

CHAPTER VI

SURVEY OF EXTANT SCULPTURE IN THE EARLY CHŌLA PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

The Pallavas had initiated and enriched the tradition of sculpture in stone in the Drāviḍadēśa. Drawing from the earlier vital sources from Amarāvati, Nagārjunakoṇḍa, Badāmi and Aihōle, it saw the different stages of its development. An ossification by the eighth century A.D. was not unnatural. Heavier and stubbornly repetitive, it became baroque both in quality and quantity. With the spiralling of Vijayālaya Chōla we encounter a history of mixed intrigues and rising clusters. Of feudatories and alliances, faux pas and incursion, counter exchange and clan, a 'pot pourri' emerged, which contributed to the formation of one of the more talked of styles in Tamiḻ Nāḍu. From satellite and inter ambient factors emerged facets which contributed towards the Early Chōla style.

A close study calls for a modification of the just three phases of the Early Chōla art. The first or introductory aspect taken is the Vijayala or pre-Āditya I phase. From thence we conform to the usual Āditya I, the second and the Sēmbiyaṇ phases.

VI.1 VIJAYĀLAYA OR PRE-ĀDITYA I PHASE (850 A.D.)

The consecration of Nisūmbasūdani (fig.107) by Vijayālaya for the conquest of Tañjāvūr and Vallam of Kō Illaṅgo

Muttaraiyar, suddenly turned the spot light on to a phase that had much to do with the making of Chōla sculpture.

The fundamentals of South Indian architecture were already advanced to near perfection, while the sculpture showed great promise. The Muttaraiyar vessels though, were a class apart when it came to art. They shared in the same southern heritage as the Chōla, Pallava, Pāṇḍya etc. Perhaps this also caused an initial block in the unique individualities of style which were more than often based on degrees of stress and strain, preferences and predilections, ethnicity and nuances. It would be apt here to recall M.A. Dhaky who says "simplified features, summarised ornaments, and a startling glow of life wrapped in the veil of 'mist and foam' - as Zimmer sees it - are the essential characteristics of the Pallava sculpture, which more or less, were echoed in and shared by the art of similar description that blossomed about three generations later in the land of the Pāṇḍyas, Koṅgu of Atiyamans and Kerala of the Cēras, in an idiom of course, in each single case distinguishable because of differing ethnic character (and hence physiognomic features) and no less by the differing mannerisms associated with the sculptures a

time for revolt came, and so much against the frontality complex which characterises much of Pallava rock cut sculptures, but rather against the rock bound character with which all the early and mid Toṇḍaināḍu sculpture is unmistakably tied Pāṇḍināḍu reflected in some acroterian images ornamenting the superior tala floors of the vimāna superstructure of Veṭuvāṅkōvil at Kalugumalai (fig.108,109)..... the southern sculpture for the first time seems to liberate itself from the rock and emerges as a three dimensional reality, more earth bound and less mystical....."(1) At the same time it is not altogether true that the Pallava technique totally died out, for nothing could be more damning to lessons in art. The nature of revolt first of all is against a forceful and persistent feature. Thus a revolt first of all acknowledges the existence of something which needs to be changed. It is never all at once or all of a thing. The Later Pallava baroqueness was also born of a state of unrest, but with an exhausted energy it couldn't rise again like the phoenix. It repeated itself in Bāna, Nōlāmba and even in some Chōḷa temples. However, what J.C. Harle calls as the 'schematic emphasis' of the Pallava can be seen lying acrotic in the Chōḷa temples.

One must use terminologies with great caution because they lead to immediate assumptions. Based on the habitual assumption of Pallava domination, terms like Pallava-Chōḷa transition, parent child and an intermediate style emerged. Such terms reduce the stature of creativity and vitiate the making of style. It is also unfair to link art, for example with a political transition alone.

Since we are historically aware of Vijayālaya's rise in the Muttaraiyar land, our source for style should also peruse the Muttaraiyar temples. When we say the Vijayālaya phase, we also mean the Muttaraiyar or pre-Āditya I phase and more technically the post Muttaraiyar-Chōḷanāḍu style. We are likely to be thrust into 'deep waters', because both similitude and distinction are so much in conflict that a total assessment precludes us. And so we tread carefully into the tracts of a vassals comrades, and enemies from whom the Chōḷa took surreptitiously - by fair or foul means.

The Vijayālaya style, thus takes us straight into vanquished lands of the Muttaraiyar masters of the Kāvēri, with their capitals at Nēmam and Sēndalai. We owe much to K.V. Soundara Rajan who fought for their independent

idiom. When we do take the examples of Nārttamalai, Naṅgavaram, Nēmam, Tillaisthānam, Sēndalai etc., we are gradually drawn into an idiom which is a reticent expression of a proemial change. With the debut made, it stopped frozen in a moment of suspension, unable to retrace itself to a more comfortable position. Perhaps its overreaching froze somewhere between the form and its spectre.

The mid half of the ninth century A.D. saw the fully evolved, scheme of Muttaraiyar temples. "Measurably intense" manifestations as M.A. Dhaky phrases it, the period of its art and architecture was short and beautiful. "This idiom resolves in a wide spectrum of figural expression from 'pseudo morphs' of Pallava art to forms of quasi realistic"(2).

The sculptures from Nēmam (fig.110) and Palliyallicuram at Nārttamalai (fig.111) are still steeped in Pallava ideals, though in manner and intent they are different.

The Vijayālaya Chōliśvaram at Nārttamalai has thus two types of sculpture. The loose ones and the decorative sculptures found in the upper talas in its hāra, kūta and śāla (fig.112). While the almost loose round

sculptures are reflections of the semi realistic Pallava style, the others project a different sensibility.

The Vijayālaya examples of the Nisumbasūdani, Daksīnāmūrti and Saptamātr (figs.107,113,114,115), share vestiges of this Pallava style of simplified features and frontal characterisation. However, the variation is seen in the ethnic and physiognomic aspects. Somewhere hovering between the mist and foam of Zimmer, they are tentative and constrained. There is an element of the spectral with the pathos. Well rounded forms, smooth curved shoulders, very slight incurving waist gently flaring out into hips stand out, but all the same retaining their tubular aspect. This tubular aspect is also seen in the other parts of the limbs. The rounded breasts enhance the mother aspect, while the soulful expression borders on the deadpan. The variation of these features are also seen in the Sēndalai sculptures (figs.116,117); but with a homliness of their own. The Vijayālaya Chōlīśvara examples and to some extent the Sēndalai sculptures are seen to have the 'Saumya' expression accomplished by the soulful slightly vacant eyes, a flared nose and a full sensuous mouth. The source of such physiognomy derives partly from the Pallava, 'its own ethnic stock' and between these an idealised

female form. The jewellery studded with precious stones is close to belts, while some are worn off as faded flowers. The overcurved shoulders and rectilinear form are its most prominent features. The head is generally stiff. M.A. Dhaky says of these figures that they "belong more to the world of spirits rather than of men or gods". They levitate despite their full fecund forms. This very same feeling is felt in the figure of the Dakṣīnamūrti. Similar ones which bring back the same feeling of 'deja vu' are seen at Vīralūr Bhūmīśvara, Tillaisthānam Śiva temple (figs.39, 42). The Vijayālaya Chōḷīśvara dvārapāla (fig.118) despite their conscious effort at portraying the awesome aspect, maintain these same other-worldly aloofness. The hands holding the massive club, the vismaya mudra, the ornaments, jatāmakuta and prominent yagnōpavita are typical features which partly derive from their Pallava prototypes. The Tiruci rāppallī Uraiyūr, Tirtantonīśvara dvārapāla are similar. These wide spectrum of figural expressions are seen at different levels in the Airāvātēśvara at Nēmam and the Gr̥tasthānēśvara at Tillaisthānam (figs.70,42). The vocabulary remains the same in these temples. Another observation of interest is the greater emphasis given to male idealisation. The arched, well cut eyebrows, a potentially

virile body, proud and aloof in bearing, besets most sculptures (fig.119).

While the hieratic sculptures of the Vimānadēvata in the grīvakōshta, follow these very typical tendencies, the decorative sculptures seen in the different tala, kūṭa and sālā of the Vijayālaya Chōḷiśvara, the Airāvātēśvara and Gṛtasthānēśvara show a different sensibility.

The Visalūr Mārgavaneśvara, Kāliyapatti Śiva and Vīralūr Bhūmisvara despite their paucity of sculpture show the sculpturesqueness in the vyālāvāri and vṛśā figures that are also seen in Pāṇḍyan temples in the Tālinatha at Tirupattūr and the Vāliśvara at Tiruvāliśvaram later (fig.120). Naturalistic, they are carefully styled. The sculptures of the vimana devata of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Bhikṣātana and Viṣṇu, however, show apart from the seed of Muttaraiyar style very clear Pāṇḍyan types seen at the Pāṇḍyan Vettuvān Koil at Kalugumalai (fig.109). The Nārttamalai grīva kōshta figures although show the Muttaraiya vocabulary which we have discussed, the figures of males and females, rsi and amra perhaps recall some Jain figures, very slightly and could have a Pandyan source.

The Ghr̥tasthānēśvara and Airāvateśvara show similar figures. The broad, but round curves, a medium frame and austere features reflect the same school of sculptors at work. Clarity of form, the physiognomic build up, the posture or stance and the manner become factors for identity. A very slight change is seen in the clear cut eyes set wide on the face, the nose coming down from between the brows, a sensual mouth and fairly congenial face marking a slight movement away from the 'other wordly detachment' (fig.119).

The watermark of the Muttaraiyar expression was fulfilled. The Chōla of the Vijayālaya phase were by now haunted by the Muttaraiya dream.

VI.2

THE ĀDITYA OR FIRST PHASE (870 - 940 A.D.)

"The Chōla sculpture, even at its detectable beginnings is never phantomic (phantom like)". This is the difference or contrast we observe immediately on surveying them. The feeling infused and the feeling provoked gives them a very powerful and unique presence. The common iconographic programme, in the griva koshta of the southern Dakṣiṇāmūrti, northern Brahma, western Viṣṇu and eastern Skanda (?) are seen in some of the temples as at Tīlāisthānam, Nēmam and Nārttamalai.

The Tillaisthānam temple specially reflects in its ascetics and apsara of the upper tala those features which the Chōḷa would take up and recreate. The typical posture, the slight physique with rectilinear emphasis was in a crucial transformational poise. The vṛsa in the prati also show this haunting combination of the human and divine. The Naṅgavaram Sundarēśvara (fig.71) which is of mixed Irrukuvēḷ and Muttaraiyar idiom still shows the predilection for such form.

The Tirukaṭṭalai Sundarēśvara shows, similar seated ascetic and apsara figures in the Karnakōshṭa. They are however turned sideways (fig.74). The devakoshta figures also resemble the Muttaraiyar figures in this respect. The Muttaraiya, Irrukuvēḷ, Chōḷa affiliation which was political and cordial combined here in a conducive blend.

An example that again shows a curious mix of idioms would be close to 'withdrawal symptoms'. These symptoms are best seen in Tirivēdikuḍi Vēdapurīśvara. The Durga (fig.121) is of course more static and lacks the refined elegance of its Muttaraiyar counterparts. Just for a small difference in the waist which flares conically and the kucabanda which are found in the Nārttamalai

Mātrika (fig.114,115), this is perhaps the last of the Pallava technique seen in the undetailed ornaments, the tense rigid body, the broadened, narrowing and flaring of torso. The ethnic feature however is different, the facial expression and rounded limbs are again a peculiar mix. The Ardhanārī (fig.122) tells a different tale altogether. The first startling difference is the attitude—one of sudden langour. The overtones have completely changed externally. The body is supple, fecund and rounded on the right side while potentially virile on the other. The deeply curved waist, heavy thrusting hips and a palpable breast evoke the urge for tactile contact. The head tilted in repose shows an oval face with a dreamy expression. There is an abstraction suggested by the facial muscles and fair degree of complacency. It is the forerunner of the Chōla ideal, and also the key image that will find a prominent place for itself in the iconographic scheme of the vimana. The Viṇādhara Dakṣiṇāmūrti (fig.123) again shows a variation by recalling the seated Viṇādhara Dakṣiṇāmūrti of Nārttamalai, Vijayālaya Chōliśvara (fig.113) showing similar male idealisation, and the climax of the power of abstraction. "The Tiruvēdikudi Ardhanārī's luminousness uncannily subtle is the result of the process working from within the half closed flower

like eyes of the Ardhanāri slowly opening reveal power which seem to rise from the deepest depths that lie beyond consciousness....."(3)

The Tiruccatturai Odavanēśvara shows Śiva Bhikṣātana in the west wall (fig.97) which like the Tiruvēdikūḍi Ardhanāri is both by physiognomy and stance the prima facie of the Chōḷa idiom. The youthful, proud bearing, slightly scornful expression became the theme of the nude mendicant, here partially covered. One can almost imagine this youth stepping out of the niches and demanding his bhikṣā as if by right. This one example suggests the Chōḷa style had gained 'terra firma', with clarity, poise and lessons learnt from the Muttaraiyar sources in the Vijayalaya period. These sculptures cannot be called outright Muttaraiyar, because they are not totally other worldly. There is an innate realism, or what Herbert Read refers as 'dimensions of reality' which is humanism tempered by the right amount of sublimation. These sculptures affect the observer by cajoling and drawing him into a world of fantasy, empathy and inspiration. So convincing is the 'locus standi' that even after the battle of Tirupurambiyam there was no change in the artistic domain. The Tiruccatturai Śiva is modelled to perfection and purity.

A fine group of sculptures which emerge bearing the first crop of an emergent style are seen in the Tiruppālanam Āpatsahāyēśvara dvārapāla (fig.124). The Sēndalai Sundarēśvara Brahma, the Kīlaiyūr Avani Kāṇḍarpa Īśvarīgr̥ham icons of Dakṣīnāmūrti and Subramanyam (figs.125,126,127,128) and the Lāḷguḍi Saptar̥sīśvara Dakṣīnāmūrti (fig.129) are a variation of the same emergent trend. Of these Kīlaiyūr is a Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar domain under direct Chōḷa suzerainty. There is a noticeable sharpening and seriousness of features, and stiffening of form. Beset with a slight tension and restraint these sculptures from Kīlaiyūr have an identity of their own. A careful observation reminds us of the rounded limbs, their placement in the dēvakōṣṭha similar to both the Chōḷa and Irrukuvēḷ examples. The physiognomy and expression despite their uniqueness betray their suzerains. The faces are recut and the nature of their chiselling recalls Muttaraiyar elements, but the tautness, formal smile on a round face and vacant eyes are more Pallava. Perhaps if every feature is taken and placed carefully alongside an average Chōḷa, Irrukuvēḷ, Muttaraiyar or Pallava sculpture a little of all these would be noticed. A certain commonality is to be expected. Nevertheless, a later comparison will reflect similar traits. If the Agastīśvaram sculptures (fig.130) with

broad rounded shoulders, narrow lower torso, sharp cut features, sharp eyebrows, small noses and mouth are one kind, the Brahma (fig.131) of the same temple departs from these norms. There is an awareness calling forth greater refinement and grace. The Tiruccaturai Śiva(97) seems to have been a possible inspiration apart from vestigeal Pallava elements. The Tiruccendurai, and the Tiruppālanam sculpture (fig.124) are closer to the afore mentioned Brahma where the softening and calming effect of Tiruvēdikudi perhaps was the source of inspiration.

The Lāguḍi Saptarṣiśvara has been causing a little discomfort. Despite conclusive inscriptional evidences, the sculptures (figs.132,133) show elements hitherto unfamiliar. The limbs, specially lower ones appear somewhat wooden like the Ardhanārīśvara from Tiruvēdikudi. The ethnic source is not clearly definable, while the technique and idealisation reminds us of Muttaraiya origin. Unable to draw a definite conclusion it could be a variation in the Āditya I phase, lying between the archaic and progressively changing idiom. The Ardhanārī rather relieves a little of our guilt by being a variation of its Tiruvēdikudi counterpart. Ofcourse, the feminine is seen to the left, proudly .

exaggerated. Skilled hands have apparently made the form palpable. The male side is an uninterrupted flow and continuity of line. The opposing is delectably deliberate but suave. Perhaps, the mettle of the Chōla artist more than the sculpture itself is reflected here for the moving back and forth into the male and female aspects of anatomy, was a sure sign of the emerging Chōla duality of "graded ethereality". The Bhikṣātana sculpture and Viṇādhara Dakṣiṇāmūrti (figs.132,129) once again are paradoxical. The first is loosened and does not evoke the quality of expression that is so remarkable of this phase. The feeling is slack and it can only be surmised that an inferior hand or an inexperience one sculptured this form. At the same time the Viṇādhara is rigid-taut in a pleasant way suggesting the same alertness and confidence of the Ardhanārī. Instinct takes us to the Muttaraiya origins in the partial physiognomy.

This "graded ethereality", is a very sensuous outpouring where hard stone literally melts into the hands of master sculptors. Liquid gold caught and made tangible upon the temple walls reflected in the subtle seductions of the apsaras of the Kumbakōṇam Nāgēśvarasvāmi (figs.134, 135,136). Tender and demure they are aware of their

potential 'ananku'. She the apsara is mysterious and has been referred to as woman, queen and divinity. Her attraction lies in this semi-divine semi-human stance. Poised in a framed niche, she half emerges from somewhere within. The full impact of her form standing proud hits our eyes. It is as if all else recedes in the background and she beckons you to her with nothing but yourselves. She is omniscient, and she knows it, however she puts on a confident and complaisant air. Under the circumstance the slightly exaggerated anatomy does not deter one from relishing these figures. It is also not unique because the concept of the super-human anatomy had been long accepted in the fertile imagination. In contrast to this female bounty the male figures of siddha, ṛṣi (figs.137,138) etc. are austere and contemplative. With bare adornment they are a variation of the same male form, but a slightly questionable ethnicity. The ascetic quality could have a source in the wandering Jain monks of the day. Intuitively they recall some Pāṇḍyan element, that has not been pinned down. Pāṇḍyan inscriptions do occur in this temple, but much of the architecture and sculpture are Chōḷa; it is sometimes these isolated factors which make us wary. At the same time the icons of divinities like Brahma or Sūrya follow the archaic but

not primitive Āditya pattern. The clear benignity, the way the hands hold the ayudhas and the figures definitely rooted to the spot would quieten even the most tumultuous heart. It is this transfigural naturalism at its height in the female form and its understatement in the divinities and other male figures that lures the human empathy as bees are lured to the nector in flowers.

THE REIGN OF PARĀNTAKA I (907-970 A.D.)

M.A. Dhaky in his Chōla sculptures raised the question if three separate idioms - the Chōla, Irrukuvēl and Paluvēṭṭaraiyar simultaneously exist within the ambit of Chōlanādu. We have thus far seen that at some time or the other the three had come into close contact. They have been linked politically, in kinship, as suzerains and as vassals. Despite a variation in form and ethnic traits, there are also those features like form, technique or compositional stance which favour the Āditya I style. Subtle distinction and sub-cultural patterns have to be readily conceded to. The crystallisation and trend setting has to be handed to the Chōla, and rightly enough, "without undoing or transgressing, or violently differing from the main tenets of the general regional style to which such an idiom pertained around the rule of the local dynasty"(4). Certain distinctions

are maintained and certain broad parameters employed. Thus the three idioms fall under the same major stylistic Chōḷa frame work.

Although we do not see a great consequential change, what to an art historians is very important is the transubstantiation, where naturalism and spiritualising are combined in a language of gesture and movement. There is within this physical form or body an innate presence and a vitality that takes us beyond the gross. These, we observe are resolved by playing with and reorganising the form as itself, by its placement, and by certain formal devices which go with them. The Chōḷa exploited the human form and made it representational. It contained and expressed all that the sculptor had conceived. It became a vehicle of communication.

The most important temples of this phase are the Pullamangai Brahmapurīśvara, Śrīnivāsanallūr Koraṅgaṇātha and Eurumbūr Kadambavanēśvara. As rightly pointed by M.A. Dhaky "It is in the Pullamaṅgai temple that Chōḷa art reached its height of meridian. The sculptures are incomparable"(5).

The cult images in the bhadrā dēvakōshṭa of the vimāna are important in the Brahmapurīśvara. "In the much

discussed Brahma (fig.139), in the north wall power of Chōla art has, in realisation of the absolute transcendence, reached its ultimate. The tender expression, contemplative eyes and intense calm sublimates the god's wonderful, elongated face beyond the reaches of representation. The slender bodied god no more seems to occupy the niche. Like the epiphany, he has, as though appeared in the niche. The total coordinated attenuity of limbs torso and head, makes the god's being very light, rarified and hence beyond gravitation. The god is, one feels about to leave; his inner unfathomable power is now contracting and next will expand a moment before the last take off as though. At any moment, it would seem, he may rise and disappear into Infinity whence he came"(6).

And yet the Brahma who flanks the Lingōdbhava in the west (figs.140,141) evokes something else. If intense calm and sublimated transcendence is suggested in the north wall Brahma; it is because his function is that of the confident creator. The intensity and seriousness are becoming. The Brahma here, in the Lingōdbhava panel is full of youthful arrogance. The way he stands, his stance with one hand resting on his hip with supreme confidence, the other hand held out with non-chalance,

he is still rooted in reality. He is juxtaposed by the stiffly aloof Śiva in the split linga. The youthful arrogance is accentuated by the slight snub nose and a slight knowing smile. The sculpture is not devoid of innocence however. The sculptor aimed at both the innocence arrogance aspect of youth. It is as if he throws out a challenge to 'the Śiva'; and in the Lingodbhava panel rises up in quest. The broad shoulders and torso, the slightly disproportionate lower limbs, the extra long arms reflect in totality a sinuous grace and callow youth. This conforms with the superior sectarian priority, where all else is inferior to 'the Siva'. The Brahma is neither fully human nor super human, he is neither absolutely divine nor human; he is suspended in a semi divine-human animation.

Somewhere in lesser than this animation are sages, siddha, ṛsi and devotees in various levels of transcendence. The south wall ṛsi (fig.142) are best described as 'lustrous', but with no upper age limit. They are young - tyros. In contrast to the pert or austere Brahma there is a solemn and devoted expression bound by concentration, as if they try to reach the unattributable qualities of the Yōga Dakṣīnamūrti. The way their eyes are shut, the way they are seated as if

raptly listening to the teacher, is a very conscious and deliberate exercise in self discipline. This can be seen in the way the bodies are closely carved, the way the whole face is made to draw inwards. At the same time their body is rooted at the feet of the lord, while their minds are seeking to find the ultimate. The purity of lines, the clearly cut eyebrows and lips relate them with the earlier Kumbakōṇam sculptures as M.A. Dhaky points out. Yet, the whole approach to attitude is different in the temples. Kumbakōṇam is a social comment while Pullamaṅgai is a religious quest.

A religious quest need not always be related to transcendence, it can be more earth bound, as we see in the Gaṇapati panel in the south (fig.143). The Gaṇapati himself seated in a very comfortable posture is very close to the humans. The concept of Gaṇēsa triggers off much more than religious thought, epicures delight. The rotund pot belly, the very appealing way of being seated causes a child like delight and innocence. Such a delight and innocence is further seen in the charming and naive figures of the accompanying gaṇa or bhūta. True goblins as one would have invented in his fertile imagination. The art of transubstantiation and the art

of simplification occur in the same temple. This simplification occurs by the reduction of all else but the emotive and suave sensitivity of expression.

Pullamaṅgai takes us through stages of evolutions not seen elsewhere. These occur in individual masterpieces on its walls. Even the detail showing the paṇjāra has a female form who is both natural and idealised; the transubstantiation is high effective here.

The Alambakkam Kailāsanātha tries to combine this sublime quality with the physical form in the Brahma from the north wall (fig.144). Although it falls short of such expectations it shows the Āditya I qualities of gesture, stance and relatively archaic features which they were trying to overcome. Somewhere between the Kumbakōṇam and Śrīnivāsanallūr sculptures they stand in suspension. About a decade later the Caḍaiyar Kōvil at Tiruccenamapundi also tries to express certain desired features. The contours of the form stay rounded and broad in the shoulder. There is a greater softening of the features. The round face is in natural contemplation and evokes a sense of contentment. It is not always called to compare with 'the Pullamaṅgai Brahma'. There is a change in the subtle body language and gesture

that is taking place. One observes that the upper limbs are relatively subtle and sensitively suggestive. Such naturalism does not occur at Pullamaṅgai but more so at Kumbakōṇam. Infact the slight protrusion of knees, muscular upper arms, a cushiony mount Venus upon the palm, suggest once again a more human-divine expression and form. This is achieved in the soulful nandi or Vṛsa (fig.145), which is naturalism and yet goes beyond it showing an inner life of its own. It is at once tangible, communicating the strong urge to touch it. At the same time a benign innocence is felt in its bovine expression and posture. The tactile and the spiritual have successfully combined here. The Tiruvālīśvaram at Tiruvālīśvara the Pāṇḍyan temple shows such introspective contemplation brodering on a universal pathos. The appeal of innocence and child like naivette is its characteristic. The Brahma strives towards such a fulfilment. The face becomes somewhat idealised. If Kumbakōṇam shows courtly refinement and Pullamaṅgai transcendence, then this example is one of quasi religious eloquence. A variation of the same type is also seen in the Ardhanāri (fig.146) now in the Madras Museum. This is very reminiscent of the Tañjāvūr Nisūmbasūdani, but moves towards a more humanising factor. It is firmly rooted in a hard reality of exaggerated contour

and a relatively uninspiring expression. The quest for an expression between the human and subliminal seems to be a growing preoccupation. Similarly the Tirukan-
 diyūr, Brahma and Sūrya (figs.147,148) from the Virāṭṭa-
 nēśvara about 918 A.D. try to go away from the archaic
 quality of Āditya I towards the material and spiritual
 aspect of peace and detachment. They come close to
 the Brahma and Surya at the Kumbakōṇam Nāgēśvara.
 The Sūrya although tried to achieve the distinction
 of detachment, the manipulation of the facial feature
 and sculpted form fall below it; while the Brahma is
 closer to realisation and fulfilment. The human quality
 however dominated all else still, while the physical
 being shows us the 'innate presence' yet to be fully
 realised. The Korāṅganātha at Śrīnivāsanallūr shows
 the coalescence of the tangible and the spiritual. The
 apsara (fig.149) are gracious although their conception
 from the front gives them a slightly boring air and
 a far Eastern appearance. Slightly broad faced with
 chinky eyes the countenance is that seen in the make
 up of certain Far Eastern Countries like Cambodia and
 Barabudur. This is perhaps accentuated by a flattened
 face. At the same time a certain divinity is achieved
 in her profile. The rsi (fig.150) can be compared
 to the Kilaiyūr Dakṣiṇāmūrti from Chōliśvaram which

is a variation within the same vocabulary. The Brahma from Tiruccenāmapuṇḍi Caḍaiyar koil and the Dakṣiṇāmūrti from Śrīnivāsanalūr. Koraṅganātha are studies in plastic conception (figs.151,152). The totally meditative quality, a rounded form that is a gradual flow show the innate potential. If the Brahma reflects a total involvement in creation, it is to the credit of the sculptor's involvement. The Dakṣiṇāmūrti flanked by human and animal form is a study in assurance and transcending grace.

Stylistically the Tiruppanṭūrutti Puṣpavaneśvara examples of the Bhikṣātana and the standing Śiva (figs.153,154) are individual expression of the same idiom or ideal. The one has an ovoid face with a direct expression while the other is again a striving towards the physical and spiritual compatibility. Once again the degree of variation causes this diversity in the Āditya phase.

About the same time in the last two decades of the ninth century A.D. the Irrukuvēl. of Koḍumbāḷūr showed as keen a sense of art preception as the Chōḷa.. Their clarity of vision culminates in the Mūvar Kōil. First and foremost the examples show a certain degree of mixed elements. The Bālasubramanya (fig.155) was perhaps the first tentative attempt at trying to release the

form from the medium. The three dimensionality has not been achieved wholly and the figure stays trapped in stone. Similarly, the Tirukkaṭṭalai Sundarēśvara sculptures of the same idiom show a lack of confidence. There is nothing Chōḷa here, expect perhaps a timid Muttaraiyar influence if one can be sure. An unexpected shock ripples through when we confront the other examples of Mūvar kōil which are studies in textural and dynamic representation of forms. The Tripurasundari (fig.156) now in the Madras Museum is one of regal bearing and confidence where both the mobile and sensitive expression come through with great impact. The characteristic half smile lights up the sculpture. Unlike the courtesan grace of the Nāgēśvara females, she is ultra sensitive and spiritual - this is perhaps intentional because she is the consort of Tripurāntaka (fig.157). In the same vein, with a body made more muscular and well formed he is a compliment to his consort. Graspable and firm bosoms of the goddess are a contrast to the male chest. Her incurved and suddenly flaring waist are a lyrical flowing of form contrasting her consort's slight thickening girth. Her slender finger, to his square competent hands, and her beautiful expression balance the slight but proud tilt and expression of her consort. The Tirukaṭṭalai Tripurāntaka

with a slight bodily flexion is more feminine in conception, but falls short of the grace possessed by the Tripurasundari. The Śiva (fig.158) has a slight facial variation. Unlike the afore mentioned sculptures, he lacks the sensitive mobility of features. Similar to the Purandhara in the eastern grīvakōshta these sculptures are of more rounded features, recalling the Korāṅgānātha Brahma. The torso, ornamentation and drapery differ but the way the hand is in the kaṭihasta and the feet in samabhaṅga are similar. Another point to note is a semblance of seriousness they share. Youthful but uncertain they are not of the stature of the Tripurāntaka and Tripurasundari. The Ardhanāri (fig.160) seems to be carved out of the Chōḷa hand. The Chōḷa sculptor perhaps had a long standing love affair with his Ardhanāri. At once male, at once female it reflects in overall the Chōḷa ethereality. The heavy thrust out hips, the slight tilt and expression of gazing, recall Tiruvedikudi Kumbakōṇam, Lālgudi etc. in technique. Unique example that however defy sources are the Tirumaṅgalam Bhikṣātana (fig.160), and the dramatic Kalārimūrti (fig.161) of the Mūvar kōil. The latter is a highly mobile and sensitive face contorted in the purpose of quelling time personified shows a dynamism and texture never encountered before or after. The

ethnic and dynamic construction are, it must be concluded, an individual force spilling out into a unique sculpture.

The Erumbur Kadambavanēśvara has a few unique sculptures which combine the gross and ethereal, which are referred as the 'material solidity and spiritual essence' both at one place. This temple was rebuilt in stone in the 28th year of Parāntaka I i.e. about 935 A.D.(7). Looking at the sculptures, the Aruṇācalēśvara tries to achieve the afore mentioned idealisation (fig.162). a rounded face of the general Āditya I variation by itself is not unique. What makes it strive for the unique is the conscious effort of moving from the archaic to the classic and subtle. An ethereal or graded reality is observed but only in degree. The form as a whole, its physical sweep, postural stance and individual aspects were still in the throes of combining the innate presence in the human form; its expression through this form appear to be the sculptor's dilemma and his quest. The Brahma (fig.163) has his face recut and perhaps has lost the austere dignity of Aruṇācalēśvara but both of them are the same handiwork. The serenity upon the lattar's face does not occur in the former's ; yet a face beset with a purpose is seen. The Brahma is more rigid; from

the Puñjai, Naltunai Īśvaram. The temple that calls attention is the Uyyakonḍan Tirumalai Ujjīvanātha which does not bear very important evidence. Yet the sculptures here show the archaic Āditya I features combined with the Pallava vestiges of technique. This only goes to show that there are always vestiges that become a force of habit and sometime deterrents to understand a consistent development of style. The sculptures (figs. 167,168,169,170) have both the benign and other wordly - ghost like pallor trapped in the body. This is also felt in some of the finest Muttaraiyar examples we have encountered earlier.

The Grāman Śivalōkanātha of 943 A.D. shows us a combination of features we would call the reminiscent and the new. The Dakṣiṇāmūrti (fig.171) shows a similarity to the ṛṣi of Pullamaṅgai in form but have now gone much beyond mere form. The innate realism or dimensions of reality conjoined by a sublimation makes it one of the most characteristic and outstanding example of the Early Chōḷa synthesis of form, technique and expression. It is here that the essence and the presence are both achieved. An ethereal transcendence occurs. Such unshakable concentration is the sculptor's fulfilment. The Durga (fig.172) on the other hand moves towards

a more fuller and heavier style closer to the third phase. The crowning glory of this phase is the Ardhanāri from the Ugramahākālī temple, Tañjāvūr (figs.173.174, 175). of early 10th century. This sculpture outdoes the Tiruvēdikudī and other examples of the Ardhanāri. Somewhat similar to the Tiruccendurai Chandrasēkhara Ardhanāri, this is a take off from the physical-spiritual into the more tactile. Rounded shoulders, tiny hemispherical breasts, charming but not as heavy or as gracefully cuppable as the Tripurasundari from Koḍumbālūr are assets. A benign composed face, with the half smile similar again to the Tripurasundari, are the qualifying features. Early Chōla had already reached its pinnacle of aesthetic restraint and poise, the ethereal and the tangible in a subtle language of gesture and form (fig.176).

VI.3 THE SECOND PHASE (940-970 A.D.)

The sculptures from the Śivalōkanātha at Grāmam are borderline cases. They are moving towards a fuller and much heavier style. The quality of trans-substantiation had been fully realised in stone, the purpose more or less accomplished, the creative urge and restlessness try to manifest in another medium bronze. The post-Parantaka period signals a change in Chōla

sculpture and naturally its attitude. What happened to the subliminal idealisation? It had begun to taper off or perhaps not needed any longer. Much more than the humanising and spiritualising aspects which were related more to the mind than touch had been successfully achieved. Once achieved the interest was transient and moved towards the development of form and proportion. There appears to be a preoccupation with mediums. Stone attempted to follow bronze and bronze stone, as far as the tactile were concerned. This aspect will be dealt with separately in the bronzes. The uniform facial physiognomy which was deliberately recalled in the previous section posits the Aditya I technique of archaicism continuing as a standardised feature. Such a feature encouraged the ample and much more laxer forms that foreshadow the Sembiyan phase.

A very important post-Parantaka temple is the Naltunai Īśvaram at Puñjai; replete with sculptures that show us the direction sculptural form was taking. The Brahma, Durga, Lingōdbhava Agastya and Gaṇapati (figs.177 to 181) look metallic. The form on one hand becomes more broad and filled out, and at the same time imitates the metal in finish. This is further enhanced by greasy oil that heightened this polished like finish. The

slender and taut qualities are discarded for the fulsome figures. They suggest a master hand at work. D. Barret associates some of these examples to the loose sculptures at the Virāṭṭanēśvara at Tirukaṇḍiyūr. This is partially valid because the human form with the Āditya I archaicism is given more prominence, or the spiritual had not yet been achieved. Tirukaṇḍiyūr, Grāmam and a few lesser known temples foreshadow this change.

The Brahma and Agastya in the south of the ardhamāṇḍapa do not show the total idealisation of Pullamaṅgai or the intense earthiness of Kumbakōṇam. The quest for a more or less perfect form is achieved here. The Brahma represents a congenial creator, confident not by mere expression, but by a sure delineation of form. He stays within the bounds of human understanding. He is at once a god and creator, but he is also very accessible. The broad, virile shoulders and torso brings us to a neat midriff with not an ounce of extra flesh. A pair of well proportioned lower limbs seen through the translucent drapery are well formed in the knees and shanks. The abhaya mudra and kati hasta add to a strong presence of the deity. The textural quality and sinewy form are combined to cause the

proper emotion. Here the use of drapery and ornament are part of the technique to enhance form. Rich in form he stands as one apart and as one at the humanised level too. The Agastya like the Gaṇeśa is benevolence and worldly wisdom. Besides his genial countenance, to carve such a seated form with skill, again reminds us of the metal casting tradition as a standard. Short and squat, the intellectual pursuit has left the saint very much in want of other activities. Sedentary, his hands are frozen in the act of communicating the vedas and sastras. Seated in the ardhaparyāṅka the efforts at foreshortening is a difficult task. The ability to move from one part to another in a natural rhythm is achieved here. The single blend of total form is so overwhelming that a defective lower limb can be easily ignored. The sculptor more or less has recognised the best way of manipulating his form by gentle curves. He has carefully chiselled and smoothened his surface so that each part is able to merge with the other without much clash. This can be recognised in both the Agastya and Gaṇeśa. If the eyes of the former are so cut that they are so life like, the same way the slight varying planes achieve this effect in the Gaṇeśa's eyes. Their closeness to metal is overwhelming.

The Lingodbahava and Durga also show this metallic nature and preoccupation with the study of form. The former is close to naturalism par excellence placed in the centre of the split linga. The gentle undulation and accent on the texture take us to a technically perfect form, based on proportion and texture. The Durga to a lesser degree shows this finesse and organic unity so characteristic of this temple. The Dakṣīnamūrti (figs.182,183) are again closer to the spiritual ethereality without of course neglecting the form. A very life like body carries such detachment of expression as we saw at Pullamaṅgai. The variation is a formal one. The limbs of these examples are at sharp contrast to the Agastya and Gaṇeśa. Delicacy and grace however belong to all the examples when we survey the aṅga and upaṅga very carefully, like for example the instep and palms of Dakṣīnamūrti, the lifted or other hand gestures, the protrusion of high cheekbones or the flesh quality; they reflect the rapport between the sculptor and his medium. The miniature reliefs on the galapadas are fields of activity where the sculptor uses the kantha for delineating sketches with vivid dynamism and movement. They suggest the sculptor's play or exercise in being able to cause movement, vigour and portrait study for the human form. Here it is

the fleeting action and movement that can be caused by manipulation of form through construction, distortion and contortion (fig.184). Style and intent conform in these sculptures. The three dimensionality renders nature very faithfully in these examples. The life quality is given here by the flexure of surface. Stone became palpable, soft with 'underlife'. They are not mere texture or pieces of flesh, but an organic undulation of forms. The sculptures are conceived in complete isolation. The much exploited subject, the human body established a sense of real existence. The sculptor projected the 'image' based on the 'idea' of himself. Sight or vision was not enough, so he took the sense of touch where we are drawn to feel the sensations of muscular tensions, movements, langour and lassitude he uses in varied proportions. It is here that he gives stress to his 'haptic sensations'.

The Gōmuktesvara at Tiruvāduturai 945 A.D. of the last years of Parāntaka I shows such a predeliction in the sculptures of the devakoshta. This temple ushered in new trends; of which Agastya was introduced for the first time in the ardhmandapa. His place in the iconographic scheme gets fixed. The first aspect that draws our attention are the ampler and fuller forms;

and the details that are accurately taken up. The accurate cutting is also the First Phase cutting.

The Agastya and Ganesa in the ardhmandapa are not upto the mark of Puñjai, the Gaṇeśa is more or less totally defaced, and the Agastya looks closer to the early metal sculptures. The Brahma, Lingodbhava (figs. 185,186) and Durga, show the archaic Āditya I style in a fulsome manner. What marks these sculptures is a lack of variation in the physiognomy and expression. They are all more or less alike and with very limited expression. To be exact, there is no repertoire, they are conventional and settled. There is no restlessness or conflict that is a driving urge to change, rearrange and reorganise forms. This is closer to a package deal. The iconography is set, the placement is conventionalised, the form has resolved itself; the intention appears to be sedate and not challenging. The only important aspect to us is its 'imitation' of metal. When the word imitation is used, it is just that and does not take off from the source to great heights. Punjai was exceptional. These elements are also seen in the Kīlūr Virāṭtanēśvara Lingodbhava and Brahma (figs.187,188) and the Kōvilādi, Divy ajñānēśvara Durga (fig.189). Passivity and poise are the keywords; but

nowhere is the stone shown as molten. These are transitional sculptures for the Third Phase. There is a solace and truth sought in this phase. The sculpted gods belong more here than elsewhere. Realistic detail, like precisely articulated angas and upangas are balanced by a moderate detachment. This is the beginning of an empirical outlook as opposed to the earlier sublimity. There is a partial clinical detachment here while the earlier was a blend of realism with idealism. There is an accuracy trying to be achieved in this phase, and texture is used to show this.

Tiruvāḍuturai and Puñjai are 'the two' monuments of the Second Phase, they can be dated to the fifth decade of the century before the battle of Takkōlam. The new approach to sculptural form had already emerged in the metropolitan centres. The roots of these D. Barret takes back to Grāmam and Tirukaṇḍiyūr. The other sculptures are scattered in the Tanjavur and different museums. They all appear to belong to the same atelier. Carved in the round with unfinished backs these are close to Puñjai in style and thus D. Barret compares these to the 'Noble style of Puñjai'.

The eve of the battle of Takkōlam saw confusion, a

few temples of modest size, with scant royal patronage are seen.

The Tiruvērubūr, Piplīśvara is one such example but with no commendable examples in sculpture. There is a Harihara in the western devakoshta which is a typical Second Phase example, and qualitatively superb. The Turaiyūr Visamaṅgalēśvara sculptures are similar too, the relief sculptures however seen on the kaṇṭha of adhis thāna are naturalistic and dynamic forms of elephants, meśa (ram) and vṛsa (figs.44,44a). The volume, mass and shallow relief form have a breath of life. These animal studies are examples of the sculptor's love for capturing vibrant life forms.

The development of the Early Chōḷa style during the Second Phase shows that during the later years of Parāntaka I and before the Takkōlam debacle Puñjai and Tiruvāduturai were erected, showing the still existent and powerful Chōḷa kingdom intact. The architecture mostly, and to a lesser extent the sculpture anticipate the IIIrd Phase. A retardation occurred due to the Rāṣṭrakūta invasion. With the accession of Uttama the new style of the Third Phase was established about 969 A.D.

VI.4 THE THIRD OR SEMBIYAN PHASE (969-985 A.D.)

The period of Uttama, under the patronage and inspiration of Sembayan Mahādēvi received great attention both in architecture and sculpture. The most important feature of this age is the greater attention and patronage given to metal casting. This naturally made stone lose its stature and become a little stereotyped. Much of the qualities like that of idealisation or factual realism suffer due to loss of individuality and originality. The features of the Second Phase tend to multiply themselves here and ossify.

This phase also saw the establishment of additional dēvakōshṭa first seen in Kāṭṭumanārguḍi. Agastya who was introduced in the late years of Parāntaka I became a canonical diety with a special place on the southern niche of the ardhamandapa. Bhikṣātana (fig.190) of severe austerity, Ardhanārī and rarely Gaṅgādhara and Natarāja are also included with relatively varying positions. The style of sculpture had by now moved completely away from the First Phase. We are now in another style or world. There is first of all a uniformity in style, they are so similar that they appear belong to a common atelier set by Sembayan herself.

Tiruvāduturai and Puñjai were precursors or sources for this style, and are thus closest in both expression and quality of form to the Third Phase rather than the First. In the words of D. Barret, "Sculptured images, though unequal in quality are so uniform in style that it would not be difficult to confuse the icons from one temple with those from another. One gets the impression of a single workshop or group of sculptors working on the Sembiyan Mahādēvi's commissions. The style itself cannot be confused with that of Phase I and is in fact, rarely comparable in quality"(8).

Barret is valid in making such a statement, but what bothers those who look at the style of the sculptures from different sites of the Third Phase are that, beyond the general uniformity there are variants. G. Schwindler rightly points out that "what has not been adequately acknowledged, however are the sculptured variants among certain temples in Barret's inventory"(9). The reasons or causes for such a variant needs to be explored.

Under the circumstances we must recall what R. Nagaswami says; for the sculpture was no longer carved on site, but elsewhere and fitted in the framework of architecture. Another factor which calls for attention is the

visible increase in the niches of the ardhamaṇḍapa and garbhagrha. Apart from establishing an iconographic programme they also facilitate and encourage the overall style to prevail. Nevertheless, exceptional cases reflect due to lack of all other evidence rare examples of individual creation and expression. From the main style of Phase I, the Second and Third Phases are substyles and its variation. D. Barret again and again points out, "the unique achievement of Phase I which surely includes some of the most imaginative curving in hard stone..... occupied three generations of artists. Its strength, dignity and power but less of its intimate grace and tenderness survived the sturdier more earth bound figures of Phase II. Stone sculptures in Phase III is strangely unequal even in temples built by Sembiyan Mahādēvi. At its best it remains a noble form of expression"(10).

Some of the relevant sculptures sharing similar traits as well as those which differ are taken to confirm style and its variation. They are taken together and dealt with as groups within the Third Phase. Sequence does not seem relevant here due to both unity and diversity.

The Konērīrājapuram Umamāhēśvara shows us a sculptural style now far removed from the First Phase. The Naṭarāja and Bhikṣātana (figs.191,192) would stand as the general spokesmen for this style. The feeling for form had reached to its brim. This is seen in stone sculpture. However, the creative urge was still at high tide in bronze. It may well be remembered that Konērīrājapuram is better known for its metal sculpture than architecture or stone sculpture. From sensation to solid shape, shape and idea seem to be a major preoccupation. The plastic intention is naturalistic in the organic form. The flexure and texture abetted it. Standing with an arm and leg thrown out, while the other two hold ayudha the Naṭarāja is more or less in a state of detachment. Both the facial features and the body form suggests this. The outflung arm emerges out exactly parallel to the legs if it were not flexed at the knee. The extracting of a definite shape from the medium shows that the skill had been perfected. The upper outflung arm is stretched, but is not tense as is achieved in the fall of the hand, hanging loose. The lifted leg shows closely packed tension while the supporting foot is flexed at the knee very moderately to suggest the body weight it supports. The relative proportion between each individual part is balanced and merges into the

torso. There is a series of movements that is complex. This is deliberate - so that as our eye moves over the sculpture a whole cosmic experience of the dance comes through. The individual parts of the limbs takes us from the smooth to the jagged. There is an angularity in the whole, which is smoothened out by the anatomical curves and flexures. If the lines of the limbs are complex, and interrupted, those from the head to the supporting foot and torso are straight but gently curved by the rounded form. The space around gets moderately activated by such a fling of limbs and the spread hair. We are aware of the plastic quality by action, gesture and the different views of the figure.

The Sembiyan Mahādēvi Kailāsanātha, shows us both the standard types as well as variated ones. The temple had subshrines perhaps; for lying in the maṇḍapa are loose sculptures of Jyēsthā and Saptamātrika (figs. 193 to 195). Here is an example of Vaiśṇavi which recalls vestiges of Phase I and yet is fully of the Third Phase in its play of form. The metallic quality is absent here. The figures due to their very nature as female forms project a lassitude. It is here that the lines are flax and run in both curves and angles. The upper

arms run parallel to the plane of the knees. One hand that is placed on the knee runs parallel to the hanging foot, what concept was seen in the Konērirajapuram Natarāja in action, is also applied to the seated goddesses. The more difficult task here was the manipulation of medium to grasp the female anatomy. Although the sculptor had successfully handled masses and turned them to palpable shapes, the struggle to balance proportion and shape is evident in the other matrikas. The benign, detachment is one of the characteristic features.

Such a feature with a very slight variation is also evident in the Bhikṣātana (fig.196) and this is so because of the mythic interpretation of this aspect of Śiva. If the 'Cosmic' dance is one beyond myth, it is thus captured; the mātrika too project the universal Mother concept, but the Bhikṣātana is a specific view which is human and comes through in myth. This in turn finds apt expressions here. Interestingly the forms in this phase are youthful but serious to the point of sullen solemnity. This is very prominent in the Balasubramanyam (fig.197) from the same temple. Degrees of such feelings come to us from the same group. The Bhikṣātana is congenial thanks to the myth, his stance, the slight tilt of the shoulder and head and the very

small change in postural direction are not unusual. Konērīrājapuram has a similar one but with a serious countenance, as if to negate the above statement. The Bālasubramanya too projects such a detached expression. This is brought to total effect in the rigid stance and in a body held in tension. The combination of parallel and diagonal flow suggestive of potential movement and direction, which is done with discretion in the Bhikśātana is not needed here perhaps. For in such stance and rigidity of line, the sculpture stays aloof and is not conducive to human empathy. The facial expression binds it to that of the Vaiśnavi.

The two examples from Tirumañjēri Udvāhanēśvara, are variations of the Konērīrājapuram and Sembiyaṇ Mahādēvi sculptures (figs.198,200). The Naṭarāja (fig.198) shows similar dynamic movement but with an intuition for greater vigour. Confident in stance, the hair spread out and the arm flung out with a complimenting limb shows tenacity. The Dakṣīnāmūrti (fig.200) also falls within this framework but the humanised quality is closer to the Bhikśātana. The visual convention of the Third Phase is set. A part of an iconographic scheme and realism of the cult object is seen in the physical form, while the semi detachment is a convention

for the abstract. The sculptures conformed to the cultic requirement. The Durga from Tirukkuruhavūr (fig.201) Velladai ~~ś~~īvarām follows this convention. Her image in myth is made synoptic and she stands in aloof pride upon the slayed Mahīśā. The full, heavy oversized and rounded face, with heavy eye lids and a squat or short attenuated body becomes a distinct character. Such features could have derived from their own ethnic stock or as G. Schwindler suggests from 'folk development', in direct contrast to D. Barret's 'metropolitan style'. The latter is seen in the Sembiyan Mahādēvi Kailāsanātha Durga (fig.202). This sculpture shows a slight frame, fairly sharp and slender waist, an exaggerated tribhanga and tubular limbs. There is evident disharmony in the two limbs which would perhaps be more befitting in an Ardhanārī. To counter balance the effect of form, heavy ornamentation becomes a norm. Apart from this its status as a Sembiyan temple saw generous donations. This aided the economy and thus could indulge in a little grandeur and elaboration. The facial variation does not call for comment.

A unique example is the Kailāsanātha Ardhanārī (fig.203) which is a class of its own. How does one explain this sculpture or the still more splendid one from Vṛddhā-

girīśvara at Vrddhācalam (fig.204). The perfect geometry of proportions, materiality and very human qualities are present here. The former shows precision in distribution of weight and mass with appearance of a tensile quality, while the contours still remain molten. Just as much as the left side is femininely rounded with gently flaring hips and globular breasts, the right side is broad chested and takes on the slightest of flexion to reach upto virile and muscular thighs. Not an ounce of spare flesh or flaccidity is seen here. The face is one of benign joy that is caught in a moment of sensual bliss and transcendence. Almost at the same time the Ardhanārī from Vrddhācalam shows us the combined features of Puñjai. The metallic quality needs no better commendation. Supple and vigorous, this quality is enhanced by the use of ornaments and drapery. The sheen is bronze like. The plastic achievement is quite different from the other examples of the period. The body flexing like a creeper with the slightly exaggerated tribhanga is a study in formal composition. The slight and subtle tilt of the head the graceful curves on the female side, a moon like breast as if moulded and fixed, the thrust of hips and tapering leg are contrasted with the male side. The broad rounded shoulder with just relative proportion to the droop

of the left shoulder, arm resting on a bovine *vṛśá*, the angular cut from underarm to the waist and thigh are all in consonance and compliment with the feminine side. This is called the 'new rhythm in confrontation concept' by M.A. Dhaky and rightfully so. The abdominal muscles the barely discernible flesh are bound and compactly in place by ornaments like the waist band. The presence as well as coalescence of male and female aspects are suggested not only iconographically, but by a thorough formal expression and artistic intuition. The face has a human quality but is introvert. This sculpture in an otherwise standardised vocabulary stands apart.

Another divergent trend in this period, perhaps closer to the Ardhanārī of Kailāsanātha is the Anaṅgūr Ardhanārī and Durga (fig.205) which can be closely dated to *Vṛddhācalam* and *Sembiyan Mahādēvi* sculptures. These figures fall between the two but are also typical in the *Sembiyan* characterisation of large and ample figures. Perhaps they are more conventionalised in the fluidity of their form and countenance. Their quality of attenuated forms similarly show in style and quality both the unifying and divergent trends. They are neither damsels nor divinities, nor royal courtesans and could be conventional

abstractions. A very inferior example which only shows coarseness is an anathema. This Ardhanāri shows as an example that, foresight, hind sight, intuition and technical excellence are all not common property. This is a poorly imitated work and as such only shows the presence of inferior sculptures too.

Closer to metal than stone, the Brahma (fig.206) from Govindaputtūr falls in the category of Vṛddhācalam and Sembiyan Mahādēvi. It is needless to say qualitatively inferior when compared, but certainly not non-descript. Here again the naturalism and realism combine. Firm abdominal muscles, neatly delineated arms and elbow; and the broad chest with a suggestive curve showing flesh like quality, are all encased in a sheath of skin. The ornamentation and drapery only enhance the form further. The facial expression, incised well cut eye-brows, eyes and the fleshy lower lip show the familiarity with medium. Although the technique of carving is the same, the female form is an exaggeration. The Durga (fig.207) upon the full buffalo head has a sharp narrow waist, is long legged and broad faced. Bosoms unable to bear their own weight are held up by the *kuc abandha*. The flow of metal perhaps is reflected in stone but certainly not its control. The Kalārimurti

(fig.208) from the same temple is a later insertion from the older sanctum of Parāntaka I and belongs to the Parāntaka Phase of Āditya I style. The dynamism recalls to a lesser degree the Kalārimūrti from the Mūvarkōyil Kōil at Koḍumbālūr (fig.161).

We are beset with two problems when we see the sculptures of the Tiru Ālandurai Mahādēvar at Kilappaluvūr. Based on the stylistic aspect of sculptures, D. Barret assigns this temple to the 15th year of Uttama. Balasubramanyam claims that there are only five dēvakōshṭa as seen in Āditya I and Parāntaka I days, while the Sembiyan Phase has no less than nine dēvakōshṭa. Five dēvakōshṭa in such a phase would be an anachronism. He disagrees to the original inscriptions of Parāntaka I foundation. Barret does not deny the existence of a First Phase temple on site, for there is a gracious dvārapāla close to the Early Chōla Āditya I type; showing those 'evocative' expressions and poise of form so typical of the period (fig.209). The problem of a common 'biruḍa' makes the Parākēsari both Parāntaka I and Uttama. However looking at the architecture it is definitely Third Phase. Barret is confident about the sculptures too. Perhaps we tend to see what we want to see.

The power of the creative mind, the coalescing of the material and spirit - the accent on transubstantiation seen in Āditya I and Parāntaka I Phase are partially fulfilled here, atleast two generations later. Since the presence of a First Phase temple is known and a dwarapala was found 'in situ' it is tempting to say that some of the sculptures could have been reinserted in the reconstruction of the Uttama fabric. When one surveys the ever gracious and spiritual, the facial features and expression, it is overwhelming. At the same time what stops us is the metallic quality of the sculptures of Durga, Gaṇeśa and Brahma (figs.210 to 212). The textural finness, ornament and presentation of form are closer to Puñjai or Gōmuktēśvara. Another feature is the change in the iconography of the Lingodbhava (fig.213) where in place of Brahma we see the hamsa which is definitely a Third Phase occurrence. Apart from this the sculpture as a whole shares in the general style of the other sculptures in the temple. The Lingodbhava from the Vasiś tēśvara (fig.214) Kārunt tataṅguḍi shares in this with two large supporters in the Āduturai Dakṣiṇāmūrti (fig.215) from Āpatsahāyēśvara and a Naṭarāja from the same temple. They broadly follow the Third Phase features which will not be described here. As a contrast we see some strangely

different and unappealing sets from the Velaichēri Dandīśvara (figs.216 to 220) and examples from Tirukuruhavur Mullaivanēśvara (figs.221,222). With a touch of metal, these sculptures are short and may be swarthy too. Exaggerated and overly curved these are very rounded figures which are further accentuated by an oily surface. Belonging to the full Third Phase, they however recall the Later Pallava style which requires to be properly pinned down. The presence of the haṁsa on the Lingodbhava only posits the date, but the style leaves us with vague doubts.

Tiruvallam, an ancient Bāna capital has the Bilvanāthēśvara temple which was possibly rebuilt during Uttama's reign. Looking at these sculptures (figs.223 to 226) we are immediately made aware of something similar. Here again the highly polished and fine finish of Viṣṇu, Durga, Dakṣiṇāmūrti and the gana with their amply articulated form justify the phase, yet a lingering doubt takes us away from merely this. In features, intuitive modelling and individual depiction of features they are softer versions of the Jalanathesvara Takkolam, and hence close to the Pallava or Toṇḍainādu idiom. There is approximately a hundred years difference between the two; but proximity between these places and the

areas being basically in *Toṇḍaināḍu*, this is not unusual. A give and take naturally occurred. The *Tiruvallāṃ* sculptor modelled his sculptures to the *Sembiyaṇ* character, but could not forget a memory of training and experience which was inherent in him. They become a part of his intuition and memory and it is not surprising that he modelled his forms with the spirit of his native land and the material form of the *Chōḷa*. The changes, made more visibly are the way the *ayudhas* are held, the changes in posture etc. The essence of *Toṇḍaināḍu* however remains. *Tiruvallāṃ* and *Velai-chēri* are extremes in the *Toṇḍaināḍu* influence, one subtle and poised the other inconsequential and unimpressive.

985 A.D. marks the accession of *Rājarāja I*. Sculptures increased in number but there appears to be a deadlock. A certain staticity had begun to set in. Variations seen in the previous examples are not morphological in nature. They are not even prominent examples in isolation. A creative deadlock, or middle age blues beset these sculptures. Off and on there is a lone star shining or a lone drummer beating his song all by himself. One such example comes to us from the *Tirunaraiyūr Siddhanāthasvāmi*. The *Bhikṣātana* (fig.227) formally similar to *Sembiyaṇ Mahādēvi* has the innocence and

shyness of youth aware of his physical beauty. The wandering youth here is a reflection of the care-free and unattached. With no concern for a beginning and an end, he represents a state not bound by the chariot of time.

Two temples that stand out for their sculptures in this period are Kuṭṭālam and Tiruvārūr (fig.228 to 237). The former shows us the Third phase style in general; the Agastya (fig.228) shares a degree of the facial feature of his Puñjai counterpart, while the Brahma is several degrees lesser than his Puñjai counterpart. The Lingodbhava (fig.230) stands out with clarity and metallic precision, besides bearing the usual features. The Tiruvārūr Acalēśvara is a contrast to the full fledged 'Third Phase', here we come across a refreshing change. This temple is in the second prākāra of the Tyāgarājasvāmi temple, with sixteen niches carrying the deities of utter simplicity and elegance placed more or less like those at Śrinivāsanallūr and Kumbakōṇam. This temple has deities and portraits frontally placed and in profile. R. Nagaswamy has discussed this temple in detail(11) Tall, slender and almost fragile, these sculptures are a refreshing change. The Brahma (fig.231), the rsi (fig.232) the portrait (fig.233) and the Durga

(fig.234) recall in their placements both Kumbakōṇam and Śrinivāsanallūr. The portrait sculpture recalls Kumbakōṇam, but is more smoothened and rounded, while the placement of Brahma in a narrow but not deep niche recalls Pullamaṅgai and Śrinivāsanallūr. In fact the devotee or royal personage resembles the one flanking Dakṣināmūrti in the south wall of the vimāna of Śrinivāsanallūr. The feeling for form and expression are so balanced here that in case of lack of evidence, it is easy to put this temple a hundred years earlier. The Durga is more and more like metal sculpture, the treatment of form and ornament are lucid and have the finish of a skilled craftsman. The same temple also shows us an Ardhanārī (fig.235) similar to Anaṅgūr but with a more softer modelled and modulated expression. A certain ruggedness of medium is quite different from the dīvarapāla and Dakṣināmūrti who are now common place features of the Third Phase (fig.236,237). Of such types are also the Durga from Karuntattaṅgudi and Kāmarasavalli Karkotīśvaram, but more stone than showing the now oft repeated metal trait (figs.238,239).

Last specific examples that call out for attention are the sculptures from Tirumiyaccūr-Muyarcināthēśvara. If stone can be turned to metal, the sculptor here per-

formed his trick. Iconometrically the sculptures are relatively small. It would be presumptuous to put them under any definite tala without definite measurement. The Durga, R̥shabhāntaka, Gaṅgādhara and Pārvati, and Gaṇapati (figs.240 to 244) are parallel to the bronzes of the late tenth century A.D. Their postural attitude, faces lit up with spirituality, the ornaments, ardhouka and other drapery etc. are found in bronzes of the period. The miracle was that metal craft could by skill be simulated in stone. The means and mediums were different but the end is similar. To be able to release such form from a stone medium shows the trend as having taken a full circle. The logical consummation was affected in the repetititon and stagnation of a generalised style in the Sembiyaṇ Phase. This was solely in stone. Once the technique of metal craft got impetus, the end of the Sembiyaṇ Phase of stone was recognised. The urge now was to take stone as a challenge once again and turn it to liquid gold-of fluid forms. The Brahma and Liṅgōdbhava (figs.244,245) are no less but still retain some of the stone qualities. There is a geniality of expression. Once again the need to revive the ethereal and divine quality arose and can be seen in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti at the Uttara Kailāsa in Tiruvaiyāru (fig.246), recalling Pullamaṅgai, Kumbakōṇam

and most of all Śrīnivāsanallūr in technique. "The torso and the face particularly are after the bronze style of the Mid-Chōla period"(12). The transubstantiation, sublime and 'congealed ponderability' effect us first and last of all.

A few sculptures at the end of this style illustrate certain limitations, archaism, continuity and unexplained features. Of the first and second qualities are three examples of Gandārāditya worshipping the Linga, from Konērīrājapuram (fig.247). Portrait of a devotee, Sembayan Mahādēvi (fig.248) and the Sambandhar later insertion(?) from the Vasiṣṭhēśvara at Karuntattaṅguḍi (fig.249). These are either smaller relief sculptures or ones flanking the main dēvakōshṭa. Having to be carved within limitations of space and function there is a certain uniform quality about them; of devotion, humility and supplication. Carved in shallow relief and in places like the galapāda, or blocks of stone in not too prominent places, the shallow carving area of space available and depth of medium do not facilitate greater details. They do not reach the mark of the amra and semi divinities we see in Śrīnivāsanallūr and Pullamaṅgai due to their non-vantage point and stature. The tōraṇa of Tirumiyaccūr Naṭarāja (fig.250) and the

Tiruvilākūḍi Kalyāṇasundara (fig.251) are carved in much sharper relief, but once again convention puts them within the cavity of the arch. Generally they are overly crowded and dynamic figures with a certain naive expression - and are more generalised due to their size. The makara tōraṇa now loses so much of its austere identity that it is filled with figures of men, animals and plants. They come close to wrought iron and embossed metal. The three examples from Kāmarasavalli-Karkotīśvara, the Brahma, Lingōdbhava, Kaṅkāla mūrti and Kalārimūrti (figs.252 to 255) are in mixed style of metallic and ethnic traits; and an influence that recalls the Rāṣṭrakūṭa element, specially in the Kalārimūrti. This aspect needs further exploration. However, the dynamism strikes a familiar chord in us, apart from the Kalārimūrti of Koḍumbālūr (fig.161).

Two baffling examples assigned to the Sembiyan Phase are the female figures from the Candramaulīśvara from Tiruvakkarai (figs.256,257). Dated both in the mid 10th century A.D. and the beginning of the 11th century A.D., here are the most intuitive and sensitive sculptures recalling the pan Indian, transubstantiated form that is both timeless and abstract. Although it may be modelled after some person or courtesan the ideal-

sation is achieved; fully sensual, the detachment and semi ethereal quality finds fullest expression here.

SUMMING UP

Just as unexpected as the emergence of Vijayālaya, 'invisible' and lying low, we are brought to the Chōla Muttaraiyar tracts with the same sense of vague uneasiness. The Chōla had come to stay, but he couldn't exercise the ghosts of his predecessor. Thus, when we enter the Muttaraiyar temple we are surrounded by something haunting. A sense of uneasiness prevails. M.A. Dhaky calls this as not being surrounded by living pulsating sculptures but by images of the spirits. This quality, of a state of limbo is all the more convincing because of the deep narrow rectangular niches resembling burial dig outs. A Muttaraiyar temple arouses the feeling of awe, one can almost imagine the devotee with his eyes downcast - perhaps circumambulating, chanting his liturgy with the acrid smell of incense and eric silence to accompany him. What the sculptures represent and what they suggest are beyond human comprehension, but are nevertheless propitiated and part of his system. Despite the figural sensuousness, the vapourising potential is greater, the conceptual aspect is stressed. We always remain in the outer nartex. The human form is used, but it is a category that is just out of reach and we are in an abstract no man's zone.

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The primordial spirit which the Muttaraiyar was able to infuse in form did not express a unified concept of the world. They projected idea of immaterial essence because of which even their smaller temples did not have devakoshta on the first tala. There is an ordering whereby the human being is placed on the ground level, with the divine and semi divine deities coming in the upper tala. This is a neat step. The decoration was relatively simple. With temples of different tala as at Nārttamalai, Sēndalai, Naṅgavaram and Nēmam, they attempted at projecting a dualism of material appearance and essential reality. The sculptures were however carved with a restrained sensual form and instead of coming closer moves in another sphere of consciousness not so easily acceptable to a culture just emerging from a state of hibernation. The art was one of the substratum. These sculptures are certainly not archaic in their form, instead they are idealised to such an extent that they stand aloof in dignity. The first tala of temples at Vīralūr, Nēmam and Tillaiśthānam show such sculptures. Spectral, their power of abstraction is startling.

The Āditya I and Parāntaka I phases follow the admonition nothing in excess. The sudden political identity and status in historical context gave the Chōḷa a new found confidence and power of expression. Their cultural quest was also towards fulfilment and realisation. They no longer wanted to be in the substrate

and dwell with the 'haunted past'. They were moving from a state of becoming to being, through balancing the ideal form and realism. The unsettled - on the move feeling of Muttaraiyar gave way to this state of being; which established an identity and positive existence of all that is Chōla. The first attempts thus were propelling sculpture towards some realism. A style compounded by the descriptive and specific traits complex came into being. Contemplation, moderation, emotive, active communication and individuality poured into a single vial which effervesced into the Early Chōla. The westerners would class this as the 'passion and control forces balancing the work of art'. The tension of the opposites as Heraclitus claims is 'the dissonant is in harmony with itself'. The Chōla possibly realised that, what is at variance agrees with itself. The Tiruvēdikūḍi Ardhanāri, the Tiruccatturai Śiva Bhikṣātana(?) in the western and northern niches, the Kumbakōṇam divine and semidivine sculptures or the Tiruccenampunḍi Brahma show poise of the sculpted bodies, using the clashing tensions evoked by shifting the weight of the body on to one foot, or by a pair of ripe breasts that pull down by their weight the shoulders; or they are a contrast to the sharp curve of the waist. Tension in repose is also accentuated by the tribhanga. An outthrust hip clashes in contrast to the comparatively straight or stiff limbs, or by a head tilted in opposing directions. In the case of the Tiruvēdikūḍi Ardhanāri the vṛsa is used in opposition to create a total balance. The

tangible or tactile quality further enhances our eye movement. Balance here is a 'corollary to passion and control'. These sculptures reflect the Nichomachean, 'virtue practised to the right proportion' - balance between excess and deficient. The sculptures unlike those from Muttaraiyar temples combine the 'life here and life hereafter'. It is not 'phantomic' even from its beginning. It is no wonder that attributes like 'presence, idealised reality, graded ethereality, tangible, compact and tactile three dimensionality', are so frequently used. The conflict to idealise and realise was the outcome of both religious and creative motivations. This is reflected in all its varied strains.

The varied also means the Pāṇḍyan. The Pāṇḍyan occupation, and then their defeat at Tiruppurambiyam was again an exposure which was more direct, than other means. The Pāṇḍyan sculpture quite scanty for the centuries was first of all too robust and sinewy. However, they lacked the numinous quality, despite the physical charm. M.A. Dhaky calls this a luminous glow from without or an outside radiation, despite devices used to accen-tuate the godly and spiritual.

The Early Chōḷa had come thus far. Improving upon the Muttaraiyar flow, it would defeat their purpose to absorb the Pāṇḍyan residues or superfluity. It was not for the ornament, or tightly shut eyes, the seriousness or the condescending vague smile that

came from without that they aimed at. They strived for the inner radiation and luminousness. They did not surrender to that 'smile' and maintained their identity with all the more conviction. These are seen in the Tiruccaturai Śiva. The intuitive feeling for form in its physiognomy, body language and intense three dimensional quality became their vocabulary. an elaboration of this is seen in the Kumbakōṇam figures where the unwordly or over scrupulous are avoided. The 'touch of human, both subtle and sensuous' come to the fore. Very slightly turned, she-the apsara is poised, this eternal woman in the doorway, at once alive, awakened, aware and tender. She is both real and an enigma. This was the direction the Chōḷa spirit was taking and it was fulfilled in the Ardhanārī from the Ugramahākālī temple in Tañjāvūr.

The Chōḷa quest for balance, counter balance and movement caught between stillness and action is 'poise of being theory' of Aristotle. There is a movement from the particular to the universal prototype, it is also approximate to what is claimed in the 'Posterior Analytics' where all knowledge begins in sense impressions and ascends to the general or universal. An idea is not only particular but a universal abstraction. This does not imply that the Chōḷa wanted to lose his identity altogether. He took a path that was different, using all those aforementioned traits. He used material realism and suggested through it the 'total

being or a perfect being' which are the same human qualities but used in degrees and in variation. Thus, certain ennobling features distinguishes them from the mere mortal. Such examples were to a large extent fulfilled in the Śrīnivāsanallūr sculptures. The divine, semi divine and human were all introduced at the same level.

At the same time we are also conscious of certain ethnic differences in the phase. The Tiruvēdikudī, Tiruccaturai forms and other lesser known examples show the divine character, rounded faces and postural affinity called archaic Āditya I style and are the two opposite points of this phase. The lesser known examples perhaps concentrated more on achieving the expressive qualities, or were not in the jurisdiction of the epicentres. The possibility of economic limitation, resources and sculptors removed from the centre were responsible for this. However, ethnic sources differ. The Tiruvēdikudī figures, the Kumbakonam and the Śrīnivāsanallūr figures have very different faces, but perhaps similar physiognomy. The Śrīnivāsanallūr face shows a heavy face with oriental features while the Kumbakōṇam probably a typical gaṇika or even a courtesan. These variations occur within the Chōḷa , and at least a few of them have to be carefully and separately explored. However, they do not effect the attitude or basic vocabulary. Occasionally vestiges of the Pallava technique and form may appear as in the Durga from Tiruvēdikudī

but the distinctive traits and character of Chōḷa remain. This is not so in the Saptamātrika at Nārttamalai, for they still show the Pallava traits heavily; in the Chōḷa case they are just what could be termed as M.A. Dhaky's 'schematic emphasis'.

Talking of influence we are at once confronted with the two unique idioms of the Irrukuvēḷ and Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar. The Koḍumbālūr sculptures which we have discussed show ethnic uniqueness. Yet the Tripurasundari is similar to the Tiruccendurai Vṛsabhāntika and the one from the Ugramahākālī temple at Tañjāvūr. The Mūvarkōil alone shows certain ethnic as well as postural variations. The Ardhanārī in the Tirubhūtiśvara east, is by virtue of stance, gesture and body language like the female form in the southern side of the ardhamāṇḍapa at the Kumbakōṇam Nāgēśvarasvāmi. The Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the southern shrine south, is generally Āditya I type. The same shrine shows a Gaṅgādhara in the east which recalls some of the features of the Tirutantoriśvara dvārapāla from Tiruc irāppalli. What can be said of the Kalārimūrti? This is the crux of the problem that makes Irrukuvēḷ different from the mainline Chōḷa. Some of the features from here are perpetuated in the Visamaṅgalēsvara at Turaiyūr and other temples. The Tirukaṭṭalai Tripurāntaka looks familiar to the Śrīnivāsanallūr male figures.

The Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar in their twin shrines show their own ethnicity, some of the Uraiūr Tirtantorīśvara dvārapāla in their

own, show a little of the Tiruccaturai Śiva in their Śiva and Dakṣiṇāmūrti. At the same time they are tense, and stiff with nothing of the 'casual Chōḷa stance'. There is a slight relaxation in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti from Chōḷīśvaram.

Looking at these examples it is clear that there existed simultaneously in the neighbourhood certain broad and common trends, as well as their peculiarities. They belong to the major style which is the Chōḷa, not merely due to political upmanship but by the virtue of the style and quality of sculptures which were created very specifically by the Chōḷa psyche. Without transgressing these idioms they combined the main and substyles and can be called the extensions or types of Chōḷa idiom.

The Parāntaka I Phase brought to feverish pitch or climax in the quality of tran substantiation in sculpture. This is discussed in the examples at Pullamaṅgai and Erumbūr of the Brahma and Aruṇācalēśvara respectively. The traits which form the style in this particular phase are those of the sublime and transcendent. Placed frontally and right at the edge of the niche which was habitual except in Korāṅganātha Śrīnivāsanallūr where they are turned in the corner niches, these sculptures still throw accent on expression achieved through a careful study and execution of form. Having reached the pinnacle of creativity there were new challenges to be taken. Stone as stone had been well and

truly understood. But stone simulating metal was an irresistible challenge. The parallelism of mediums began. The end of Parantaka I phase called forth in Punjai and Tiruvadutturai changes which thus place them in the Second Phase. However, they are called so, they are better known as the transitional temples ushering in rightfully the Sembiyan Phase. The change in attitude led to the new aspect in style, that of the preoccupation with medium and form. This shows us how the trend towards bringing a metallic quality in stone was pursued. All else was secondary. In this obsession with form, they tried to grasp the elements and their interrelationship. They went for the fulsome, round forms where they coordinated the details. They organised their material in terms of lines, masses, space and volumes. They aimed at exploiting their medium and harmonising. Then organising of these forms is their presentation, taking after what they suggest. From a casual organisation of the previous phase, where expressive qualities were emphasised the Third or Sembiyan Phase heralded the definite organisation. It meant that the tactile value was the first and foremost. Punjai Vrddhacalam sculptures and others of the phase consummated this union. The art had matured, and was beginning to face the reality of middle age and impotence.

A summing up is somewhat inconclusive if the iconographic programme is altogether ignored. To a limited extent a style is determined

by iconography and iconology. These two aspects are very limited; however, the placement of images in the fabric of temple and their number calls forth two traits. These are the direction taken by religion which establish a hieratic convention and which in turn call for more sculptures to be accommodated in various niches in an advanced or relatively more elaborate architecture. "Temple building was never a static art tied to the apron strings of text books on architecture. There were prescribed patterns and designs but within their framework there was infinite variation, innovation and room for individuality..... buildings were fashioned to the varying hour. Changes and new facets of style make their appearance in each region and certain temples always stand out as prototypes of a certain region or reign"(13).

The Āditya I temples varied in their dēvakōshṭa. There were usually three to five dēvakōshṭa to suit the modest size. Some of the Muttaraiyar temples as at Sēndalai and Vijayālaya Chōḷisvaram at Nārttamalai did not have dēvakōshṭa, just as Panangudi and Kaliyapaṭṭi. Those at Nēmam, Naṅgavaram and some other show the usual east occupied with Skanda or Indra, the west with Viṣṇu; south with Dakśīnāmūrti or Bhikṣātana and the north with Brahma. Vīralūr shows an exception in that we find the Dakśīnamurti in the north dēvakōshṭa. Some such variations are seen in the Tirukaṭṭalai Sundarēśvara where the southern niche has the Tripurāntaka; and Harihara in Trivērumbūr in the

west. The western niches of Kumbakōṇam and Tirukaṭṭalai have Ardhanāri and Lingodbhava. The Tiruccendurai has R₅ abhāṅktika in the south. Lālgudi like Vīralūr has Bhikṣātana in the north.

Āditya I also introduced the idea of the twin complex which has Subramanya in the east. Such a feature is also seen in the upper tala niches in some of the Muttaraiyar temples. It is observed that the rear niche favoured Ardhanāri in the Āditya I phase, however like the Muttaraiyar, the Grāmam temple in the later years of Parāntaka still used the Viṣṇu form.

The parivaralaya are well known features. Besides this, the idea of separating the garbhagrha into two sections in the Avani-kāṇḍarpa at Kilaiyūr and also introducing the two storeyed garbhagrha at Korāṅganāntha Śrīnivāsanallūr are noticed in his phase. However, the limitation of dēvakōṣṭha limited the repertoire of sculptures. A form of Śiva was often used as variation. In Turaiyūr the Dakṣināmurti was replaced by Sarasvati, or by the Vinadhara Dakṣināmurti as also seen in Lālgudi.

The ardhamāṇḍapa was usually attached to the garbhagrha or sometimes an antarāla connected them, just as a mukhamāṇḍapa was connected.

The dēvakōṣṭha of some of the temples as at Lālgudi, Allambākam etc. had a projected bhadra because of which the dēvakōṣṭha

was projected forward with the sculpture. A lot of these temples had this feature and with it came extra pilasters on the corners like those at Vīralūr, Grāmam, Kilaiyūr, Tiruccaturai etc. The Tiruvēdikūḍi temple also has the projected bhadra with dēvakōshṭa but there are recesses or hārāntara recesses with adorers; this also occurs in Tillaisthānam and Kumbakōṇam. A variation of the above occurs in Tiruppālanam with additional pilasters flanking the bhadra kōshṭa .

Most of the ardhamāṇḍapa have no dēvakōshṭa , but some examples like the Tiruvēdikūḍi, Kandiyūr and Grāmam have one dēvakōshṭa on each side. There are additional niches for semi divinities or amāṛ in Kumbakōṇam on either side of the dēvakōshṭa somewhat similar to Tiruvēdikūḍi. Śrīnivāsanallūr also has one dēvakōshṭa on the ardhamāṇḍapa. Tirupāllanam has a complex arrangement of a projected bhadra with dēvakōshṭa and recesses carrying adorers.

In some of the larger temples we see a gradual increase in the sculptures.

The Parāntaka I Phase follows the Āditya I Phase closely. The 'noblest artistic expression was found in the Pullmaṅgai'. The most important feature was the introduction of Lingōdbhava in the rear niche while the other features continued. D. Barret

used this character to shift many temples chronologically from Āditya I to Parāntaka I Phase. They also act as a rough index for architectural differentiation. This further shows us the slant or slightly turned sculpture in the niches. Sometime an additional niche is added to the three. In such cases Gaṇeśa was added to the south and Durga to the north. In Puñjai and Tiruvāduturai we see Agastya entering as a niche figure, and sometimes in the antarāla niche too.

The later part of Parāntaka I's reign saw the beginnings of a new movement, by introducing the false antarāla. Each wall of the garbhagrha was articulated by two pavillions flanking the central dēvakōshṭa. The ardhamandapa, for example show three dēvakōshṭa with Agastya, Gaṇeśa and a blind dēvakōshṭa in Tiruvāduturai. In the north wall opposite the Gaṇeśa is a dēvakōshṭa with Durga. There are iconic variations in the way ayudha are held here too. The ascent of Uttama saw a more elaborate planning of dēvakōshṭa in the ardhamandapa, and thus a greater variety of sculptures. This is seen in Konērīrājapuram. The garbhagrha has Lingodbhava in the east or west, Dakṣīnāmūrti in the south and Brahma in the north. This became more or less fixed. The ardhamandapa walls show from east to west Bhikṣātana, Durga and Ardhanārī in the north and in the south Naṭarāja, Gaṇapati and Agastya. From two dēvakōshṭa of the First Phase we now have six. Kāṭṭumannārguḍi shows these addi-

tional dēvakōshṭa for the first time in the ardhamanḍapa. Agastya was a canonised deity in the south wall. Bhikṣātana, Gaṅgādhara and Ardhanārī find places. The hieratic trend was conventionalised. Vṛddhācalam shows the central dēvakōshṭa flanked by guha niches. This is for the first time the perfunctory method of accommodating the full iconographic scheme on the ardhamanḍapa walls.

The Sembiyan Mahādēvi Kailāsanātha shows Naṭarāja occupying the central dēvakōshṭa for the first time. The Karuntaṅguḍi Vasistēśvara shows on all the three sides between the pañjāra and frontis piece images set directly on the wall, which read from south to east, Gaṇapati, Agastya, Ardhanārī, Kaṅkāla, Gaṅgādhara and Viṇādhara Dakṣiṇāmūrti. The recessed wall spaces see Bhikṣātana with ṛṣi patni in the south and Kālahāra in the north. Two of the dēvakōshṭa contain Naṭarāja Ānaṇḍa Tāṇḍava in the south minus the Gaṅga; and Durga in the north. The other side reads from west, Appar and Sambandar, south Kārtikēya and Bhikṣātana north.

The Sakheśvara at Tirupurambiyam not only occupied five dēvakōshṭa images but no less than twelve smaller images.

The Third Phase shows two kinds of iconographic schemes. One similar to Karuntaṅguḍi where only two dēvakōshṭa are seen on the ardhamanḍapa, where Ānaṇḍa Tāṇḍava Naṭarāja is

in the south. Tiru purmbiyam suggests that the images in the flanking niches could be an after thought, as is justified in the Tiruvaiyāru Uttarakailāsa. The second scheme seen in Vṛdha calam displays six images in the ardhamandapa.

These are unique Chōla developments which show a conventionalising of an iconographic scheme and placement of deities, not hitherto seen before. Perhaps a separate study of this scheme in the ardhamandapa at greater length will yield some fruitful results in understanding this rule and its expression for a newer understanding of style.

At this point what is important to us is the incorporation of sages, men, gods and demi gods, am . and gaṇa, who call forth certain very humane qualities which are rendered so successfully by the sculptors that they become special Chōla characteristics, which are its potential and output. The gods, the mortals and the semi divine are all on a level plane of reaching out to one another so lyrically expressed in Bhakti.

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