

A Study On Environmentally Safe Art And Architecture In Thanjavur District, Tamilnadu, India

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Abstract

The period between 1532 and 1799 A.D. in Thanjavur constitutes the most brilliant chapter in the history of South Indian art and architecture. The rulers of Thanjavur in this period derived their semblance and sense from the school of arts maintained by their erstwhile predecessors, the Cholas and the Vijayanagar rulers. The art and architecture admired and patronised by them are discussed at length in the following pages. The art of miniature painting had its entry in Tamil country only during this period. The period between sixteenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed an important epoch in the history of South Indian Fine arts. Musicians were colonised in a particular place and Melattirwas an important place where five hundred musicians were colonised in the Nayak period. Thanjavur was also the centre of manufacturing of more kinds musical instruments including Vina. Lavani music was introduced in this region by the Marathas. Thanjavur attained cultural sanctity by being the abode of musical trinity, namely, Thiagarajar, Muthusamy Dikshitar and Shama Sastri. Bharatanatyam attained greater importance along with other kinds of dances. The Nayak rule witnessed the establishment of Nataka sabha for the first time in Thanjavur.

Key words: Case Study, Art, Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Thanjavur.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emphasis on social history is a modern trend. A study of society in a particular period of time, in Indian context, is receiving attention among the researchers in recent times. Socio-cultural life of India with varied characteristics offers a good scope for historical research. South India, as in the case of North India, always offers no lesser variety of lives. However it occupies only a few pages in the social history of India. It has been pointed out that regional specialization is a more fitting sign of historical research. South India consists of many micro regions each with its own sociocultural identity. Thanjavur is one such potential region, which had richly contributed to South Indian history. Once, being the seat of the great Chola empire in the medieval period, it had a brilliant cultural heritage nurtured by the waters of river Cauvery. It has its own historical geography. A cultural continuum, with the changing perspective of this region, from the medieval to modern times is a fait accompli. In the above process, the dynastic drifts led to the socio-cultural changes. The dynastic periods of the Nayaks and their successors, the Marathas mark a distinct epoch in the history of Thanjavur. The society of Thanjavur in the backdrop of the above political set up demands the attention of the researchers.

2. SCOPE

The scope of the present thesis mainly involves the study of the structure of the society of Thanjavur from the point of view of hierarchy, class structure and power distribution. The social change in consequence of the political drifts becomes the part of the study, an analysis of various economic activities of the people also comes within the purview of the theme. As social and cultural aspects of human life are interrelated with each other, the study of different religions. The developments connected with education, literature and arts also need researcher's special attention. The methodology comprises an analytical and integrated approach within the frame work of historical research.

3. SOURCES

The period under study, consulting sources of varied nature such as literary and epigraphical, archival and ecclesiastical, native and foreign provides a mine of information on the theme under study. The epigraphical sources of the Nayaks and the Marathas of Thanjavur form the main stay of our information

for the construction of the research paper. The inscriptions of the Nayaks of Thanjavur ascribable to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reported in the Annual Reports of Epigraphy and the publication of a few of them in the volumes of South Indian Inscriptions are relevant sources of primary and native nature. So also the texts of the epigraphist of the Marathas of Thanjavur datable to the period between seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, published in Thanjai Marathiar Inscriptions and Thanjai Marathiar Copper Plates both edited by Pulavar S.Raju of Tamil University, Thanjavur, are more useful primary sources. Among the native sources of other kinds, Tamil Manuscripts titled Kallar jati Vilakkam and Maravar jati Vilakkam included in the list of Mackenzie manuscripts of contemporary nature bear evidence on the caste culture of Kallar community of the region. The Modi records of the Marathas of Thanjavur are also the native source with fountain of information relating to various social aspects, such as customs and manners, crimes and punishments, trade and commerce and caste structure.

The archival records such as Commissioners' Reports. Consultations. District records and the Danish and Portuguese records bearing on the evidence relating to the Thanjavur region have also been consulted. The ecclesiastical records, viz. Jesuit Letters and Memoirs of Father Schwartz and It began at Tranquebar provide a mine of information relating to the cultural aspects and their interrelation to the society of the contemporary period. The secondary works of eminent scholars provide a proper background for the study. The data derived from the above primary sources when colluded and interpreted after a careful scrutiny would furnish the social history of Thanjavur of the period in the proper perspective.

4.DETAILED STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE

The Nayaks and the Marathas contributed both for religious and secular architecture. Many of the buildings in Thanjavur are the work of the Nayaks and the Maraths. Regarding the religious architecture, besides the construction of new temples, old ones were renovated with an additional pillared halls, pavilions and suitable secondary structures. The founder of Thanjavur Nayakdom, Sevappa constructed Kamalalayam in Thiagesar temple and north Gopuram of Thiruvarur. Siva temple, which reflects the Vijayanagar style. The Gopura of Lord Arunachaleswara temple at Thiruvannamalai was constructed by Sevappa. The eleven storied structure reflects the style of Vijayanagar. He also constructed Swaminatha temple at Swamimalai. Achyutappa, the son and successor of Sevappa constructed a number of Mandapas buildings and halls of temples at Mayuram, Thiruvidadimaruthur, Kumbakonam, Thiruvanchuzi, Viruthachalam and Thiruvedi. One of the important architectural features of the period was the installation of fifty six feet height monolithic pillar known as Garuda Sthambam, in front of Rajagopalsamy temple, Mannargudi. Besides this the east, north and western gopuras of this temple were constructed by Achyutappa.

Apart from it the eight prakaras, big mandapas were also erected by him. He also built a gopura of Rameswaram, to which shrine he used to visit annually. He repaired the Siva temple at Thiruvidadimaruthur and donated a village to the temple for its maintenance. Govinda Dikshita, the political guru of Sevappa and Achyutappa Nayaks also contributed to architecture. Periya Mandapa and Ananda Kalyana Mandapa at Kumbakonam and Turai Katlurar mandapa in Vilanagar temple in 1608 were his contributions. The gopuras of Thirupalathurai and the store house for paddy were the works of Govinda Dikshita. The temples at Kumbakonam Vijayaraghavapuram and Srirangam were perfected

during his time. In 1631 he built Acharavalal to the temple of Sarangapani at Kumbakonam.



Figure 1. Inspiring architecture of Tanjore Palace

The contribution of Raganatha Nayak to art and architecture is plenty. Thanjavuri Andhra Rajulu Charitram informs that he constructed the Ramasamy temple at Kumbakonam. The temple of Srirangam was completed during his reign. Mainly the arch roofed mandapas, multi-storied buildings, tallest gopurams, long corridors, artistic mandapas were the characteristic features of his period. He constructed 16 small temples with Dhana mandapas around the Mahamaham tank at Kumbakonam, Besides these, he made contributions to the Bakthavachala Perumal temple at Thirukkannamangai, Ayyarappar temple, Thiruvédi, Uppiliyappan temple, Nathan Kovil, Naichiar temple, Siva temple at Nallicherry, Ramanatha temple at Rameswaram and Vishnu temple at Srirangam. The images of chief deities installed in sanctum sanctorum of the above mentioned temples were his contributions. These images were tall sculptures with the artistic excellence. The Perumal temple at Nedunkunram, his native place, also received due share in the hands of Raganatha Nayak. In this temple second prakara, gopuras and mandapas were his contributions.

Vijayaraghava, the last of the Nayaks erected the structural work of arid/ia and inukha mandapas of Margasahayeswaran temple at Muvalur in Mayuram Taluk. The temple constructions of the eighteenth century have a Maratha style. Ekoji, the founder, of the Maratha rule constructed the Punnainallur Mariamman temple, near Thanjavur town. The same temple had been further enlarged by the construction of corridor and vimana by Tulaja. Sahaji made the arch type gateway before the Keralanthakan gopura, known as, Maralha Vayil in the Brahadeswara temple. At both sides of the entrance of the Maratha Vayil have small arch shaped construction, housing Vinayagar and Muruga images respectively. The front way steps, leading access to the mahamandapa in the Brahadeswara temple were the construction of the Maratha period.



Figure 2. Maratha palace (Aranmanai) at Tanjore

The important Vaishnavite temple Kaliyuga Venkatesa Perumal Kovil, located in the South main street, Thanjavur was the contribution of Sarabhoji 1 (1712-1728). Subsequently additions were made in this temple by the later rulers. The image of Sarabhoji I is found in one of the pillars of the temple. Raja Pratap Singh (1739-1763 A.D.) constructed a temple known as the Kothanda Ramasamy temple at West main street, Thanjavur. This temple is also called Vijayaramar temple. He also constructed a temple known as Veera Hanumar temple at the north end of West main street, Thanjavur. A modi record informs that in 1777 A.D., during the reign of Tulaja (1763-1787) the temples of Neelamegaperumal, Manikanda Perumal and Melasinga Perumal were constructed on the banks river Vennar. He also built the gopuras of Ramasamy temple, Thanjavur. The same ruler, along with the construction of Ellaiamman temple at Thanjavur, constructed Navanitha Ramasamy temple in 1769. The Modi source also reveals that in 1778 at Meemisal, he built a temple known as Kalyana Ramasamy temple. The gopura of the Ellaimman koil was constructed by Sarabhoji II (1798-1832).

5.DETAILED STUDY OF SECULAR ARCHITECTURE

In connection with the development of secular architecture, Sevappa Nayak built a fort for the palace at Thanjavur. Before the construction of big fort, which is seen to-day, he built a small temple and the Sivaganga tank and the entire complex was covered with moat. But in later days, Sevappa and his son Achyutappa united both the Sivaganga fort and the present big palace, which had additions in subsequent centuries. Near the fort Sevappa also constructed a small lake known as Sevappaneri, which supplied water to the capital. A big and tall tower at Thanjavur palace was erected by Vijayaragha Nayak, the last of the Nayaks. It has been constructed so as to have a view and darsan of the gopuras of Srirangam from the top of the tower. The present big fort with palace was completed by Vijayaraghava Nayak. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the palace got renovated by the Marathas.

The Maratha Kings built the Darbar Mahal. The front portion of it is covered with artistic wooden pillars and the roof is covered with dome shape. In all their multi storied buildings, the lower Hoor was covered with stone granites and each of the upper floor covered with wooden blocks which were rest on the rifts. On the wooden blocks burnt bricks were covered. All the walls were built with bricks and lime mortar. Most of the Maratha Chatrams (Almshouse) reflect the blending of Nayak and Mughal style of architecture along with their own. The pillars of them were built of bricks and lime mortar and a few are stone. The inside roofs of most of their buildings had conical shape finishing. The domical roof of the Rajachatram at Malliam, near Mayavaram is of conical shape, indicative of the Nayak influence. The dome structure of the Rajammalpuram Chattram, near Darasuram reminds one of the Pallava style. The top of roof with Sala shape and artistic Kalasas also remind one of the Pallava style. The granite pillars of the Chattram are noticed. The front portion of the Yamunambal Chatram, near Needamangalam built in 1761 resemble Ratha structure with two wheels along with pulling horses reflect the style of Vijayanagar. The front style of the Mukthambal Chatram at Orathanad is also found with above features. Some of the buildings of the Marathas reflect their unique style. The Chatrams at Rajamadam, near Pattukkottai, Needamangalam and Vennar have their front portion with wooden pillars erected which support the entire roof covered with tiles. With the above style the Chatram at Rameswaram was constructed in 1784 by Tulaja. Apart from it the palace at Thiruvudaimaruthur and the forts at Saluvanayakkan Pattinam and Pattukottai were also Maratha constructions at the end of the eighteenth century.

6.DETAILED STUDY OF SCULPTURE

The sculptural art of the region during the period under study offers an interesting inquiry. Its development marks the characteristic features of the period. The portrait sculptures and the images of

royal personalities received their due share in this period.

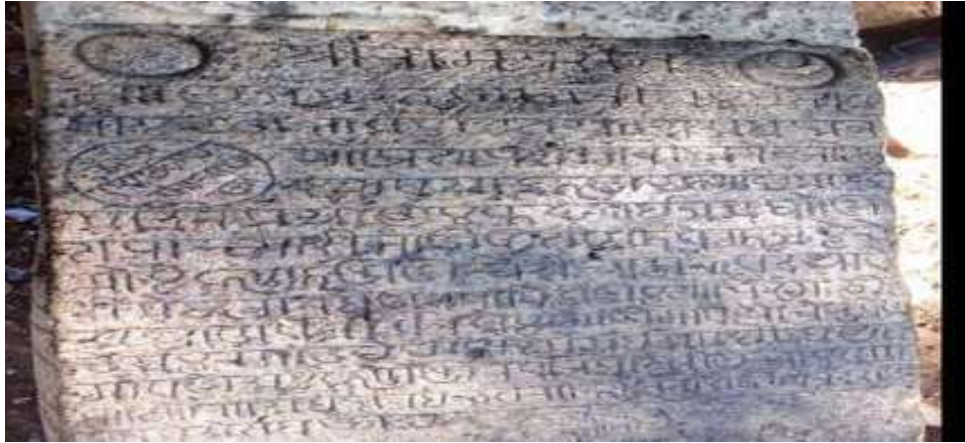


Figure 3 . Stone inscription of Maratha ruler found in

The beautiful sculpture of Sevappa on a Pillar of Swaminatha temple at Swamimalai with a cap on the head and the ornamental waist dress is very artistic in nature among the sculptures of the Nayaks. The sculpture of Achjoitappa at Thiakesar temple, Thanjavur with hair dressed and coiled on one side, the ear rings, garland of Pearl, ornamental waist dress with long sworded reflect of the excellent skill of the artist. The sculptures of Achyutappa, Moorthiambal, Rajagopalasamy and Hanuman exhibited on a big pillar at Vaithiswaran koil exhibit their skill in sculptural art. Ragunatha Nayak contributed much for the development of sculptural art in all the temples and mandapas constructed by him, and installed his statues.

On the pillar of Ramasamy temple, Kumbakonam, his beautiful sculpture exhibit the face round with strong chins. The statue of Ragunatha Nayak in the pose of performing tuladanam, Hiranya parvadham, kodhanam and in the pose of worshipping Rajagopalasamy along with his two wives exhibited on the pillars of the temple were the best examples to express their artistic skill. In Vedaranyeswarar temple at Thiruvallangadu in Thanjavur district, two panel sculptures are found, one exhibiting the sculptures of Ayyanar with his consorts and another the figures of Subramanya with his consort. These panels, reflect the excellence in sculptural art of the period of Ragunatha Nayak. The contribution of Govinda Dikshita, was remarkable. The Veerabhadra idols found in the sanctum sanctorum of the temples in Kumbakonam and Thanjavur reflect the influence of Carnatic style of round face and fleshy forms of the body. This type of style was already introduced by Ragunatha Nayak.

Govinda Dikshita was also responsible for making the panels of sixty three Nayanmars found in a temple at Thirupalathurai. In addition to this, there were a number of fine portraits and decorative sculptures on every part of the temple. The images of reed women, divine figures, flowers, ornaments, chiselled minutely on the unplastered brick walls in the temple of Pulivalam, Ammaiappan and Mathur exemplify the sculptural art of the period. In some of the Nayak temples, the plasters of the basement carry scroll work, while the recesses are adorned by dancing figures representing Bharatanatyam poses with drummers and other musicians. There were sculptured lines on yalis, lions and elephants. The Maratha's perfection in sculptural art is not superior in relation to medieval traditions and to that of the Nayaks. However their sculptural art assumed importance from the thematic points of view.

The sculptural scene of Rama Kathai (Rama story) at Kaliyuka Venkatesa Perumal Koil, Thanjavur, the panel of Ramayana scenes which chiselled at Nageswara temple, Kumbakonam, sculptures engraved on the walls of Ramasamy temple, Mannargudi arc of religious importance. The Maratha rulers upto Pratap Singh were concerned more on sculptures. The temple complex of Rajagopalasamy, Thanjavur possess the idols of Hanuman, Vinayagar, Dhandapani, Vittoba and two queens which were the Maratha contribution. Apart from that a panel of sculptures at Navagraha, Naga Devatha Deviar, Pandurangan, the Angels of Marathas, who were on the horse back the five faces of Sivalingam prove their sculptural talent.

The Maratha sculptures of Ranu Bai and Chattu Bai, who were the goddesses of the Marathas are found at the Kali temple in the complex of Rajagopalasamy temple are worth noticing. Ranu Bai was considered Amangala angel where as Chattu Bai was considered Sumangali angel worshipped by the Maratha people in Thanjavur like the semblance of worship of goddess Paechiyayi and Katteri by the local people of Thanjavur. The Marathas introduced another important sculpture of their own style known as Sivendirar. This sculpture contains the figures of eight angels in round panel along with the symbol of burning crown

with a Chakkara and Trisul. They also made the sculpture of Chackrapani with sixteen hands at Mannargudi and at Kumbakonam. The Marathas also chiselled on the unplastered brick walls. The sculptural scenes of ten avatars of Lord Thirumal, the wedding scenes of Siva, Tirumal, Murugan and the figures of dancing girls in the Darbar hall of Thanjavur palace express their skill in sculptural art. The Vaishnavite sculptures are found in the mandapas at Thiruvedi, Orathanadu, Rajamadam, Needamangalam, the places in Amman Mandapas, Upparikai of Saluvanayakan Pattinam, tula mandapa at Mayuram, Thanjapuriswarar temple and Prasanna Vcnkatesa Perumal Kovil. These sculptures excel in artistic skills.

The introduction of wooden sculptural art as reflected in the temple cars and palanquins of the Saptasthana temples of the region exhibit the excellence in chisel carving of minute nature of the period. In the icons, the Marathas were not so skilled as the Cholas and the Nayaks. But their contribution was remarkable. Tuldoji's efforts for the icon of Suvedavarakar and Mahadeva Samy are the fitting examples. The Icon of Sarabhoji I in Chackrapani temple at Kumbakonam reflect their artistic skill. The icons of Sarabhoji I and his Queen in the brass metals found at Art Gallery, Thanjavur indicate their excellence. The icon Ammuni Amman in Copper metal with the height of 120 cm is of worth noticing. The art of sculpture of the Nayaks continued to flourish even after the end of their rule.

7.DETAILED STUDY OF PAINTING

The Prime importance of painting art was a fait accompli in the history of Thanjavur during the period between sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The art of painting had been flourishing with the patronage of artistic tradition of the Thanjavur region. The artists from Thanjavur were skilled and their paintings achieved a fine harmony of blending of not only colours, but also traditions. The Painting art in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Thanjavur under the patronage of Nayaks reflected the continuation of the traditions of Vijayanagar. Generally the Nayak paintings were mural paintings in nature' which are seen in the temples of Malaipatti, Thirupalathurai, Thiruvanchuzi and Pattiswaram. Red colour was the main colour used in the painting of this period as seen in Thiruvanchuzi and Pattiswaram. The images of the paintings were depicted in the side views and their eyes were large and their faces were long, round with slim body. Dresses were colourful with artistic excellence.



Figure 4. Nayak paintings

Ragunathabhudayamu reveal the painting scenes depicted in some halls of the Thanjavur palace complex. The theme of crowning ceremony of Lord Rama depicted on the walls of a hall, known as Rama Sautham, is an important one. This painting is assigned to the period of Ragunatha Nayak as he himself found in the painting panel as witnessing the crowning ceremony. But unfortunately this scene could not be seen to-day. Another scene in the hall of Vijayabhavanam depicts the war scenes. Yet another scene painted was the portrait of Ragunatha, who granted sovereign right to the King of Ealam. The wall paintings at Thiruvizimizalai, the scenes of flute playing Kannan and the portrait of Lord Vcnugopala are really

excellent. The walls in the circumbulatory passage of Brahadiswara temple were painted by the order of Ragunatha Nayak.

The painting on the walls of the cave temple at Malaatiapatti is remarkable and datable to the Achyutappa. The figures of Hanuman, Garudas and the Dasavathara scenes reflect their artistic skill. Recently discovered Nayak paintings in the upper layer in the Thanjavur Big temple give the clear picture about the life of the people/the elaboration of costume, ornaments etc. The painting art continued to flourish in the eighteenth century. It reflected the harmonious blending of the existing southern and northern traditions introduced by the Marathas.

The migrations following the establishment of the political rule of the Marathas brought in a community of Moochy painters. It led to the introduction of Miniature painting art of Deccan. The introduction of new mediums for the art such as cloth, wood, glass, mica and ivory is another redeeming feature of the art of the period. Also the art of the period marked the introduction of secular themes too. It has been pointed out the above changing tradition represented the originality of the art and its compelling syncretic symbolic form. Altogether it was called 'Tanjore School of Art'. A large number of miniature portraits of the royal family found in National Art Gallery, Madras, are classified as Tanjore portraits. It consists of two types of which the first one, equestrian showing the ruler on horseback or riding chariots or on elephant. The second one depict the royal personalities standing or seated alone. The faces were depicted with large eyes and heavily lined features. Probably almost all the pictures were intended for Hindu Public. The paintings drawn on cloth stretched wooden panels with glass and gems and gold leaf decorations is a special feature of the period. The main figure of this type of paintings is shown bigger in size than the others. The best specimen is Navanitha Krishna painting in which the infant Krishna's portrait is larger than Yasodha. Glass and ivory medium assumed importance at the end of the eighteenth century. The best example is a deified royal figure clothed in velvet with drapery behind carrying the attributes of a god with four hands. Yet another example is the portrait of a musician which shows the fondness of the Tanjore artist. From 1790, this type of paintings were drawn. The miniature consisted of portraits of queens, kings and noblemen. The ivory painting which depicts Krishna was a remarkable one.

8.DETAILED STUDY OF FINE ARTS

8.1.MUSIC

Thanjavur, being the centre of many arts, fostered the art of music specifically during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Owing to this royal patronage music all its branches flourished and Thanjavur became an important centre of musical learning and it was called, 'the cradle of South Indian Music' Thanjavur became the paradise of music during the period of the Nayaks who patronised composers of music. Along with literature the twin arts Sangita and Sahitya flourished in a high degree of perfection. Sevappa and Achyutappa Nayaks patronised music and dance and granted the village of Melattur to five hundred Brahmin families for the purpose of fostering the art of music. This village in course of time became the centre of Bhagavata mela natya. Ragunatha Nayak being himself a player of Vina wrote a number of Telugu works on music. The Sangita Sudha was the fittest example to prove that he was an expert in lakshna and lakshya of music. He was the inventor of new ragas, called Jayantasena and the new talas, Ramananda. He himself composed a number of songs, particularly in Telugu. In fact he himself made a vina known as 'Tanjore vina', which contained a melam known as Ragunatha melam, and this type of vina was the forerunner of modern vina. They played on instruments like Vina kinnara, Mukka vina, flute, Tampura, Swaramandala, Ravana hasta, udukka, Dande, Changu. It showed their ability for handling them. Some members of the troupe were high class experts in folk music. Dwaipadas were sung and yakshagana music was concerted.

Seetha, in her work. 'Tanjore as a seat of Music' opines that during the reign of Vijayaraghava, the prabandha composition of Telugu had originated. Thanjavur had been a meeting place of other musical cultures and hence the Thanjavur musicians had the chance to contact with other systems of music. The classical music of south India was perfected in this unique region. In eighteenth century, the interest of Sahaji, Tulaja and Sarabhoji I in music was conducive for its development. A new style of Prabandha composition, which had musical and dramatic significance was inaugurated by Sahaji. Number of musical works are attributed to him. He brought literary Prabandhas and the Yakshagana tradition. Tulaja introduced Hindustanic music in Thanjavur. His musical work Sangitha Saramritam reveals his highly cultivated musical taste. Thanjavur became the favourite resort of musicians from various parts of India during the reign of Sarabhoji II. His court became a home for musicians and composers. He had a vast

knowledge in music and had a taste for the western music too. His European contacts made him to organise the 'Tanjore band' and collected Western musical instruments like Violin, Clarinet, Piano, Dublimcr and Tampura to play western tunes on the Tanjore Band In his reign Thanjavur became the musical treasure of Tamihiaadu.

The introduction of north Indian instrument called Mayura, under the name of Balasaraswathi in Thanjavur is of greater significance. Bhutgoswamy was the only musician who played on it to perfection Yet another significant development was the impact of Maharastra Kirtana and the devotional songs sung by the saints on south Indian Bhajana resulted in the evolution of a synthetic form of worship of which the Maharastrian devotional music embedded. The foremost effects of Maratha rule in Thanjavur was the introduction of Lavani song. It was the Maratha folksong and due to its impact a number of Tamil songs were composed in Lavani tunes. They are in the form of puzzles and answers whether Manmatha (Cupid) was consumed by fire or not is one of the spicy theme in lavani songs. In fact it was performed as an entertainment for the rulers. patronage.

Only the male participation is worlli noticing. It had royal Harikatha Kalakshapam was yet another development of the impact of iVlaratha influence. Prior to the advent of Marathas, Buvas or Kirtankaras were popular in Tamil country, by which the expositions of religious teachings through the medium of stories by the Bhagavatars sitting on the pials of houses and addressing in open air gathering. But the Marathas introduced the rehgiouis discourses with musical accompaniments for the first time in Thanjavur.

Thanjavur's prime importance as a sacred centre of music was also due to the contributions of the famous music trinity of the eighteenth century. Trinity Thiagarajar (1767-1847) Muthusamy Dikshitar (1776-1835) and Syama Sastri (1762-1827) all hailing from Thiruvarur, have done a valuable service for the cause of Camatic music." They exhibited distinctive styles in their kirtis, the kirtis of pancharatna, Navavaranas, Navaratna Malika. In fact the eighteenth century was the golden age of Carnatic Music. In Thanjavur the western instruments like the violin, clarinet, harmonium were adopted to the needs of Kuravanji music. Especially violin, its solo and duals became very popular in Thanjavur. Modi record informs that Thanjavur was an important centre of learning in music which attracts pupils from outside. The government accommodated them with free boarding and lodging. Thus Thanjavur became virtually the seat of music.

9.DETAILED STUDY OF DANCE AND DRAMAS

Dance by its visual character was naturally an art of attraction of all ages. It is believed that Bharatanatyam, one of the attractive forms of dance, had its origin in Thanjavur. It had its phenomenal development in the sixteenth to eighteenth eenturies. In the Chola period, the art of dance reached its perfection which is revealed through their sculptures and paintings. Among the various types of dances, Aryakuttu was an important one. At Brahadiswara temple during the annual festival of Thiruvaduthurai, they performed the dance of Aryakuttu. In another place at Viranarayapuram on every Chithirai (Tamil month) they performed. In course of time it became the 'Tanjore Natya'. Like the imperial Cholas, the Vijayanagar rulers patronised the drama. The famous ruler Krishnadevaraya employed sixty dancing girls to the temple of Thiruvannamalai. With their assistance the Pallakki Seva was performed. Like their medieval predecessors the Nayaks in Thanjavur patronised the art of Dance. Ragunalha Nayak patronised the dance of its various types. Most of the dancers were specialised in them. Ragunathahiidhayanui mentions tlic names of the specialists viz. Rupavati in Champada dance Cliampakavalli in Sambdachintamani, Murti in Jakkini, Koma Valli in Koravai, Loka Nayaki in Navapada, Sasirekli in Desi, Rathagiri in Dwaipada and Bhagirathi in Perani. Thus during his reign dance of various forms attained perfection.



Figure 5. Dancing God Shiva carving on the wall of Brihadiswara temple

Ragunatha Nayak honoured the efficient dancers with the title of Manikkam. Manikkam. The dance in Nedunkunram Ramachandra temple got the title He was mainly responsible for making and developing the Yakshakana Nataka. He wrote two important works on Telugu yakshakana dramas. Rukmini Krishna Vivaha Yakshaganam and Janaki Parinayam Ragunatha Nayak was also the first dramatist, who introduced women roles and made only women to play the women roles. Thus he broke the old tradition of Bharatanatyasastra that men only should play women roles and not women. In fact Ragunatha constructed two or three theatres at different places and he was the first to construct a Natakasala in Thanjavur. Vijayaraghava Nayak further developed these dramas and he made arrangement for enacting this in numerous places. He also constructed an open air theatre at Thanjavur. In his reign some women dancers dedicatedly brought out all the intricacies of Gamaka Stayi Raga, and prabandha in Marga style. Such was the exquisite beauty of the dances and perfect mastery of art.

Muthu Chanthira Reka was a star dancer in his court, who earlier occupied an important position in the heart of Achyuta Devaraya. The musician dance dramas called yakshakana started in seventeenth century around Thanjavur was popularly known as Bhagavalamela in the eighteenth century. The themes of the Bhagavatamela included Prakalatha Natakam, Harichandra Nataka, Markandeya Natakam, Usha Parinayam, Rukmani Parinayam, Sivarathri Nataka and Seetha Kalyanam reveal their object of devotion to God. The Bhagavatamela was expounded with music of high class camatic tradition, dance and abinaya in classical Bharata Natya technique, poetic speeches and dialogues and dramatic action.

The Maratha rulers were the great patrons of this art who themselves were the authors of many such dramas. During his reign Ekoji, with his wife Sujanabai, conducted the Bhagavatarnela at Deepambalpuram, near Saliangalam. A modi record hiforms that Sujanabai donated lands to Girija Kavi, who enacted the Bhagavata mela. The famous Venkatrama Sastri and Panchanatha Bhagavathar enacted these dramas at Melattur Saliangalam and Sulamangalam. Mohini Mahesa Parinayam was one of the Bhagavatamelas performed at Brahadiswara temple, Thanjavur during the time of Serafoji I.

Regarding Melattur Bhagavathamela, it came into prominence from the time of Tirtanarayana yogi, who migrated from the Andlira Desa to Varagur in Thanjavur district, where he composed a number of dance dramas in Telugu. He applied classical music to the Bharatanaty dance. After him his son Gopala Sastri composed a number of dance dramas. His son Venkatrama Sastri wrote twelve dance dramas.

The eighteenth century also witnessed the emergence of other types of dramas in Thanjavur region, Kuravanji, Pallu and Nondi were the three popular dramas performed throughout the region. These were the attractive arts to the commoners. Kuravanji was a very popular drama with the theme of love. It exhibits the sorrow of the heroine, who expects the arrival of the hero. After seeing the heroine's palm she expresses good hope to heroine, which causes great joy to the heroine and presents to the Kurathi a valuable present. The social, philosophical and religious throughs are mixed with the dramatic element. Kuravanji form appeared even in Islamic and Christian literatures. Gnana Kuravanji by Peer Mohammad and Bethlehem Kuravanji by Vedanayakja Sastri were the best examples. Pallu was a dance drama enacted by the people. It portrays the life of the agricultural labourers. Nondi Natakam, which was enacted by a single man who posed himself lame. It attracted huge crowds with full of humour. Both the above mentioned dramas were enacted. Sarabhoji I encourage this type of dramas. Both these dramas were enacted at Thiruvarur.

10.CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in the preceding pages to trace the social history of Thanjavur (1532-1799 A.D.) from the historical and sociological points of view. In the process, an integrated approach has provided a very clear picture of the society of Thanjavur in the pre-British period. The environmentally safe infrastructures, traditional arts and architecture are clearly revealed by the study. The religious architecture developed to a certain extent. The Nayaks exhibited the style of their predecessors, Vijayanagar rulers in their religious structures. The secular architecture as represented by the Thanjavur palace complex reflects the Nayak and Maratha efforts. The secular structure of chatrams, palaces and royal residential quarters reflect the alien influences of the Marathas. The portrait images of Nayaks and the Sivendrar style of the Maratha figures represent the trends in the development of sculptural art during the period under study. The painting scenes of Rama Sautham, of the palace a local complex of the Nayaks and the paintings of the Marathas in the temples and palace buildings represent the harmonious blending of southern and northern traditions. The art of miniature painting had its entry in Tamil country only during this period. The period between sixteenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed an important epoch in the history of South Indian Fine arts. Musicians were colonised in a particular place and Melattirwas an important place where five hundred musicians were colonised in the Nayak period. Thanjavur was also the centre of manufacturing of more kinds musical instruments including Vina. Lavani music was introduced in this region by the Marathas. Thanjavur attained cultural sanctity by being the abode of musical trinity, namely, Thiagarajar, Muthusamy Dikshitar and Shama Sastri. Bharatanaty attained greater importance along with other kinds of dances. The Nayak rule witnessed the establishment of Nataka sabha for the first time in Thanjavur. The musical dance dramas Yakshakanas or Bhagavathamelas were very familiar along with Kuravanji, Pallu and Nonti natakam during the eighteenth century. These dramas reflect the socio, religious and philosophical thoughts of the people.

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