

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHŌLA ARCHITECTURE

INTRODUCTION

"A culture develops its own architectural dialect and strikes its own critical attitudes through a slowly formed consensus of opinion, that some of these combinations are more agreeable than others".

- Sinclair Gauldie(1)

Through a maze of Pallava temples, the first visual impact that the Early Chōla temple makes is one of compact economy, modest scale and uniformity in plan. A square garbhagr̥ha, flat roofed, carries an ekatala or dvitala superstructure. From the garbhagr̥ha we are led into a rectangular flat ardhamandapa. Commendable articulation, they offer scope to spatial imagination in their chiselled and bare blocks of gneiss and granite walls.

The conquest of Tañjāvūr and success at Tirupurambiyam about 878 A.D. saw an increased vivre in their art activities. The legacy of a rich tradition offered itself as a challenge for reinterpretations and innovations. The 'anukāya' elements were perhaps most attuned to cope up with such change, that gave both refinement and identity to the Chōla. The unique way in which the elements were handled and rendered lift it out of its being a

general Dravidian idiom, to the only Chōḷa and all Chōḷa style.

Through odds when its tracts of land were being overrun with occupied areas; specially between 864 to 871 A.D. When adversity loomed large as the Pāṇḍyan and Pallava the Chōḷa lay low, but not defeated. The Takkōlam inscription of Āditya I himself confirms his ascension in 871 A.D. This is further attested by the absence of Pāṇḍyan and Pallava inscriptions, etc. Thrown open to politic and diplomatic office; and occupying much of Muttaraiya land it was natural to have intercourse with all. With an eye for the best they stole a march over friends, and adversaries. They introduced 'inflections and accents' giving us a healthy view of their egoism and personality. Their urge shows us that "culture is not a mere reflex, but a progressive appropriation and renewal"(2). They are a 'family of mind' making choices and therefore show a 'classic stability'. However, the following sections show us that this was achieved by opposing factors of affinity and contradiction. It was not a single factor that predetermined their predilection for style. A complexity of factors saw a mutation of forms. It is our task here to explore these forms, how they began, evolved, changed and emerged. And thus is style determined.

Political chronology is used here for convenience, however, wherever the need arises, other aspects take liberty of moving in and out of this chronology which is not binding.

Just as in the previous section, this chapter too is divided into the adhithāna, the 1st tala and upper tala respectively.

IV.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADHITHĀNA

Despite the traditional 'padabandha' being in popular usage the restlessness manifested itself in the search for new forms. The plainness of the pādabandha was to some extent relieved by the galapāda carrying relief sculptures of purāṇic and epic themes. These are casually carved, perhaps because they are in such places that did not call for great detail, or due to limited space, or because it was much too below the eye level to catch great attention. The episodic nature of sculpture was a change from animal or vegetative motifs.

The padmabandha (fig.22) emerged as an important feature. This is found in contemporary Irrukuvēḷ and Paluvēṭṭaraiyar architecture. It was an elaboration and sculptural play on form. What was a mere hint of lotus petal, like the first frothy wave that touches the shore and becomes a diffused trickle, became the wave that rode the crest. From mere incision the form was scooped out smoothened and carved into a passion swept wave like petal. This was his architectural precision. The kapōṭabandha seen in Pallava Olakkanēśvara (fig.24) as the kapōṭa of the

high upapīṭha, which was very rare - saw a sudden rebirth as the adhisthāna feature in the temples of Ṭarāṇ-taka I. Once again it is the usage, transformation and persistence that established a norm here. Such variation of mixing, matching and alternating also saw the padmaka, vaprabandha, ṣundarabja and puṣ'pabandha adhisthāna. It will be seen that the last became an all time favourite in the latter half of the tenth century A.D.

The making of Chōḷa architecture began with Vijayālaya's conquest of Kōḷḷango Muttaraiyar's Tañjāvūr. While the fundamentals of architecture were already known, and thus in an advanced stage, sculpture too worked towards greater heights showing more promise. The Muttaraiya vassals were a class apart sharing the same Drāviḍa legacy; they had established an identity even in a very short span of reign. The search for the Chōḷa style must therefore begin somewhere here. When we say Vijayālaya we simultaneously mean Muttaraiyar or pre-Aditya or the post-Muttaraiyar-Chōḷa style. Architecture does not preclude us here, in fact very artfully it confirms its presence and its influence. Similarly, the Irrukuvēḷ and Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar, also immediate neighbours, allies and vassals at different turns played a major role. The important thing to be remembered however is that

with the Chōḷa hegemony these idioms naturally gave and took from them and are called Early Chōḷanāḍu style with respective sub styles or idioms. These are called 'oscillations of artistic enterprise'. The Muttaraiyar were subdued while the Irrukuvēḷ were more Pallava vassals, yet they shared a comaraderie and a 'cultural nexus' with the Chōḷa. Proximity was a major cause for architectural and artistic exchange.

The Vijayālaya phase naturally includes most of the Muttaraiyar sites as a prelude, to the Chōḷa temples. Two of their temples the Panaṅguḍi Agastīśvara and Vīralūr Bhūmīśvara (figs.38,39) are considered to be the earliest independent examples of the ekatala Chōḷa vimāna, with traces of subshrines. They are the 'isolated essays' of the Early Chōḷa style. We tread surer grounds when we touch the Āditya I phase. The Anbil plates of Sundara Chōḷa dated in his 4th year extol the virtues of Āditya I as the builder of lofty and indestructible stone temples on the banks of the Kāvēri(2). Balasubramanyam has explored the authenticity of these and laid claim to thirty eight temples of Āditya I in the region. Inscription and paleography however pose a problem. Do the dates belong to its construction or terminus ante quem? Visual elements and style hence call our attention. The temples

become a cumulative evidence of the Āditya I phase. The Tirupurambiyam battle gave further impetus to political and cultural expansions into the heart of Tonḍaimaṇḍalam. From a buffer state, they rose into prominence as evidenced by a spurt of activity. The timing perhaps was right for a cultural ferment, with a much of the inoculum coming in from friends and foes alike. Partial to creativity, their artistic temperament couldn't be ignored. Propinquity was an advantage above all. The 'oscillations of artistic enterprise' couldn't have a better alternative. A Cālukyan, Gaṅga, Irrukuvēḷ and Pāṇḍya kinship and a complementary Pallava-Muttaraiyar-Chōḷa one is suggested by K.V. Soundara Rajan. The Muttaraiyar as a primary agency for the assimilation of Pallava agencies transmitted much to the Chōḷa. No temple in this phase can be used as a prop to chronology. Within a given time span they are placed and dated approximately. The Rājakēśari inscriptions and biruḍa can perhaps be misleading due to their indiscriminate usage. Renovation and reconstruction are partly responsible for their failing.

Nevertheless, the maturity gained in his phase is carried over gracefully into the reign of Parāntaka I. The embellishment of the adhithana, on the threshold of fulfilment, continued with little change. Whatever change occurred

was affected during the latter's last years. Tiruccendurai began to anticipate a general change and the temples thenceforth could be dated with more precision or a 'terminus ante quem'. The temples of this period are about two dozen in number, and included both new constructions and renovations. The general style is conservative and repeated olden patterns. The noticeable advances are made in the treatment of complex wall surfaces and quality of sculpture. With the end of Parāntaka I's reign the Ist or Āditya phase come to an end.

The IIInd phase from 940-970 A.D. began from the latter part of Parāntaka I to the accession of Uttama Chōla, as based on inscriptional and stylistic grounds. The temples of the latter part of his reign are crucial for the fulfilment and restlessness which moves towards a change.

The IIIrd or Sembiyan Phase that followed saw from Uttama's ascension to the reign of Rājarāja I in 985 A.D. Politically the Chōla were worn after the Takkōlam debacle. They were slowly recovering their losses. It was in such troubled times that Sembiyan Mahādēvi, the queen of Gandārāditya and mother of Uttama took up the cause of temple building. A combination of personal

losses and political setback drew her into piety. Her undivided attention to temple building and devotion to religious deed saw the fulfilled human and a fulfilment in art. From the Uyakkonḍan inscription, as early as the 34th year of Parāntaka I to the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. - a period of sixty years she is extolled and remembered for her noble and charitable acts. It is within this ambit that we shall survey the emergence and growth of Early Chōḷa style.

Instead of breaking up into historic sections, we shall take the individual adhithāna and study the temples under each of these categories. The adhithāna ten in number are enumerated below.

- i) Pāḍbandha
- ii) Pratibandha - Pratikrama
- iii) Padmaka
- iv) Vaprabandha
- v) Padmabandha
- vi) Padmapuśkala
- vii) Kapōṭabandha
- viii) Puśpabandha
- ix) Sundarābja
- x) Śrībandha

i) PĀDABANDHA ADHISTHĀNA (figs.40a,b,c)

The pādabandha was every man's heritage in the Drāviḍa-dēśa. With variation in heights they are seen in all the three phases of Early Chōḷa temples. Its usage did not necessarily mean an altogether austere temple. Conservative, they are successive layers of geometric and mathematical precision over each other. Dominated by horizontals and lesser verticals they are basically functional. To one who looks at them carefully they are like exercises in scales, repeating the same note a little different from the other. These flat straight notes are the upana, jagati, kumuda, kaṇṭha and paṭṭika. The Kaliyapaṭṭi Śīva, Panaṅguḍi Agastīśvara, Visalūr Mārghasahāyēśvara, Vīralūr Bhumīśvara, Naṅgavaram Sundarēśvara, Tillaisthānam Ghṛtasthānēśvara, Kilattanaiyam Uttamanāthasvami, Nēmam Iravātēśvara and Nārttamalai Vijayālaya Chōḷīśvaram are Muttaraiyar examples of this adhithāna with no exceptional quality. (figs. 80,38,69,39, 71,42,70,41)

The Tillaisthānam temple has a praṇāla and slightly more pronounced features. This could be because the aṅga divisions are very distinct. The karna, salilantara and bhadra are clear cut. This also makes it more rigid. The Sundarēśvara at Naṅgavaram has its adhithāna

buried upto the tripatṭa kumuda, only the kaṇṭha, paṭṭika and prati are seen. The parivāralaya show the praṇāla cut in the pattika below the vedi. The Iravāt ēśvara and Vijayālaya Chōḷisvara both Muttaraiyar Chōḷa transition temples have galapāda decorations either with a deity or purāṇic scene. The Early Chōḷa examples of this adhisthāna are numerous. The Tirutantōrīśvara at Uṛaiyūr; Tiruppanturutti Puśpavanēśvara; Tiruppālanam Āpatsahyēśvara; Erumbūr Kadambavanēśvara; Uyyakoṇḍan Tirumalai Ujjīvanātha; Kōyil Tēvarāyanapēṭṭai, Matsyapurīśvara (fig.92) Turaiyūr Vismaṅgalēśvara; Kōvilāḍi Divyajñānēśvara; Tiruvērumbūr Piplīśvara (fig.87) and Puñjai Naḷtunai are examples of the pādabandha. Of these the Naḷtunai Īśvara; Vismaṅgalēśvara (figs.43,44,44a) and Piplīśvara follow the Iravātēśvara and Nārttamalaḍi in galapāda decoration. The first (fig.43) is an excellent display of proportion in elevation enhanced by a robust pādabandha. The galapada of the vedi and adhisthana have a mini tableaux which show spirit and skill in terms of their composition. Vivid movement is caught in these rectangular blocks. A similar but coarser vivacity is reflected in the Visamaṅgalēśvara with lively animals like the bull, cow, rams and elephants (fig.44,44a). Epic reliefs of the Vāli Sugrīva combat, Narsimha and Naṭarāja in the Ānandatāṇḍava are found on the vēdi

galapāda. The Piplīśvara includes the floral motifs. Tiruppanturutti Puṣṭpavanēśvara has a praṇāla at the upana level which suggests an earlier Muttaraiyar site. This is supported by the mātrika sculptures found there.

Surprisingly even the Sembiyan construction at Konēri-rājapuram Umamāhēśvara (fig.91), Tiruviḍaimarudar Mahālingasvāmi; Anaṅgūr Agastī śvara; Tirukuruhavūr Tiruvellāḍai Īśvara, the Udaiyarguḍi Anantiśvara (fig.90) are also on this simplest form of base.

ii) PRATIBANDHA PRATIKRAMA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.45)

The earliest examples of this adhithāna are seen in the Kāñci Vālīśvara, and somewhat ornated in the Jalanāthēśvara at Takkōlam (fig.46) both Pallava temples. The Sēndalai Sundarēśvara (fig.47) and Kīraṇūr Uttamādānīśvara (fig.48,49) were two Muttaraiyar temples that give it their own special quality. Architecturally there is a cuboid like block that is seen just below the corner engaged pillars where the ends of the two floor joists are carved. A single vyāla and projecting bevelled member on the top, bottom and sides are seen. Below the intermediate pilasters two on each facade, the ends of floor joists are indicated by the smaller bevelled member projecting from the horizontal groove. The feature

that catches our eye is the curve of the kumuda which is asymmetrical and rounded. The ribs and minor cyma recta seen at Takkōlam are not here; but the kumuda is more pronounced fleshy and confidently carved than even at Vāliśvaram. The Kīraṇūr Uttamadāniśvara has apart from a smooth curving kumuda a frieze of vyāla which are facing breast front on faces turned sideways. The compact, neat rows are smooth and in a continuous rhythm. Placed at a very moderate height, one can observe three distinct shapes succeeding one another. The angular profile, the curved one and a dynamic one with forms of life.

The adhisthāna is like a mirror reflection of the haṁsa-māla and overhanging flexed kapṭha at the bottom; and act as if between them they hold up an austere wall, with equally austere Brahmakanta pilasters.

Sēndalai and Kīraṇūr, specially the former are transition temples.

iii) PADMAKA ADHISTHĀNA

This adhisthāna is a unique feature seen in the Tiruccaturai Odavanēśvara (fig.50) and the Kumbakōṇam Nāgēśvara (fig.51,52) both temples of Āditya I phase. The name

padmaka derives from the lotus, and it is the flowing wave like petals which come closest to our feet as we circumambulate the temples. This adhisthāna is a flourishing touch on the pādabandha. The artist in the architect sculptor breaks his upana and uses it as the ksudrōpana with the heart like lotus petals. This cyma recta moulding at the lower most section is carefully carved. It is more like a jeweller at work. This is all the more enhanced because the vimāna is divided into a neat bhadra and karna , with the former just projected forward. Relieving the harsher angles of the jagati, antarita, kumuda now tripaṭṭa kumuda, kampa, gala etc. the cyma recta is a softer modelling of form. How it draws attention to itself is a question, perhaps it did not have such ostentatious intentions and was only the creative urge to soften, model and externalise a finer sensibility into stone. The Tiruccaturai has an additional antarita which Kumbakōṇam does not have. The latter takes the padmaka even in its ardhamandapa. The petals are more elaborate. The vimāna is broken into the bhadra and karna too and adds to the rhythmic movement back and forth. The galapāda have themes like Rāmāyaṇa in shallow relief.

iv) VAPRABANDHA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.53)

Innovative and original this takes a few more steps from the pratibandha pratikrama types. Upon a cuboid uapana and jagati rests the vṛtta kumuda, the very word vṛtta makes it curved. Claspings it on either sides are small closely carved lotus petals called adhah padma and urdhva padma. Following this is the pratimukha. This is enclosed on either side by the antarita and prativajana. It is seen that the gala in both pratibandha and vapra-bandha are absent. The pratimukha carries a finely carved dynamic vyāḷāvari. Examples of these types are the Tirukāṭṭupalli Agnīśvara, Śrīnivāsanallūr Koraṅga-nātha (fig.54) and the Allūr Pañcanādīśvara. The jagati in these temples is relatively higher, and the kumuda more deeply cut specially in Koraṅganatha. This temple slightly larger than many temples of this phase is remarkable for its clarity and resonance of forms and masses. Powerfully rendered vyāḷa. and a makaratunḍa carrying human figures form a vigorous garland around the vimāna. Divided into the karna, salilantara and bhadra there is a rhythmic flow of opposing forces that create greater movement. The finer quality once again is barely perceptible to a common eye, for the adhahpadma is barely visible. The urdhvapadma is carved out in shallow relief, as if they replicate silver or gold filigree.

The galapāda above the vēdi are left bare. There is a slow building up of different human qualities from the basement till we reach its fulfilment in the life size sculptures (fig.54). The Tirukāṭṭupalli Agnīśvara is simpler with a smaller adhah and urdhvapadma and vyālavari. The vimāna of the Allūr Pañcanādīśvara is also a simpler version of the Koraṅganātha with a relatively smaller vṛtta kumuda. The vyālavari with elephants is less powerfully rendered.

The Manavālīśvara in Tiruvilākūṭi is similar to Koraṅganātha but adds an additional minor ksudrapadma between the jagati and upana somewhat recalling Tiruvāduturai.

A unique example of the Kodaṇḍarāmēśvaram (Ādityēśvaram) in Tonḍaimānād which is a pallipadai in memory of Āditya I was constructed in the 34th year of Parāntaka I i.e. 941 A.D. The only surviving adhisthāna of the Pratikrama Vaprabandha type it has a ribbed kumuda called kata-kāvṛta kumuda. Its earlier prototype is seen in later Pallava temples of Takkōlam and Uttaramērūr. The vertically fluted and slightly curved kumuda have been subtly carved and have supported gracefully well rendered vyāla in high relief. Smaller than the Jalanāthēśvara and Sundaravarada of Takkōlam and Uttaramērūr resp.(figs.46,27)

the jagati carries the katakāvṛta kumuda clasped by adhah and urdhva padma. this type does not feature anywhere in the Early Chōla temples. Both geographically and stylistically it leans towards the Pallavas. This kumuda relieves the rigidity of other components by its mellifluous wave like flutings. Lying in the heart of the Pallava domain, it naturally shows Pallava affiliations and handwork.

v) PADMABANDHA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.55)

Temples of the Early Chōla style, like the Kīliyanūr Agastīśvara, Lālgudi Saptarśiśvara; Pullamaṅgai Brahma-puriśvara, Tirunāmanalūr Tirutoṇḍiśvara; Tirunaraiyūr Siddhanātha; Allūr Pañcandiśvara; and Vālikandāpuram Vālikandēśvara follow the padmabandha adhisthāna which is an elaboration of the vaprabandha with a padma or major cyma recta moulding in place of the jagati. The earliest development occurs in the Pallava Alaivai-k-kōvil at Māmallapuram (fig.22); the same is called padmōpana above which stands the tripattā kumuda or its decorated version called kairava. The padmaka adhisthāna developed thereafter and the proper padmabandha, giving emphasis to the major cyma recta moulding occurs. The major difference is the treatment of this part. Apart from this in place of an angular kumuda it continues

to use the vṛttakumuda with adaha and urdhva padma as in the vaprabandha adhisthāna. Three forms of adhisthāna are combined here to create a new form.

Above the vṛttakumuda clasped by the adaha and urdhva padma are the dynamically carved vyālāvari.

The Saptarśisvara at Lālgudi (fig.56) shows us a curved in padma with the tips of its petal rising up like waves. The fall of the open petals from a small convex to concave, and rising back like the crest of a wave gives us the illusion of a full bloom lotus floating on the water surface. Complimented by a moderately curved kumuda, the mouldings have a natural fluidity. The vyālāvari is the turbulent surface rendered with vigour. The necklace of leonine and elephant forms with riders and warriors thrown in are the dramatic and only such forms in the whole of the 1st tala. From ripples to high tide and turbulence the various mouldings take us through similar feelings. The wall kanthas are exceptional sculptured blocks bearing panels from Śiva Purāṇa and Rāmāyaṇa. The makara tuṇḍa in each case are awesome.

The other interesting example is the Tirutoṇḍisvara at Tirunāmanalūr of the late Parāntaka Phase, 935 A.D. This is not as exciting an adhisthāna as the former,

but is relatively austere, and has a convex curve that opens slightly into restrained curves of the petal. The adaha and urdhva padma are also rounded, while the vyāla are not strung close together and are scanty. The closely packed lotus petals appear almost in a straight line despite the slightly projected bhadra.

vi) KAPŌTABANDHA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.57)

Kapōtabandha literally means bound by the flexed or overhanging cornice. The earliest example of this feature occurs in the upapīṭha of the Pallava Olakkaneśvara at Māmallapuram (fig.23). The interesting aspect is that this form had practically died out after Rājasimha Pallava. This form appears as a variation of the prati-bandha with a major additional component. The Pullamaṅgai Brahmapuriśvara; the Sōmūr ruined temple and the Tiruccenamapundi Ca ḍaiyar kovil follow this form.

Pullamaṅgai has a high kapōtabandha adhithāna with vivid carvings of epic themes in the galapāda . A rectangular block of upana carries a high jagati a vṛta kumuda with only urdhva padma, kampa, gala and again sculptured galapāda urdhva, kampa, kapōṭa and the pratimukha or vyālāvāri with a makara tuṇḍa in corners (fig.58). The kapōṭa is like the keel of an inverted boat and

is enhanced with valḷi in the corner, and candramandala along the rims. The vyāḷa and makara in the pratikaṇṭha are complimentary life forms. Mythic, floral and animal motifs find place in continuous blocks; clarity and perfection of each architectural form reflect the architect's fetish. Love for minute detail is seen in the careful carvings of miniature reliefs. Such crisp and sensitive details find place even in the kumuda, kaṇṭha and kapōṭa. The kapōṭa is the focus of attention.

The Caḍaiyar Kōvil in Tiruccenampundi (fig.59) was possibly rebuilt in 920-921 A.D. during Parāntaka I(3). Both vimāna and the ardhamanḍapa are on the kapōṭa bandha adhithāna. The galapāda are not so remarkably adorned. The carvings are not as masterly. The vēdi has pāda adorned with charming miniature reliefs and floral motifs. This also has over the vṛtta kumuda the barely discernable urdhva padma. The kapōṭa valḷi are not overly commendable due to being partly defaced, but the precision with which the vyāḷāvari runs round the vimāna is very rhythmic and compact. They can compare to Kīranūr and Śrinivāsanaḷūr in their precision in workmanship.

The Sōmūr ruined temple supposedly has a remarkable adhithāna standing on a very narrow upana, broader

jagati, a vṛtta kumuda clasped by a shallow carving of adaha and urdhava padma, and an unadorned gala over which hangs a prominent kapōṭa. This has a band of arabesque or kodikkaruku running on the ridge and a kūdu arch at equal intervals to relieve the linearity of the band. The pratikaṇṭha or padmavājana carries the vyālāvāri and makaratunḍa at the corners.

vii) PUSPABANDHA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.60)

Puśpabandha literally calls to our mind garlands of puśpa placed at the feet of the Lord. Euphemistic perhaps but true. Moulding after moulding are interwoven garlands of petals running round the vimāna, perhaps the fervour reaching a fever pitch. The last years of Parāntaka I saw the emergence of the puśpabandha with auxilliary laminations of minor cyma recta mouldings for the first time. It was prominently used in the latter half of the 10th century A.D. This period, the last years of Parāntaka I otherwise too saw advances made in some of the larger temples like the Tiruvādutuari Gōmuktēśvara and Puñjai Naṭṭunai Īśvaram. New trends were ushered in this phase. The former temple poses much problem due to its controversial inscription and misleading word 'kūḍapa dai'(4). D. Barret's investigation is agreed to be most plausible so far. The 25th year inscription

of a Parākēśari Parāntaka I, 932 A.D. mentions the construction by a Karralip - Piccan and a 38th year inscription of Parāntaka I which records a donation of 500 Kalanju of gold for the construction of the temple from the kūḍa-
paḍai upwards. This could according to S.R. Balasubramanyam be the donation made by the king before the final installation of a stupi in gold. Ghai and K.G. Krishnan call it the kumuda paḍai i.e. the temple was constructed from the kumuda upwards in the 38th year of Parantaka I, 945 A.D. M.A. Dhaki takes the kumudapaḍai closer to its Śaṅskrit equivalent khūrapaṭṭa, which is the jagati below the kumuda and is the first mouldings of the base, and thus began the construction from 945 A.D. onwards. The only valid alternative is that the brick structure constructed by Piccan Karrali was rebuilt by Parāntaka I in stone, and this is the most plausible one, since both architecture and sculpture support it. The temple as a whole is complementary and conforms to its design. The interplay of different features with super skill makes it a royal, late Parāntaka I foundation.

Tiruppāṇḍal Aruṇācalēśvara; the Tirunāgēśvaram Nāgēśvara, The Tiruvāduturai Āmuktēśvara; Kīlappaluvūr Tiru Ālandurai Mahādēvar; Kuhūr Āmravanēśvara, Sembiana Mahādevi Kailāsanātha, Tiruvārūr Acalēśvara and the Kārmūṭaṅgudi

Vaśisthēśvara fall in this category of adhisthāna. All these temples apart from the Aruṇācalēśvara have series of padma from the upana to the vājana. Above the upana are moderate sized padma which run around the vimāna, parallel and running successively in the other mouldings, the inverted lower petals above the jagati are called ambuja. This is an additional new feature. Clasping the vṛtta kumuda are the adhah and urdhvapadma. Above this is the kampa, gala, urdhva kampa, urdhva padma which clasps the mahāpaṭṭi from below and the ksudra padma which does the same from above. The topmost section is the vājana paṭṭi. Thus every rigid geometric shape is counter balanced and relieved by the carefully and lovingly chiselled padma or puśpa .

The Gōmuktēśvara (fig.61) ushered in this trend, and they were seen in the latter years of Parāntaka I and justifiably carried over into the Sembiaṇ phase. the Tiruvāduturai temple also uses this form in its kōshṭa pañjāra. There are miniature panels on the galapāda of the vēdi. There is no māha-padma, but smaller ones. The ambuja and adhahpadma have the semblance of the plaited feature. Another notable feature is the intervening spaces have lozenge decorations which are rich and carved to minute detail. Such a unique base is found nowhere

in this phase again. The Sembiyaṇ adhithāna. do not come anywhere near these, while the Nāgēśvara and Aruṇā-calēśvara are also otherwise a little doubtful(5). The Second Phase anticipates this base in the Third Phase, but the latter lacked in surpassing the former.

viii) SUNDARĀBJA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.62)

A rare form of adhithana, there appears to be none other than the Āduturai Āpatesahyēśvara (fig.63) which has it. Very similar to the puṣpabandha in all respects, the only major change occurs in the major cyma recta moulding 'mahā-padma' which takes the place of both upana and jagati. It stands on a very slight ksudropana. Falling convex and then concave its petals rise gently. The total effect is one of a cascade. The vṛtta kumuda is less prominent because of this and the adhah-urdhva padma are barely discernible. the kaṇṭha or galapāda is bare. There is such a dominating spirit in the maha-padma that the other features appear comparatively subdued. This adhithāna combines the puṣpabandha and padmabandha adhithāna .

ix) ŚRĪBANDHA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.64)

The human urge to mix and match, put the pieces of a jigsaw together are suggestive of man's restlessness

and dissatisfaction. When a skill is not yet acquired, his ego refuses to acknowledge his defeat, and so he tries it over and over again. Once the means and end have arrived the rest takes on a meaninglessness; i.e. an 'intended effect' once produced kills interest in it, and the unquenching thirst takes them to newer heights. Exposure to other types of development and guilds have played a role in the emergence of this type of adhithāna.

The three major temples which follow this adhithana form are the Vṛdhacalam Vṛddhagirisvara, Kuṭṭālam Uktavēdiśvara, and the Tirupurambiyam Sākṣīśvara; and all these belong to the Third or Sembiyan hase. The Gandāritam Sokkēśvara and the Govindaputtūr Gaṅgajātāharēśvara also follow the same.

This adhithāna has a medium padama above the ksudropana, a jagati, the ambuja and adhah padma, the vṛtta kumuda, the ūrdhva kumuda, gala, kapṭha, paṭṭika, padma-kampa and prati. The ambuja is also called ksudrapadma and has an antarita or ālinga above which comes the adahapadma. The cyma recta mouldings which besides differentiating also intergrate the other features carefully.

The Tirupurambiyam Sākṣīśvara (fig.65) is more ornate, in that it has a dressed kapṭha with kodikkaruku and

a kūdu arch. A vyāla frieze is also seen. This kind of adhisthāna is described as śrībandha in the Vaikhānasa Āgama and Mārīcisamhita. The vyāla friezes are not impressive, while the jagati vṛtta kumuda, gala etc. are dominating. The minor cyma recta mouldings are like delicate ornaments over the body of the major mouldings. The valli and kūdu arches also appear graceful and modest. Interestingly the lowermost section, where the pillars of pañjārakōṣṭha stand are projected with pairs of vājana puruṣa holding up the same.

The Vṛddhagiriśvara and Uktavēdiśvara are similar. Both have modestly carved adhisthāna. The latter is on a high base, and the vēdi kaṇṭha show carved episodes in relief from Śiva Purāṇa and secular themes.

x) PADMA PUŚKALA ADHISTHĀNA (fig.66)

The adhisthāna with the mahāpadma as in the padmabandha, and the vṛttakumuda clasped by the adhah and urdhva padma as in vaprabandha go into the making of the padma-puśkala. Although relatively simpler it is one of the most graceful and austere rich. They are the perfect bases for one of the most perfect examples of the Irrukuvēl and Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar temples under the Early Chōla style. Upon a very usual upana, in place of the jagati are

the most elegantly carved mahāpadma. This is surmounted by the vṛttakumuda with the adhab and urdhva padma with the antarita below the former. The pratimukha of vyāḷa recall Kīraṇūr Uttamadānīśvara (fig.49) of the Muttaraiyar. Perhaps the Caḍaiyar kōyil at Tiruccen-āmapundi and Koraṅganātha at Śrīnivāsanallūr both drew from these sources (figs.54,59).

The best examples at hand and the best preserved ones are the Koḍumbālūr Mūvar Kōil, Tiruccendurai Candraśēkhara both of the Irrukuvēḷ idiom, the Kīlaiyūr Agastīśvara and Chōḷīśvara, and the Pañcanādīśvara at Tiruvaiyāru (figs.76,77b,67,68).

The Mūvar Kōyil shows large or broad cyma recta mouldings which again fall into upturned tips of petals. The incised carved out areas give an elegant shape to the form. Not too fleshy, but with sufficient emphasis, they come close to naturalism. Surmounted by the vṛttakumuda it is only upon close observation that the adhab and urdhva padma are visible. The vyāḷāvari need no further commendation, they are a rhythmic flow of dynamism and vivre. The Candrasēkhara at Tiruccendurai is similar.

If the Irrukuvēḷ's ample sweep of the mahāpadma and the striking quality of the powerful vyāḷa characterise

these temples, the Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyars were none the less. The perfect carving of the slightly smaller mahāpadma make it appear rich and velvety. Pouring over, the petals have a double curvature effect. This is an example of the conquered medium and outstanding architectonics. The vṛtta kumuda with the adhah and urdhva-padma are cushion and lace, as if embroidered upon the docile stone. The vyālāvāri in contrast is all animation above the subtlety of the lower components and these are reflected both in the Chōḷīśvaram and Agastīśvaram at Kilaiyūr.

The Pañcanādiśvara in Tiruvaiyāru sees this kind of adhisthāna, where the mahāpadma is similar to the Mūvarkōil. The adhah and urdhva padma pulsate with life as if impatient to grow.

General observation shows us that despite the large number of temples both new and renovated, the Chōḷa temples proper used the pādabandha most frequently. The puśpabandha was the uniquely new feature while all the others are found in the Pallava, Irrukuvēḷ Muttaraiyar and Paḷuvēṭṭaraiya temples. It is their play of changing, interchanging, emphasising and giving expression in their own precise way that calls forth for them accolades. It is also seen that those temples which

cause us some doubts regarding history, dating, etc. come up with these variations, like the Gōmuktēśvara, or the Mūvarkōil. Falling under and within the Early Chōḷa reign, the Irrukuvēḷ Muttaraiya and Paḷuvēṭṭaraiya sources have contributed to a large extent in this madness towards the hybrid form. The yield needless to say was a rich output of architecture and architectonics, forms which metamorphosed over and over again into new shapes, carrying a revived life, perhaps the life elixir. Royal patronage appears to have had a key role in determining the relative importance of these temples.

The form and texture so go together that the qualities of shape are manipulated by the Chōḷa with dexterity. Emphasis or blur is shown on the surface which enhances or conceals accordingly. The human urge is hence both exhibitionist and reticent, where enhanced display and camouflage give it that unique identity. They are evocative compositions in stone.

IV.2 THE FIRST TALA (THE WALLS OF THE VIMĀNA)

"Above the adhithāna rise the walls of the temples, (called the first tala). These are large fields of beautiful and accurately worked hard stone left plain, and

carefully placed pilasters and engaged pillars were used to articulate the wall surface. The effect achieved is one of classical precision and severity, and the architect is never tempted to emphasise his decorative detail at the expense of his forms"(6).

- Douglas Barret

The above description is most succinct and complete within itself. It is for us to identify, sift and then see the emergence of style from this part of the temple. The visual impact upon this area is very relevant, for falling within the human vision and proximity the space is aptly utilised for both elaboration and education. The wall with its focal niches became the spokesman for all that stood for religious thought. From being a very necessary and strictly functional architectural component it metamorphoses into a play field, upon which the artist sets off in a love affair. However, the walls of the Early Chōḷa temples stay apart, beyond all compare, accessible yet not accessible, proud and aloof, commanding the respect and reverence of its sculptor - architect lover.

The wall proper begins at the vedi and ends at the vyālāvāri or kapōṭa. Discrete punctuation by pillars

and pilasters of different orders - The Brahmakanta, Viṣṇukanta, Īśakanta, Indrakanta and Saumyakanta are seen on the wall. They offered great scope to the sculptor, for upon its surface he created and tamed the medium to his will, and dressed them in ornaments in the mālasthāna, lasuna, ghaṭa and maṇḍi. This finely finished member carried a palagai some times. The vimāna had either one or different types of pillars and pilasters, while the ardhamandapa was usually punctuated by the Brahmakanta. The interiors had Viṣṇu, Īśa or Indrakanta types. The Brahmakanta was never used as a free standing pillar. These pillars are either bare or dressed in shallow relief. The shaft or kal is either square, round octagonal, polygonal and fluted delicately. The fluted shaft was referred as the 'sundobhēda' - one like the split bamboo. Resting on a square base saduram, the 'kal' carries a kalaśa bound by the padmabandha moulding. At this point is the mālasthāna with either tasseled decorations, muktāvali floral or foliate motifs. The capital which is above has respective members; the vase like kalaśa surmounted by a moulding 'tadi' (echinus) which spreads in a convex profile. The kumbha a rounded vase topped by a padma cyma recta, with its tops curving inwards makes a powerful torus moulding. Some times indenta-

tions mark the petal tips called 'munai'. The palagai or abacus surmounts this; they carry the 'vīrakaṇṭha' which appears to be inserted into the poṭṭika.

The poṭṭika is either plain and angular, or the taraṅga type we have already seen in the preceding chapter. The arms are hewn off at an angle of approx. 45°; and could be either plain, or with the slanting and horizontal faces with roll or reed moulding taraṅga. A plain or decorated median band 'paṭṭa' holds these in the centre. In the plain angular poṭṭika this paṭṭa is prominent. The prastāra rests on this poṭṭika; and often has mouldings called the uttira and valabhi (a strong convex moulding bearing the haṁsa or bhūta mala which kind of bind and perform aesthetic functions). Overhanging on this is the kapōṭa, which is basically employed to throw off the water and protect the beams and joists of the roof. The flexed curve became the sculptor's delight and carried the patralata or koḍikka-ruku in the corners, and centre. They substitute for the koṇa paṭṭa which braced the corners of the kapōṭa in its wooden prototypes. The lower ridge of the kapōṭa have rows of flat bosses or candramaṇḍala which again take off from the metal bossing upon the wooden prototype. Above this at uniform intervals occur the kūdu

(nāsiṁ), horse shoe shaped with simhavadra finials and mukhapatti. The gadha cavity may or may not be filled with motifs. Above this is the vyālamāla between the prastāra and the hāra of the second tala. At first glance all these components look the same; and infact they are common to all South Indian architecture. The relative emphasis and articulation make one aspect more dominant or recessive than the other. The Pallava pillar for instance is shallow, using very little recession. The kalasā ran smoothly into the shaft preserving the columnar aspect. The Sundaravarada Perumāḷ at the Uttaramērūr shows the padmabandha recession, the inward curve of the base of the kalasā which is basically the nature of manipulation. In contrast to this, the nature of the Chōḷa articulation is more vibrant and expressive. On one hand the quality of architectural precision is at the fore, sturdy and dominant while on the other the sculptural empressement reflects his urge for freedom of expression. This is seen in their adhisthāna superstructures and walls. The Early Chōḷa pottika is a complex profile of vertical ending fascia, with an angular throating. The Lalitānkūra at Tirucirāppali anticipates the roll ornaments and its use at the lower angle of a large role with an 'incised volute'. The South Indian prastāra is more or less

the same, the change is upon the dressed surface - for the Pallava finial of the kūdu is shovel shaped while the Chōḷa finial is usually the lion mask and an overflowing arabesque.

The dēvakōṣṭha, one of the most important features of the wall becomes next important to the garbhagrha with the mūla dēvata. It is usually the vehicle for religious thought and mythology. Elongated and rectangular, this recess is shallow or deep. It is a classic understatement - for with restrained elegance, it draws our eye to the enshrined god. They are framed by two split pilasters of the Brahmakanta type, with a poṭṭika virakaṇṭha or palagai, a lintel of two straight mouldings and separated by the cyma recta of lotus which may or may not be carved. Crowning this is the tōraṇa, simple or elaborately carved with either floriate or geometric motifs interspersed with human or semidivine figures and a central lalāṭabimba. This tympanum is usually a 'makara torāṇa' which is as old as the cave temples of the Pallavas and seen in the Dalavanūr Satrumalla, and the Trimūrti cave temple (figs.10,16). It is said that the Pallava never forgot the original function of the tympanum which was that of the lintel for support. To be able to make any change in it was a professional

risk. The risk however we see was overcome, and the spirit of adventure was fulfilled in the Early Chōla tōraṇa.

With this brief description this section is divided into four parts or phases.

- i) The Pre Āditya or Vijayālaya phase (850 A.D.)
- ii) The Āditya I phase (870 - 907 - 940 A.D.)
- iii) The Second phase (940 - 970 A.D.)
- iv) The Third or Sembiyaṇ phase (969 - 985 A.D.)

The temples dealt in these phases are more or less stylistically grouped, except in some rare cases where doubts exist they are treated as close as possible to whatever predilection they show.

i) THE PRE ĀDITYA OR VIJAYĀLAYA PHASE (850 A.D.)

The lesser or smaller temples of the Muttaraiyar which are closest to the ekatala vimāna of the earliest Chōla temples are clearly articulated by the Brahmakanta pilasters minus the dēvakōshṭa . The Kaliyapaṭṭi Śiva, Visalūr Marghasahāyēśvara (figs.80,69) are apt examples. Shallow, but nevertheless they relieve the bare walls. An incised band for the mālasthāna continues with barely

any change into the lausuna or kalasā. Over this is the taḍi, kumbha - the rectangular cushioned capital and palagai over which is an angular poṭṭika. Hidden above are the uttira, valabhi and prastāra components by the kapōṭa. This austere kapōṭa has a patralata at the extreme corners followed by two rounded kudu arches minus the finial. A candramāla runs along the rim of the kapōṭa. Slightly recessed in the prastara is the vyālāvāri, with pairs of vyāla breast front and facing each other sideways.

The Virālūr Bhūmīśvara (fig.39) is larger and has a central devakoshta and crude remains of a tōraṇa. Framed by split pilasters it is narrow. There is a merest hint of the bhadra and karna, with the former ever so slightly projecting. The pilasters are the Brahmakanta two are the corners of the bhadra and pairs on the extreme ends of karna. The Panaṅguḍi Agastīśvara (fig.38) finds the Brahmakanta with plain angular corbels too. The ardhamandapa here also has evenly spaced pilasters. Rectangular niches at the entrance are present to receive the dvārapāla. These are the earliest and simplest forms of the Early Chōla vimāna. D. Barret says "the question remains whether it is a true primitive of the style", due to lack of

other really usable material. The Bhūmīśvara still has sculptures that could be dated to this formative phase on stylistic grounds.

The major temple on this Chōla conquered Muttaraiya tract is the Vijayālaya Chōlisvara (fig.41). Here again we encounter slightly pronounced Brahmakanta pilasters with the projecting palagai and plain angular poṭṭika. The vertical shafts are minus the lasuna. The unique identity of this temple wall are in the paired row of pilasters in contrast to the mushrooming upper talas. Unarticulated upto the taḍi, by virtue of their simplicity and thinness they give a heightened elegance to it. Flat ribbon like, these pilasters frame the wall in five sections while the geometrically plain and angular corbels rise upto merge with the uttira. The ardhamāṇḍapa pilasters are similar but barely pronounced.

The pillars in the interior are massive, cut square at the top and bottom and octagonal in between. They derive from the Pallava and the Pāṇḍya cave temples. The front corners have Brahmakanta pilasters with the poṭṭika decorated with large even rolls bound up with a plain median paṭṭa which indicates a throating - very much the Early Chōla.

The Nēmam Irāvātēśvara (fig.70) also has simple Brahmakanta with archaic decor on its kalasā. Like the Tirupattūr Tālinātha there is a slight incurving of the kalasā - just a slight play is also shown in the pilaster of the same order. The variation is an intentional one to show the difference between a supporting pillar and a relieving one.

The Ghr̥sthāneśvara at Tillaisthānam (fig.42) ushers in features that become typical Chōḷa. The wall section leans heavily on the formative Chōḷa idiom, and is a definite advance over the Muttaraiyar. The Viṣṇukanta is prominently used in the karna and the Brahmakanta for the sham niches in the recesses, and the bhadra dēvakōshṭa. The bhadra itself is framed by the Rudrakanta. This is exceptional because thus far the Muttaraiyar only used the tetragonal Brahmakanta. There is archaic decoration on the mālasthāna and the kalasā as at Panaṅgudi Agastīśvara. The walls further are dependent on the offsetting basal divisions and are thus also enhanced by them. The two pairs of Viṣṇukanta for corners distinguish that particular space with greater clarity, while the simpler Brahmakanta underplay the sham niches in recesses. The Rudrakanta are used as dominant frames that enclose the bhadra which has

a deep dēvakōshṭa framed by split pilasters. Variety or variation create a visual logic of forward backward, high and low rhythms. The pillars and pilasters are roll or taraṅga poṭṭika throated with a plain median patta. The interior pillars have cushioned capitals, less pronounced shaft and slightly projecting saduram. The Sundarēśvara at Naṅgavaram (fig.71) also has Viṣṇu-kanta pilasters without the lasuna on the corner pilasters. The pillars and pilasters have the roll taraṅga poṭṭika throated with a median band, which is a rectangular fillet, they are not as slender and elegant as Tillai-sthānam, specially the pilasters are high with a cushioned ghata or kumbha, and lesser in the mid section with a slightly more prominent saduram similar to Tillai-sthānam. Unlike this temple, the Sundaresvara does not have dēvakōshṭa .

This temple poses a problem of chronology. The inscrip-tional evidence is somewhat confusing. A 10th year inscription of Parākesarivarman 337 of 1903 which refers to a munificent gift by a lady Sōlapperundēviar (Perun-gaṅgai consort of Sembiyaṅ Irrukuvēl). The Parākesari perhaps refers to Parāntaka I. The fabric supports a date within the first two decades of the 10th century A.D., according to D. Barret and thus in the Parāntaka I

phase. Looking at the wall treatment there are Muttaraiyar features, whereas the superstructure upto the dvitala (from hāra to grīva) share in Irrukuvēḷ features. It can best be called the Early Chōḷa style of the mixed Muttaraiyar Irrukuvēḷ idiom. The Muttaraiyar Irrukuvēḷ comaraderie during Cattan Māraṇ period is a historical fact; so was the social connection strong due to marriage ties between the Irrukuvēḷ and Chōḷa (7). It was not otherwise strange to share certain cultural traits and not others. "The architecture shows a kinship with that of the Early Chōḷa, though not identical. The differences are enough to admit a cognate Kōṇāḍu idiom within a general Chōḷa framework(8).

ii) THE ĀDITYA-I PHASE

The Āditya I phase proper ushers in a new confidence. Apart from the stylistic evaluations, there are supporting inscriptional evidences that build and sustain the Chōḷa idiom. Only temples which offer us some clues and are relevant to causing style are taken here.

The Tiruccatuarai Odavanēśvara (fig.72) shows fully articulated Brahmakanta with taraṅga poṭṭika and a median paṭṭa. The vimāna is similarly divided into aṅga like the Tillasthānam temple but with a projecting bhadra.

The pilasters with the kumbha, the lasuna or kalasā and maṇḍi are all carved with elegant floral arabesques. From the padmabandha to palagai are various jewellery like vegetative scrolls. Such jewellery like workmanship is seen in the Tiruppanturutti Puśpavanēśvara (fig.73). Finely carved filigree the aesthetic aspect outdoes the functional one. With the treatment of medium showing such skill and care as the goldsmith would show his gold. The tympanum is not very clearly readable, while the corbelling is taraṅga with a plain median band. An interesting feature is the muktāvali on the underside of the lower ridge of the palagai, adding delicate grace to the spirited florals of the echinus.

The Sundarēśvara at Tirukaṭṭalai (fig.74) which is again partly a mixed idiom of Chōḷa-Irrukuvēḷ is similar to the Tiruccaturai; the difference is in the shallower and narrower dēvakōshṭa and less sharply distinguished angā. The exquisite scroll work from the mālasthāna is a simultaneous occurrence. The interesting feature is the introduction of rearing vyāḷa in the corner of the vimāna front piece, standing upon the palagai with head reaching just below the kapōṭa. They are placed at angles, so as to conform to the corbel projection as if meeting their weight. Does this occur for the

first time? Perhaps within the Chōla, but a variation of this is seen in the Arjuna ratha in larger number (fig.19). All the pilasters but the corner ones flanking the images carry it on their corbel. The very early precedent was known and reused here similarly. There is also a protractor like tōraṇa above the poṭṭika of the split pilaster that sits on a base of minor cyma recta moulding.

The most typical and remarkable temple is the Vēdapurīśvara at Tiruvēdikudī (fig.75) we now have an established corbel order with a decorated median band. There is a variation of the Tillaisthānam pillars and pilasters, while the aṅga are not on a straight mānasūtra, they project here in the bhadra. The pilasters vary according to this. The karnaṇ take Brahmakanta, the bhadra corners Viṣṇukanta these have fine lasuna carved from above the mālasthāna. The pilasters bordering the niches are round Īśakanta, with cushioned capitals. All these show us a close link with the Muttaraiyar temples at Naṅgavaram, Nēmam and Nārttamalai. Were these types or was the emergent Chōla showing residual elements, is ponderable? The compulsion to settle this question before the beginning of the 10th century A.D. is overwhelming, and a few more Irrukuvēl examples

and other types will precipitate an answer based on the visual. The Koḍumbāḷūr Mūvarkōil (fig.76) and the Tiruccendurai Candrasēkhara (fig.77) should perhaps help us. The former, a delight in architectural poise and perfection is divided into the aṅga with the bhadra slightly projecting. Over the dynamic vyālāvari rises a classically austere wall relieved by graceful Brahmakanta and very lovingly carved mālasthāna. Hooped muktāvali, floral tassels, foliate bands, the same motifs of lasuna, and the floral one on the ghaṭa show familiarity but excellent workmanship qualitative. The temple poses a chronological problem. the base shows the typical phase-I style while the sculptures otherwise, and the superstructure a mid 10th century A.D. complex(9). The other temple, which is also of this idiom is the Tiruccendurai Candrasēkhara. Less ornamented, perhaps closer to Tirukaṭṭalai, architecturally a similarity is shared, but a lot of the ornamental features are blurred. A dynamic tōraṇa of the makara type is fairly pronounced. The central medallion figure is a dancing gaṇa, surrounded by a loop of muktāvali bearing alternate figures of vyāḷa and gaṇa. The catch here is in the bold lines and bolder execution of the motif. A nervous rendering aiming at dramatic form is apparent.

Drawing our attention simultaneously and compulsively is the Paluvēṭṭaraiyar, Kilaiyūr Avanikandarpa Isvarīgr̥ham. The twin shrines of the Agastīśvara (fig.67) and Chōḷisvara are about the same time in 884 A.D. If Koḍumbālūr is the 'pièce de resistance' of the Irrukuvēḷ, then these twin shrines are nonetheless of Paluvēṭṭaraiyar. In their pillars and pilasters are seen a delicacy of equal measure. The mālasthāna are superbly rendered crowns a slender flame form, as if turned to clay and by the sunlight spun into gold. These temples show skilled hands at work, there is not a trace of tension or uncertainty in any feature. Distinct padmabandha, lasuna of flowing scrolls and tassels and mukṭāvali add to the solitary grandeur of these temples. The kalāśa takes the kodikkarruku or patralata in an inverted arch. The central motif flowing down and opening out and again upwards was a popular feature. The kumbha or ghaṭa the pāli, carry an indu-maṇḍala on the palagai. The southern wall pilasters have a fine echinus with a row of haṁsa-mālā within a sprouting vegetation. The forms are biomorphic, growing and merging to intricacy. The ardhamāṇḍapa is also supported by four cushion type pillars of Īśakanta simhapāda. The sculptor architect has turned his blocks of stone into fluid, malleable and ductile forms. These are flame like-

falling, winding meandering into spirals suggesting movement and growth. The tōraṇa are equally elaborate and classically carried upon simple Brahmakanta with tapestry like ornament on the kalāśa, with palagai and angular corbels. They rise into a crescent filled with an exquisite embroidery of forms. The central field has an eight armed dancing Śiva flanked by gambolling gana on music. Two flying deities are present on either side. The muktāvali carries flora, fauna and gana, spewn from the makara mouth. There are horsemen, vyāla and gana. Agitated movement but with a definite format is seen. there is struggle to eliminate or create the unknown; but having reached a totality of conception the sculptor now only attends to the task of giving the final or finishing touch. The motifs are like a birds eye view of green vegetation upon a sea of wall. The Chōlisvara imitiates its twin with perhaps just a little less finesse. the maṇḍapa pillars are simhapada below the mālasthāna, while two other pillars are leonine and elephant faced; the Agastīśvaram also has these, and recall Pallava precedents.

The Tiruvaiyāru Pañcanādīśvara (fig.78) now only in fragments has the tarāṅga poṭṭika, with decor comparable to Tiruccaturai and Tiruppanturutti and shows the similar

mode of flame like jewel on the lasuna, kumbha and palagai.

The Lālgudi Saptarśiśvara (fig.56) comes to us replete with Pallava Pāṇḍya, Paluvēṭṭaraiyar and Chōḷa inscriptions(10). Well preserved, the Viṣṇukanta has taraṅga poṭṭika and decorated median bands, the saduram is cut in the Brahmakanta and the shaft is fluted. The other parts are decorated while the capitals have flutings falling in line with those on the pillar. The maṇḍi run is octagonal and simulates the large petals of the padma in its segments. The palagai is over the taraṅga poṭṭika meeting an uttira and then taken over by the valabhi with bhūta . This bhūtavalabhi is in consonance with the same in the adhithāna. There are detailed blocks of sculpture in wall kaṇṭha carrying purāṇic scenes. The split pilasters of the same Viṣṇukaṇṭha type imitate the main pilasters and carry elaborate but eroded makara tōraṇa . There is no central medallion with clarity but the muktāvali loop has nothing in them. From the mouths of the makara are spewn, figures. The emphasis here is given more to the sculpture, adhithāna and to the superstructure.

The other very important Chōḷa temple the Kumbakōṇam Nāgēsvarasvāmi (fig.79) rebuilt in 886 A.D., shares

in the many features seen thus far. The typical Brahma-kanta pilasters for karna and bhadra on a straight line, the recessed hara recesses recalls Tillaisthānam (fig.42). The important feature is the presence of dancing figures of apsara for the first time. We have seen these in Tirukaṭṭalai as rearing vyāla but the dancing figures do not occur elsewhere. Their order is seen thus, the karna carry the apsara, and the vyāla are on bhadra pilasters. There is a fine row of bhūtagaṇa under the kapōṭa. The central dēvakōshṭa has split pilasters and is further flanked by cantoning pilasters. The salilāntara recesses have figures too. This kind of wall treatment and ornamentation foreshadow many decorative aspects of the full fledged Early Chōla temple.

The straight ardhamandapa has a central dēvakōshṭa and two bald niches on either side. The recesses connecting the ardhamandapa to vimāna show female figures. A continuous row of bhūta run under the kapōṭa but visible only when carefully seen. It is seen that the walls are relatively unadorned here. The bhadra and hāra recesses are carefully used and this was perhaps deliberate, to facilitate a greater focus on figurative sculpture. A snapshot frieze was probably

intended to capture attention in the finer details and aspects of such sculpture that would stand on the threshold of life, upon an austere and bare surface. The Āduturai Āpatsahyēśvara (fig.63) is similar but highly misleading due to its paint and stucco; it is not fair to discuss it in detail. The feature that is noteworthy is the complex wall treatment of the aṅga, which only carry the miśra variety of pillars and pilasters - Viṣṇukanta for karna, Brahmakanta for hara recesses, Brahmakanta for bhadra and Rūdrakanta for central dēvakōshṭa. The centre two and karna pillars carry a padma maṇḍi with the torus of padma with its munai. This is a new feature not seen anywhere in the Chōḷa land, however, a tentative crude form is seen in the Kāñci Mātāṅgēśvara and Mukteśvara of the Later Pallavas in the post-Rājasimha phase. This is improved in the Koilpaṭṭi Purvanāthasvāmi temple in Pāṇḍināḍu about 878 A.D. and comes closer home, where they are confidentially carved.

A word about the kapōta - most of these share a similarity. If Kāliyāpaṭṭi (fig.80) shows two nāsi on the kapōta, from the Vīralūr Bhūmiśvara (fig.39) onwards they appear in alignment and in pairs with the pillars and pilasters. So much to so that in the Nārttāmalai it (fig.41) shows even pillar and pilasters carrying

the kūdu in alignment with the mukhapatti and with human faces. Most of the temples show two, one, one, two for the karna, bhadra, bhadra and karna and thus totally six. In between are kodikkaruku with the ridges carrying candramandala. Some of the gādha cavities carry floral motifs or nothing at all.

Thus far we are in the germinal state. Most known features and few unknown features are brought together and being reconstructed and some of these similar and new characteristics have been highlighted here. Their purpose is more than description. They show the direction forms were taking, there is no alienation and nothing we have seen is such a uniquely isolated phenomena. The phase of conforming and assimilating is yet on; the general trend ascertained - we move on to the more definite Parāntaka I phase, the latter part of Āditya I phase.

ii) THE ĀDITYA PHASE [THE REIGN ON PARĀNTAKA I
(907 - 940 A.D.)]

The trend was ascertained in the last decades of Āditya I. There was no friction in the cultural output between the overlord, vassal or foe. A momentum had been gained and alongwith it the format had been finalised,

the fulfilment had not yet reached a plateau. Conservative and restrained (or disciplined) they used and reused the older patterns. There was certainly no evidence of a 'creative menopause' because advances were not blatant. The wall surfaces were being qualitatively improved, so was the sculpture. Qualitative change is also one of the determining factors of style. A few temples stand in testimony to heights achieved by the sculptor architects of this period.

The wall is treated with a wider variety of pāda and pilasters distinctive in decoration and character.

The Kailāsanātha at Allambākam, Allūr Paśupatiśvara and Andanallūr Vaḍatirthanāthar have Brahmakanta pilasters, pillars with plain angular corbels. The tympana are barely discernible, and do not show anything unique, nor does the Mucukundēśvara at Koḍumbālūr. Even if these temples don't suggest anything more than self compliance, they are compact, limited - in their wall treatment, superstructure and sculpture, suggesting a uniformity in style. The Kumbakōṇam Nāgēśvara had made an impact in certain aspects like sculpture; but not as such otherwise. Pullamṅgai Brahmapuriśvara or Paśupatiśvara (fig.81,82) with an elaborate scheme

like Tirupāllanam is the crême of architecture, sculpture and architectonics. There is such an interplay between the three that together they blossomed as winners all the way.

The temple has no Āditya I inscription. There are five Parākēsari ones, of which three are Parāntaka I and one of Gaṅga Prithivipati II, a feudatory. This is a royal construction of the 3rd year of Parāntaka I. Consciously or unconsciously we react at once to space, shape, form and the play of light and dark. More than vision alone, something else intimates to us the presence of these. The relationship of these parts brings about such an evocation. The bhadra and karna are clearly defined and offset with the mysteriously recessed hārāntara. It is in this offsetting that we are aware of the light and shade; enhancing the same. Well proportioned wall sections with ornate pillars and pilasters of the miśraka type are, the Viṣṇukanta for the bhadra, split Īśakanta for the central devakoshta, and Brahmakanta for the karna and pañjārakōshṭa. These components come to life with floral and vegetative patterns, fauna and human figures ensconced within a muktāvali or other creeper forms. The mālasthāna is a complex design of even spiral or circular motifs

with small carved figures, while some figures are seen in the loop. The kalasá has the flame like design we are now so familiar with. The kumbha is also adorned, while the palagai gracefully holds up amara , apsara and vyāla on the corner. Even the taraṅga poṭṭika are decorated on its median band with a patralata and can be called patra poṭṭika. A vigorous bhūtamāla appears below the kapōṭa. The love for detail and embroidery like decoration was an overwhelming feminine aspect of creativity. It reflects the sensitivity and touch of graceful elegance. The Viṣṇukanta which flank the dēvakōṣṭha have a vivid mālasthāna with dancing figures between the flutings and a muktāvali loop enclosing them. The kalasá and kumbha are also fluted and have the flame like decor. The split pilasters are Īśkanta with square bases, with a garland of pearls for the mālasthāna, floral scrolls like filigree. The muktāvali seen in the padmabandha, lasuna etc. are more or less similar, but the execution and detail are one of clarity and precision. What is felt here is the positive and definite use of spaces. It is as if they are marked for elaboration and ornamenting not in the usual manner, but highlighting these minor features and making them stand apart. They are deliberately isolated and carved out for more than a passing

glance. They are there, compulsive and beckoning us to enter into a sensual and aesthete experience.

The *tōraṇa* is the final building up, the highest note or 'crescendo, vigorous and in consonance to the mellifluous pilaster ornament, they abound in the wild growth of the vines, berries and foliate details.

An interesting feature is the chattra over the deities both in the *vimāna* and *ardhamanḍapa*. The earliest and crude manifestations are seen in the Harihara niche in the *Varāha* mandapa and the *Ādivarāha* caves over the four armed Durga in *Māmallapuram* (fig.104). It is found in *Kāñci Sālākāra* shrine of Mahendra III Pallava. It is also seen closer home in the *Chōḷisvara* at *Kilaiyūr* over the *Dakṣīnamūrti* (fig.125) and in the *Erumbūr Kadamabyanēśvara* as a shallow inverted lid (fig.162). The *Takkōlam Jalanāthēśvara* also has this. The *Brahma* and *Gaṇapathi* (figs.139,143) have half a sphere over their heads. The upper dome is in the form of huge petals dropping into a rim of a tiny *muktāvali*; of a straight row of pearls and looped pearl strands below, and motifs within. The perfect hemispherical chattra stands out as a remarkable feature suggesting divinity and royalty. On either sides are *gaṇa*, musicians,

mooshika and the gala with seated devotees and standing figures. The Brahma is flanked by two seated adorers in three fourth profile. The vyāla and bracket figures add to the sense of heightened theatrical forms of Pullamangai.

The replicating of details of the adhisthāna and the vēdi in the kapōṭa on the inner niches of the vimāna and the central section of the ardhamāṇḍapa wall are seen. The kapōṭa form surmounts the niches over the corbel and bhūtavalabhi. This kapōṭa has a pair of kapōṭa nāsika with a floral motif encircling it, as it emerges from the siṃhavakṛa or siṃhalata and mukhapattī. The rim of the kapōṭa has perfectly proportioned candra-maṇḍala and a remarkable valli or cakravāki motif. Over this is a vyālāvari which carries a minor niche 'pañjārakōṣṭa' with deities or amara. These figures are flanked by Brahmakanta pilasters and carry miniature models of different types of vimāna with a gādha of the major kapōṭa nāsi of the siṃhavakṛa, from the mouth of which pours out the patralata or circular floral bands. The corners of the palagai here also carry rearing vyāla.

Pullamaṅgai is the water mark of the 1st phase. The architecture is a grand culmination of this phase -

expressed in an equally elaborate articulation of the wall which is totally transformed into a complexity of architectonics. The texture and quality make it the most satisfying of all temples. Crisp and sensitive, the love for detailed carving makes it an architectural and sculptural haven, the small similarity to the Kumbakōṇam Nāgēśvara carving on the Kaṇṭha and pillars is only incidental; Pullamaṅgai is the dream realised.

Closely related to this is the Caḍaiyar Kōvil in Tiruccenāmapuṇḍi (fig.83) about 920 A.D. with incontrovertible Parāntaka I inscriptions from his 14th to 37th year. Another Nṛpatuṅga Pallava inscription of the 22nd years suggests its rebuilding in stone during Parāntaka I. The plan shows an advance over many other temples of the phase. The bhādra and karna are very slightly differentiated. This has miśṛaka order with Viṣṇukanta for karna with the padmaṁḍi with the torus or the muṇai visible above the bun like kumbha. The hāra recesses have Brahmakanta split pilasters with a decorated laṣuna and cushioned ghaṭa. The central bhādra have Indrakanta pilasters. The ṁḍi of these pillars is the pāli form. The Rudrakanta flanks the dēvakōshṭa. The finesse of Pullamaṅgai is absent here, yet a balance and austerity is easily perceivable. There are siṁha-

maddaḷa in lieu of the bhūtavalabhi. The corbels are taraṅga type with a plain median band. The central dēvakōshṭa is dressed with a blurred but elaborate tōraṇa. To torus of the padma carved with a munai is similar to Tirupāllanam Āpatsahāyēśvara. This is mature realisation of the earlier attempts. The mastery and perfect finish give it a unique place for a realised anukāya element of the pillar and pilasters. With the superstructure present, this temple would have certainly commanded a special stature in the Early Chōḷa period.

Within a span of the next seven years, more or less contemporary to the Caḍaiyar Kōil is the Koraṅganātha at Śrīnivāsanallūr (fig.54). The earliest incontrovertible inscription here belongs to the middle and second half of the Parāntaka I reign(11). Stylistically the temple supports 927 A.D. It ranks with Kumbakōṇam and Pullamaṅgai; both in its architectural and sculptural output, larger than the afore mentioned; this vimāna is divided into clean aṅga on a straight line; but with hāra recesses pushed backwards. The wall treatment is a rich experience. Karna support Brahmakanta, the hāra recesses have Īśa or Rudrakanta, while the bhadra dēvakōshṭa has split Rudrakanta, and the cantoning pilasters of the bhadra are Viṣṇukanta, all carry cushioned capitals,

while the Viṣṇukanta takes on a fluted form. The pāli and padma mandi are present together and carry rectangular palagai . One of the Viṣṇukanta pilasters and a split pilaster show an octagonally cut shape according to the echinus of maṇḍi. The pāli form is seen over Brahma and Viṣṇukanta pilasters, the Īśa or Rudrakanta takes on the padma form with the torus of the lotus very slight. Both the kalaśa and mandi are very carefully shaped and the decorations variegated richly. Exquisite pearl and scroll festoons, musicians and dancing figures, a complex patterning of human and other decorative motifs abound. There are exquisitely elaborate tōraṇa - spewn from the mouth of makara both from the top and centre. The kapōṭa is high and in place of vyālāvari vertical lūpa are found, (similar ones are found in the Dharmāpuri Mallikārjuna temple complex of the Bāna in the second quarter of the 9th century A.D.). With this classically majestic temple there is a sudden lull and no really remarkable structure to compare.

The Tirunāmanallūr Tirutoṇḍiśvara 935 A.D. has over superlative padmabandha an austere wall with central dēvakōshṭa in a very very slightly projecting bhadrā. The really striking feature are the apsara on the palagai

in sharp angles on the outer side of the pilasters in various poses. The bhūta, on the bhūtamāla alternate with mṛnālīka (eve strut). These are first examples in the Chōla temple. to be brief only the impressive adhīsthāna and the newly occurring mṛnālīka are notable.

The Ujjivanātha Uyyakonḍan Tirumalai shows bold decorations on the mālasthāna, lasuna, pāli etc. The usual figural and floral motifs appears and are only shown here to point out the continuing trend of the same.

Grāmam, Palūr, Vālikandāpuram and Tirukaṇḍiyūr vimāna have nothing much to show in either architecture or sculpture.

iii) THE SECOND PHASE (940 - 970 A.D.)

The last years of Parāntaka I usher in once again new trends simultaneously as they preserve some of their heritage in other temples. These latter temples need not be sullied, but may be considered to be modest outputs in a tradition bound society. Innovations and variations, and creativity are seen in select vimāna. These are relatively larger and due to proximity of the ruling house, important in status. Royal patronage became vehicles for incorporating both the old and

the new. Once these trends were introduced in an already accepted and existing format, they become the regular features of the later temples. Some of these temples are highlighted to pin down the continuing and the newly introduced features.

The near end of Parāntaka I's reign becomes the beginning of a new phase. It is the Naṭtunai Īśvara at Puñjai which open the door. Less elaborate of the Chōḷa temples, the tour de force in this vimana are its galapāda reliefs, pilaster carvings and remarkable sculptural finesse. Despite the lack of architectural rhythms of the aṅga it maintains a unique identity. The miśraka variety of wall pillars and pilasters are used, with the Indrakanta for the split pilasters flanking the devakōshta. The dēvakōshṭa of the ardhamandapa uses the Brahmakanta. Graceful, they are treated very carefully (fig.84,85,86). The malāsthana is treated as māla and malāsthana, the lower vertical section and the upper horizontal band are separated by a fine muktāvali. The lower sections have looped garlands, with fine tassels in between, and the interiors of loops carrying intricate scroll work. The kalaśa or lasuna in contrast are left relatively simpler, with only the flame like motif. They are in much clearer relief. Some bear

human figures seated, while others have beside the scroll patterns clearly delineated dancing figures. The padmabandha shows clear lotus petals clasped on either side by a strand of pearls. The cushioned ghata show floriate scrolls on the corners and centre. The padmamāṇḍi are in a process of transformation. They are no longer exact lotus petals, but move towards a more animate form which are fully and better expressed in the ardhamāṇḍapa and in other temples. The Viṣṇu-kanta pillars also show the artists love for detail. The loops of pearls with floral arabesque, the pearl tassels, and the horizontal band of māla with circular motifs set within the squares all follow the planes of the flutings. The padma bandha has softly modelled lotus petals clasped on either sides by the strand of pearls. The flame motif is seen, and the pāli is cut octagonally holding the palagai. tōraṇa arches carry miniature scenes, with lively naturalistic human figures. The Agastya and Gaṇapati both have tōraṇa not clearly readable. The taraṅga poṭṭika is seen with a plain median band; and the vigorous bhūtamāla. The ardhamāṇḍapa shows an interesting feature which is the extending of the flutings into the capital and the nāgaḍaḷa form of the māṇḍi. Here the huge lotus petals transform into snake like hoods with a sharp munai. The quality

makes it a key transition from the Parāntaka I to the Sembiyaṇ phase. S.R. Balasubramanyam puts it in Āditya II's period, D. Barret calls it one of the best Early Chōla temples 'essentially a transitional monument though far less advanced than Tiruvāduturai'.

The Tiruvāduturai Gōmuktēśvara approx 845 A.D. (fig.61) is more elaborate. The bhadra projects forward, while the karna is pushed back slightly with elaborate projecting pañjārakōshṭa , similar to Pullamaṅgai. The finish and quality is lesser than the latter, but it is next only in beauty and importance to Pullamaṅgai. The feature par excellence are the architectural grandeur of the pillars cantoning the karna and bhadra . Boldly ornamented, the Viṣṇukanta stand on alternating geometric and flexible floral puṣ'pabandha adhisthāna. The architectural members of the walls show a vertical domination. The māla and mālasthāna are in the vertical and horizontal bands in harmony with the sundobhēda fluting. The scrolls form a bold 'S' curve of pearl garlands while the flame like motif is stylised in the ghaṭa, pāli and hīraka. The shorter pilasters of the pañjārakōshṭa have besides the above features figurative reliefs on the mālasthāna. The palagai are squarish, with corbels of the taraṅga with a plain median band. The

vigorous bhūta appear to support the roof and kapōṭa like vājanapurusa . The kūdu on the kapōṭa have the mukhapatti from the Simhavaktra. The sides have single kūdu . The ridge has candramaṇḍala and cakravāka birds motifs. Between the corbels these features appear in much smaller form on a miniature pañjāra-kōshṭha which reaches up below the kapōṭa. The mukhapatti, simhavaktra and kūdu are rendered with dynamism, and are more sculptural than architectural, to balance the geometricity of architecture. The ardhamandapa shows a similar complexity.

The controversial inscriptions spell gloom due to one damning word 'kūḍapaḍai' used in an unexplained context, which meant either the adhithāna or finial which are the lowermost and uppermost parts of vimāna(12). Stylistically it points to the late date of Parāntaka I's reign which D. Barret says could be his 38th regnal years. The changes and features of the temple as a whole mark the real movement taking off in a newer and definite direction.

The eve of the battle of Takkōlam saw a dark phase for about nearly two decades. Paucity of temples after Tiruvāduturai is seen. The scale could also not be

maintained. A few odd temples, not of royal patronage were seen in the shrunken kingdom. They are Kōvilādi Divyajñēśvara, Tiruvērubūr Piplīśvara, Turaiyūr Visamaṅgalēśvara and the Peraṅgiyūr Śīva temples.

The Tiruvērubūr Piplīśvara (fig.87) also controversial in chronology has mixed inscriptions(13). Based on the format it is closer to 952 A.D. The projecting pañjārakōshta, the high adhisthāna with vēdi and wall kaṇṭha are the horizontal flow counterbalancing the vertical. The pillars and pilasters have heavy ornament in their upper components, except the lasuna and pāli. There is no unique aspect calling forth description. The plan however is not found in phase I, and therefore posits a later date due to the miśraka order, pañjārakōshta etc. It is very probable that the brick structure of the 19th year of Āditya I was rebuilt in 952 A.D. by Vēlan Vīraṇārāyaṇan in the third year of Gandārāditya.

The 5th year inscription of Gandārāditya found in Turaiyūr Visamaṅgalēśvara (fig.88,89) posits 955 A.D. as its date. This temple due to lot of oil paint is difficult to decipher, but has the mālasthāna, etc. in the similar style; so are the āṅga differentiated and the pañjāra-

kōshta represented. The capital is topped by a full hooded nāgaḍaḷa maṇḍi. The framing pilasters of the paṇḍjārakōshta are octagonal above the ōma or saduram; and above this is the Īśakanta which is unusual. Although the ardhamanḍapa shows nothing unique, the Brahmakanta have four triangular motifs which have not been encountered before. Similarly the Peraṅgiyūr Śiva temple also has a mālasthāna with floral and human figures. Some pose like dṵārapāla guarding the linga while the others are in dance postures. Generally the finish if observed carefully, brings out the care taken by the sculptor while carving these.

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

The death of Āditya II, accession of Uttama as defacto ruler and the slow convalescence from the ravages of Takkōlam gives us a confused picture of the Chōḷa . A visible laxity in temple building after Tiruvāḍuturai shows a preoccupation with more practical and political matters. The finale had been reached at Pullamaṅgai and Tiruvāḍuturai, and there were no new innovative or radical changes worth their name. There is a plateau on which sprouted indistinguishable temples, but neither was there a downhill trend. Whatever changes occurred were not architectural by nature. They were concerted

efforts in the iconographic programme, and positive crystallisation in the iconic conventions in the third quarter of the 10th century A.D. There was a new convention where the ardhamandapa walls received a hieratic meaning and specific Śaivite images.

The gradual reclamation of their lost land, as well as some in Tonḍaimaṇḍalam, peace and security again led to the revival of the nobler arts on a grand scale. The credit of fairly well dated temples goes to Sembiyan Mahādēvi. Her name occurs first in the 11th year of Parāntaka I and was seen continuously till the beginning of the 11th century A.D. as a munificent and pious donor.

One of the earliest temples of this phase is the Kāṭṭumannārguḍi or Udaiyarguḍi Anantīśvara (fig.90). The walls show those features which are of the miśraka columns, with the usual ornamentation; the planes of certain pillar faces are used according to their shapes in the decoration. The new feature that is seen are the haṁsa just above the ōma carved out fleshily on the pilaster. Meaty sworling forms, they sprout out as contrast to the angularity of the pilasters and delicacy of ornamental detail. The temple is a problem poser. S.R. Balasubramanyam feels it is an ancient Parāntaka I

foundation in character with incontrovertible inscriptions of his 33 to 38th year. D. Barret offers two suggestions based on the ardhamāṇḍapa. The plan of the ardhamāṇḍapa is new and is seen only in Tirukuruhavūr, and Vṛddhacalam, of Uttama's 12th and 13th years and therefore belong to his IIIrd Phase(14).

Konērirājapuram Umā Māhēśvara (fig.91) is a key monument of the IIIrd Phase and is closely dated between 969-74 A.D. The south wall inscription say it is a Sembiyaṇ Mahādēvi construction(15). A 7th year inscription of Uttama(16) corroborates this. No new features are seen. There is only a heavily treated wall with miśraṅka columns with inferior decoration. The decoration and wall treatment is similar in the Mahālingasvāmi at Tiruviḍaimarudar; the plan shows projecting bhadra and karna. Qualitatively the Anaṅgur Agastisvara is also similar (fig.95).

The Matsyapurīśvara at Kōyil Tevarāyanpēṭṭai (fig.92) austere and utterly simple, is usually said to belong to Āditya I reign(17) but the 1st tala is very close to Kilappaluvūr (fig.93) of the IIIrd Phase; specially its sculptures. Divided into sharp aṅga the wall is treated with Brahmakanta and its decoration; the karna

carry pañjārakōshṭa which is a Hind Hāso feature. The flair for aesthetic excellence is also seen in the Tirukoḍikāval Tirukōṭīśvara (fig.94). The rich decorative bands almost occupy half the pilaster. Using the elongated loop motif within which is encased a floral foliate arabesque, the mālasthāna is a horizontal gushing of scroll work. This is discretely offset by the padma-bandha, above which the lasuna again expresses dynamism in its flame like motif. There is a rare nāgavakṛa maṇḍi in the capital section. Though the relief decorations are shallow they have a rich textural quality. The pillars and pilasters of the ardhamāṇḍapa have the torus of the padma carved with a munai. An earlier Kō-Ilango Muttaraiyar temple existed here, but the 11th year inscription of Uttama refers to its construction in stone by Sembiyaṇ Mahadevi.

The Sembiyaṇ munificence is seen in the 12th year inscription of Uttama in the Vṛddhagiriśvara Vṛddhācalam (fig.95), where the Śrī Kōyil, snāpāna maṇḍapa, gōpura, suṛalli (covered verandah) and the subsidiary shrines were Sembiyaṇ constructions. The wall features are not unique, but again the level of artistic output is superior. The dexterous art of carving intricate floral and foliate arabesques, the dynamic reliefs of deities

and animals from mythic scenes, the muktāvali where gross stone is carved out into small pearls, where every motif is so articulated are such that they appear to be a tapestry. The ardhamanḍapa has the central dēvakōshṭa and two additional ones one on either side. The recessed wall spaces have dēvakōshṭa with tympanum enclosing a single lozenge piercing. There is a rather perfunctory method of accommodating the full iconographic scheme on the ardhamanḍapa. This phase shows many temples like the Kailāsanātha at Sembiyan Mahādēvi, the Tiruvellarai Isvara temple at Tirukkuruhavūr, the Gaṅgajaṭāḍharar at Govindaputtūr the Mānavāliśvara at Tiruvilākuḍi, Āmravanēśvara at Kuhūr and the Nāgēśvara at Tirunāgēśvaram; however there are no architecturally unique features really to be discussed.

There are two temples that need to be briefly discussed. These are the Tiru Ālandurai Mahādēvar at Kilappaluvūr (fig.93) close to Kilaiyūr; and the Sākṣīśvara at Tirupurambiyum (fig.65). The former poses a dating problem. There is an inscription in the south wall ardhamanḍapa of the 15th year of a Parākesari which states that the Paluvēṭṭaraiyar chief Māraṇ Kandan built this temple. There is apparently some confusion regarding the biruḍa . S.R. Balasubramanyam calls it a Parāntaka I

inscription; but stylistically, the temple posits a later date in the Uttama period(18). There are thin pilasters with the Brahmakanta, Viṣṇukanta and Īśakanta. The bhadra projects slightly forward. The central dēvakōshta is flanked by split Īśakanta, whereas the bhadra pilasters have Viṣṇukanta, the karna have Brahmakanta pilasters on the pañjārakōshta. There are rearing vyāḷa on to palagai. The tympanum are elaborate but short. There is a ferociusness about the makara from the mouth of which emerge warrior and the like. The centres of these lalāṭabimba are the Natarāja in ānanda tāṇḍava, Narasiṃha, Gajāsura etc. The Āduturai Āpatsahāyēśvara also has similar features with lesser finesse carrying the rearing vyāḷa but no pañjārakōshta.

The Sākaiśvara (fig.65) has differentiated karna and bhadra on a straight mānasūtra. All the pāda are Viṣṇukanta with typical Sembiyan carvings and bases, the bhadra dēvakōshta however has split Īśakanta. Over the vyāḷavari with corner makaratunḍa rise the vēdi with the decorated wall kaṇṭha. The recessed spaces of the wall kaṇṭha are carved with full lotus discs which is a late feature. The pañjārakōshta reach the kapōṭa which are elaborate with two ornamented kūdu and elaborate koṇapaṭṭa. Above this rise minia-

ture shrines of the śāla type. The other pilasters carry the taraṅga poṭṭika with rearing vyāla and bhūtamāla. The temple walls are overly articulated with a change in the pañjārakōshṭha and the full blown lotus motif in the wall kaṇṭha recesses. The ardhamandapa is equally elaborate, but is relieved by the central dēva-kōshṭha flanked by recesses - two on either sides carrying divinities. The tōraṇa is relatively small and ordinary.

The Sembiyaṇ style continued even after the accession of Rājarāja I, till his royal and imperial construction eclipsed all else. The Tirunaraiyūr Siddhanāthasvāmi with the 2nd year inscription of Rājarāja was a lesser known temple. High quality decoration is seen on its Viṣṇukanta and Brahmakanta pilasters. The other features we are now aware of prevailed with only some variation due to different men at work. The Sāmavedīśvara at Tirumaṅgalam has miniature relief sculptures in the oma of padas, which was not common in Chōḷa architecture; but is as old as the cave temple of the Pallavas. Such a feature is also seen in the Mallikārjuna temple at Dharmāpuri which was a Bāna foundation. This rare occurrence was not even a trend setter, but an isolated feature. The notable feature is the prominent padmākara maṇḍi where the torus of the munai is sharp at the

ridges. This is also seen in the pañjārakōshṭa . the pañjārakōshṭa is a notable feature and shows a kapota surmounted by a larger mahānāsi and a face on top. A bhūtamāla runs beneath the kapōṭa. This is generally a neat temple.

The Acalēśvara, at Tiruvārūr (fig.96) is also an example of a qualitatively neat and interesting temple, this is specially in respect to its sculptures. The aṅga of this temple are clearly defined with the bhadra further having the subhadra. The Viṣṇukanta has a padmākara maṇḍi, while all other miśraka pillars and pilasters have the pāli type. The niches have moderate tōraṇa . If the sculpture reflects the importance of this temple, architecture speaks up for the Uktavē-dīśvara at Kuttālam, differentiated into various aṅga , it also shows the miśraka variety type of columns. The major feature that again draws our attention is the strongly formed pañjārakōshṭa inserted in the centre of the karna , which extend upto the bhūtamāla. The Rudrakanta pilasters have a prominent padmākara maṇḍi or nāgaḍaḷa. The ōma of the pilasters show for the first time mukula endings and a median band of carvings. This feature will be seen much later and more popularly in the 13th century A.D.

A typical Sembiaṇ example almost at the fag end of the century before the imperial structures began is, the Sakalabhuvanēśvara at Tirumiyaccūr. The decor, the pilasters with padmākara maṇḍi, śālakōshṭa. kapōṭa, mahānāsi, gādha cavity and the siṃhavaṭṭa are the fully developed Sembiaṇ decorations. In place of the paṇjārakōshṭa is the śālakōshṭa. This is one of the later Sembiaṇ temples that goes into the Rājarāja Phase.

Thus far these phases have shown us the articulation of the walls with the Brahmakanta pilasters, gradually including the miśraka variety in the Āditya I phase. Their places are determined for karna , bhadra , corners, and for those flanking the dēvakōshṭa . The tōraṇa from being coarse turn into intricate diadems. The recessed space from carrying sham niches or shallow ones begin to take the paṇjārakōshṭa or śāla kōshṭa . The Chōḷa niche is narrower. Although the tōraṇa maintains a fluidity of highly stylised forms, they also tend to become more semispherical. The shovel shape finial is altogether replaced by the siṃhavaṭṭa, specially noted in the paṇjārakōshṭa. An important feature is the Early Chōḷa corbel that supports on the vīrakanta or palagai a lintel of two mouldings separated by palin or carved lotus petals. It is over this that we see the demilune.

This became an area for great elaboration - festoons and people garlands issuing in massive curves from the mouths of makara or simha. At the top of the curve addorsed makara heads receive the garlands with deities or mythic scenes. Such is the making of the ornament into a habit.

IV.3 THE UPPER TALA (SUPERSTRUCTURE)

Temples are classified either by their size or the number of floors or tala. They are either alpa vimāna or mahā-prāsāda. When they have one tala or bhūmi, they are ekatala prāsāda. Depending on the number of tala thus they are eka, dvi, tri tala etc. When their shapes have to be referred or identified they are sama caturāsra, vṛtta, caturāsradīrgha, gaja or hastipṛṣṭha, vṛttāyata, shatakōṇa or astāsra. They are also generally referred to as kūtagāra caturvarga, śadvarga śālakāra, cāpakāra, gajapṛṣṭha, miśra Viṣṇucchanda, Brahmacchanda, Rudra-cchanda and miśraka.

D. Barret rightly says that the tower is the most difficult part of the Early Chola temple to study, due to peripheral mushrooming of other structures, or thick coats of stucco in all its stages of wear and tear.

The Early Chōla sikhara is either domical or square and very rarely octagonal, with a pronounced waist above the outward curve at the base. The topmost section is the stūpi, which adapts according to the shape of the śikhara. The stūpi base is generally not a flat one but is a circular row of open lotus petals. The śikhara is concave but has an incurved feature like a waist that slightly skirts out at the base. From the base of stūpi to the base of the sikhara run ribs with floral mantling called the patralata or kodikkaruku, which spreads on the outward curve of the śikhara. There are also recessed bands of flat circular bosses. These are compulsive habits that didn't die and had their roots in the wooden prototypes. These were the metal bracings with function, which became non functional decoration.

The śikhara is supported by a square, octagonal or circular clerestory called gala or grīva. This has four grīva kōshṭa facing four cardinal directions. They contain sculptures, and are called the vimāna dēvata . This is surmounted by the kūdu or mahānāsi instead of the makara tōraṇa of the first tala. The mahānāsi has a śiṃhavakṭra which extends high above the waist. If the first tala shows the makara tōraṇa, it now combined with the kūdu and became a highly elaborate mahānāsi

from the mouth of which are spewn floral and foliate mukhapatti enclosing a gādha cavity. These were again habits left over from the past, for they replicate the dormer windows of their wooden prototypes.

It is also a noticeable feature that between every section or tala there is a frieze. In this case at the top of the grīva just below the śikhara curve is a frieze of hamsa supported at the base by a simple series of projecting and recessed mouldings. In turn the grīva rests on a wide square platform surrounded by usually vigorous vyālamāla. At the prati corners are the vṛsa or nandi - when the prati with the vṛsa and the vyālamāla became the topmost members supporting the śikhara immediately after the wall, kapōṭa and prastāra it is called the ekatala vimāna. The variation and number of storeys other than this occur when additional members or tala are introduced between the śikhara and prastāra. Between these two, every 'tala' that is introduced is repetitive. The principle of design for every tala is the same.

The Early Chōḷa vimāna are usually ekatala or dvitala and usually encourage a great clarity of design and proportion between the component features. The variation of scale and detail of individual forms are a total blend of the two, the individual and collective.

The Pallavas had already exhausted their repertoire. Two hundred years of mastery show a variety of śikhara, alongwith the stenciling of tala. This repetition does not reduce the coherence of forms but its gradual reduction in size builds up the magnificence of height. The hāra may or may not be used. It may be added around the grīva platform, particularly obscuring it. This further enhances and encourages the vertical or pyramidity of the temple. The grīva and śikhara are not to be treated as a tala. Any additional tala would include a vyālamāla above the prastāra upto the vyālamāla below the prati or hāra. The components of the hāra are from top to bottom, the koduṅgai or kapōṭa with bhadra śāla or kōshta in the centre with the śimhavaktra nāsi. This is a rectangular wagon roof attique. A little higher up in the corners are the tilanāsika or kūdu similar to these in the kapōṭa. This is supported by a grha-piṇḍi which may have a niche just below the nāsi in the bhadra-śāla itself. There are karnakūta in the extreme corners with nāsi and in between there may or may not be nētrakōshta with small nāsi on the hārāntara. The karnakuta may carry in its central koshta a deity. These small supporting pilasters are called vitardika. The portion just below the karnakūta is called mañca. It is beneath this the vyālamāla garlands the tala.

This makes up the second or dvitala or the hāra, and every additional one makes it another tala.

Thus far we have observed certain features that persist. These are the kūdu forms - the mahānāsi, kapōtanāsi, tilanāsi. Right from the śikhara to the kapōta of the first tala. Śāla, kūta and kapōta are also noticable features which provide the right space for the different kūdu forms. These are the ornaments of the vimāna. They are more pronounced as decorative motifs and are the field for artistic expression, experiment and preservation of tradition.

The Early Chōla temple specially is a play of opposing forces. This is what preserves its identity - that of balance and unsurpassed poise. Every feature which demands a geometric concept of horizontals and verticals, is balanced by contrasting forms. The sculptor and architect were constantly striving towards a balance. The wall and the grīva were the important components which provided a clear vertical thrust to counter balance the horizontal aspect of the tala and adhithāna. The grīva also separates the śikhara from the tala and gives it a unique identity.

The hara it may be noted was an ambulatory parapet in the Pallava temple, while in the Early Chōla vimāna

it became a mere architectural repetition.

The superstructures follow the same phases; divisions we have seen in the earlier section.

i) THE PRE ĀDITYA OR VIJAYĀLAYA PHASE(850 A.D.)

The earliest ekatala vimāna lie in the heart of the Muttaraiyar land. These are the Visalūr, Kaliyapattī, Virālūr and Panaṅgudi temples (figs. 68, 80, 39, 68).

Over a kapōṭa, dressed austerely with two kūdu, vallimaṇḍala and the candramaṇḍala, rises the vyālāvāri. Paired vyāla facing each other, and on a smaller base above this is the prati bearing vr̥sa usually.

The Kaliyapattī Śiva, Panaṅgudi Agastīśvara and Visalūr Marghasahāyēśvara have square grīva with centrally placed grīvakōshṭa, intended to carry the vimāna devata. This is surmounted by another kapōṭa or ridge of the śikhara which is square. There is no vyālāvāri in these. Instead the ridge is ornamented by the band of candramaṇḍala broken just at the centre over the grīvakōshṭa to form the mahānāsi. The Panaṅgudi and Visalūr vimāna have the śimhavadana spewing the mukhapattī and a central gadha cavity; the Kaliyapattī temple

does not have it or must have lost it. The waist or curve of the śikhara has the vallimaṇḍala or kodikkaruku. Visalūr has one that extends all round the grīva waist. The outward curve of the śikhara now closes into support the padma-pīṭha with its sweeping petals which carries the stūpi. This stūpi is made up of the stūpika, kumbha, nālika and mukula. The ridge from top to bottom may also have a foliate strip as at Kaliyapaṭṭi. The Panaṅguḍi tries to simulate the shape of the śikhara very slightly.

The Vīralūr Bhūmīśvara has a circular base carrying a circular grīva and śikhara; and therefore appears bell shaped. A vyāṭavari runs beneath the circular ridge of the śikhara, while the grīva has grīva-kōshṭha framed by split pilasters. The śimhavaṅkṣa mahānāsi the candramaṇḍala on śikhara ridge, the padma-pīṭha, around the stūpi are all visible. The Kaṇṇanūr Bālasubramanya of Pāṇḍināḍu looks similar but with a sharper waist in the śikhara.

These are the closest to and within the Muttaraiya-Chōḷa tracts; however, the farthest we can trace back takes us as far back as the Satvāhana and Ikśavāku relief sculptures. The structural stone examples are of course fully evolved in the Ramānuja cave, Arjuna's penance

and the Trimūrti caves at Māmallapuram. The Northern Piḍāri ratha is an example of the basic kind of vimāna which undergoes a metamorphosis of shape and size with elegant and curvilinear bends.

However, there is a sudden burst of energy that mushrooms into the Vijayālaya Chōḷisvara at Nārttamalai (fig.41) as a tritala vimāna, with the āstapariṣārālaya. As a classic example of proportion and architectural display, the kapōṭa carries a single nāsi for each pilaster below. Surmounted by a dynamic vyālāvari, the second tala is seen to rise over a mañca with a vitardaka, the parapet walls decorated with a series of miniature shrines called 'pañjāra'. The corners have cubical karnakūta. The centre has bhadraśāla with the bhadra-kōśhta. In the interspace are jutting sala forms over the parapet with dancing figures. This second tala over the garbhagrha merges with the ardhamandapa. Above this rises the third tala within a smaller area, so that the structure becomes a diminishing one. This hāra is similar to the second one.

Surmounting this is a circular feature, grhapīṇḍi. There is a kapōṭa which carries the kūdu and above which is a circular hamsavājana. Above this is the circular

grīva with vṛsa on the prati corners. The grīvakōśhta carry vimāna dēvata facing the cardinal directions. The semi circular śikhara has four mahānāsi, mukhapatti of simhavaktra type, with an empty gādha. There are smaller anunāsi in the interspace. It is also observed that the grhapinḍi is square upto the square section and become round at the base of the grīva. Another observation is the cloister above the grhapinḍi of the second tala is formed by the karnakūta followed by two śāla instead of one which is a Pallava convention as also its form. The style here is mixed. It draws from the common South Indian heritage. This temple shows the Pallava and Muttaraiyar conventions.

The parivārālaya show square sanctums with bulbuous śikhara and rectangular open maṇḍapa in the front. These are a contrast, for they are simple ekatala vimāna models also seen in the afore mentioned temples.

The typical Muttaraiyar features are the amara with rounded shoulders and arms in the kūta and śāla (fig.112). A feature to be noted is that the ardhamāṇḍapa has a prastāra topped by a cloister of kūta and central śāla which are seen in Pallava and Early Cālukyan temples. A few more specific temples which take us closer to

the formation of the Chōla style are in this Muttaraiya-Chōla idiom. The Nēmam Irāvātēśvara (fig.70) is a dvitala vimāna and shows the kapōṭa with paired kūdu with kinnāra heads in the gādha cavities. There is an unclear mukhapatti and finial. The kapōṭa is dressed as usual with the koḍikkaruku and candramaṇḍala too. A little to the back and above is the vigorous vyālāvari. The mañca is above this and carries the hāra of karna kūta, nāsika kōshṭa and bhadra śāla. The cloisters contain male divinities, similar to those in Nārttamalai. These divinities are crowned by the nāsika without the gādha in very shallow lined relief. The plane surface is cut into small lozenge shapes. There is apparently a hamsavājana beneath the soffit of the śikhara which is square, but heavily renovated. A circular stūpi is found 'in situ' but lying on the ground. Other aspects appear suspicious and could be later additions.

The Ghrsthānēśvara at Tilaisthānam (fig.42) is also a dvitala vimāna which ushers in typical Chōla features; a broader line case it leans more heavily towards the Chōla and falls in the early years of Āditya I Chōla. The same features of the kapōṭa as in Nēmam are seen here too and are typically Muttaraiyar. The features like the mañca and hāra are similar. In place of standing

divinities there are seated figures. The corner figures are females in semi-profile; and the central ones are seated males, facing frontally. The figures are more relaxed and forms more flexible, expressing those qualities which make Chōḷa sculpture stand apart, as we shall see in the following chapters.

The gr̥hapiṇḍi also supports another kapōṭa with the same ornaments and is surmounted by the vyālāvari. The components like the prati, vṛsa, a square grīva, grīva-kōshṭa etc. are normal features. The same goes for the square śikhara. There is window like lattice work in the gādha cavity of the mahānāsi. The stūpi is modern. Features like the paired alpanasi, archaic bhūtamāla and figures on kūta and śāla are Muttaraiya features undergoing slow and steady changes. The human form, the body language now come closer to Chōḷa so does the waist of the karnakūta. The grīvakōshṭa figures maintain the Muttaraiya features. The vṛsa also become more poignantly naturalistic, in that they are slightly built and bovinely expressive. The nētrakōshṭa in the hārāntara and vṛtasphutita in the gr̥hapiṇḍi are close to the Irrukuvēḷ-Kōnāḍu idiom.

Showing such a mixed idiom is the Naṅgavaram Sundarēśvara a dvitala vimāna (fig.71). Resembling Nēmam in the

kapōṭa and Tillaisthānam in the hārāntara they also carry both standing and seated figures. This temple shows skillfully carved nāsika, tilanāsika and mahānāsika. The gr̥hapinḍi is specially subdued or indrawn and creates a chanda which is the intermediate between the arpita and anarpita (with or without hāra). The kapōṭa above this is like all the other examples of this phase. The vimāna dēvata are modern. The subdued grīva draws our attention at once to the crowning śikhara with prominent mahānāsi and gādha cavity. Both the śikhara and stūpi are renovated. The feature that shares a strong kinship with the earlier and smaller Muttaraiyar temples is the strong flexed karnakūta roofs as seen at Visalūr and Kaliyapattī.

The subshrines show for the saptamātrika the śāla type, Gaṇeś a the gajapṛṣṭha and for the other two existing shrines rudracchanda.

These were temples with mixed features but establish certain norms that will keep occurring over and over again with barely and change.

ii) THE ĀDITYA PHASE (870 - 907 A.D.)

The temples briefly surveyed in the earlier phase also continued well into the Āditya I phase. The Āditya I

Phase proper begins with the Tiruccaturai Odavanēśvara (fig.72) a dvitala vimāna with a square griva and sikhara and stūpi. The super structure is a individual variation of the same types encountered so far. The seated deities or figures are close to Tillaisthānam. Stucco hides what could have been a fruitful exercise.

The Tiruppanturutti Puśpavanēśvara is an ekatala vimāna, with the kapōṭa, vyālāvari etc. The grīva is surmounted by a semi-circular śikhara of brick. The vṛsa are late. Perhaps well articulated then today, it is again covered with impenetrable stucco. The Tirukaṭṭalai Sundarēśvara (fig.74), of the mixed Irrukuvēl-Chōḷa idiom, a dvitala vimāna is in fairly good condition. It follows the Naṅgavaram, Tiruccaturai and Nēmam temples with scroll work on the kūdu and kapōṭa with remarkable skill. The hārāntara features are now established and show in the kōshṭa or pañjāra seated figures. The śāla are slightly recessed and have prominent tilanāsika with the simhavakṛa finials. The bhadraśāla show horn like incurving feature on the sides; quite different from Naṅgavaram or Tillaisthānam. The tilanāsika frame human and decorative motifs. Behind this we can see the high gr̥hapinḍi carrying the haṁsamāla and then the pīṭha carrying the yālī frieze. The Rudracchanda

grīva and śikhara changes its contour to a less formidable one. The features of kapōṭa and hārāntara are similar to the temples already seen, while the slightly flexed waist recalls Tiruvēdikudī. The vṛsa become more and more naturalistic. The delicate waist draws our eye to its inward curve close to the Agastīśvara at Kilaiyūr. This is only smaller in size. The padma-pīṭha and stūpi are the crowning glory of the excellent workmanship. Infact every normal architectural feature in this temple is accentuated by fine jewellery like decor.

If excellent workmanship marked the Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar-Chōḷa idiom, the Irrukuvēḷ-Chōḷa idiom is no less. The temples combine rigorous principles of architectural discipline, as well as the freedom to create. A curious blend produced such a harmony. Not very different from the Kilaiyūr temple in architecture is the Tirucendurai Candraśekhara temple (fig.77a,b). The square grīva and śikhara of this dvitala vimāna is replete with anukāya elements. The hārāntara or hāra sections show no new feature, except for two additional Brahmakanta framing the central bhadraśekhara. These have four complimentary alpanāsi therefore. The Lālgudi Saptarśīśvara which is ekatala shows in place of the candramaṇḍala in the kapōṭa, rosettes. Besides this the gadha cavities don't

show figures. A round bulbuous śikhara crowns the grīva. The Nāgēśvara at Kumbakōṇam has a barely discernible superstructure due to garrish renovation. Stripped of this it may well be close to the temples thus far seen. Problems of renovation and repetition have beset us, but the superstructure calls forth again and again mere repetition. The Tirupāllanam Āpatsahāyēśvara is such an example.

One example shall conclude the description of this aspect. The Mūvar kōil of the Irrukuvēl at Koḍumbālūr (fig.76,98) carries a superstructure of remarkable clarity. Over a beautifully carved kapōṭa with paired karna kūdu, bhadra, pilaster nāsika, the vallimaṇḍala and the candramaṇḍala, a vigorous vyālāvari is seen in contrast to the mellow kapōṭa. This is surmounted by the mañca vitardaka, karnakūta and bhadraśāla with the hārāntara. The nāsika at the karna kūta are single. There are ksudrānāsika in between and four nāsi for the bhadraśāla with four pilasters. The bhadrakōṣṭha has deities in dynamic action. The grhapīṇḍi raises the bhadraśāla with a prominent nāsi. Two important vrataphūṭita elements of round pillars as if bearing the weight of the kapota are seen. The dynamism of the vyālāvari is now left behind and we reach up the soulful vṛsa,

and the most natural but ethnic sculptures of vimāna dēvata. The well flexed waist of the śikhara carries Kodikkaruku, candramaṇḍala and a mahānāsi with the simhavaṅtra spewing intricate scroll work. The stūpi compliments the curved kūta type śikhara. The gādha cavity carries a lattice.

From the afore details it can be safely concluded that the plan of the vimāna was usually square, on a straight or differentiated mānasutra and aṅga. These aṅga are the karna and bhadra emphasised by the salilantara recesses. The ekatala prāsāda was generally favoured although dvitala is common and tritala, as in Nārttamalai, Pullamaṅgai and Tiruvaṅṭur are very rare. The grīva is often stone but the śikhara a brick reconstruction. The dvitala vimāna carry the full kūta, hāra and śāla elements and the ardhārika walling of the dvitala carries its own prastāra and is then topped by grīva and śikhara. The kūta and nāsika carry am . or rsi. The śāla and grīvakōshṭha also carry these figures of deities and may often be in hieratic consonance with the figures of the first tala. Since temples are mostly Śaiva ones, the prati corners take vṛsa.

The śikhara are usually Rudracchanda vṛtta śikhara while the dvitala and tritala favour Brahmacchanda stūpi

for karnakūta . The śikhara follow the configuration of the roof, those for the śāla are of course round.

One of the most unique temples of this phase which is a little confusing is the Koranganātha at Śrinivāsanallūr (fig.99). Above the first tala rises the gr̥hapindi which is as high as the first tala. It replicates all the features of the ground tala and then only shows the hāra, kūta and śāla sections. Even these are relatively tall and carry almost round nāsika and are flanked by Īśa-kanta pillars. The kōshṭa are all bare. The relative proportion of the diminishing features are therefore inter-linked. This superstructure is an isolated example.

The Parāntaka I phase, the Second and Third phases do not offer us much scope for any relevant study of style; and have therefore not been singled out. Apart from this, heavy stucco work render us perplexed, and cause confusion even to the most shrewd.

SUMMING UP

Looking at the repetition and details in the same architectural components, one is more and more convinced that the Chōla style proper and its extended idiom are typological variations. The interaction and architectural

programmes were handed out to them. They didn't have to formulate anything functional, but improved upon the structural embellishment was found more on an aesthetic need than functional. The adhithāna showed this in its architectural bloom of new types. The walls say it all in the same vocabulary but heightened by a keen sensual and mathematical precision of forms. The superstructure only gave a final contour; and recognised the advantage of the more compact eka and dvitala. Aesthetic decisions thus evolved perhaps over years through the interplay of ideals within a group. This Early Chōla form as a whole was a successive series of intentions woven together and realised. 'Coherence' was its sustenance. It may well be remembered too that "aesthetic intention is not merely grafted upon the functional and structural intentions but is rooted in them and even inspired in them, he derives his organic unity from these itself"(19). It is not perfunctory cosmetics but a far deeper interplay of form and creative urge which culminated into an understatement called Chōla.

The awareness of space and structure are clearly understood and exploited by them in gauging distance and height. The structural soundness shows the immanent rightness in organic forms and 'logical response to forces

like gravity, wind pressure and balance'. They reflect in the hāra and hārāntara, the ability to distinguish patterns of repeated movements. There is a visual line of communication as well as an auditory one that we can apprehend. The eye traverses the facade and records the up and down high and low, curved and geometric features, and alterations on walls and superstructure. This rhythm indicates a visual movement and occurs due to the enriching of vocabulary through stone, texture, placement, alternating components etc. It is following and recreating these conventions in their own way that a unique dialect of architecture developed and a style was recreated. The pillar was more than a supportive block, it was a visual refinement and an aesthetically more acceptable one. The scale was one of moderation, neither human nor superhuman. The right scale of the vimana suggests the proper awe, power and autocracy. The base determined this aspect to some extent. The proportional relationship was established - he reduced disparities and irregularities increasing visual correspondence and ordered it based on the earlier compendium of knowledge. He took every 'visible module' worked at it and achieved a subtle correspondence'. This dimensional correspondence is seen in the rhythmic scale of successive storeys or tala and hāra. Discrepancy and

and monotony in turn are reduced. There was an enhanced use of solids and voids, vertical versus horizontal causing in their contrast a 'continuity'. This harmony of contrasts gives a special identity to the Early Chōḷa vimāna and is the 'potential energy' elastic and vital but well in control. The flaccidity of some of the Later Pallava temples perhaps influenced the Chōḷa temples towards a sustained energetic form. These are very obvious in the hāra and kapōṭa with a touch of freedom and a dose of discipline that is self imposed; to check the vulgarity of excess. The style shows no divorce between freedom of expression and discipline, aesthetic urge and structural logic, extremes of plainness and confusion. The kuḍū with soft curves give relief for example to preponderantly rectilinear grid of proportions, while the flutings mālasthāna etc. in the pillars and pilasters are magnetically attracted.

The subconscious awareness of mass, saw a balanced and not too unweildly temple. The weight of certain architectural components are discretely reduced by the embroidery like decoration and shapes. The centre of gravity was apparently so well conceived that the vimana carry off well with stability . The principle of compression was precisely applied because they stood for

strength and stability. The Early Chōla temple was compressed enough. This was reduced however by the variation of curved and delicate architectonics. The prastāra of every tala, the mañca, vitardaka uttira, vallabhi etc. are all features which are compressed aspects for stability, but their rigidity and probably uncouth weight was reduced by the vājanapurusa, vyālāvari and hamsamāla which encourage movement. These are active curves as opposed to passive. The quality of shape are further made stable or light by emphasising or blurring the nature of the surface. The decorative aspects all camouflage the gross form and in using these cause an opposite feature, a light but firm one. The texture was so manipulated that it became evocative. "Texture can mitigate or reinforce the suggestion made by the shape which carries it"(20).

The word decoration has appeared successively through out; this is because they were a special enrichment. They articulated the unwieldly form. It is the "nature of ornament to seize and hold the eye by a display of energy, it provides a most obvious means of focussing attention and thus of making a distinction between one part and another"(21). This decoration is further used to enrichen the verticals as verticals and horizontals

as horizontals, too sometimes. The pillar or column emphasises itself as something that stands, the entablature as something that lies. The articulation is supplied by ornament, when the structural system provides none. This is seen in the pilaster, kūdu and tympanum, so forth.

Early Chōlā architecture was not revolutionary in nature, but more evolutionary and embellishing.

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