

## **Important Archaeological Sites In Tamilnadu - A Study**

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### **Adichanallur**

**Adichanallur** is an important archaeological site in Tamil Nadu. It is 18 km. south of **Tirunelveli** and about 13 Km from **Korkai** an ancient port of South India.<sup>161</sup> There is an urn field here, 46 hectares in area. It stretches along the southern bank of the river *Tamraparani*, near which there is a small hillock. In 1876, it was noticed by **Jager** of the **Berlin Museum**. Later around 1889-1905, **Alexander Rea**<sup>1</sup> of the **Archaeological Survey of India** and **Louis Lapique** (1903-04) of the **Paris Museum** took interest in the site. **Rea** conducted an extensive excavation. The antiquities unearthed there are now kept in the **Madras Museum**. Alexander Rea observed that in the rocky areas, urn-burials were arranged in rows. The burial pit was usually concave in shape. It had a small hole at the bottom to hold the pedemele of the urn firmly. After lowering the urn into the pit, it had to be positioned safely. Then the human remains in crouching and bent positions along with other furnishings were placed in it.<sup>2</sup> The final step was to fill the pit with gravelly earth upto the ground level, or some earth was heaped over the opening of the pit.<sup>3</sup> In some cases, particularly when important persons were buried, the grave was marked by a pile of heavy stones. The gravelly earth and the looseness of the soil indicated the location of the burials.<sup>4</sup>

Sites excavated (1899-1905) yielded very many objects.<sup>5</sup> Along with the large urns, skeletal remains as well as megalithic ceramics, iron objects like weapons for offence and defence, objects for domestic use, bronze cups, and bowls, gold ornaments (diadems), beads of semi-precious stones, stone objects of household utility were dug out.<sup>6</sup> There was an iron ring covered with gold. Traces of cloth, paddy-husk and remains of millet were also obtained. The gold diadem

was of thin sheet and oval in shape having rope like protuberances on each side, fastening others which had holes at the end.<sup>7</sup> A few were decorated with incisions.

Hoes, horse-bits and tridents of impressive size were some of the iron objects found here. A few bangles and other ornaments were also seen. The most noteworthy bronze object discovered here was a statue of the mother goddess, possibly *Aditi*, which resembles the repousse's gold leaf figures of the mother goddesses found in the Buddhist centres.<sup>8</sup> Bronze cups and bowls have lids with animal and bird forms which are not found elsewhere in South India. The skulls recovered from this site, according to experts, resemble the Mediterranean and Proto-Australoid.<sup>9</sup> As it was not possible to further classify the skulls in between these two groups, the experts state that the remains represent a homogenous and mixed population, identical with the admixture of the present people of Dravidian stock.<sup>10</sup> So far, no specific date has been assigned to this site.

### **Chitharal**

Chitharal is a small village situated at a distance of 8 km. from Kuzhithurai in the Kanyakumari District. Near this village, stands the small craggy hill called '**Thirucharanattumalai**' which means the hill holy to the *Charanars*.<sup>11</sup> **Nikantus** say that the word '**Charanar**' represents '**Jain Monks**'. According to the Tamil Lexicon, the word '**Charanar**' means **Jain** or **Buddhist** sages who have obtained supernatural powers. Therefore it is to be presumed that the hill was sacred to the Jain monks, or they might have lived there in large numbers. Epigraphical evidences also show that the sacred hill was dominated by the devout Jains in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>12</sup> Though **Chitharal** is a small village, it is famous for the rock-out temples, which were first discovered some hundred years ago (A.D. 1895). These are found on the summit of a huge rocky hill. This can be reached by a rough foot path formed of rubbles. One of the most important structures is a low roofed temple, facing west with a dilapidated gopura. It is cut out of a rock with its hall built outside and has a low domb supported by ornamental granite pillars. It is a Jain shrine<sup>13</sup> as seen from the base-relief sculptures of **Jain Thirthankaras**, on the rock forming one of the side walls on the north. The inner shrine contains

images of **Ambigai, Buddha and Gopalakrishna**. The annual festival of the temple is conducted before **Vaikasi Vishakam**, for a period of 10 days which attracts people from all over the district.

The cave temple at Chitharal is divided into three chambers. The presiding deity in 'Padmasana' posture under a triple umbrella and in the central chamber is **Mahavira**.<sup>14</sup> The huge image standing under the canopy of a hooded serpent to the left of Mahavira is **Parsavanath** and on his right stands **Bhagavathi** in the place of **Padmavathi Devi**. According to epigraphical evidences, a reputed Jain University existed there at **Thiruchcharanathu Malai** (Chitharal).<sup>15</sup>

The temple and the huge rock in the background present a striking view. The top of the work commands a beautiful view of the jungle-clad hills, the low-lying paddy fields, river and the numerous palmyrah groves. The sun-set seen from the temple porch is a pleasant sight indeed. Compelling the attention of every visitor is a rock locally called '**Urinchipparai**'<sup>16</sup> situated on the north of the shrine. Pure water comes from a small hole in the rock if any one sucks it.

### **Kanchipuram**

**Kanchipuram**, 77 km. south west of Chennai is one of the most ancient cities of South India. The place finds its name in **Mahabhashya** written by **Patanjali** of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>17</sup> This city has been successively the capital of the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Vijayanagar rulers. Seven cities are held sacred in India. They are **Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, Kasi Avanthi, Kanchi** and **Dwaraka**.<sup>18</sup> Of these three are sacred to **Siva** and three to **Vishnu**. But **Kanchi** is sacred to both. Besides **Saivism** and **Vaishnavism** it has also been the seat of **Jainism** and **Buddhism** in ancient days.<sup>19</sup> At one time the city was divided into four parts - **Siva Kanchi,**

**Vishnu Kanchi, Jaina Kanchi** and **Buddha Kanchi**. Thus the city had been the centre of learning and of the composite culture of ancient India. Even now all phases of the ancient religious culture are represented by their places of worship.

### **Siva Kanchi**

Kanchi is a very important centre to Saivites. Here Lord Siva is worshipped in the form of **Prithivi Linga** (earth linga). The presiding deity is **Ekambaranatha**. The name Ekambaranatha<sup>20</sup> is a modified form of the expression **Eka Amra Natha** meaning the Lord of the unique **Mango tree**. (Ekam - one, Amram - Mango tree). **Mango tree** is the *Sthala Vriksha* of the temple. It is said that the four Vedas have combined to form the mango tree. The taste of the fruits of each of the four branches differ from the other and the leaves are also different in appearance. It is believed that **Goddess Parvathi** practised penance beneath this tree. There are five prakaras in the temple. The southern gopura of the temple, one of the highest in South India, has ten storeys and is 188 feet (57 metres) high.<sup>21</sup> It is said that the tower was constructed by **Sri Krishnadeva Raya** in A.D. 1509.

Another ancient temple at **Siva Kanchi** is that of **Kailasanatha temple** also called as **Rajasimheswara** built by the Pallava king **Rajasimha** during the first quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>22</sup> In the sanctum sanctorum of the temple is a Prismatic Linga with sixteen facets which is of highly polished stone, eight feet in height. On the backwall of the sanctum, above the Linga is a panel of Somaskanda. The temple is a well-planned structure which incorporates all the major characteristics of Pallava art and architecture.<sup>23</sup> Kanchi is also famous because it is one of the important seats of **Sakthi**. Other places are **Kasi** and **Madurai**. Here the deity is called as **Kamakshi**. The temple of Kamakshi is in the centre of Siva Kanchi.<sup>24</sup> Devi Kamakshi is in *padmasana* pose having four arms; the upper arms hold *pasam* and *ankusam* and the lower arms *pushpabanam* and a bow of sugar-cane respectively.<sup>25</sup>

### **Vishnu Kanchi**

Kanchi is regarded as one of the three most important centres of **Vaishnavism**. The others are **Srirangam** and **Tirupathi**. About 3 km. from Siva Kanchi is **Vishnu Kanchi**, which contains several ancient Vaishnavite temples, the most important of which is that of **Varadaraja Perumal temple**,<sup>26</sup> situated on

a hillock called **Hastihiri**. One has to ascend 24 steps up the hill to reach the sanctum sanctorum. Lord **Varadaraja Perumal** with Chaturbhujas is in standing posture facing the west. The image is huge in size and decorated with costly jewels. The temple has a seven-storeyed tower which is 100 feet (30 metres) high. The noteworthy feature of the temple is the 100 pillared hall, a master piece of the Vijayanagar artisans of the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>27</sup> It contains beautiful sculptures of **Rati** and **Manmatha** (Goddess and God of Love). Ornamental rings carved out of single stone at the four corners of the mandapa present a unique and delightful spectacle.<sup>28</sup>

The **Brahmotsava** with its chief item the **Garudotsavam** popularly called as **Kanchi Garudasevai** which takes place in Vaikasi (May - June) every year attracts thousands of devotees from all corners of the country.<sup>29</sup> Another equally important Vaishnavite shrine at **Kanchi** is **Vaikuntaperumal temple**. Here one can see the three poses of Lord **Vishnu**. In the ground floor, He is in sitting posture and in the first floor, He is in standing posture and in the second floor, He is in reclining posture. The temple is of great archaeological and historical interest. Built by the Pallava king **Nandivarman II** during the later half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the temple retains even today all the characteristic features of Pallava architecture.<sup>30</sup> The important events of Pallava history during the period of Nandivarman are depicted on a series of panels around the central shrine.

### **Jaina Kanchi**

Kanchi appears to have developed as a favourite centre of Jainism from the early times.<sup>31</sup> The celebrated Pallava king **Mahendravarman I** who ruled Kanchipuram during the first quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., was a staunch adherent of Jainism in the early part of his life. **Tiruparuthikuntram** otherwise known as **Jaina Kanchi** about 4 km. from Kanchipuram has preserved two Jain temple<sup>32</sup> even to day. The smaller one is dedicated to **Chandraprabha**, the eighth Tirthankara and the larger one is dedicated to **Mahavira**, the last Tirthankara. The big image of Chandraprabha made of white marble in the smaller temple and the beautiful paintings depicting scenes from the life of **Mahavira**, of **Rishabadeva**

and of **Neminatha** in the larger temple are a feast to the eyes and mind.<sup>33</sup> **Jaina Kanchi** has also been the seat of some great Jain scholars like **Akalanga**, **Chandrakirti** and **Mallisena Vamana**.

### **Kudumiyanmalai**

Situated in the Pudukottai District of Tamil Nadu, **Kudumiyanmalai** is at a distance of 19 km. from the city of Pudukottai. It is known as "Tirunarkunram" in early and as **Sikanallur** in later inscriptions.<sup>34</sup> At the top of the hill, there is a temple of **Subramanya** on the base of the hill. On both sides of the way to the temple at the summit, natural caves exist which might have been inhabited in the past probably by Jains.<sup>35</sup> A mandapa with thousand pillars exist in front of Sikanadar temple and the beautiful pillars on the path in the mandapa has sculptures of the monkeys of the Ramayana epic, **Ravana**, deities and of those who donated grants to the temple. The **Saba-mandapa**, besides it, contain idols like that of Nataraja. Beyond this mandapa, there is a big hall containing the bronze statues of **Ganesa**, **Subramanya**, the **Saiva Nayanmars** etc., constructed during the later Chola period, while others indicate the Pandyan style of architecture.<sup>36</sup> The sanctum - sanctorum has been renovated more than once and the temple has three prakaras (enclosures). A number of small temples for **Akilandeswari**, **Vinayaka**, **Sundaranayaki** etc. exist in the outer enclosure. In the western side of the outer enclosure exists a rock cut temple built during the time of **Mahendravarma I**, while **Sundaranayaki temple** belongs to the Pandya period. On the back side of the rock out temple, the famous musical inscription is inscribed in between two Ganesa sculptures. The musical inscription occupies a space of 3.9 m x 4.2 m and begins with the phrase "**Cittam namasivaya**" containing seven sections for the seven musical notes.<sup>37</sup> It ends with the note that it suits eight as well as seven and a king **Parama Makeswaran** claims to have been the author of this inscription. Besides this useful inscription for musical research, the place contains about one hundred and twenty inscriptions that help to reconstruct the history of **Pudukottai**. Western temple called **Tirumerrali** is the oldest and might probably belong to the period of **Mahendravarma I**.<sup>38</sup> Irunkovel, Pandyas, Cholas, and

Pallavas have given grants to this temple. **Kudumiyanmalai** was an important town during the period of the **Chola - Chalukyas**. Cholas and later Pandyas have carried out renovation works<sup>39</sup> here and a Devadasi **Umayal Vinacci** was responsible for the construction of the **Sundaranayaki temple**. Inscriptions are available in the tower of Kudumiyanmalai.

### **Kayalpattinam**

An important port town of the Pandyas, Kayalpattinam is situated in the east coast in Tuticorin District. A centre of maritime trade, it attracted trading public from within and outside.<sup>40</sup> **Marco Polo** who had an intimate knowledge on this harbour mentions that *Kayil*<sup>41</sup> (Kayal) was the big city belonging to the eldest of the five royal brothers by name **Asher** (Maravarman Kulasekara) and the merchants from **Harmuz, Aden**, and other Arabian ports arrived with their ships laden with horses and other commodities. The king extended all support to foreigners and indigenous merchants who thronged the harbour. It was the centre of large scale export and import and as a result the government secured a lot of income in the form of excise and custom duties. Though customs and excise duties were collected, they were not highly taxing the merchants as can be learned from the observations of Marco Polo, that the merchants felt it convenient and safe to trade through this harbour. *Anchuvannam* (a merchant guild of Arab Muslims in Tamil Nadu) operated from this harbour town in collaboration with others like the **Nanadesikal**.<sup>42</sup>

### **Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram)**

**Mahabalipuram**, once known as **Mamallapuram**<sup>43</sup> is on the east coast, about 60 km. south of Chennai city. There are some of the most famous ancient monuments in India which are appealing even to the occasional visitor. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the kings of the Pallava dynasty created cave temples, monolithic shrines, structural stone temples and expensive relief panels carved on the open-rock-face of the hill side.<sup>44</sup> **Mamallapuram** has 15 cave temples, 10 monolithic shrines, 3 structural stone temples and 4 relief sculptured rock panels.<sup>45</sup> These were the creations of the Pallavas in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. As a sea-port,

Mamallapuram has been very famous since the beginning of the Christian Era. This has been referred to as **Mamallai-Ptolomy**, the Roman geographer refers to it as "**Malange**". The findings of Roman coins in the neighbourhood testify its importance as a trading centre. It was **Hiuen Tsang**, the Chinese traveller of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. wrote that Kanchi was the sea port of the Pallava rulers of South India.<sup>46</sup> By this, he might have, most probably referred only Mamallapuram and not Kanchipuram as the latter is situated far away from the sea. **Manucei**, an **Italian** (17<sup>th</sup> century) among other European travellers, was the first to be attracted by the monuments in **Mamallapuram**. "**Seven Pagodas**"<sup>47</sup>, the popular name should be credited to the early Europeans in India, was originally applied to the shore temple. The monuments at Mahabalipuram were mostly erected during the reign of **Narasimhavarman I**. They can be classified based on the mode of construction.<sup>48</sup>

- (i) **Monoliths** - free standing temples cut out of solid rock, most of which are locally called as **Rathas** (Chariots)
- (ii) **Caves** - excavated in hill scarps and used as temples, some of which are called mantapas or canopies.
- (iii) **Temples** - built up masonry temples, and
- (iv) **Sculptures** and **Sculptured Scenes** carved on the hill edges.

The five monoliths (**ie. Dharmaraja Ratha, Arjuna Ratha, Bhima Ratha, Draupati Ratha, Nakula - Sakadeva Ratha**) in a group, is cut out of solid rock hewn to form five free standing monolithic temples, close to each other.<sup>49</sup> The temples are associated with any historical evidence, with the five Pandava brothers of **Mahabharata**. The super structures, each of which varies from one another, illustrate the varieties of roofing system that were followed.

### **Shore temple**

Situated on the sea-shore, the **Shore temple** is a complex consisting of three temples - two of them dedicated to **Lord Siva** and the other one to **Lord**

**Vishnu.**<sup>50</sup> The temple which faces west and having Tritala vimana is called '**Rajasimheswara**'. The other temple, facing east, consists of a 'Chatusthala vimana' called "**Kshatriya Simheswara**". It consists of a **Somaskanda Panel**, while the one facing west, has a dhara of fluted linga. At some distance, opposite this temple, is a **Dwajasthamba** and a **bhalipeeta**, around which have been stacked some loose sculptures. The whole compound of the shore temple which was burried under a thick deposit of sand had been cleared and restored to a certain extent.<sup>51</sup>

### **Arjuna's Penance Panel**

This monument, located north-west of Sthalasayanaperumal temple, is one of the biggest base reliefs in open theatre, carved over two large natural boulders with a narrow fissure in between, have been chosen to represent a series of rows of gods and goddesses. It is generally taken to depict the scene of **Arjuna's penance**, flow of the Ganges, and other related sceneries on the banks of the river Ganges.<sup>52</sup> Arjuna is depicted in the emancipated form, doing penance, standing in one leg with hands raised. On one side is the four armed Siva carrying a trident in one of his hands and attended by dwarf Ganas. The central cleft has been taken to depict the flow of the Ganges, and besides this, in the centre, Surya and Chandra, celestials like Kinnaras, Siddhas, Kinopurusha, Gandharvas, Apsaras etc. are shown rushing towards the central point of the cleft. Apart from the celestials, there are sages, disciples, hunters and wild animals like lion, tiger, elephant and bear. The elephants are the masterpieces of the artistic non-chalance.<sup>53</sup> The young one nestling in the space between the legs of the parent animal and playing with trunks show delightful deliration of life. Near the banks of Ganges, is a small shrine where saints are involved in various religious acts. Another feature is the gigantic representation of row of elephants rushing to the central point. The monument belongs to the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from *Arjuna's Penance Panel*, the *Ganesha Ratha*, *Pidari Ratha*, *Dharmaraja Mandapa*, *Dolostava Mandapa*, *Mahishasura Rock*, *Krishna's Butter Ball*, *Krishna Mandapa*, *Ramanuja Mandapa*, *Kotikal Mandapa*,

**Mahishasuramardini Rock-cut Mandapa** and **Varaha Rock cut Mandapa** are centres of architectural excellence.<sup>55</sup>

### **Nagapattinam**

An important port town in the east coast, Nagapattinam was well known to foreigners from the very early times. A centre of maritime commerce, it was an important harbour in the two sea routes followed by China. Known as **Nikaua to Ptolemy, Nagavatana to It-Sing, Pa-tan to Marco Polo**, the port town is mentioned as **Navutapattana** in the epigraphs of the **Kalyani Chalukyas**. In the Buddhist texts, the city is mentioned as **Nagai** and **Nagainagara**<sup>56</sup>, while it is **Tirunakaikkaronam** to Saivites and **Tirunakai** to **Vaishnavites**. In A.D. 720, the Pallava king **Nandivarma Pallavamalla** built a Buddhist vihara at the request of the Chinese emperor and it was known as the **China Vihara** there.<sup>57</sup> **Marco Polo** also confirms that there was a Chinese temple in **Nagapattinam**. According to Vaishnava texts, **Tirumangai Alwar** took away the golden Buddha statue from the Buddhist temple and built a well in the **Srirangam temple**.<sup>58</sup> During the Chola period, Buddhists from the **Shailendra Empire** of **Sri Vijaya**, had a colony in Nagapattinam. With the aid of the Chola monarchs, the Buddhists built a vihara to rejuvenate the decaying Buddhism in the area. Further the Chola monarchs, **Rajaraja I** and **Rajendra I** built two Buddhist monasteries, **Rajaraja Perumpalli** and **Rajendra Chola Perumpalli** in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and endowed villages like **Yanaimangalam** as **Pallichantham**.<sup>59</sup> The vihara built on the **Shailendra's** insistence was named **Chudamanivarma Vihara** after **Chudamanivarman**, the father of **Mara Vijayottungavarma**, the **Shailendra emperor** of **Sri Vijaya**.

The three storeyed gopura of the Chinese vihara which functioned also as a light house to the ships that approached Nagapattinam was also known as **Puduvveli gopuram**. In Nagapattinam, rare Buddhist bronzes have been found<sup>221</sup> and therefore, it is obvious that it was the bronze casting art, that was fostered for the first time in Tamilakam by the Cholas which gave a fillip to casting of Buddhist bronzes as found in such profusion in Nagapattinam.

**Poompuhar - An ancient port of Tamil Nadu**

**Poompuhar**, the celebrated ancient city of the Cholas, was one of the leading international ports of those times. It was the centre of abundant wealth and prosperity.<sup>60</sup> '**Puhar**' in Tamil stands for a place where a river enters the sea. Due to the exquisite beauty of the port town, where the river **Cauvery** merges with the Bay of Bengal, it came to be called as "**Poompuhar**".<sup>61</sup> This city was called by various names in the ancient times, as **Kaveri-Poompattinam**, **Kakanti**, and **Cholapattinam**. Ancient Tamil epics *Shilappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai* and other **Buddhist Jatakas** throw considerable light on Poompuhar.<sup>62</sup> Poompuhar was ruled by many eminent Tamil kings. It reached new pinnacle of glory under the magnificent reign of king **Karikala Chola** who was a great patron of dance, music and architecture. It was this **Karikala** who constructed the **Grand Anaikat** across the river **Cauvery**, when the science of hydrology was unknown to the west.

The layout of the city of **Poompuhar**, the names of its streets, groves, and gardens are given in detail in **Silappadikaram**. It is clear that this city was built on a well laid-out plan, as early as a century before the Christian era.<sup>63</sup> **Poompuhar** consisted of three main parts. The place near the sea-shore was **Maruvurpakkam**, and the main portion inside was known as **Pattinapakkam**. The intervening space with a number of shade trees was the central market place known as **Nalangadi**. This was a day market, while the evening market was known as **Alangadi**. The sailors from all over the world were seen on the harbour. Ships from far off lands called at the port of Poompuhar. In the streets of the market place, hawkers sold fragrant scents, fur and cotton, besides rare ornaments, perfect pearls, gems and gold. Some of the special streets sold eighteen varieties of food-grains.<sup>64</sup> Many temples dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu are said to have existed in the city. The king **Cheran Senguttuvan** immortalised **Kannagi** (the heroine of *Cilapadikaram*) by raising a stone temple for her, with endowments for daily worship. A Buddhist '**Vihara**' and '**Chaitya**' were also located in the area. Artisans from **Magadha**, **Avanthi** and other regions and also the Greek sculptors were working in the city. Many communities like Jains, Buddhists, Shaivites and

Vaishnavites lived in harmony. Poompuhar was a busy - international port and goods of foreign trade bore the '**Tiger seal**.'<sup>65</sup> A light house of excellent engineering skill beautified the port.

The life of **Poompuhar** seems to have centered around foreign trade. Food and other utilitarian objects were imported from **Ceylon, China** and **Malaya**. Sandal wood, pepper, spices, precious gems, silk and cotton were exported. Unfortunately, such a prosperous port city, became submerged by the fury of the sea. '**Manimekhalai**' gives a graphic account of the destruction of Poompuhar by the sea.<sup>228</sup> It may be concluded that this ancient port city lost its glory gradually through the centuries, never to rise again. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many historians and scholars have been taking considerable interest about this ancient city. As early as A.D. 1910, the Madras administration excavated the submerged area close to the sea shore, and exposed some wells surrounded by burnt earthen walls of hard clay and blocks. In A.D. 1961, the **Archaeological Survey of India** (ASI) discovered some remarkable antiquities, such as the ancient wharf with wooden posts, probably used to anchor the boats, and a part of a '**Buddha Vihara**' with square chambers.<sup>66</sup> A beautiful stucco head of **Buddha** and a '**Buddha pada**' carved out of limestone, carrying Buddhist symbols like '**Swastika**', '**Purna Kalasha**' '**Srivatsa**' etc. were also found in the area.

With a view to recapture and bring to surface the lost glory of this ancient port city, the Government of Tamil Nadu has built a beautiful **Art Gallery** at **Poompuhar** with the traditional Dravidian style in a seven storeyed mansion.<sup>67</sup> The Art Gallery covers about 75 square metres in area near the sea-shore. The building was opened to public in 1973, along with its entire sculptural forms which were made at Mahabalipuram. The mansion with its spire at the top is 16 metres in height. In the front is a massive gateway, which is based on the architectural entrance found in the temple of **Mangala Devi** in **Surulimalai**. The entire area is made up to present the environment and atmosphere of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by the erection of various **Mandapas**.<sup>68</sup> **Poompuhar**, with its many monuments, has

become a great attraction for the tourists. Many foreigners visit the place to know the ancient glory.

### **Sittannavasal**

Sittannavasal is a place of artistic excellence in Tamil Nadu. It is situated in the Pudukottai District.<sup>69</sup> The well-known rock-cut cave temple there, containing the celebrated ancient mural paintings in fresco, was for a longtime believed to be of Pallava origin.<sup>70</sup> But the discovery of an inscription disproved the theory. The epigraphy indicates that it was executed by **Elan Gautaman of Madurai**, an ardent supporter of Jainism.<sup>71</sup> It was executed during the reign of **Sri Mara Sri Vallabha**, the Pandya king of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The fresco paintings of **Sittannavasal** were discovered in 1920 by the late **T.A. Gobinatha Rao**, who wrote, "*These paintings are perhaps as old as the shrine and are in a fairly good state of preservation and need being copied fully.*"<sup>72</sup>

In **Sittannavasal**, the principal subject matter still preserved is a grand fresco which adorns the whole extent of the ceiling of the Verandah. This fresco represents a tank covered with lotuses. Amidst the flowers are found fish, goose, buffalo, elephant and three men who are surely Jains holding lotuses in their hands.<sup>73</sup> The chief significance of this fresco is the "two *Apsaras* the heavenly dancers, whose supple movements have been seized and rendered with the eagerness, and sureness, borne of the closest observation and aesthetic insight... the glorious figures of swaying *apsaras*, loaded with jewelled ornaments, broad-hipped narrow waisted powerful and graceful as panthers."<sup>74</sup> Of the two upper garments, one is loosely worn round the waist of the dancer and the other is thrown round the shoulder in a very artistic manner and the frills of this garments are most marvellously depicted by the artist.<sup>75</sup> The absence of nose-rings on both the dancers is reminiscent of the Pallava queens in sculpture who wear no nose-rings.

### **St. Thomas Mount**

**St. Thomas Mount**, a cantonment area, is 13 km. away to the south of Chennai city, on the Grand Southern Trunk Road. St. Thomas Mount is under the

foot of the hillock bearing the same name which is derived from **St. Thomas**, a great Christian Missionary who is said to have attained eternal rest at this place.<sup>76</sup> This mount is familiarly known as **Big Mount**, an isolated cliff of green stone and syenite about 100 metres above the sea level. The ascent to the hill is made by a flight of steps as well as by a nice motorable road. A beautiful church at the top of the hill that adorns the place attracts a large number of devotees. An oil painting, a crude one upon wood, representing a virgin and a child, is placed before the sacred rock. This picture, it is said, was painted by **St. Luke**, an artist.<sup>77</sup>

St. Thomas mount is the headquarters of the Old Madras Artillery and still one of the military stations in Tamil Nadu.<sup>78</sup> The church is built over the spot where the Portuguese in A.D. 1547 discovered the celebrated **Mount Cross** attributed to the legendary evangelism of St. Thomas.<sup>79</sup> The cross was found, while digging for the foundation of a hermitage amid ruins which marked the spot of the martyrdom of the apostle St. Thomas. On one fact of the slab, was a cross in relief with a bird like a dove over it, with its wings expanded as the Holy Ghost, is usually represented when descending on the Lord at His baptism or on the Lady at Her ammunition. This cross was erected over the altar in the chapel which was built on the new sanctuary.<sup>80</sup>

### **Buddhist Centres in Tamil Nadu**

A major contribution of India to world religions is Buddhism though in the land of its origin, it has virtually disappeared from the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D, except for sporadic revival in modern times. The spread of Buddhism in India including Tamil Nadu was the prelude to the spread of Indian culture and traditions.<sup>81</sup> In spreading Buddhism in South and Central Asian countries, the monks from Tamil Nadu have played a significant role. Buddhism once flourished very well in Tamil Nadu. This is known from inscriptions and a few Buddhist remnants found there.<sup>245</sup> In the Chola period, there were some Buddhist colonies such as **Nagapattinam**<sup>82</sup>, **Bhutamangalam**<sup>83</sup>, **Kaveripumpattinam**<sup>84</sup> etc. Asoka's missionaries, on their way to Ceylon, left some relics of Buddhism in Tamilakam. Tamil literary works like *Tirukkural*, *Manimekalai* etc. echo some Buddhist

precepts. Tamil kings were also favourably inclined towards Buddhism. However, the impact of Buddhism on Tamil Nadu was comparatively less than on other parts of India. Later due to the strong influence of **Bhakti Movement**, Buddhism disappeared from Tamil Nadu.

### **Jain Centres in Tamil Nadu**

Jainism as a religion flourished in Tamil Nadu as early as about 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.<sup>85</sup> and even today it is followed in some pockets throughout the state. The important Jain centres in Tamil Nadu have been classified, mainly based on the occurrences of the inscriptions or the existence of Jain monuments.

1. **Aiyam Palayam** in the Palani taluk of the Dindigul district bears Jain vestiges in the form of a natural cavern that was inhabited, and the presence of a large number of Jain images. On Palaeographic grounds, its inhabitation is considered to some extent to a span of 4 centuries from the 7<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>86</sup>

2. **Mettu Patti** (Siddar Malai) in the Nilakottai taluk has a huge cavern with two rows of five beds carved on the sloping rock, each with a pillow on the left. Brahmi inscriptions datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. engraved on the head side of the beds, can be taken to be the names of the resident monks of the monastery.<sup>87</sup>

3. **Ananda Mangalam** in the Madurantakam taluk of the Chingleput district is named after **Ananthanatha Tirthankara**, whose image is sculptured along with those of other Tirthankaras and their attendants. A Jain temple **Jinagiri Palli** datable to the Chola period also exists there.<sup>88</sup>

4. **Tirupparuthi Kuntram**, in the Kanchipuram taluk of Chingleput district is also known as **Jain Kanchi**<sup>89</sup> and is one of the most important Jain centres in Tamil Nadu. The **Trailokyanath temple** is a Jain monument bearing a number of inscriptional records regarding its maintenance and construction.<sup>90</sup> Exhibiting essentially the Chola architectural features, it had its origin in the Pallava times and had received patronage of the Vijayanagar Emperors also.<sup>91</sup>

5. **Kalugumalai** situated in the Kovilpatti taluk of Tuticorin District, apart from having natural caverns, also possesses Jain images which were erected by a number of disciples, as per inscriptional evidences.<sup>92</sup> The celebrated contact between **Tirupparuthi Kuntram** and **Tirunarumgondai** was well established as early as 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. is also known through the inscription.

6. **Vira Sikamani** in Srivaikuntam taluk of Tuticorin District has stone beds in a cave with engraving of a single foot print and a couch, **Sri Suriya Aduman Jinendra** seems to be an important mark who lived in this cave.<sup>93</sup>

7. **Kovilankulam** in the Aruppukottai taluk has a ruined **Jain temple, Ambalappa Swami** of the Chola period. Metallic images of the God and **Yakshi** were presented by some individuals. From inscriptions, it can be gleaned that it was a flourishing Jain centre.

8. **Citharal** also known as **Tirucharanathumalai** in Vilavankodu taluk of Kanyakumari District has a number of Jain images that were sculptured by Jain disciples around the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>94</sup> From inscriptions, it is learnt that it had contact with far flung Jain centres like **Tirunarumgondai**.

9. Nagaraja Koil of **Nagercoil** in Agastheeswaram taluk of Kanyakumari District, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. received patronage for the upkeep and maintenance of Jain temple from the royal house of Travancore.<sup>95</sup>

10. **Alagar Malai** in the Melur taluk of Madurai District, has a huge natural cavern in which, many carved beds with the names of the occupants inscribed in Brahmi script datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and also some Jain images of a later period are found.<sup>96</sup> The size of the cavern indicates that it was selected to accommodate a large community.

11. **Anai Malai** in Madurai District is considered to be one amongst the eight sacred Jain hills in Tamil Nadu by the **Digambara Sect**.<sup>97</sup> A natural cavern with carved stone beds inscribed in Brahmi speak of Jain presence in the 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.; yet it reached its zenith only in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. when a number

of pious devotees contributed their mite in developing it into a Jain settlement. This is seen through the predominance of images in the Jain cult.<sup>98</sup>

12. **Aritta Patti** in Melur taluk in Madurai District has not only a natural cavern indicating Jain presence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. but also Jain images of a Tirthankara canopied by a triple umbrella of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. highlighting Jain dominance, by virtue of which it came to be known as **Tiruppanaiyan Malai**.<sup>99</sup>

13. **Kilakkudi**, otherwise known as **Settippodavu** in Madurai District was a Jain establishment presided over by the monk **Guna Sena Deva**, around the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Stone beds and Jain images mark its importance.

14. **Kila Kuyil Kudi** in Madurai District has revealed through inscriptional evidences that Jain monks from **Sravanabelagola** had visited this place to preach Jain tenets.<sup>100</sup>

15. **Kilavalavu** in Melur taluk of Madurai District, by presence of a large number of beds within small radius may prove that it had a large congregation of ascetics. Even during the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., images portray the presence of Jainism.

16. **Mankulam** in Madurai District has a cluster of caverns which formed the Jain establishment presided over by the monk **Kaninanta**. A number of beds hewn out of stone have been noticed dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.<sup>101</sup> A merchant guild of **Vellarai** also bestowed its patronage on Jainism.

17. **Mettupatti** in Madurai District enjoyed Jain patronage, right up to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In the earlier phase, (1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries A.D.) it is known from the inscriptions that contact between Jains in Ceylon and Tamil Nadu existed.

18. **Tirupparankunram** in Madurai District through epigraphical sources, proves that cardinal relations existed between Jain adherents of **Elam** (Ceylon) and Tamil Nadu in the early centuries of the Christian Era, as a house holder from Ceylon created a rock bed here.<sup>102</sup>

19. **Varichiyur** in Madurai District contains a large number of stone beds and through inscriptions, they can be dated between 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. and 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

20. **Bomma Malai** in the Kulattur taluk of Pudukottai District had Jain establishments known as **Tiruppalli Malai** (the mount of the holy monastery), the **Then Tiruppalli Malai** (the mount of the holy monastery in the south). The deity bore the name **Tiruppallimanaiyagar**.

21. **Nattarmalai** in Kulattur taluk of Pudukottai District had a Jain temple<sup>267</sup> presided over by the deity **Arha deva** of **Tirumanai malai**.

22. **Sittannavasal** in Kulattur taluk of Pudukottai District was the most famous Jain centre.<sup>103</sup> It has a natural cavern with chiselled beds. It flourished as a stronghold of the Jains from 2<sup>nd</sup> century - 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. to the 8<sup>th</sup> century - 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is also accepted that some ascetics of the Jain persuasion migrated to the extreme south from Karnataka to propagate the gospel of the Jains.

23. **Tirunarumgondai** in Ullundurpet taluk of South Arcot District is one of the most important places of pilgrimage for the Jains of Tamil Nadu.<sup>104</sup> The natural cavern on the hill contains a number of stone beds. A little to the north of the cavern, is the **Appandinatha temple** with shrines meant for **Parsvanath** and **Chandra Prabha**. This Jain temple has been patronised by the Cholas, the Pandyas and their feudatories. **Tirunarumgondai** seems to have had a Jain mutt presided over by Jain monks in medieval times.

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