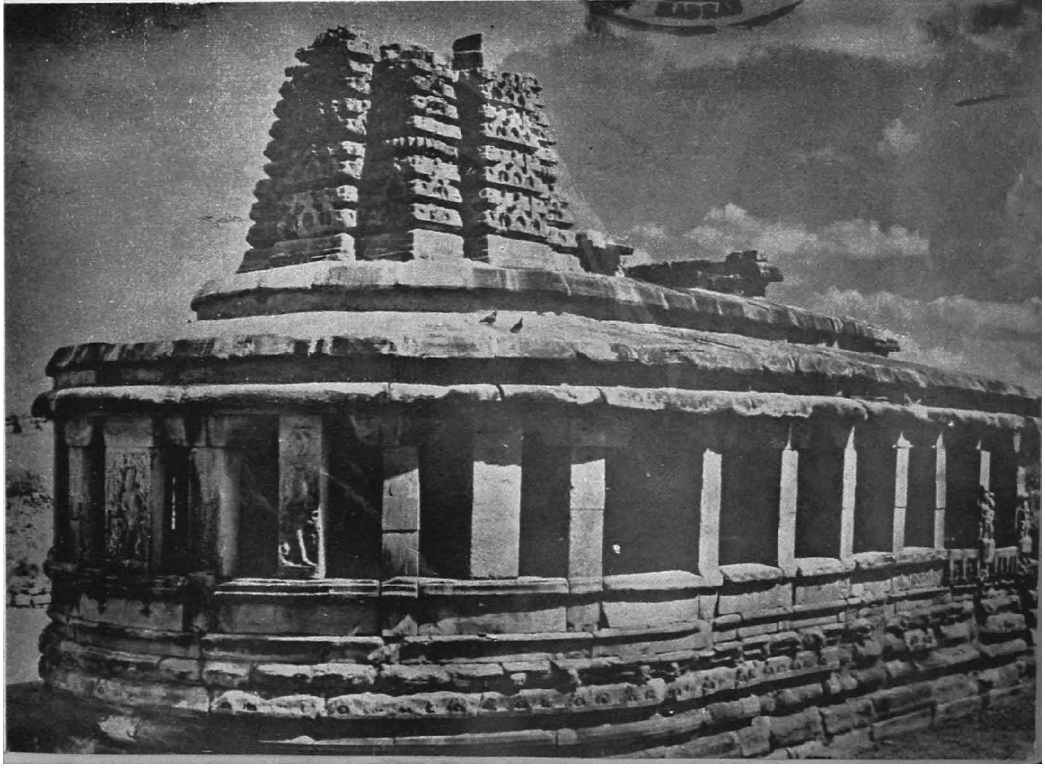
The Papanatha temple gives every indication of being an unsuccessful attempt to find correct proportions for the main elements of the structure. A faulty disposition of the different parts of the temple has led to inconsistency of the exterior design as well as the plan. For its length which is 27 metres, the height of the temple is too low. Its curvilinear sikhara is in the Northern style, but looks dwarfish in relation to the total dimension of the temple.

There is no doubt that this early experimentation in the Northern style proved infructuous because subsequent architects clearly abandoned this clumsy conception. Meanwhile political developments which culminated in renewed conflicts between the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pallavas of Kanchi influenced the temple style of the Mysore region as no single event had done before in the history of South India. The Chalukyan monarch, Vikramaditya II, defeated his Pallava rival, Nandivarman, in about A.D. 740 and occupied his capital, Kanchipuram, for a time. Struck by the beauty of its magnificent temples he was determined to adorn his own capital city by constructing edifices which would rival in grandeur those of Kanchipuram. To this end he brought with him master masons who had built the Pallava monuments. The Virupaksha temple at Badami which has so much in common with Kanchi's Kailasanatha temple, is a monument conceived by these Pallava master builders. While its architecture shows the predominent influence of the Pallava tradition it leaves us in no doubt that the temple was the combined product of both the Chalukyan and the Dravidian builders.



The Ladh Khan Temple, Aihole (5th century)

The Durga Temple, Aihole (5th century)



Above : The Huchchimalligudi Temple, Aihole (5th century)

Left : Siva, a wall-panel in the circumambulatory passage of the Durga Temple, Aihole

Right : Pillars and ceiling in rear verandah, Cave No. 1, Badami

Mahishasuramardini, slaying Mahisha, the demon, Pattadakal

The Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal (about A.D. 740). Exquisitely proportioned, this temple makes a rational and rhythmic combination of all its main parts. All evidence points to the predominant influence of the Pallava builders on this temple.

for the Buddhist monks became sanctuaries under the Mahayana influence, containing an image of the Buddha in the interior cells. The walls and ceilings of the Chaitya halls were treated as an immense canvas for painting murals which are classed among the greatest masterpieces of Indian art. Besides, the rock-cut phase of the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries made itself remarkable also for the development of plastic art which in subsequent years was destined to play a conspicuous role in Chalukyan architecture.

The Hindu architect, too, had been inspired and guided by the rock-cut traditions of the Buddhists as we have noticed at Mamallapuram and Badami. When the Chalukyan king Kirtivarman II was defeated and dispossessed of his kingdom in A.D. 753 by one Dantidurga, a Rashtrakuta prince, the event was not merely of political significance. Thanks to the tastes of the new dynasty of which he was the founder, the rock-cut style of architecture received added impetus. To this final phase of rock-cut style which was very popular till the end of the 9th century belong the reputed excavated halls and temples of Ellora.

About the beginning of the seventh century the Mahayana Buddhists had already excavated viharas into the Ellora hills (about 32 kms. from Aurangabad). Soon after, Hindu masons also started cutting columned halls into the face of these hills in much the same style as the Buddhists had done. The Brahmanical excavations made along the western face of the Ellora hill number sixteen, of which the principal ones are the Ravana-ki-Khai or Abode of Ravana, the Dasavatara or Ten Incarnations of Vishnu, the Kailasa, the Rameswara and the Dumar Lena, also called Sita's Nahani or Sita's Bath.

Of these, the Dasavatara is the simplest, being designed after the Buddhist vihara. It is an open courtyard of irregular shape, and has a detached shrine in the centre. Beyond this hall, the temple presents a facade of a double-storeyed structure. Each of these floors is a pillared hall, and in the niches on the surrounding walls are figure-sculptures of immense size depicting themes concerning Siva and Vishnu. Selecting the Hiranyakasipu panel as the best among them, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy says: "It would be difficult to imagine a more splendid rendering of the well-known theme of the impious king who met his death at the hands of the avenging deity in man-lion form. The hand upon the shoulder, the shrinking figure with the mocking smile that has had no time to fade—what could be more terrible ?" The relief is easily one of the great masterpieces of Hindu art.

The Ravana-ki-Khai is simple in plan being rectangular, and most of the space is occupied by a pillared hall and the rest by a shrine. The capitals of the pillars are conspicuous for the 'vase and foliage' design. The sculptures within the hall including the 'dwarapalas' (celestial guardians) and other figure compositions in the pillared recesses of the walls are virile and bold productions.

The Rameswara cave is equally simple in plan, but better known because of the rich carvings with which its walls are covered. The veranda facade is extremely impressive, much of the effect being due to its powerful pillars with the familiar 'pot and foliage' capitals and the magnificently decorated bracket figures of

dryads and goddesses. Within the cave are to be found some of the most powerful figure sculptures of this period of which the panels depicting Durga, and the marvellously reposeful dance of Siva as the "God of Dance" are easily the most outstanding. The slow, gentle musicality of the dance without any of the frenzied or violent gestures commonly associated with this divine death-dancer gives the image a look of serenity and makes it fit for worship.

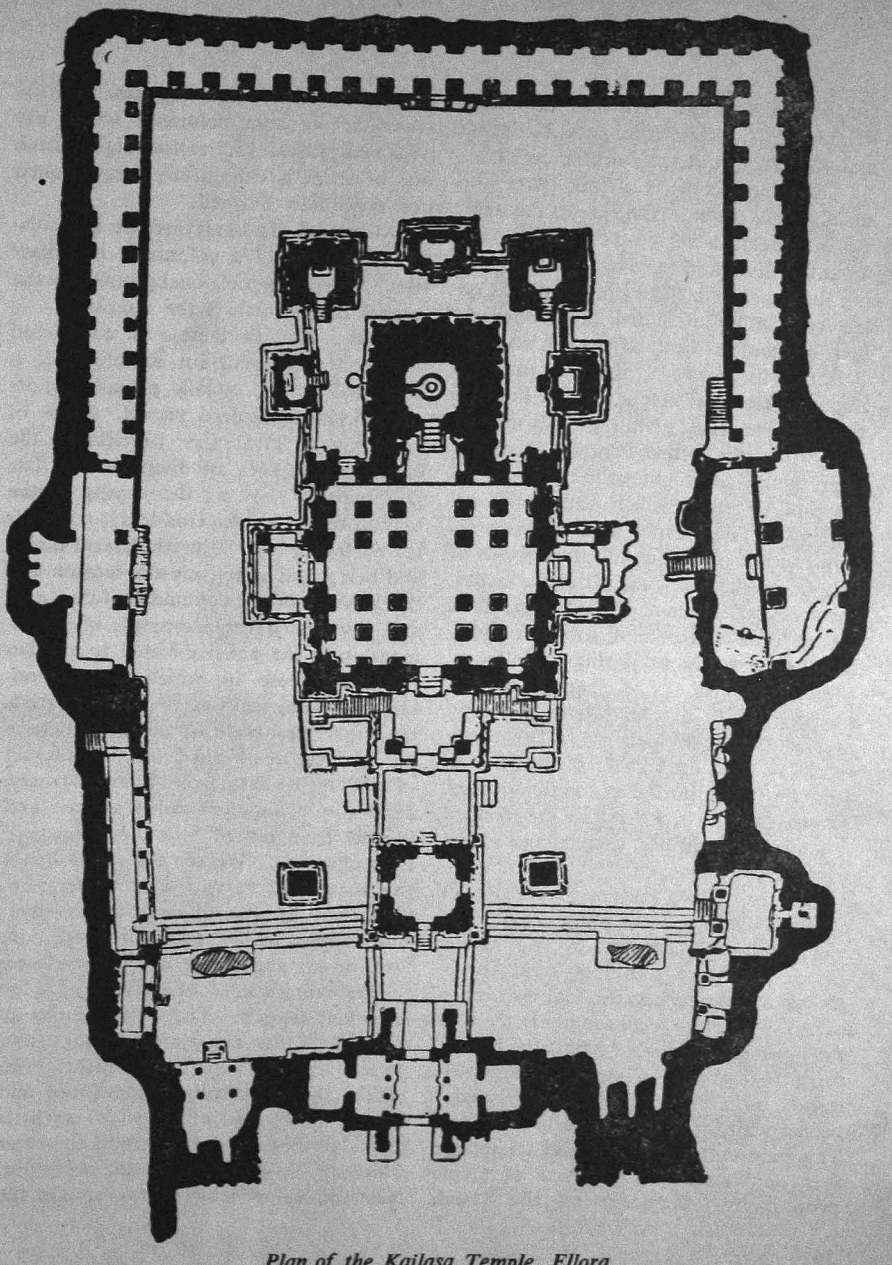
The Dhumar Lena has a striking resemblance to the Elephanta caves though it is a little larger and very much more impressive. The entrance to the cave is by a flight of steps guarded on either side by a watchful, ferocious-looking lion. In the interior twenty-six massive pillars support the roof of the excavated hall. The main shrine dedicated to Siva is a quadrangular chamber situated at the back of the hall, and each of the four sides is guarded by a pair of gigantic Dwarapalas attended by female figurines. Among the fine sculptured panels in the interior, the one depicting the marriage of Siva and Parvati is strikingly beautiful and ranks among the best of the sculptured compositions at Ellora. For sheer power and boldness of expression, another panel representing the dance of Siva clad in elephant skin is noteworthy.

The Kailasa Temple

There are many other excavated shrines besides these at Ellora, the latest of them being Jaina caves, belonging to the 9th and 10th centuries. The Indra Sabha (c. A.D. 750-850) is the best example. But the most remarkable of all the excavations at Ellora, and by far the most stupendous example of rock-cut architecture, is the temple of Kailasa. A creation in which thousands of skilled stone-cutters must have obviously revelled, the Kailasa is the achievement of an audacious visionary who saw in art the culmination of religious devotion and an effective challenge to transience. Time and labour apparently did not count as obstacles to this massive undertaking. We see in this temple a departure from the older tradition of excavated subterranean halls to a new, bold experiment in which a large-scale replica of a structural temple is scooped out of a solid hill.

Referring to the physical magnitude of this unique achievement Percy Brown says that the "plan of the Kailasanatha approximates in area that of the Parthenon at Athens, and its height is one and a half times that of the Greek masterpiece." The Kailasa is more than twice the size of the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, and bears a certain resemblance to it in its architecture although distinctly more evolved and far more imaginative in conception. If the conception of an excavated temple of this magnitude was bold it must have required an even bolder patron to have undertaken the work. The Rashtrakuta king, Krishna I (757-783) had the confidence and resources to take it up.

The Kailasa temple is primarily the work of stone-cutters. They started on it after digging three enormous trenches from above the hill to obtain a massive, isolated block of rock, 60 metres long, 30 metres wide and 30 metres high, standing in a courtyard 91 metres long and 53 metres wide. Having thus obtained the rocky mass into which the temple was to be carved, the artisans started working from



Plan of the Kailasa Temple, Ellora
(*from* History of Indian and Eastern Architecture *by Fergusson*)

the top and front. As the architects delineated the architectural parts, sculptors started carving out their ornate details.

The temple consists of four parts: the main shrine, the entrance gate to the west, an intermediate shrine for Nandi (the mount of Siva) and the cloisters surrounding the courtyard. The temple stands on a lofty plinth, 7.6 metres high, which is heavily moulded both at the top and the bottom. In between the two runs an imposing freize of elephants and lions of considerable size, giving the illusion of supporting the entire superstructure on their backs. A flight of steps leads to the pillared porch which also stands on a plinth. The temple is a harmonious combination of all the known elements of temple architecture—the pilasters, niches, cornices and vimana. The tower is a replica of a three-tiered structure "with its predominantly projecting gable front, and surmounted by a shapely cupola, reaching up to a total height of ninety-five feet (nearly 29 metres)". This tower recalls to mind the sikhara of the Mamallapuram ratha, its Pallava contemporary. Around the base of the sikhara are grouped five miniature shrines, each being a model of the main shrine.

The interior of the temple consists of a cella, a vestibule and a pillared hall. The hall which is 21.3 metres by 18.9 metres has sixteen square pillars arranged in groups of four each at the four corners so as to leave a passage all round. In front of the mandapa or pillared hall is the beautiful Nandi shrine, 6 metres square. It stands on a high plinth which is connected with the main temple by a bridge. The main entrance to the Kailasa temple is a double-storeyed structure of ample proportions. Adjacent to the Nandi shrine on either side are two 'dhvaja stambhas' (banner columns) which are detached pillars, 15.5 metres high. Each one of them is delightfully proportioned and exquisitely finished.

All round the courtyard are the cloisters composed of a colonnade of pillars which provide a rich background to the central mass which is the temple.

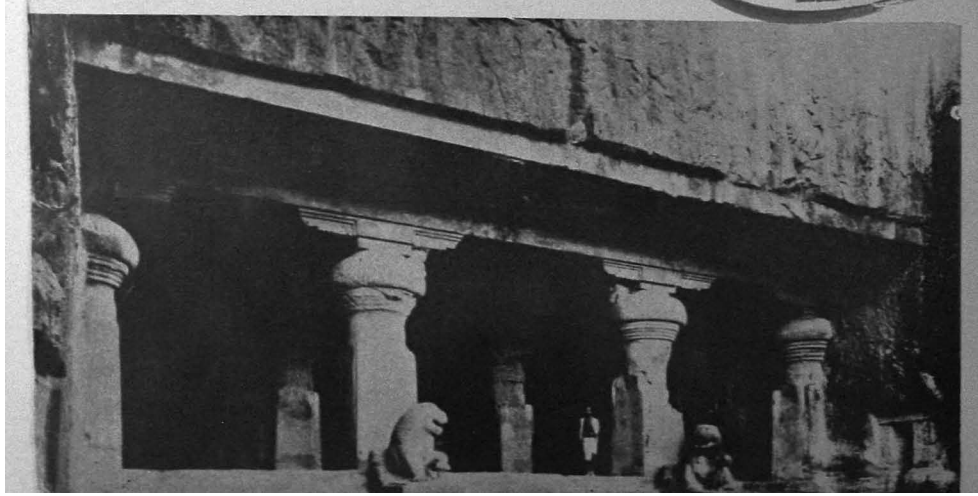
If the Kailasa temple is considered unique for its rock-cut architecture, it holds the ground equally proudly for its magnificent sculptured panels. Some of them are as great and timeless as the famous sculptures of Elephanta. The Durga panel showing the slaying of the buffalo demon by the Goddess is a powerful portraiture of the mythological theme and brings out effectively the tension and the heroism of the contending forces. A still more remarkable example of draftsmanship is the panel devoted to another mythical theme in which the demon-king, Ravana, seeks to convulse Kailasa, the mountain-abode of Siva. It depicts the haughty ten-headed king in the act of shaking Kailasa from it subterranean depths at a moment when Siva and Parvati have retired into the privacy of their chamber. We see consternation in the gestures of Parvati, Siva's wife, who, frightened by the underground convulsion, clings to her mate for protection, Siva, serene and composed, presses down the hill with his left foot and imprisons the impudent demon. The entire drama is depicted on a two-storeyed stage and placed in a deeply cut niche. The figures are realistically proportioned and convey the illusion of life with very little of the symbolic and ornamental character which is so common to the sculptural masterpieces of later centuries. On the

"Death of Hiranyakasipu", Dasavatara Cave, Ellora (7th century)

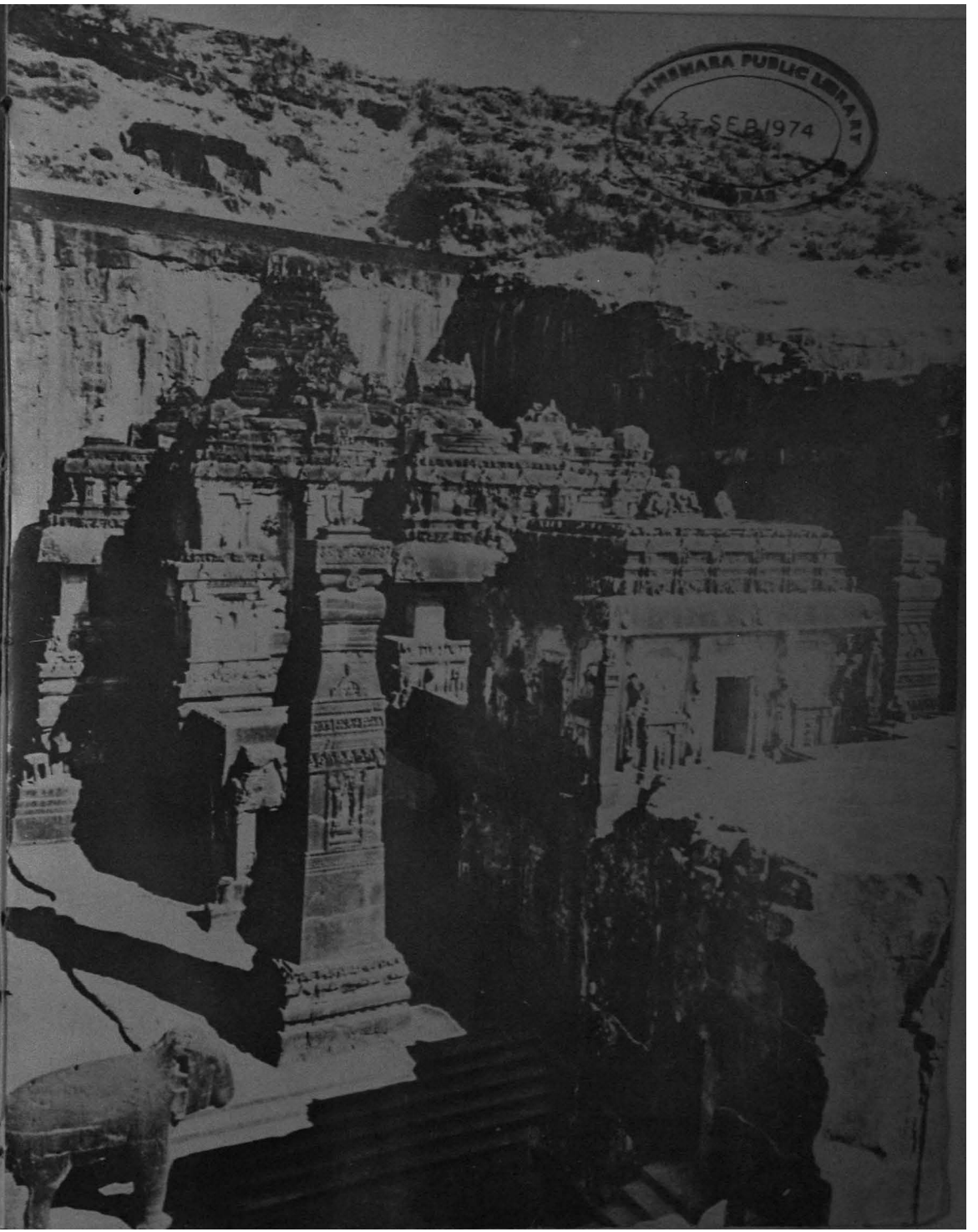
Ravana-ki-Khai (Cave No. 14)—interior view. It consists mainly of a pillared hall and a shrine. The sculptures in the pillared recesses of the walls are virile and bold.

Rameswara Cave (Cave No. 21), Ellora—exterior view. Simple in plan this excavated hall is known for the rich carvings on its walls.

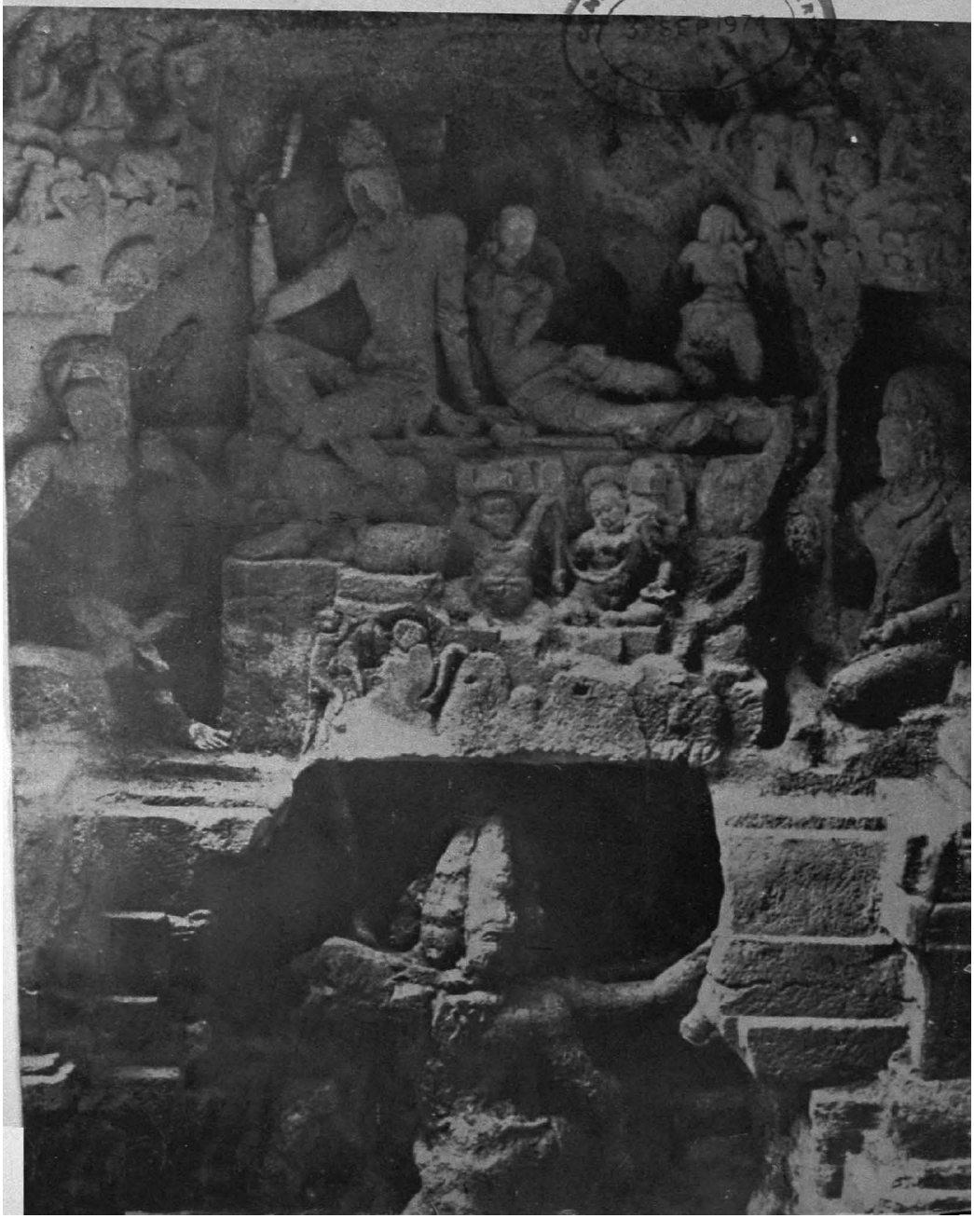
The Dhumar Lena or Sita's Nahani, Ellora



Right : The Kailasa Temple, Ellora (8th century)



Ravana under Mount Kailasa. Panel from the Kailasa Temple, Ellora



exterior of the central court, however, we find a rather interesting panel of intricate relief-sculptures running in horizontal bands, depicting the epic story of Ramayana. It is interesting because the treatment, the inspiration and the technique adopted in the Kailasa temple became, in subsequent centuries, a conspicuous feature of Hoysala or later Chalukyan temples.

It is difficult, indeed, to estimate the influence of the Kailasa architecture on the later temples of the Kannada country. Its general characteristics are more Dravidian or Pallava than Chalukya. It might be more reasonable to treat it as a unique example, great in itself rather than as a link in a long chain of evolution.

THE LATER CHALUKYAN STYLE (1000-1300)

While passing from the early Chalukyan temples, (A.D. 500 to 750) to the later Chalukyan or Hoysala, (*Circa* 1000 to A.D. 1300), the Rashtrakuta period comes in as an interregnum with its emphasis on the rock-cut techniques. This does not, however, imply that the structural type of construction was given up for a time. The Kailasa temple at Ellora was itself only a reproduction of the prevailing structural type, though far more refined and embellished than its model.

By the time the activities of the rock-cutting architects culminated in the exquisite achievements at Ellora, Western Dekhan also witnessed great political changes which brought about the eclipse of Rashtrakuta power and revived the ancient Chalukya dynasty under Taila II. From A.D. 973 onwards, the Kannada country passed into the hands of the new Chalukya dynasty who set up their capital at Kalyani, 96 kms. west of modern Bidar. The two major powers who came to dominate South India during the succeeding two centuries were the Cholas in the east and the Chalukyas and Hoysalas in the west.

About the time when the Chalukyas were still busy consolidating their newly acquired gains, there was a spurt of artistic activity in the Mysore region under the patronage of an ancient, but relatively minor dynasty of rulers called the Gangas whose capital was at Talakad (Mysore District). Professing allegiance to one or the other of the powerful dynasties—whether they were the Cholas, the Rashtrakutas or Chalukyas—they had contrived to preserve their political identity. Jains by faith, these Gangas made a great contribution to the literature and art of ancient Mysore.

The greatest bequest of the Gangas to the art and architecture of South India is the group of monuments at Sravana Belagola (88 kms.) north-east of Mysore city. Of these, the Chamundaraya Basadi and the stupendous monolithic statue of Gomata (son of the first Tirthankara) are the best examples. The Basadi is situated on Chandragiri, one of the two hills adjoining the temple town. Commenced sometime around A.D. 980 and completed sometime early in the 10th century, this Jain temple conforms to the typical Chola architecture. The temple is a small

structure being 21.3 metres in length (including the portico) on the eastern front, and 11 metres wide. It has a pyramidal sikhara crowned by a domical finial.

Opposite this hill is Indra Betta or Indra's Hill, about 120 metres high. On the summit of this hill, surrounded by an arcade of cloisters, stands the stone colossus of Gomata, over 17 metres, in height. This magnificent statue of the nude Jain saint was carved from a solid block of gneiss which had crowned the hill. The statue is elegantly proportioned, and the serene, benevolent smile of the Jain saint is still as fresh today as when the artist left it carved.

Towards the middle of the tenth century a new artistic impulse blossomed in the Kannada country which cannot strictly be described as a continuation of the Rashtrakuta tradition as we see it exemplified in the famous cave temples of Western Dekhan. The multi-pillared, flat-roofed cave temples with their profusion of sculptured panels must have, however, influenced the Hoysala style. Nor did this impulse result in hasty imitations of any style, old or existing. The large number of temples built between A.D. 1050 to 1300 in the rather limited region of Mysore speak of an unprecedented era of artistic activity which, while being undoubtedly inspired by earlier traditions, produced an architecture sufficiently distinctive to merit a separate appellation. The term 'Chalukyan' which modern writers have applied to the large number of Hoysala temples refers to the region under the occupation of this dynasty rather than to the dynasty itself.

The Hoysalas under whose patronage most of these temples were constructed began as subordinate chiefs under the Chalukyas of Kalyani and rapidly rose to political eminence towards the beginning of the 12th century. Finally, they overthrew their imperial suzerains and became the most dominant power in South India, influencing its political destiny from about A.D. 1150 to 1310.

In one important respect the later Chalukyan style was a continuation of the early Chalukyan tradition as represented by the group of temples at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal. They supplied the model from which the Hoysala architects derived their ideas which in subsequent centuries were amplified and elaborated upon. The marked departure from the simpler and older style of the 7th century, to the more elaborate and ornate style of the second millennium was made possible by the discovery of a new building material of a much finer grain than sandstone. This material was soapstone (called chloritic schist by geologists) which is found in abundance in the Mysore State. It is close-textured and highly tractable under the chisel. The builders could lavish their unrivalled skill in decorative art effortlessly on this excellent dark greenish soft stone.

The basic scheme of the typical Hoysala temple is not very different from the other known types in South India. The Pallava vimana influenced the Chalukyan style, but it was subjected to radical modifications. The horizontal arrangement of tiers was retained but the total height was reduced by making each tier shorter. In the later Hoysala temples of the 13th century these horizontal lines slowly lost their emphasis under the overbearing effect of sculptural details worked on all

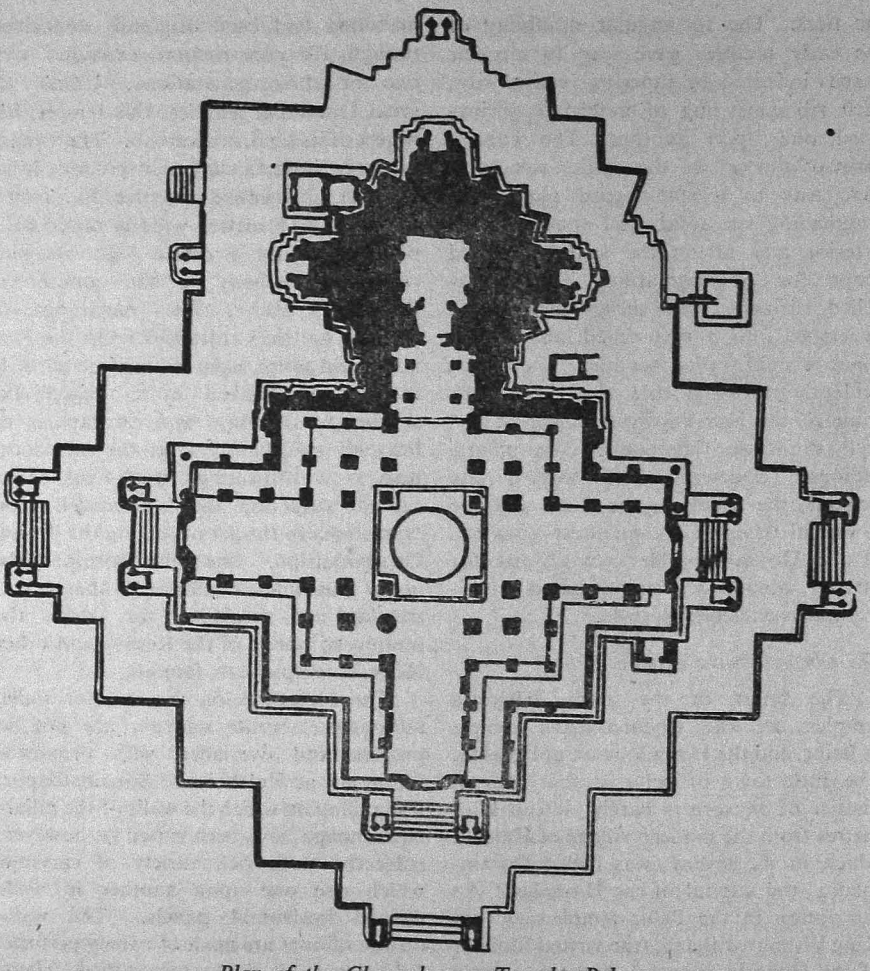
the tiers. The rectangular moulding of the early temples gave way to circular shapes indented by tapering vertical ribs, each rib consisting of miniature shrines piled* one upon another. The cubical form of the cell of the earlier structures gave way to a star-shaped plan, thus lengthening the total wall space on the exterior and giving the sculptor added scope for ornamentation. The single-celled shrine of the earlier period was developed into a twin-celled and sometimes a multi-celled temple. There was evidently no strict rule about this since some of the best known examples of this style differ on this point. The pillars, ceilings, doorways and jambs, the capitals, the brackets, the walls and the tower all received the minutest attention of the Hoysala builder whose zeal for carving obviously subordinated architecture to a secondary role.

The Chennakesava Temple, Belur

The finest of the early Hoysala temples are the Chennakesava temple at Belur, and the Hoysaleswara at Halebid. The little town of Belur in the Hassan district of Mysore is barely sixteen kilometres from the modern village of Halebid which in its heyday was called Dorasamudra, the capital of the Hoysalas. An inscription in the Belur temple says that King Vishnuvardhana, (the virtual founder of the Hoysala dynasty), had this temple built in A.D. 1117 to commemorate his historic victory over the Cholas at Talakad.

The Kesava temple as it stands today is undoubtedly an amplification of the original temple referred to in the earliest inscription. But the entire scheme with the cella, vestibule, and the pillared mandapa had been originally conceived, though its construction extended over two or three generations. Unlike the great Dravidian temples, this temple, like others of its kind, is dwarfish. The vimana however, is particularly conspicuous by its absence. The entire structure, 54.2 metres long and 47.5 metres wide is raised on a platform about a metre high, its plan conforming closely to the contour of the temple above. The navaranga or pillared hall has entrances from the east, north and south, each of them elaborately carved and flanked by a pagoda-like shrine in miniature, and dwarapalas or heavenly guardians. Over the east doorway is a projecting panel, intricately carved, depicting the lion-headed God Narasimha in the act of slaying the demon Hiranyakasipu. The workmanship on the jambs and lintels conforms to the general standard of excellence for which the sculptured panels of the Kesava and other Hoysala temples are famous.

The sculptures on the exterior walls, although elaborate enough, are not so profuse and overladen with ornamentation as at Halebid and Somanathapur. The railing on which the walls of the pillared mandapa have been raised is, however, subjected to a rich variety of carvings which rise one upon another in well-defined horizontal panels. The walls on the railings are made of twenty perforated screens, all elaborately carved. These typically Hoysala screens remind us of the marvellously carved sandal wood and ivory screens for which the craftsmen of Mysore are to this day famous. A feature altogether unique to the Kesava temple and not found in the later temples of this style, is the series of sculptured figure-subjects fixed slantwise on the exterior



Plan of the Chennakesava Temple, Belur

pillars of the main hall and below the heavy, overhanging cave. They are popularly known as Madanika bracket-figures, wrought in the most exquisite style ever attempted by the Hoysala artist. Originally there were forty of them, but two of them are missing now. These bracket-figures give to the exterior of the temple a decorative element the like of which we do not find in other temples.

The interior of the main hall is a pillared pavilion covered all round by perforated screens. This pillared hall is typical of the Hoysala style, but

like all others of its kind, its pillars are numerous and too closely set to make possible any spatial view. Some of the pillars, and invariably all the ceilngs and the stone beams are so heavily carved that the resultant effect is one of congestion. The onlooker is dazed by the unrestrained exuberance of carvings which are no doubt in the best of Hoysala tradition.

One of these pillars which looks particularly fabulous is an example of the fantastic lengths to which these inspired Hoysala sculptors could go. This pillar, called the Narasimha pillar, has been subjected to exceedingly intricate carvings, the capital and base not excluded. These carvings consist of a repeating pattern of pillared niches running in horizontal bands around the shaft, with a tiny image enshrined in each niche.

Another pillar, known as the Mohini pillar, is likewise the product of a master-sculptor. Its section is star shaped, but the various tiers of the monolithic shaft are all moulded in different patterns. resembling a wheel, a bell, a pot or a double umbrella. These are enclosed by eight narrow bands of excellent scroll-work ascending vertically from the base of the shaft to the capital. A tall beautiful figure of Mohini stands on an ornate pedestal cut into the base of the pillar. Even in its present slightly mutilated condition, this lithic representation strikes us as a priceless example of Hoysala sculpture. The four central pillars of the hall are adorned with bracket-figures of extraordinary beauty and plastic finish. The theme is in each case a dancing damsel with heavy rounded breasts and slim waist, decked heavily in jewellery.

An extraordinary feature of some of the pillars in the hall is that they are lathe-turned. Enormous blocks of stone were first roughly chiselled to required proportions and placed on a lathe and turned while sharp chisels cut grooves in the shaft resembling a series of rings, or bell-shaped mouldings. By what mechanical device they were able to work a lathe with such a heavy material on it is not known. There is no doubt that the Hoysala builder laid great store by this process because it enabled him to produce pillars in great number.

To match the exquisite beauty and the rich variety of its pillars the central hall has ceilings which are no less ornate. Most of these ceilings are flat and consist of carvings of the conventional type. But the central ceilng is a work of considerable artistic skill. It has an octagonal base over which a low dome is raised. The dome is not, as in mediaeval European architecture, built of voussoirs with radiating joints, but set, ring upon ring of worked stone, in an ascending order, the rings becoming smaller as they go upwards. All these rings are held in position by the stupendous weight of a heavy slab on top. The eight corner slabs and the ascending rings of stone are extravagantly carved. From the centre hangs a huge, tubular drop like a pendant and the flat face of the pendant is converted into an intricately carved panel depicting Narasimha in the act of slaying the demon Hiranyakasipu.

A word needs to be said about the main image of Kesava in the sanctum. Six feet high, the idol stands on a pedestal about half its height. Elegant in proportions, ornate in details and perfect in finish, this image is easily one of the

great masterpieces of Hindu iconographic art. The other examples of comparable beauty are those of Kappe Chennagi Raya in the same temple at Belur, and of Janardana in the Somanathapur temple.

The Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebid

The Hoysaleswara temple at Halebid, considered by many to be the finest achievement of the Hoysala builder, is also an incomplete structure, although its construction commenced in about A.D. 1118. Like the Belur temple, it also lacks the superstructure. If we are to judge Hoysala architecture by the standards which its builders set for themselves, then by the sheer extravagance and beauty of its sculptural embellishment, this Siva temple at Halebid is easily their greatest achievement. The several other Jain temples at the same place, each beautiful in itself, stand no comparison with this structure.

The Hoysaleswara is a twin-temple, the two structures being almost of identical size and joined by their adjacent transepts. Though each of them is a structure of moderate size 34.1 metres x30.4 metres taken together, and along with the Nandi pavilion in front, they occupy considerable space. Like all Hoysala temples this temple is also built on a low platform. The exterior of the temple is split into numerous projections in conformity with the star-shaped plan of the structure. As we proceed from the entrance round the exterior of the temple an endless scroll of exquisitely sculptured panels unrolls itself, bringing before our eyes an astonishing display of plastic art depicting divine and semi-divine characters drawn from Hindu mythology. At the bottom of the indented walls are six horizontal bands of relief sculptures, each devoted to a repeating theme like elephants, lions, legendary swans, or stories from the epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Above these bands and covering the central space of the gallery are panel after panel of figure sculptures, each about half life size, and extravagantly apparelled. For the sheer wealth of sculptural embellishment and the incredible intricacy of carvings there are few temples in India comparable to this Hoysala masterpiece.

Likewise, the four doorways of the Hoysaleswara temple are remarkable productions of the sculptors' skill. The dwarapalas at the south and south-east doorways are large-size figures drapped in extravagant jewellery so intricately carved that it gives the impression of being the work of a master goldsmith. The lintel of the doorway, 3.6 metres long and 0.9 metres wide, is also converted into a panel of intricate carvings. The interior of this temple, like that of the Kesava temple at Belur, is not architecturally imposing because of the numerous pillars fixed close to one another. But each pillar is an exquisite piece of craftsmanship, beautifully moulded, fluted and ornamented. The capitals support the typical Madanika or bracket-figures, most of which are missing now.

The Kesava Temple, Somanathapur

A typical example of the fully evolved Hoysala style in southern Mysore is the 13th century Kesava temple at Somanathapur, about 40 kms. from Mysore city. It is a three-celled structure, the shrines being symmetrically placed around the main hall.

The whole temple, raised on a low platform like all Hoysala temples, occupies the middle of a big rectangular enclosure, 65.5 metres by 54 metres. The north, west and south sides of the enclosure have a continuous range of sixty-four cells with pillars in front, all raised on a plinth, about a metre high.

The temple, being a combination of three shrines, has a cross-shaped plan so homogenous and complete that in its cloistered setting it gives the impression of a perfectly pre-planned structure. All the three shrines have their vimanas or towers in tact, the tower being divided horizontally from the base by a heavy overhanging cave. The plan of the vimana conforms strictly to the star shaped plan of the shrine, the vertical, tapering ribs being composed of miniature shrines, all elaborately carved. The indented exterior of the walls is subjected to the same treatment as that of the Hoysaleswara temple with running friezes depicting elephants, cavalry, and stories from the epics. Above them are panels devoted to the Hindu pantheon, the gods and goddesses being carved in high relief and with the same intricacy of detail as in the earlier temples.

The temple of Somanathapur is remarkable for its ceilings in the pillared-hall. Each ceiling is a dome made of enormous slabs placed one upon another. The usual pattern is that of a pendant or a banana flower which hangs from the centre. The pattern rises in concentric circles diminishing as they go up, and connected by radiating ribs. The effect is that of a highly ornate umbrella, carved into an enormous block of stone.

Besides these well-known examples, there are several other Hoysala temples of the 12th and 13th centuries in the northern districts of Mysore where the early Chalukya style originated and flourished. These temples differ from the southern group in their plan, treatment of the exterior walls, the shape of the towers, pillars, and the design of the doorways. Unlike their southern counterparts, these temples do not have the star shaped plan, but are rectangular. The treatment of wall surfaces conforms to the early style of the 7th century, being spaced out by pilasters. The embellishment is more architectural than sculptural. The vimana is a compromise between the early Chalukyan variety of Pattadakal and the later Hoysala variety of southern Mysore. The doorways too, are different. Instead of the purely ornamental rectangular gateway as in the southern temples the doorway of the northern temples is an important architectural element, with pilasters on the two sides, and a moulded lintel and cornice above.

Some of the earlier examples of the later Chalukyan style in the north are to be found at Kukkanur, a village near Gadag, and Lakkundi, also near the same place. These temples show a shift over from the coarse sandstone of the earlier days to the fine-textured soap-stone.

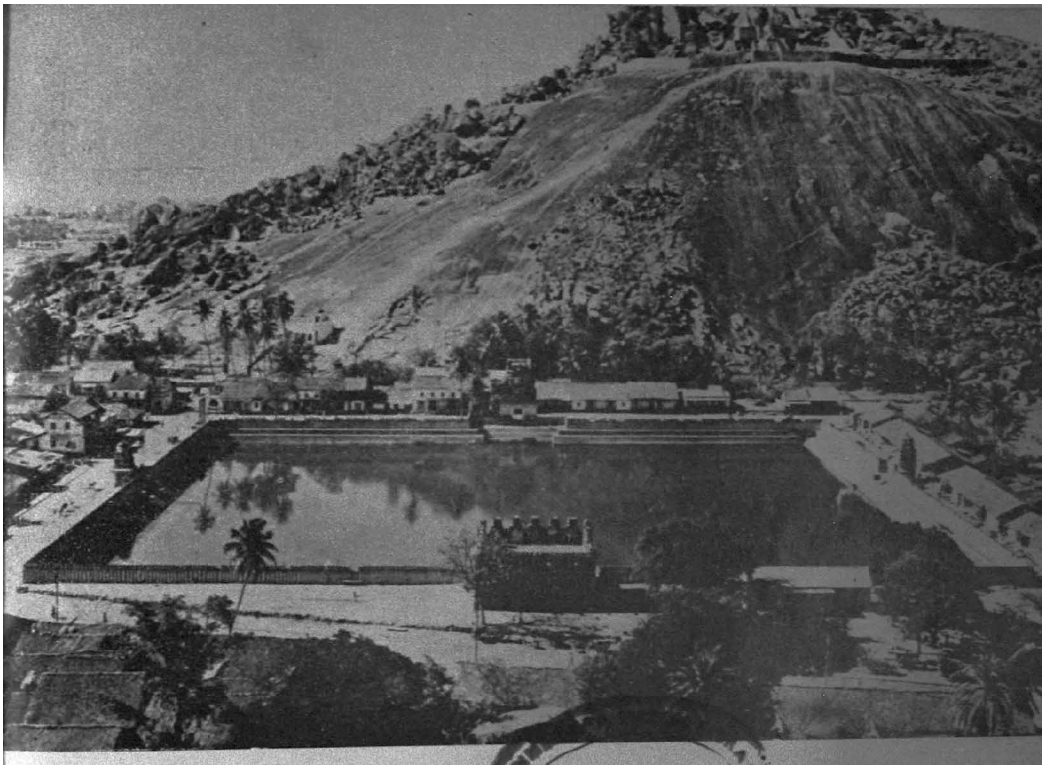
A new architectural feature developed in the later temples of the Dharwar district is the prominent, projecting eave, often double-curved in section or a straight projection which gives to the building greater protection from rain and sun, and enhances the dignity of its architecture. The Mukteswara temple at Chandadampur, on the banks of the Tungabhadra is an early example of this. The temples of Ittagi, Lakkundi and Kuruvatti and several others in the Dharwar region

represent the culmination of the later Chalukyan or Hoysala type in north Mysore (about A.D. 1100). The Mahadeva temple at Ittagi (about 34 kms. from Gadag) which is partly in ruins, may be regarded as one of the most highly finished examples of this style. It consists of an open pavilion or mandapa and a closed hall with an antechamber and the cella, all grouped together into a beautiful, harmonious structure. The temple is of considerable size measuring 36.6 by 18.3 metres and very well proportioned. The decoration of the exterior, which is more architectural than sculptural, is intricate but pleasing. The tower, which is mutilated at the summit, would be 12 metres high in its complete form. The open pillared hall at the eastern entrance measuring over 15 metres across is an exceedingly striking composition and enhances the architectural beauty of the whole structure. Some of these pillars are lathe-turned in the typical Hoysala fashion. The jambs and lintels of the entrances are elaborately carved.

The Kasivisweswara temple at Lakkundi is also an effective composition. It has two shrines at the two extremities, each with a tower whose finial is missing. The ornamentation on the towers is bold and architectural. The doorways of this temple are considered to be the finest specimens of their kind in the Chalukyan style. A series of beautifully carved mouldings frame the rectangular entrance which is flanked by a delightfully shaped pilaster. On top is a moulded lintel "surmounted by a carved cornice and overdoor, while a keystone carrying the sculptured panel of Gajalakshmi adorns the top centre of the doorway." At the bottom of both sides of the doorway each vertical moulding starts with the motif of a sculptured figure which is remarkable for its proportions and gracefulness.

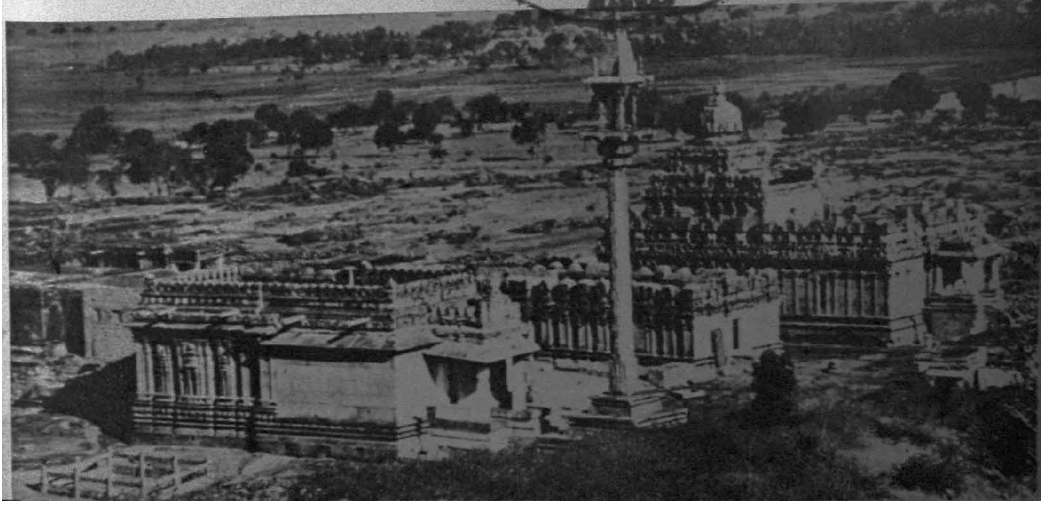
Another group of temples equally celebrated as examples of this style are to be found at Gadag. They are dedicated to Trikuteswara, Saraswati and Someswara and belong more or less to the same period. The Trikuteswara is a triple-shrine temple and has two covered pavilions in line with the eastern and western shrines. This was the earliest of the group, having been built sometime about 1000 A.D. and repaired late in the 12th century. Situated close to this is the temple of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning and consort of Brahma. Though the temple is in a sad state of ruin, one can still see the beautiful pillars of its mandapa. These pillars are variously patterned and ceilings and the doorways are remarkable for their exquisite carvings.

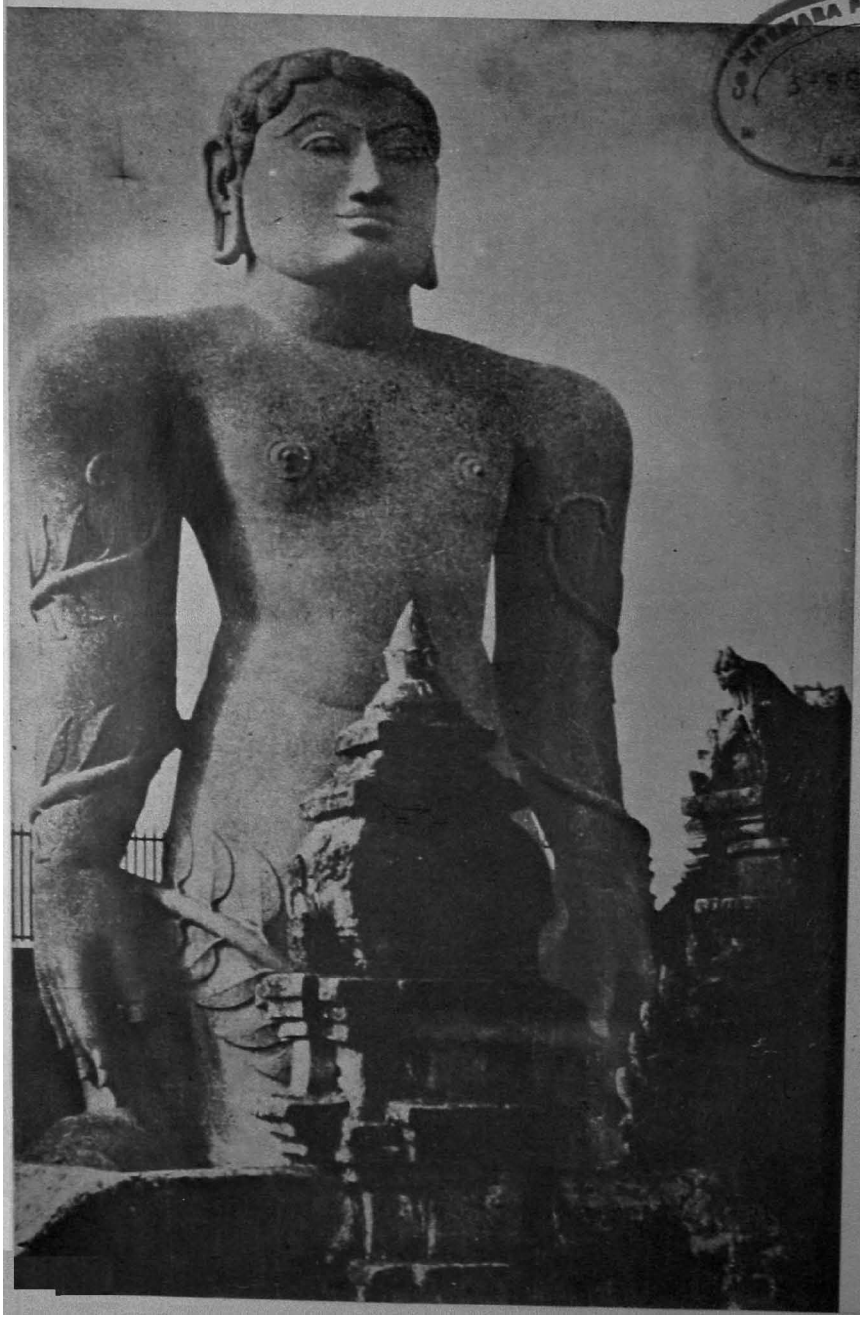
Twelfth century examples in northern Mysore are really numerous and widely distributed. But the most interesting of them all is the temple of Dodda Basappa at Dambal, 21 kms. south-east of Gadag. While all the other temples of this period in this region have a rectangular layout this temple has a star-shaped plan of the Mysore variety. The entire structure including the cella and the pillared hall has a stellate plan which is carried right up to the elevation of the building. The horizontal courses of the vimana are intersected by vertical lines that take off from the star-shaped plan of the cella. This vertical tendency of the the building is made more vivid by the angular projections in the walls and the tower which give an appearance of added strength to the structure and makes it look altogether pleasing.



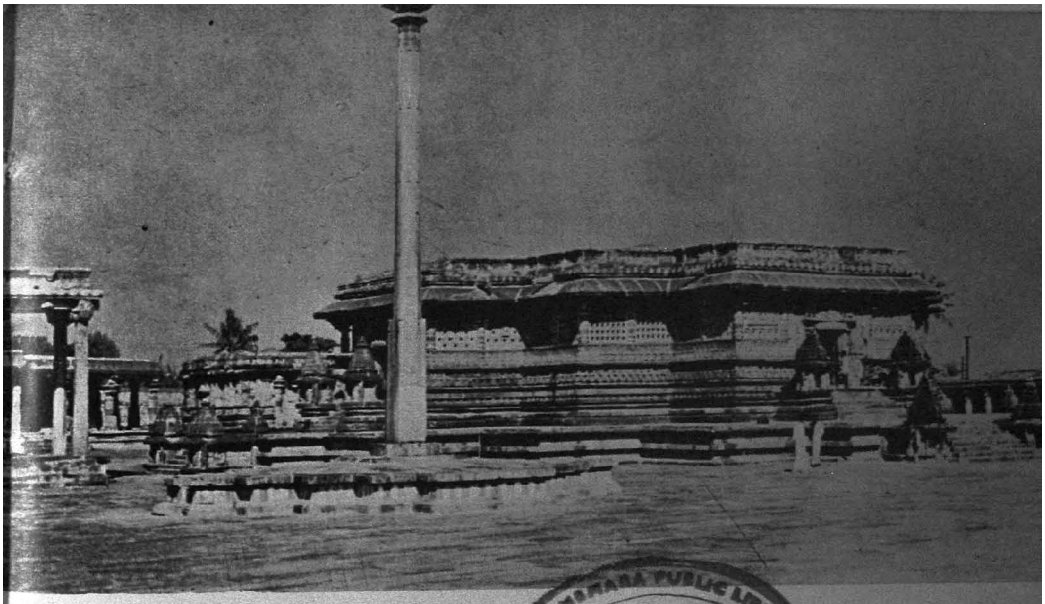
Indrapuri Hill, Sravana Belagola

Jain Basadi, Chandragiri Hill, Sravana Belagola

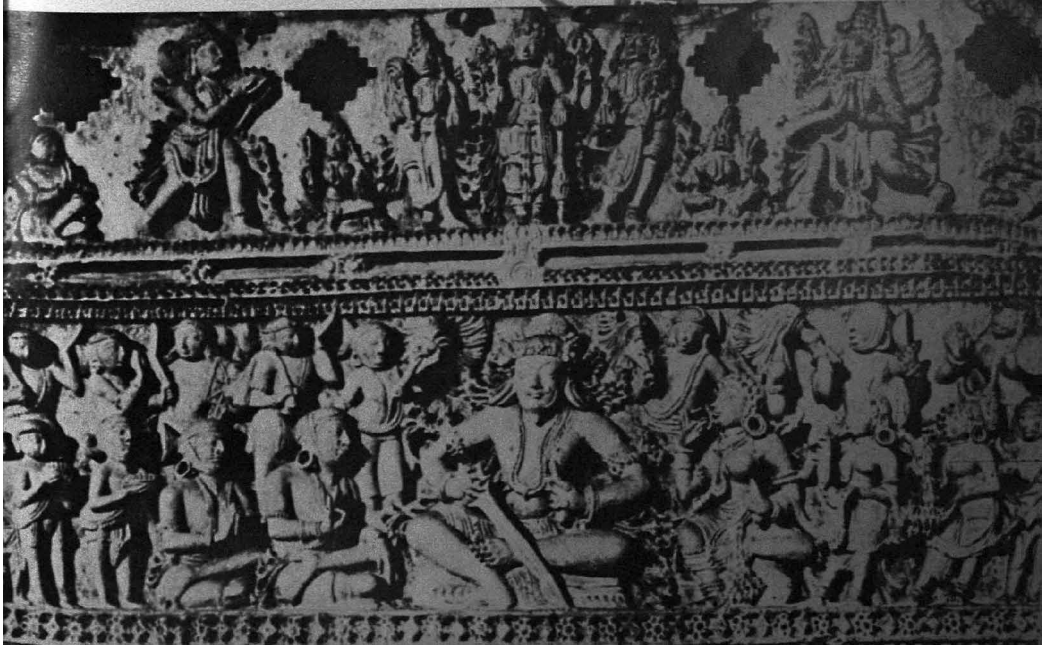




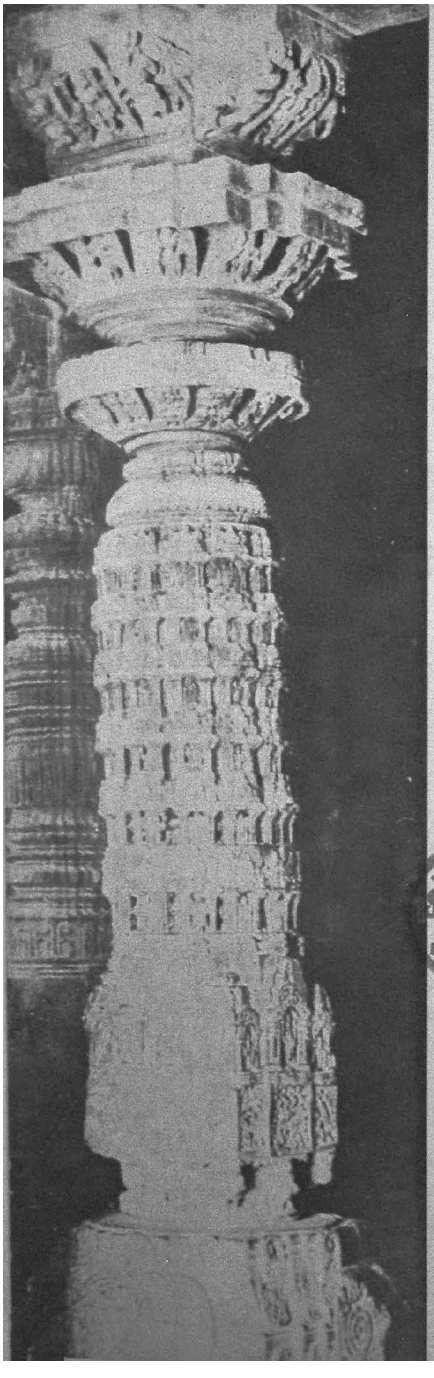
The Gomata colossus, Indrapuri Hill, Sravana Belagola (10th century)



Chennakesava Temple, Belur (12th century)—general view

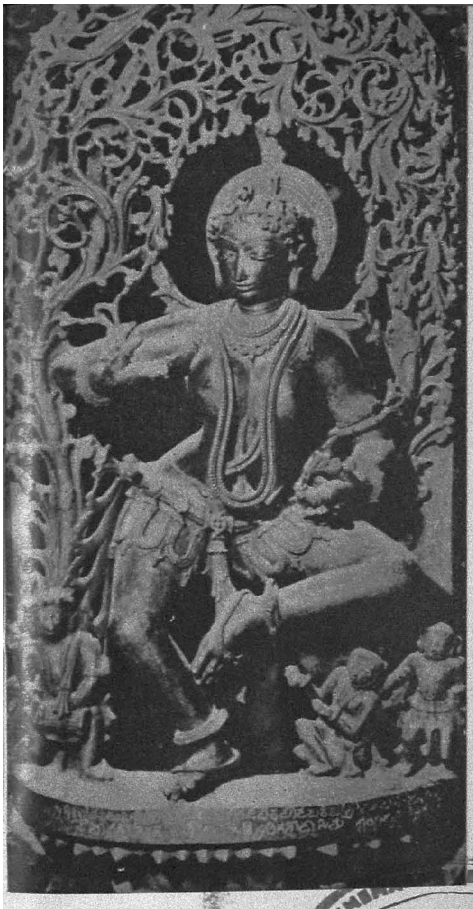


Panel on a perforated screen depicting King Vishnuvardhana holding Court, Chennakesava Temple, Belur



Girl with mirror, a bracket image on the exterior wall of the Chennakesava Temple, Belur

Narasimha Pillar in the pillared pavilion, Chennakesava Temple, Belur

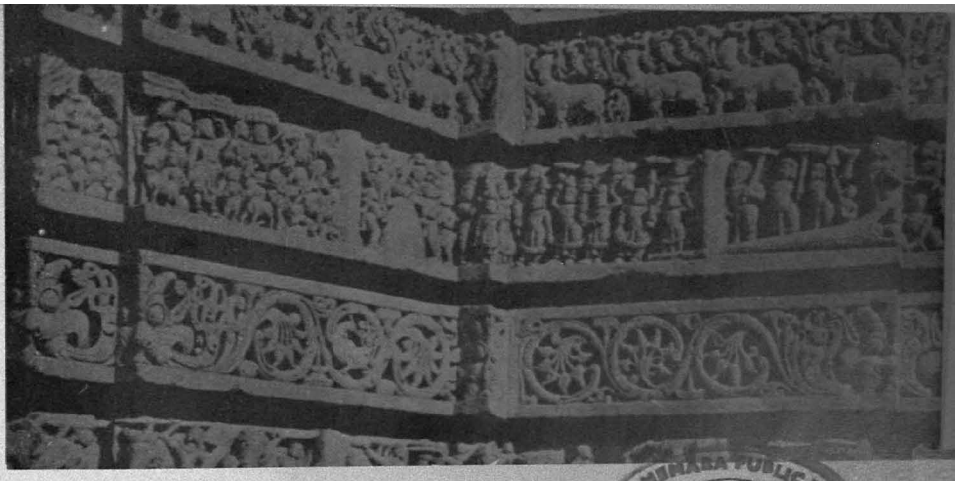


Dancing Saraswati, a pillar-bracket in the interior of the Chennakesava Temple, Belur

Mohini Pillar in the pillared pavilion of the Chennakesava Temple, Belur

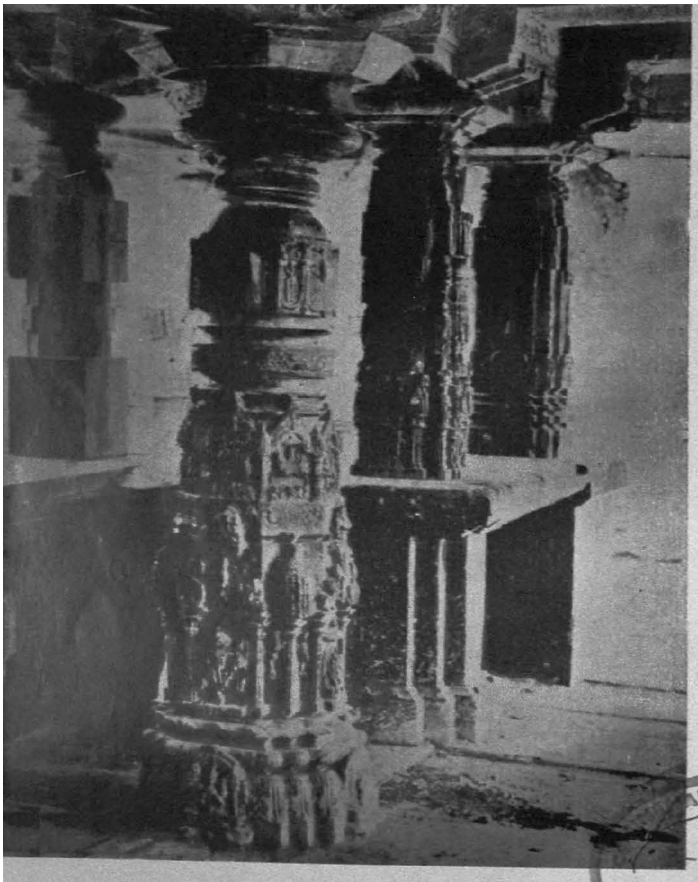
The Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebid (12*th century*)

Figure-sculptures on the exterior of the Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebid



Friezes from the exterior of the Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebid

Kesava Temple, Somanathapur (13th century)



Interior pillars, Temple of Saraswati, Gadag (12th century)

Temple of Saraswati, Gadag. Unlike their southern counterparts, the Hoysala temples in north Mysore are rectangular rather than star-shaped in plan, and bear closer kinship to the early Chalukyan temples of the 6th and 7th centuries.

The large number of temples built in the later Chalukyan style both in its southern and northern varieties owed their patronage to the Hoysala dynasty. Like everything else in the field of art, this style of temple architecture had its days of glory and decadence. Scores of temples other than those described here were built in all parts of the State between A.D. 1000 to 1300. During the last quarter of the 13th century signs of decadence became perceptible, and fewer temples came to be built. With the invasion of South India by Malik Kafur early in the 14th century, all these Hindu dynasties—the Hoysalas, the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas who had patronised temple construction so far—were more or less wiped out from the political map. As a result an unprecedented period of political chaos set in which arrested the peaceful pursuit of all cultural activities until the establishment of the Vijayanagar dynasty in 1336. From now on South India came to develop a more homogeneous style of temple-building, drawing inspiration from the Dravidian as well as the Chalukyan temples.

TEMPLES OF KERALA AND SOUTH KANARA

FROM THE stately, elaborate temple complex of the Dravidian style and the ornate, exquisite temples of the Chalukyan we come to an altogether different style of temples in Kerala—the State which now comprises Malabar and the erstwhile princely States of Cochin and Travancore. The gabled or multiple-roofed structures of Kerala built of laterite stone, bricks, wood and tiles present a completely different appearance from their architectural counterparts elsewhere in South India. Travancore, the southernmost district of Kerala, was the meeting place of both the Dravidian and indigenous styles. Not only did the two traditions co-exist here, but they continually influenced each other. While the influence of the Dravidian style is found confined largely to the extreme south and south-west of Kerala, the Malabar district in the north has retained the indigenous character of its style to a much greater degree.

While discussing the development of the Kerala style we have to reckon with the absence of example which can be chronologically strung together on a discernible thread of evolution. As Stella Kramrisch observes, "the Kerala type of building in Travancore is homely and almost dateless; the Dravida buildings are more stately and are subject to all the changes of style which the development of a school of architecture implies."

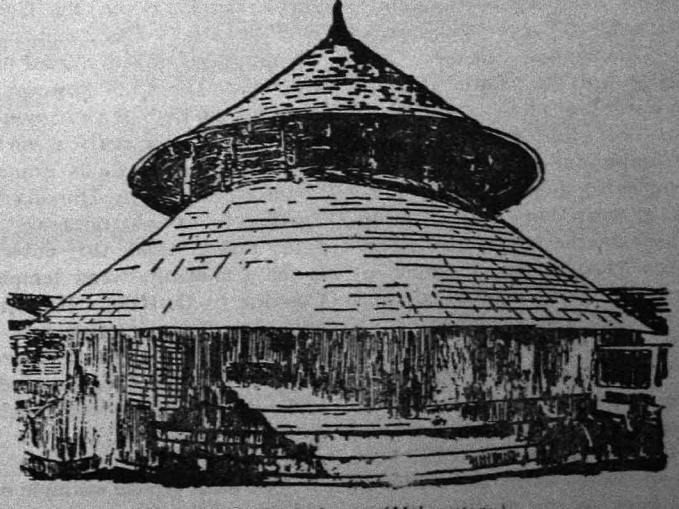
The typical Kerala temple or Srikoil can be square or rectangular or circular in plan, the structure being raised on a socle (a plain or moulded stone pedestal). The main building lies on an east west axis and is surrounded by a rectangular cloister. The roofs are by far the most dominant part of the Kerala temples. Whether the structure is circular in plan, as in the Srikoil at Tirumandikkara (13th century), or rectangular as at Vaikom (15th century), the roof also conforms to the same principles. It is a broad-based, steep and pointing superstructure, resembling the thatched roof of huts and houses commonly built in Malabar. The temple roofs are as a rule covered with thin tiles. Great attention is paid to the construction of these roofs, the length, thickness and the joints of the rafters being regulated by rules laid down by ancient treatises on architecture (Vastu-vidya).

These roofs can be single or double. The Srikoil of Trikothithanam, which belongs to the 11th century, is an example of the double-roof. The slopping roofs preponderate in the architecture of the temple so much that the visible part of the walls below is about a quarter of the total height of the structure. Architecturally this quality of the Kerala temple is not only unique in South India, but altogether pleasing. It gives the effect of lightness to the solidity of the low structures below, and adds harmony to the entire composition by the sheer simplicity of conception.

The roofs, as we have observed, take the shape of the plan of the structure on which they are superimposed. If the plan

is circular, the roof becomes an enormous cone, its open base covering a good part of the perpendicular wall in a broad, sweeping curve. The square temple has its steep, pyramidal roof, being in appearance more austere and less impressive than the cone. The third variety is a ridged roof, single or double. The ridge of the roof runs breadthwise and projects beyond the hipped end, terminating in a characteristic triangular gable-end resembling an open attic. The roofs, whether conical, pyramidal or ridged are often multiple, two or three storeys high, and on that account not only add to the height and majesty of the structures but provide greater opportunity for the image carver to display his skill on and around the struts that support the roofs.

The ridged roof is not altogether peculiar to Kerala. Old reliefs and paintings belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era indicate that this architectural conception, which was mainly curvilinear, was prevalent in central India and the Deccan. We find also that in the architecture of certain Himalayan regions, more especially in Nepal and Kashmir, gabled or multiple type roofs have prevailed throughout the centuries whether the material was wood or stone. A somewhat similar style of construction also prevails in Kathiawar, more akin to the Kashmir structure. The Kerala type is nearer to that of Nepal although we cannot explain this affinity between the two types in terms of cultural



Srikoil at Trikothithanam (11th century)

contact between regions which are separated by about two thousand four hundred kilometres. An ancient Siva temple at Beypore, a small seaport south of Kozhikode in Malabar, shows a remarkable similarity to the Nepalese double-roofed temple of the late medieval period.

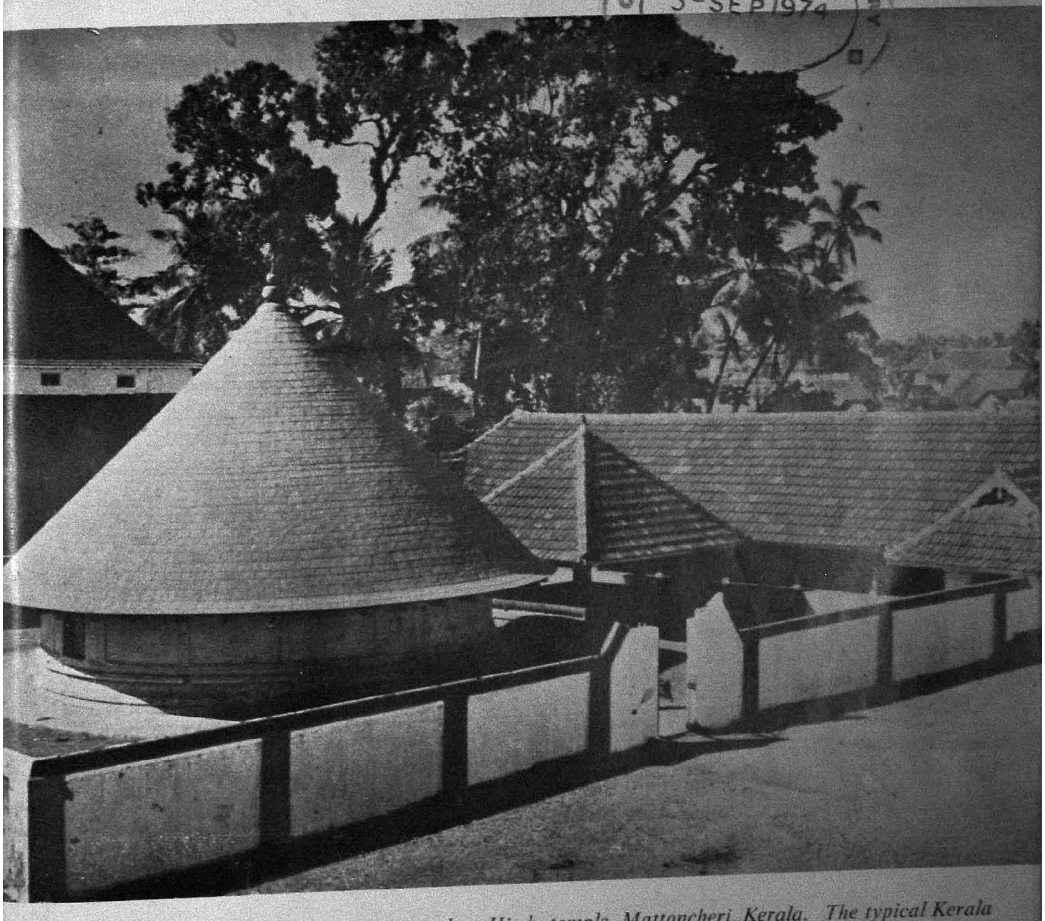
Though the architecture of Kerala's temples is simple enough, the brackets, struts and uprights on the exterior and the ceilings inside the building are often carved into beautiful imagery. We see in them the artistic ancestors of the wonderful wood and ivory carvings for which the State is to this day renowned. The ceilings are often covered with the images of gods and goddesses, not to speak of the walls and pillar bases. The Ramayana and other epic stories supplied themes for elaborate carvings of panels on the exterior walls. Where the walls were of brick and mortar the surfaces were often covered by mural paintings "like a tapestry in which the buildings appear clothed." Even the wood carvings are sometimes coloured and made to merge with the paintings on the walls, reminiscent of the cave temples of Ajanta. That wall paintings constituted an important embellishment of ancient temples in South India is also borne out by many Dravidian examples as in the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram, the Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjore and the more recent paintings in the Meenakshi temple at Madurai.

Like Kerala, South Kanara (west coast of Mysore State) also has some remarkable temples which resemble the architecture of the Himalayan region. The Jain temples at Mudabidri (32 kms. north-east of Mangalore) the earliest of which go back to the twelfth century, are built of stone but are clear copies, of the wooden structure. The finest of the Mudabidri group is the Chandranatha temple, consisting of three halls (mandapas), all connected and combined with the cella which contains the image of the Jain Tirthankar. Built sometime early in the fifteenth century this temple has pillars which resemble closely the Chalukyan order, being turned out on the lathe. The entire structure has a common, multiple roof with open triangular gable-ends similar to those of Kerala.

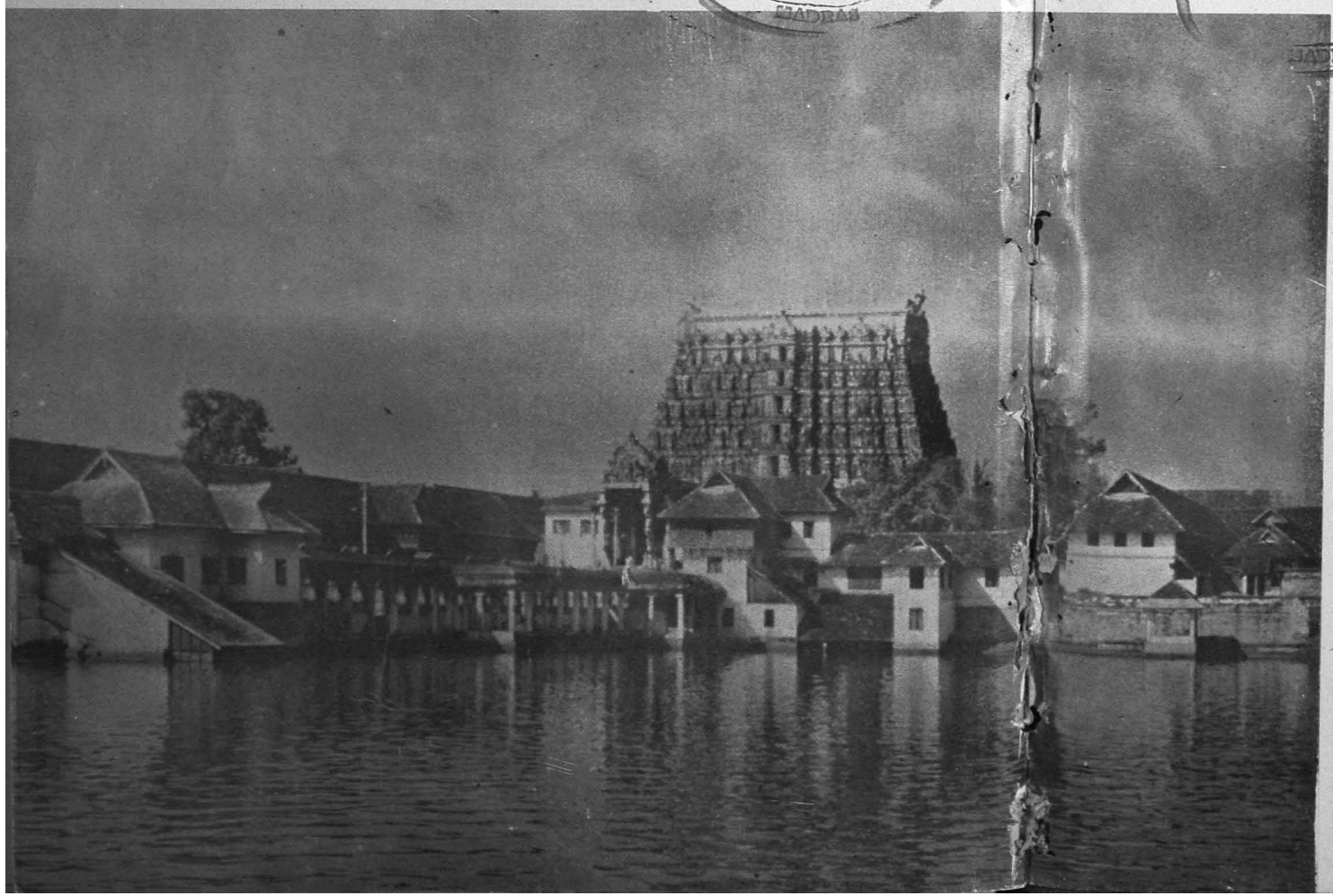
We have noted that the indigenous style of temple-building co-existed with the Dravidian style in the southern parts of Kerala. The earliest extant examples of Dravidian structures in Travancore go back to the ninth-tenth centuries—that is, about the time when the Cholas built some of their earliest temples in the Tamil country. The temples at Vizhinjam are similar to the early Chola shrines in Pudukottai. The buildings consist of a square cella, with a solid brick superstructure. The walls, however, are made of brick, instead of stone-masonry. The superstructure is itself a small shrine, shaped like a squarish dome.

Among the early Dravida temples in Travancore which resemble spacious halls rather than the cubical temple is the Guhanathaswami temple at Cape Comorin (A.D. 1000). It has a flat roof and a spacious interior and is entirely of stone-masonry. The pilasters, the roll cornice with its Chaitya window motifs and lion friezes above them clearly indicate the influence of the Dravidian style.

The most typical example of the Dravidian style in Travancore is the Suchin-

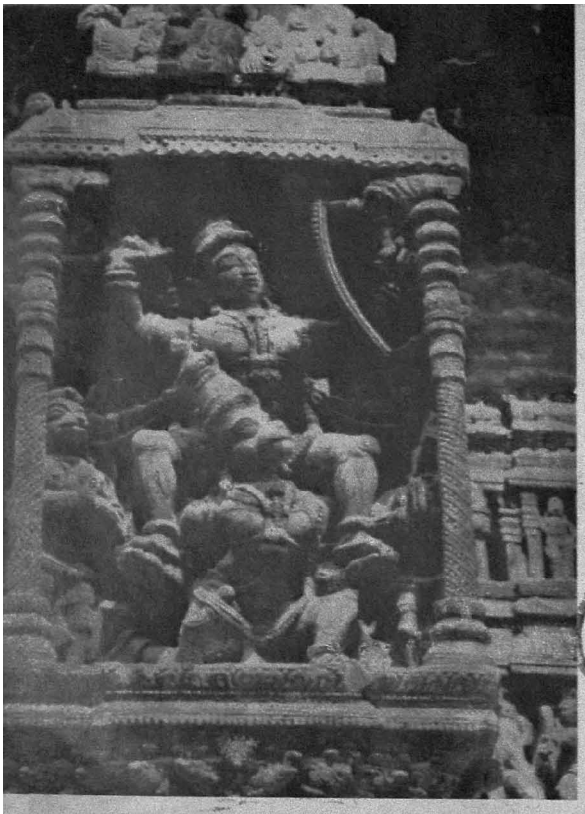


A modern Hindu temple, Mattancheri, Kerala. The typical Kerala temple is square or rectangular or circular in plan, and the roof takes the shape of the plan of the structure. This indigenous style of temple-building co-existed with the Dravidian style of the 10th century.



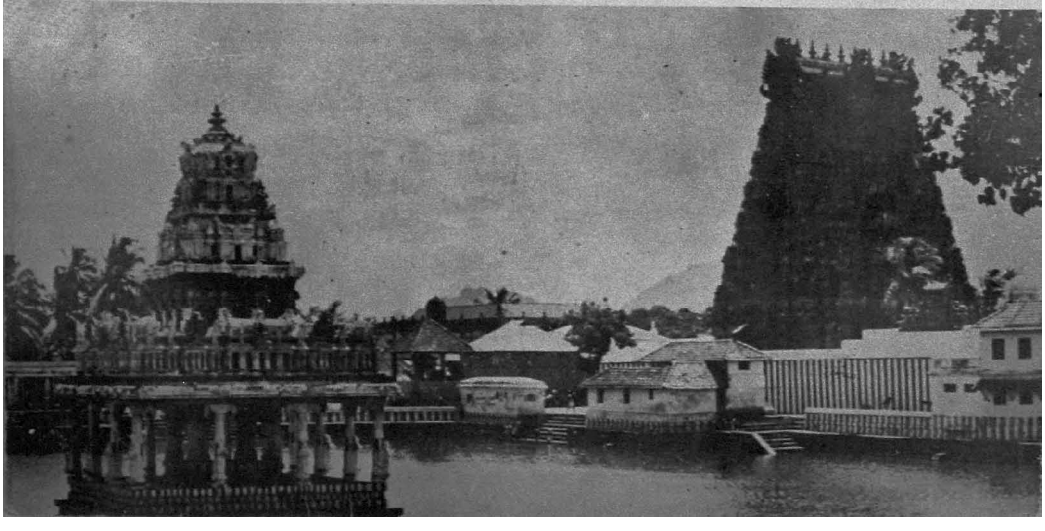
Sri Padmanabhaswami Temple, Trivandrum, Kerala (17*th century*). *The gopuram, though built in the Dravidian style, is squattish and does not quite convey the commanding dignity of the other well-known temple gopurams of Tamil Nadu.*

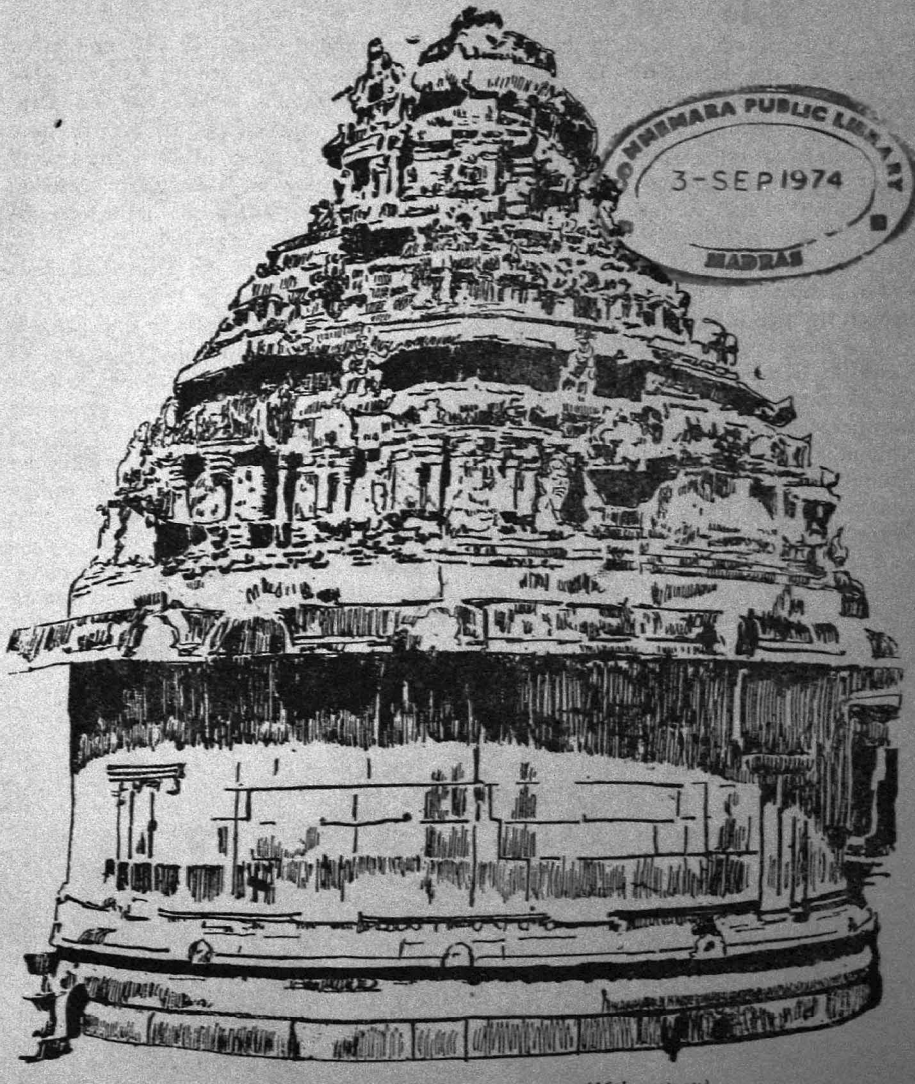
Pillars, Suchindram Temple, Kerala (16*th century*)



Wooden carvings from an old temple car, Suchindram (about the 18th century)

The Great Temple, Suchindram. The gopuram belongs to the 17th century.





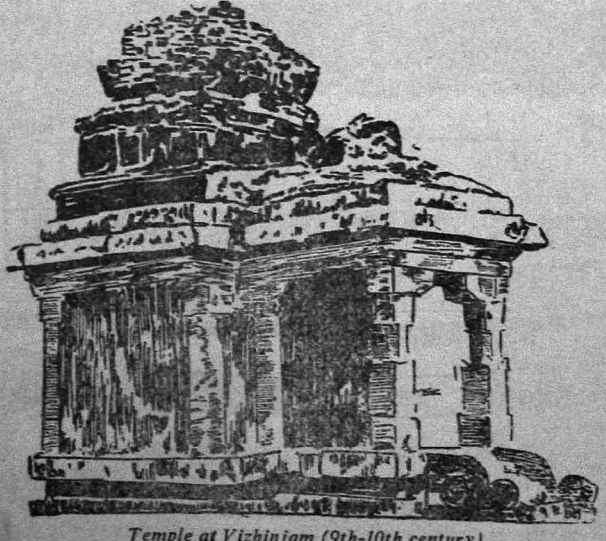
Central shrine, Valyandyadichapuram. (16th century)

dram temple, complete with the gopuram, tank and the pillared pavilion. The temple belongs to the last phase of the Dravidian style. The Navaratri Mandapam of the Suchindram temple (16th century) is an exquisite lithic translation

of the conventional wooden structure of Kerala. All the details of the original wooden model are carved on the ceiling and pillars. The ceiling is not flat, but a coffered one, "raised above the beams by a bracket construction which has the shape of a four-sided collar ceiling." Another well-known example of the Dravidian style is the Padmanabha Swami temple at Trivandrum which also belongs to the last phase of this style.

One more variety of Dravidian temples found in Kerala is the circular type. We do not find specimens of this type elsewhere in the south. The temple at Niramankara (14th century) is an elegant example of this variety. The entire temple is raised on a moulded, circular platform and within the circular enclosure wall is built a square cella, leaving an ambulatory passage all around. The shrine has a low superstructure or vimana with a domical finial. In this and other similar structures we see the fusion of the indigenous Kerala style with the Dravidian motifs and method of construction. We also see in these Srikoils the evolution of the circular Dravidian vimana, unknown to the Tamil country where the architectural style originated.

The extension of the Dravidian style to Travancore from the 10th to the 17th centuries is accounted for by the geographical contiguity and cultural affinity of this region with Tamil Nadu. But in more recent times, we find some interesting examples of the Dravidian style having been built far in the north, largely under the religious influence of South Indian Brahmins. The Vishnu temples at Pushkar and Mathura with their typical Dravidian gopurams and elaborate structure complex are instances in point. They were built late in the 19th century.



Temple at Vizhinjam (9th-10th century)