

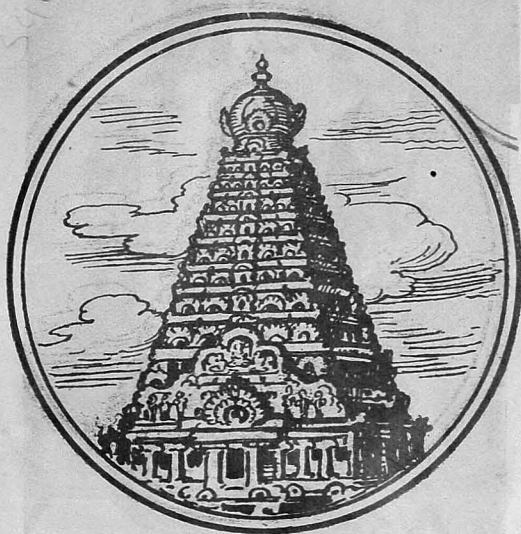
**THE TANJORE
ART GALLERY**

R. M. SUNDARAM

3007

The Tanjore Art Gallery

PALACE BUILDINGS



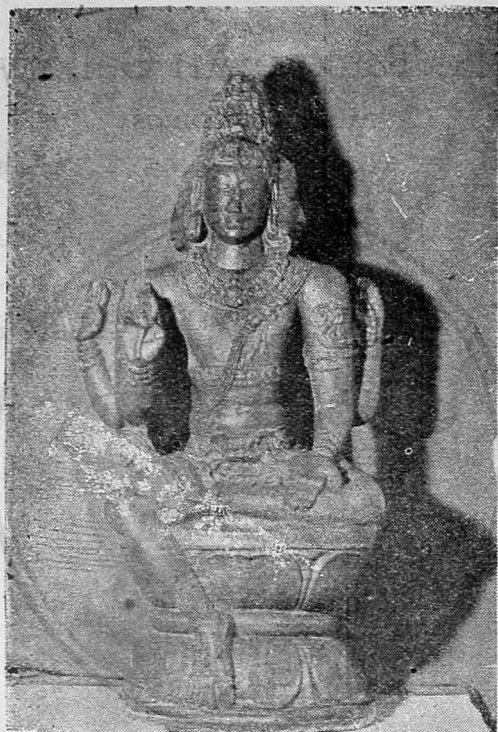
GUIDE BOOK

ILLUSTRATED

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Collector, Tanjore.



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Sri. S. RAMACHANDRA PATHAR, B. A.

DEDICATION



*To the Eternal Son
Dancing a-top of every Hill.*

Photos & Notes

by

Sri. T. M. Bhaskar Tondiman, M. A.

&

Sri. R. Gopinath, M. A.

THE ART GALLERY, TANJORE

READ BEFORE YOU ENTER.

A sculptor was at work on a large-sized idol of a god. He had just completed the upper half, the lower half being still shapeless stone. A rustic relation of his asked in all seriousness, "How on earth did you find out, Cousin, that this god was hidden inside this piece of stone?"

Thus runs a passage in a column of tit-bits in a news-paper. One is not sure whether to take this as the sublime or as the ridiculous. The rustic was substantially correct. The form was there alright plus the unnecessary part of the stone, by now chipped away by the strokes of the sculptor. Does not the sculptor just seem to unpack the idol from out of the stone into which it had been packed earlier by peeling off the stone used as packing material off the stone that makes up the idol?

Yet we know that this is not truly so. All the packing and unpacking was right inside the artist's head. What form of beauty shall come out of that amorphous block must have taken shape, designed and drawn up in perfect blue prints and tucked away in his mind. From there he transfers the picture of his mind's eye to the solid material on which he works, be it stone, metal or paint.

So much for things that do have a form. A beautiful female body or that of a perfectly developed male is in the sphere of *known* forms. The delineation of these is only an idealisation of what is substantially real. The West has attained high peaks in this field as borne out by the works of Greek and Roman art.

There is yet another field of thought and feeling which tries to get into grips with the evanescent realities of spiritual life and the vision of god-head. It is a sphere which is said to be strictly beyond the reaches of art with its finite means and ends. Nobody

has yet returned a categoric affirmative to the question whether he or she has seen God. St. Appar by far the most learned and the most endowed with spirituality has said in innumerable hymns that he has seen God at several places—now here at Thiruchengattangudi and now there at Thirupoonthuruthi. He would however seem to contradict himself when he says that it is not possible “To point and say this is God, this is his colour, this his form”. Even the exception he concedes only serves to emphasise that with ordinary mortals having ordinary vision and perception the impossibility of seeing God persists. The sentiment of Karaikal Ammayar is therefore a very candid expression of the unenviable state of the human mind even after its illumination by spiritual experience :

“ I became thy slave even before I knew thee

And yet have I seen thou not ;

What shall I say to them who ask of me,

“ What is the shape that your Lord has got ? ”

That they failed to see Him may unfortunately lend itself as an argument to the unbelievers for propagating atheistic doctrines. It is not their confession of failure that matters. That the pursuit after God was the consuming passion of their lives even after a thousand failures should drive home a profound lesson to us.

Such a lesson has been drawn by our artists and sculptors from our religious mystics. That Karaikal Ammayar confessed failure and Appar said what he did say, does not seem to have prevented the artists from grappling with the problem of finding a form for the Formless One. Considering the hopelessness of the pursuit the faith of these artists is very surprising. With faith they have turned their eyes in introspection hoping that the form will be revealed to them as an answer to their prayers. The *Murtis* that our sculptors have given us are the outcome of such *Thapasya* in which their learning and imagination and powers of

inward vision have been concentrated in an act of Yoga—of Union and Communion—on an object not definitely known and for a revelation as evanescent as it is intense. The inevitable shape has revealed itself in fits and starts and over the centuries to countless generations until it took myriad shapes—all grand, perfect and true individually and on the whole.

It is part of the doctrinaire background of the Hindu faith that God is the motive force behind the Universe and that by virtue of His immanence He is himself in a state of motion along with the Universe which he activates. This truth has crystalized in the Nataraja. That the male and female principles are complementary to each other and that the world survives only by their mutually attractive energy is a truth which has bodied itself forth in such a magnificent conception as the Ardhanari. The Bhikshadana illustrates the idea that God's voice comes to man right in the midst of his pre-occupation with the ego asking him to surrender to Him his illusory sense of individuality so that he may realise his ultimate identity with Him. The concept that Mahavishnu is in a state of sleep which does not exclude complete awareness is symbolic of the ultimate responsibility which God has assumed for man's welfare. God cannot afford to sleep; nor can he be a busy body constantly interfering with man's little ways and his endless foibles. So He is asleep and also fully aware.

In the hands of the painter the sculptor and the poet the ideal ways of life, and the high-lights of human emotion and action have taken shape as permanent influences for the improvement of the human race. The ideal hero and the ideal husband of unswerving constancy take shape as Rama in the mind of a Kamban. The lid-less and ever open eyes of a fish appeal to a poet who packs a whole metaphor in the name Meenakshi suggesting the idea of watchful eyes that never wink in sleep but always guard all animate creation from harm.

Thus our sympathies are tied up with the life and feelings of a character ; our tears are whipped up by the mere mention of a name redolent of a thousand poignant associations of sentiment and emotion. Visions rich in colourful pageant and motion are conjured up by mere sounds of familiar words which were colourless till a day before. Such are the immortal achievements of the artistic mind. Of these the achievements of sculptors have a substantially objective unity in its permanence differing from the permanence which other works of art have achieved in their own fields. The messages which our great sculptors have brought back with them after their sojourn in the land of the Muses have been treasured for us in the Gallery. We have paid our homage to these great minds whose pursuit of the body of truth has been no less ardent than other forms of search after it.

It is too much to hope that this guide book can encompass all the beautiful forms that are on show in the Gallery. Our object is to make at least photographic reproductions of some of our best specimens available to those who cannot undertake a long journey to Tanjore. There are some works of art of surpassing value which it is not possible to be seen even at the gallery. We have endeavoured to show them to the public as seen at their very sites.

It is not claimed that this brochure will impart instruction in the entire length and breadth of sculpture, its criticism and appreciation. Nor have we aimed at doing anything like it. If it serves so much as to stimulate a genuine interest in sculpture, we shall feel more than ordinarily gratified. The notes contain matter drawn from legend and, where such do exist, the underlying truths have been dwelt upon within permissible compass. It is hoped that they will tend to open the eyes of the lay man to the beauty that is around him in such bountiful measure.

It should be borne in mind that the photographic reproductions and the notes have not been prepared for catering exclusively

to the taste of Tamil-speaking people. We have had in mind the very many people of other lands who have cultivated the historic and rationalistic approach to the study and understanding of religion, language and culture in relation to the Arts.

We are proud of our heritage. We are aware that our works of art are worth making an effort to understand. We believe that right-minded persons of other countries feel likewise and pay their tributes of admiration to them. When they know what these mean to us and how deeply the roots of their inspiration have struck into the sub-stratum of Hindu religious mysticism, they would understand our enthusiasm more fully. Published in the guide book you will see what impression our works of art have made on the minds of foreign tourists and visitors.

The Gallery owes its origin to the indefatigable efforts of *Sri T. K. Palaniappan, I. A. S.*, the then Collector of Tanjore. The present incumbent *Sri R. M. Sundaram, I. C. S.*, carries forward that tradition of loving patronage and interest. Tamilnad is highly indebted to them both for the interest they have evinced.

Many have been associated with and have been of substantial help in our efforts to bring out this guide book. We offer our sincere thanks to them all.

With this brochure to help you we hope you will find it quite an interesting experience to go round the Gallery.

Tanjore }
18-4-'54 }

T. M. Bhaskar Tondiman,
Secretary, Art Gallery.

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Mr. K. P. Khaitan,

Vice-Chairman, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Mr. H. M. Patel,

Secretary to Government, Defence
Department, Govt. of India.

OPINIONS EXPRESSED

Shri. Sri Prakasa,

(Governor of Madras - of Sevashram, Banares.)

Here I was privileged to see some rare specimens of our ancient and medieval art. The sculptures are all beautifully arranged and I was glad to find new artists trying to add to the treasures of old by their own creations. More persons should visit the place, and feel the joy and inspiration that the various objects so plentifully bestow.

The gigantic structures all around are a lasting monument to the engineering skill of the medieval time; and the Sangitha Mahal is indeed a remarkable hall with perfect acoustics.

May the past continue to inspire us and enable us to produce a great future.

Srimathi Kamini Devi,

(Raj Bhavan, Guindy)

The collection of beautiful images in bronze and stone is truly wonderful and I congratulate all those who are responsible for the very artistic arrangement they have made of our ancient treasures and also brought to the best use this palace of our medieval kings.

Sri. V. V. Giri,

Union Minister for Labour, New Delhi.

The art gallery and the museum are very interesting and instructive. It is education itself to visit and study the gallery. I wish the organisers every success in their great enterprise.

Mrs. Sarah & Mr. Kanrad ..

(American Embassy, New Delhi.)

We appreciated an interesting visit to the Museum and hope to return for a more leisurely one.

Sri. M. V. Krishnappa,

(Union Dy. Minister for Food & Agriculture.)

It gives me great pleasure to see these excellent pieces of Art kept in good condition. It reminds me of the heritage of our ancestors, how old it was, what marvellous heights they had reached in Art and culture at a time when the rest of the world was still struggling to see the light of civilisation. The officials have taken great care to preserve them.

A Paris Tourist,

It is very beautiful. We would like to live surrounded with these bronzes (in original French).

Sri. T. N. Ramachandran,

(Joint Director-General of Archaeology in India, New Delhi.)

I spent a very interesting time in the Art Gallery and learnt a good deal of Hindu Iconography. The organisers deserve to be congratulated on the undertaking and the display of the exhibits. The models are particularly striking.

Sri. Dada Dharmarsikaree,

(Dantoli, Nagpur M. P.)

The collection of pieces in this Art Gallery speaks volumes for the good taste and cultural insight of those who made it. Shri Wallabh Swami, Secretary, All India Saiva Seva Sangha, Shri Vimala Tai Thakar, Srimathi Sugani Behan and myself found the collection not only extremely interesting but also very instructive.

Mrs. Charlotte Reigmann,

(Hamburg, A. T., Eggersalla 12, Germany.)

I admire very much the museum and the high Art (in original German).

Prof. G. K. M...estorg,

(Prof., Berlin.)

We had much pleasure at seeing the ancient pieces and I regretted very much that it was not possible for us to take back with us a really old piece to Germany (in original German).

Mr. A de Villanoisy,

(94 Avenue Henri, Martin, Paris.)

I have admired without reserve the magnificent collections presented in the museum. It is a beautiful work which unites art to the profound religion of the Hindu people (in original French).

Mr. Ernest Kunz,

(Zurich, Switzerland.)

To my great astonishment I found a local museum well worth seeing with wonderful pieces of Indian Art from olden times and also of the present day (in original German).

Mr. M. G. Barnes,

Clare College, Cambridge.

What fine bronzes !

Mr. Emmanuel .. (illegible)

French Naval Officer, Paris.

Limitless admiration for these Dravidian bronzes (in original French).

Prof. J. L. Davidson,

Professor of Art, Yale University.

Congratulations on a superb beginning of a fine museum.

Mr. Ruth Tomlinson,

Worcester Mass, U. S. A.

I am delighted to find such a fine Art Gallery in Tanjore.

Mr. D. F. Francer,

(From Switzerland)

I congratulate the city of Tanjore and the Curator of this newly arranged museum for the work they have done. Who comes to India for studying art and cultural life should not miss to see this new Tanjore Museum and its beauties.

Mr. C. Maxwell Lefroy,

Burma Oil Co., Ltd., Rangoon, Burma.

I have been greatly impressed by this fine and well displayed collection of art Treasures. It reflects great credit on the sponsors.

Sri. K. S. Pillay and others.

Of Durban & Natal, South Africa.

We tourists from South Africa were shown through this beautiful gallery and to us it has been a very proud visit to see so beautiful work by our Indian brothers.

Sri. N. Padmanaban,

(Chief Engineer, P. W. D., Madras)

The efforts of the Collector of Tanjore and his colleagues in making available these rare pieces of art of our land are laudable and we should be thankful to them for the feast provided for the lay man.

Sri. S. G. Nandy,

*(Maharajkumar & Badhurani of Cossimbazaar,
Sreepur Palace Cossimbazaar.)*

We went around the place and appreciated the collection which really is a thing of study. I would like to see honest efforts like this being made everywhere to teach us of the architectural sense we had in the past and an attempt may be made to regain it and attain distinction in the face of the world.

SCULPTURES
OF
THE ART GALLERY

THE FLAME-HANDED DANCER

“Often times I adorn my Lord Siva with the *Konrai* blossom and embrace his shapely shoulders and thrill to the joy of his touch. At times, I would lose faith in myself and be all cross with Him and yearn for the touch of his ruby red lips and search for him by mortifying my flesh. I would be thinking always of his grace and feel dull at the separation. Yet again I will feel elated and my heart blossoming forth with joy. Now let our voices rise in unison and sing the song of *Ammanai* in praise of the feet of the flame-handed dancer Lord Siva”, so sang Saint Manickavasagar.

It is celebrated in the scriptures that Lord Siva danced in the cremation ground bearing the inert form of Dhakshayāni and destroyed the *Yagam* of Dhaksha. That last dance was the unleashing of the frenzy of nature. The divine flame danced and went out of its mundane bounds which He in his Mercy had prescribed. The world seemed to be at an end. The artist has tried to capture in colour this magnificent scene.

The lines seem naturally to suggest themselves to the great saint poetess Karaikal Ammayar :

“Has thine hands become crimson from the touch of the flame or has the flame itself derived its redness from thy hands.”

The lines are in their turn reminiscent of Shelley’s resonant phrase “Multitudinous seas incarnadine”.

This is the work of the late Duraiswamy Achary. Our thanks are due to the courtesy of the “Kalaimagal” for lending us the plate.



LIBRARY
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DR

శ్రీ వేంకటేశ్వరస్వామి
శ్రీ వేంకటేశ్వరస్వామి



THE BRAHMA

It is a matter of common knowledge that temples dedicated to Brahma are so rare as to be almost unknown. Even at Uthamar-koil dedicated to the Trinity, Brahma does not have a place of precedence. In the Art Gallery, however, he has pride of place. Not that his work of creation of the human race is eminently satisfactory in quality or that his pace of production can be viewed with ease—with Malthus staring us in the face!

That he is the prime cause of the gallery is however reason enough for conferring this distinction on him. On seeing this image standing neglected on the river bank at Karanthai, a research worker of the Archaeological Department at Calcutta moved the Collector for permission to transport it to Calcutta. But the people of Karanthai would not part with their treasure and began offering poojas to it, if only to show that they set much store by it. The idea then suggested itself that this and similar images of artistic worth lying neglected in the outlying parts of the district might usefully be collected and arranged in an artistic manner in the vacant halls of the Palace premises. The work went on apace and the Gallery has now come to be what it is—a place of interest for tourists and a venue for cultural activities for this headquarters town.

The majesty of this figure is unmistakable. The body does not derive its manly lines from muscle but owes them to its inherent proportions. The four faces have each a subtle *bhava* reflected in it. The Brahma has been so mounted that the face on the off side may be admired also. He sits in petrified meditation right in your way as you enter. It is a difficult job with *multicephalous* gods and nothing but the generous proportions of a royal hall of prayer could have accommodated them. When the heads are serial there is problem enough about space and when they are radial it just beats you!

He is the fountain head of the Vedas. His consort Saraswathi is the patron goddess of the arts. What could be more appropriate than that he should get pre-eminence in a Gallery devoted to the resuscitation and development of Arts.

THE DANCING VINAYAKA

Fantasia is world wide in the domain of Art. The Centaur and the Minotaur are examples of half human and half animal forms which are as old as Greek Art. A bull's head cleverly mounted on the clean muscular body of a Greek God or a godly trunk growing out of a real bull fail to be taken seriously. But the Vinayaka is a class by himself. It is not a Hindu God with a misplaced head. He is an integrated whole. The body is a human form in its nearest approach to the elephantine or the nearest approach of an elephantine form to the human. That is the physical comedy about Ganesha and the reason for his popularity with children. Of all the gods he is the most loved.

Even legends connected with him are full of the comic—Ganesha, the young child, was being tenderly kissed alternately by Lord Siva and Parvathi between whom he was seated. He felt this parental osculation a little tiresome but bided his time. On one occasion when both of them tried to kiss him simultaneously he withdrew himself—and there! the two met in an unpremeditated kiss much to young Ganesha's merriment. Kailas, no less than Olympus, was a fairly hilarious place, it would seem!

Such and similar stories are the back-ground against which Ganesha has found a permanent place in the hearts of the Nation.

Dance seems to be very much in the family tradition at Kailas. Uma herself had no mean proficiency and she admitted of no rival except her own Lord whose Grand Finale at Thillai still engages the world's attention. Ganesha's dance is a comic number and he seems to join with us in the merriment with his wide pouting mouth and glinting little eyes—the ever smiling expression of elephantine humour.

In a country which has counted on the elephant as a means of royal transport, as heavy armament, as beast of burden, as wealth and as a symbol of auspiciousness, it is no wonder that the physical peculiarities of that docile creature were subject of intimate study. An artist who was not ridden by convention has sought to portray the God of Obstacles in this unusual pose—Narthana Vinayakars being a proportionately rare variant.

It does not require any special canvassing to find people to laugh at and to laugh with Ganesh!

NARTHANA VINAYAGAR - DADASURAM

மத்தள விநாயகர் - தாராசுரம்

வெங்குரு திருத்தாதை

வியக்து கை துடிகாட்ட

நீன்குடும் மழகனியு

- கும்பகோணம்





THIRIPURANTHAKA

One of the heroic exploits associated with Lord Siva is the annihilation of Thiripura. Three *Asuras* built for themselves "flying fortresses" of gold, silver and iron and sweeping upon the world from time to time, they harassed its inhabitants till the latter could suffer no longer. Lord Siva went out to war against the three *Asuras* using the earth as the Chariot mounted on the sun and the moon as its wheels. Nandi, the sacred Bull was harnessed to it and Brahma acted as the Charioteer. After all these pompous preparations, the Lord did not have to fight at all! He smiled upon them, we are told, and the *Asuras* were reduced to a handful of ashes—flying fortresses and all.

You are free to take this story seriously or with a grain of salt, if you choose. But the truths which this allegory is meant to illustrate are cardinal articles of faith with the Hindus. The Ego asserts itself every day around us entrenched behind the triple citadels of desire, anger and illusion. There is no death more deadening to the soul than the grip of these three-fold evils. The soul cannot be emancipated unless these bulwarks of personality are destroyed by the fire of divine grace. The Grace of the Lord which is cool as the moon light and the morning dew to those that have surrendered, could be hot as Hades to those who have not. And that is the paradox of the smile that could burn. God does not, of course, come a day too soon. He permits the world to be too much with us and he knows in His infinite knowledge just when we are ripe for the call. And then he would not have to fight his way in. All his panoply of war would be superfluous.

Appropriately enough, the Thiripuranthaka in stone is just the supreme Lord by himself minus the chariot and other paraphernalia. The long bow adorns his hand and a beautiful smile plays about his mouth. From his secular pedestal in the Art Gallery, he is not asking you to give yourself up entirely to him. If you learn to understand what he means as a work of art, half the trick is done. Art opens out the little casements of the soul for the first rays of light to glimmer through. God will walk in later through the open portals of your heart, mind and spirit. All in its time of course!

Like the Loacoon which has received mention elsewhere the Mercury by Michael Angelos is a celebrated work of western Art with striking dynamism. The famous twist which the god with the winged sandals has to give to his waist in the act of taking off has justly been the theme of many critics. It is not an act of strength as of Loacoon, of Hercules and of Samson but an act of extreme grace. He is not mightily kicking himself free from the earth but twisting himself up and out into the thin air above him—no bulging muscle, no throbbing vein, nothing.

We have had our share of mute inglorious Michael Angelos too. The twist has been executed as if Michael Angelos had worked at Madame Tassaud's!

The story is familiar to all. The head and front of the offence of the sages of Darugavanam was that they were not sage enough to know they were human. That ritual and Yaga were all means to an end and not ends in themselves was a lesson they had failed to include in their vast scheme of knowledge and *Sadhana*. The God of beauty and truth was as much the God of the grotesque and the terrible. The lesser *siddhis* of sorcery and necromancy—of the *abhichara* cult—are powerless against the invincible might of the good and the beautiful. The assumption of the snake as the garland and the slaying of the pard, point just this moral. Then came the elephant, symbol of brute strength or of *thamas*—the inertia of the soul. This inertia is as much in the scheme of things and is as much God's making as any other. It is symbolic of the solid front of the deterministic attitude which comes so naturally to all. Being His own making God has to make a supreme effort to destroy it. Allegory or no allegory the effort is portrayed in the sculptured stone.

The Hindu religion cannot divest itself from its philosophic background; nor can Hindu art prise itself free from its religious sources of inspiration. Within the limits, art in India has fulfilled its high destinies. In the Gajasamhara, an ordeal is pictured but it is an ordeal accomplished with ease and grace. The same subject has received treatment in the Siva temples of Tiruturai-pundi and Perur. Nowhere has it touched the peaks of artistic excellence as in the Iravatheswarar temple at Dharasuram. The figure in focus is the Emergent Lord and his face has the appropriate expression of indignation. The lesser details such as the image of Parvathi in the attitude of fear with young Kumara in her arms have received the right amount of attention. It is like the sons of Loacoon—not to physical scale but to the unfailing scale of spiritual proportion.

LAMBARAP - DARASURAM

கந்தையர் - தாராகரம்

கந்தை கண்டத்தினர்

கந்தை கண்டத்தினர்

-கந்தை





DAKSHINAMOORTHY

Four sages, learned in all the known sciences, arts and scriptures found themselves still slaves of doubt and supplicated before the Lord for enlightenment. He took up his seat under the Banyan tree, facing south in the role of preceptor and the four sages were seated at his feet agreeably to their status of eager pupils. Then followed a long lecture of unbroken silence and finally a piece of practical demonstration which consisted of the two fingered gesture—the *Sinnuthirai* or the *Gnanamudra*. The lesson was complete. The doubts had been dispelled. The unspeakable Truth had been conveyed by unspoken means. And there they have come to stay, the Tree, the Teacher and the Taught all crystalized in stone for ever.

He might just as well have said it! What real difference it would have made if he had, one wonders. That God is by nature free from the bondage of the senses and that the soul which is touched by his grace becomes likewise free from the three-fold evils of Egoism, Tendency and Illusion constitute an elucidation of the *Sinnuthirai*. In the terse words of Thirumular the idea has received immortal expression with the clarity of a formula.

“Of the three, the Lord, the Soul and the Bond
The Soul and the Bond are primeval as the Lord
The bound-up soul shall never reach the Lord
And when the Lord reaches out, the Bond shall not stay.”

Put in so many words the substance of spiritual experience does seem to ebb away; but when inculcated in the enigmatic way and realised as an inward vision, these truths come home with a force of their own. And that makes all the difference in the world.

In the Art Gallery, the Dakshinamoorthy is mounted so as to face the South—agreeably to tradition. Superstition is not of course at work because the mutilated idol is believed to have lost its immanence. And the mutilation here is very substantial indeed. The right hand itself with the inscrutable symbol of edification is missing but that cannot detract from the piece being as beautiful as it is. The face is eloquent and it is capable of giving lessons which, if they are not sublime in Truth, are not less so in beauty. You are not asked to worship it, but there is nothing to prevent you from admiring it!

THE VEENADHARA DAKSHINAMOORTHY

Of the known variants to the Dakshinamoorthy, the Yoga Dakshinamoorthy and Veenadhara Dakshinamoorthy are the most commonly seen. The specimens of Dakshinamoorthy and the Yoga Dakshinamoorthy in the Art Gallery are of stone. But the Veenadhara is a bronze and is on a large scale as bronzes go.

The art of music has never been exclusively secular in our land. It is not merely so in its theme and application. Our musicology itself has divine associations and origins. God himself is spoken of as bodied in music. Every note of the octave is a limb of His; and every raga is a vision of His Form. It is no wonder therefore that some of our votaries of God are votaries of music as well. It is significant that some of the activities of the Deity are closely associated with music and the kindred art of dance. In the hands of Nataraja, the drum is the symbol of creation. In the hands of Bhikshadanar, it is the call to the souls to surrender themselves to his direction. In the Ananda Thandavam the highest rapture is portrayed in the form of a dance.

The *siddhantic* philosophy enunciates that all matter and mind resolve themselves ultimately into *Nadham* or Sound. In that state of complete involution, God alone remains in His state of Primordial Transcendence. The spheres would by then have dissolved themselves into music. The Veenadhara Dakshinamoorthy is symbolic of that concept, that nothing is left but music floating in the Infinite Beyond. It would be pertinent to ask how at least one Veena could be left for God to play upon when there was such a holocaust of involution. The artist seems to have anticipated this objection by not including a Veena in the cast! Not having had much experience of many involutions, it is just as well for us to suppose that God can play on a non-existent Veena just as beautifully as it were there.

The Veenadhara Dakshinamoorthy in the Art Gallery has sometimes been mistaken for a Thiripuranthaka. The position of the hand meant to support the Veena is slightly different from that for supporting the bow. It is quite natural that the untrained-eye is not able to see this subtle distinction. This apart, there is a substantial difference between these two subjects. The "Muyalaga" will invariably be found under the foot of the Dakshinamoorthy and the Nataraja and not under the feet of the other deities. That rule-of-the-thumb is good enough to go by.





SIVA PARVATHI

The one lingering passion which Saint Appar had was for reaching Kailas in his mortal frame. On divine direction he bathed himself in the tank of Ayyarappan's temple and on coming up—lo! the promised vision of Kailas was before him. He sings of this experience thus :

“ I beheld the majestic tusker
Paired with his loving cow
Therein was revealed the feet of God
The vision I had never seen theretofore ”.

To Appar the vision was not of physical reality but of the essential principle of the male and the female—the eternal dualism inherent in the manifest world of life.

One might imagine that the tuskers and the cow-elephants were maintaining a respectable distance in the presence of the saintly old Appar. One would not, however, say so after reading the *Thevaram*. The burden of the song is deliberately emphatic and highly repetitive about the familiar and amorous way these pairs jostled each other in the act of parading themselves for Appar's edification. They seemed to have cared a fig for the prudes of the world.

Art, if anything, is sensuous—not sensual, mind you! It must knock at the door of the senses to gain admission into the citadel of the soul. It must therefore be first true on the human plane, to whatever higher plane it may address itself in ultimate purposes. If the Ardhhanari is at once fantastic and formalistic it is because of the inherent symbolism. The Siva Parvathi is on the other hand, full of human appeal because it is a creation forced by a very human situation.

The artist was at work on the Chandrasekara on a piece of stone a trifle large for his needs. After the well-proportioned form of the Lord had come into relief, there was a generous margin to be tooled away. To squeeze in a Parvathi there, was within the privilege of the master who was not executing an order like some present day craftsman for his business patron. A few strokes more and the slim Parvathi emerged partly hidden by her Lord. There was not enough space to go for two, unless she nestled as close to her spouse as her body would permit without undue discomfort. Even so she cannot be feeling very easy with her legs which she has had to twist out of the plane. If it had not been an after-thought, Lord Siva would not be standing in the attitude of solitary indifference that we see about his figure. And that is that!

RATHI AND MANMATHA

We had thought that the Empire of Eros was just as wide as the world. It would appear however that it extended even beyond its confines. And he is such an indefatigable god ! He immolated himself in the act of uniting the hearts of Parvathi and Siva. If Lord Siva had to efface Manmatha altogether to be beyond the latter's influence there is an implicit victory for his power. And so the " Incineration of Manmatha " is at once a victory and a defeat for the God of Love. It has been a perennial source of inspiration to the Arts of painting, sculpture and dance. It has been the subject even of uproarious popular polemics in *extempore* ballad on the day of *Holi* or the Kaman Pandigai in the south.

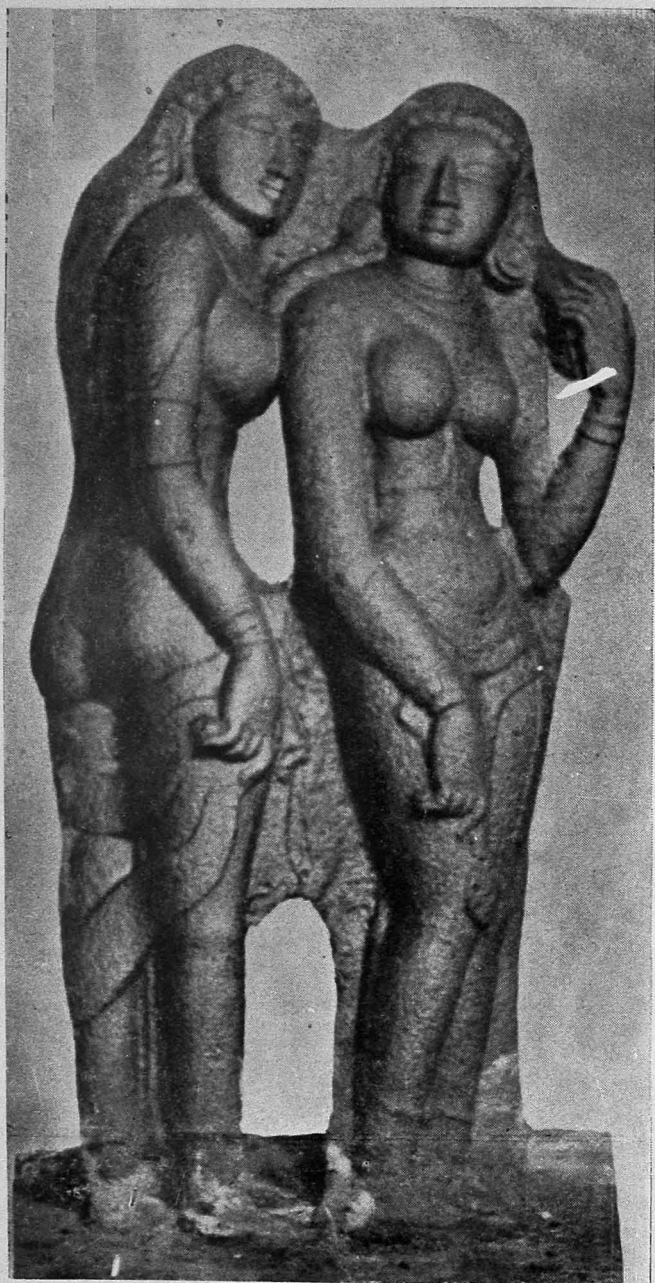
Love is of perennial interest. The world would be void without its energy. It is not seldom that we hear of love dissociated from the *libido*—all sterilized, hygienic and ampouled. Love is broad-based on the legitimate appetites of the body.

Portrayed opposite is the stone image of Rathi and Manmatha in the Art Gallery. The God of Love who played valentine with the world had himself a vulnerable heart and Rathi was the one who knew just where it was most so. A second cupid did not have to do an errand for this paragon of beauty. Her own side-long looks of love had that power. It is a poetic conceit often met with in Tamil literature that the God of Love goes out to war armed with his sugar-cane bow, with a frail string to it made of bees, and even more frail flowers for his arrows. His army is made up of women ; his clarion is the cuckoo singing with "full-throated ease ;" his drum the " multitudinous seas incarnadine " with the setting glow of the sun. He rides a chariot built of the scent-laden southerly breeze. On the top of all this, the God of Love is without a body—a *Narcissus—cum-Echo* of the East. There is no occult symbolism in all this. We know that of such stuff love is compounded.

By far the smallest piece in the Art Gallery, it is perhaps one of the best in point of beauty unborrowed from fineness of detail and finish.

MANMATHA — RATHI
 மன்மதன் — ரத்
 காதல் கடவுள் காமனுமே
 காதல் ரதியுடன் தேவேந்
 காதலை வார்த்த மிளரகிள்ளுள்
 கிளி—
 வேழம் ஓடுபவர் எத்தனைபேர்?





THE RISHIPATNIS

Love and war have always been the more common subjects of poetry and the arts. And woman has ever been a source of unending inspiration to poets and the feminine body beautiful has in like manner been the subject of treatment in sculpture and painting.

It is no act of irreverence to suggest that when the sculptor stumbled upon the story of the Bhikshadana, he found it a fit subject for exploitation because of the preponderent feminine interest in it. Here was an occasion for depicting the rapturous state of woman when they are obviously and unashamedly in love. Seven feminine figures have been chosen and posed differently from one another. All the conventional poetical conceits about the bangle and the cloth-cincture at the loins becoming loose in the love-lorn state have been exploited to great advantage. One of them is figured as holding on to her garment in the interests of feminine modesty—and sculptural decency—we may add. It is a frank portrayal and no goody-goody conventionalism has been allowed to interfere. The very peak of grace is achieved in the twin piece. The one who is on the offside of the Bhikshadana is so shy that she gets behind her companion as if she wanted to hide her charms from the Wanderer with the Bowl. She does not fail, however, to cast her amorous glance on him from her position of vantage. It would seem that she has made an excuse of nestling to the shoulders of her companion for turning her eyes full on the charming Meanderer. The other, a rather bold type and not a little gross from her looks, is actually facing away from the person to whom she has placed herself in such proximity. She is probably cracking some joke—we hope not very lewd—to the shy one. She seems to be sure that her charms have already caught the eyes of the new comer. *She* has no need to woo him.

Some very gross critic of the West is said to have remarked that Indian sculpture is all hanuch and little clothes on. We must invite him again to the Gallery, if he is alive, to see for himself that here is variety in his own line of criticism! A person with a healthily constituted sex-attitude will not faint or snigger. Such a one will exclaim "Oh! Well" and pass on—of course after seeing it all for as long as is good for him or her!

THE BHIKSHADANA

Even the most reverential minds must admit, though with a shock, that the making of the idol and the process of sanctification are *human* efforts. But the force of that shock to such minds will be taken away, we hope, when it is conceded that God in his infinite wisdom employs human means for very human ends.

One of the grandest sweeps of the human imagination is the conception of the Bhikshadana—the God with the Begging Bowl. He goes from door to door so that He may be of easy access to all. Unless God comes knocking at their doors the souls would never hear his call. He comes to beg the souls to surrender to him their sense of separate *entity*—their illusory sense of the ego—so that they may realise the *identity*. In the language of ordinary life he may be said to come a-begging for love.

This is the idea behind the Bhikshadana. That he assumed this role to humiliate the rishis of Darugavanam and that the wives of these sages became infatuated with him are all part of the legend which was the prime source for the sculptor's imagination.

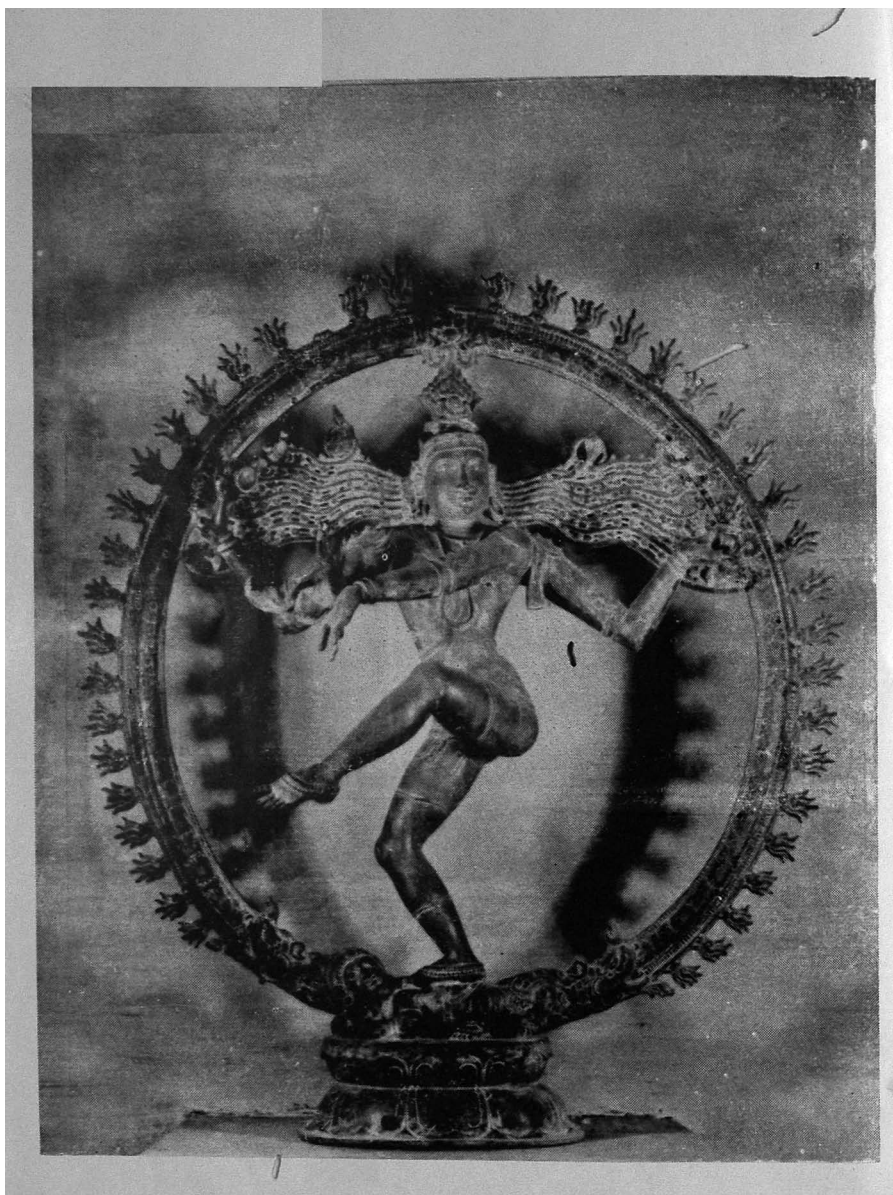
It is not enough to set up a tableau and want us to believe that the rishipathnis have fallen in love with the Bhikshadana. The Bhikshadana must be worth falling in love with. "That he is, by Jove!" is what one would exclaim on seeing his majestic form. He carries himself with ease and manly grace. His feet are suggestive of a step about to be taken—the idea of motion in an art that is essentially stationary. The poet said :

"Lo! the God on knobbed clogs of wood
Does walk the woods with a languid grace
And infatuate the women cooking the food
Who rush out with their ladles in a love-mad race !

They stand, those seven celestial brides
Each a shapely-armed wife of a seer
Enraptured as He takes his manly strides
Bearing the feathered mace and drawing near".

That is the dry bones of what is a picture in sound made up of trochaic feet tumbling up with quinquasyllabic endings. The artist lived in an age whose aesthetic climate was wholesome and undisturbed by the breezes of the West. To that extent he was lucky. We have a lot to unburden ourselves of before we can create. Ours is a generation too near the inter-regnum to be fully alive. Let us therefore be content to admire.





THE NATARAJA

The significant part of the history of the human race is the history of its yearning for a vision of God. Instances of a perfect consummation of this yearning are so rare as to be almost nothing. Karaikal Ammayar asks in a strikingly modern voice :

“What shall I have to say to them,
Who ask of me ‘What is your God like?,
What! Oh! which, tell me, is thy form”.

• We can understand her insistence. She must have had a vision of sorts about him and was content. But she seems to have had in mind the very many matter-of-fact people who would want her to produce an autographed photograph of the Lord!

But Saint Appar was forthright about it. Unless He, out of His bountiful grace, gave you the vision with which you can recognise Him, you cannot say that He is so and so. It amounts to saying that if you failed to see God, it is not because He is not there but because you do not have the eyes to see him with.

The Tamil mind has not taken its beating so easily. It has given reins to its imagination and produced a likeness which a whole sub-continent has accepted as an object of worship and the rest of the civilised world as the greatest work of Oriental Art.

It has been intuitively realised by the wise men of the East that the finest conceivable particles of matter are in perpetual motion in a circle. If there was motion, there must be a mover and if he was immanent, he must be in motion as well. The artistic minds seem to have been capable of all this cold logic too. But imagination cannot body it forth in its plenitude overnight. The artist must have prayed and prayed for the revelation. No cheap allegory could satisfy his need. The transport—the rapture—that unifies all these by a secret rhythm of integration had to come. That did come and lo! there was the Nataraja. Ananda Coomaraswamy, the great interpreter of the secret springs of oriental aesthetics to the West, describes it, therefore, as the synthesis of Religion, Science and Art

“The arched brow, the bubbling smile,
The bedewed lock, the coral tint
Ash bestrewn of milk white shade
The golden foot in the out-swung lift
Oh! this birth is worth if but to see all this.”

was the poetic exclamation of Saint Appar on one occasion. Coming upon the same vision on another occasion, he saw in the *Abhayakara*, the “Solacing Hand,” a tender gesture of enquiry and of welcome. The Nataraja was so much alive with him and in such continuous communion.

CHAKKARATHALWAR

The Vaishnavite cult has twelve Alvars or saints. Time and again we see this list swelling. Kamban the poet was just Kamban or at his best Kambar as long as he was read and understood. Later his palm-leave manuscripts were considered too holy to be read (and too big a tome, to boot, for easy reading!) and Kamban was raised to the status of Kambanattalwar. We are inclined to say that Kamban actually *dwindled* into Kambanattalwar!

Some lesser luminaries in day-to-day life also do sometimes change their names overnight into Koorathalwar and the like making civic relationships difficult by the *aliases* which naturally get incorporated. This tends only to make long names longer and instead of conferring immortality on them cause them to be forgotten the more easily.

Chakkarathalwar on the other hand is a piece of symbolism. The Saiva Siddhanta philosophy is not substantially different from that of the Vaishnavites—though of course the higher reaches of the former are denied by the latter as non-existent, or more appropriately perhaps, as unnecessary. *The Shad, Athara* or the six points of contact of the Deity with the Universe is common ground between the two sects. This underlying concept is figured in the six-pointed star and the Tiruvasi.

The Discus of Mahavishnu, the supreme Deity of the Vaishnavites is to them what the Trident of Lord Siva is to those of the Saivite persuasion—both objects of worship as the symbols of the power of the Deity to destroy evil and protect the good. The embodied spirit of the Chakra is depicted here as a sixteen-armed figure of flame with sixteen weapons of war and in an attitude of a war-leap. It is the symbol of the Militant Faith. The Vaishnavites would probably have us believe that like Vaishnavism itself it is anterior to the Nataraja. By that very handle the Chakkarathalwar must be pronounced as having the limitations of a precursor in art development. We see here the same immaturity which we notice in the Ardhnari of the Pallavas. If on the other hand it is an imitation, as in all probability it is, art must be said to have been too much enslaved by allegory to have a free rein. The Muses are always afraid of allegories as if they were allegators!



சுகதர்த்தாழ்வார்
(மன்னர்குடி)



MAHAVISHNU—MANIKUDI

One wonders whether after all the controversies about Saivism *versus* Vaishnavism were just make-believe. When the Hindu religion had no third enemy, its followers could well afford to indulge in mock polemics. Unfortunately some did seem to take it seriously and let the firm ground of spiritual experience slip from under their feet.

The great poets, thinkers and sages of India have always set their eyes on the pole-star of unified truth. With Peyalwar the sentiment was that :

“ The flowing lock and the high crowned head
The discus and the Trident
The twined serpent and the holy gold-thread
Of such symbols confluent
The Lord of the seven-fold hill
The mind of the world doth fill.”

The highest tolerance seems to have gone into the make up of his mind. Saint Appar clinched the issue for the Saivite sect thus :

“ Who would be the bride that would marry
The Lord of Ayyaru if it is not Hari.”

All this would assume greater significance when we realise that the sedent Vishnu who is reproduced here was the gift of the Darmapuram Mutt, one of the three seats of Saivite learning and religious ministration.

It is a sedent form of striking majesty. In the mind's eye of the pious, His form would seem of golden hue and his conch and discus, of solid gold. To them he would be radiant as the sun. When such piety and faith are revived in this land, the invocation of *Pallandu* which Vaishnavites sing would assume a new significance. He has been with us for all time in our joys and sorrows and how much do we need Him for all time to come. The *Pallandu* does have a meaning. Unfortunately, our generation has not got the vision to see it.

THE AZURE GOD OF PRESERVATION

"The foe-feared discus, the milk-white conch
Held aloft in hands of lotus hue
Breast bedecked by tender bloom
Thus stands the Lord
With eyes shot red with his tearful mercy."

Such was the inward vision of Mahavishnu which the hermit poet Ilangovadigal projected into his inimitable words. Reproduced opposite you see that vision which some nameless wielder of a chisel has projected in his turn into stone. It was a job of some magnitude transporting him from far-off Thirukkaravayil.

Even granite has its own tones of blue. The sculptor has evidently been obsessed with the question of colour and has therefore been at pains to choose a stone with the bluest shade of grey. The ornaments and other details have been painstakingly worked upon.

The discus in the right hand is in the "prayog" position i. e. in a state of release and not in the usual state of rest. The symbol is pregnant with meaning. The forgiving God does some times punish, lest the world take forgiveness for granted and go the sordid way.

The image is on a large scale agreeably with the idea of his being Thirivikrama, who with three steps measured the Universe—finite by His standards of Infinity. That is why one must cry a halt somewhere to going into rhapsodies about his form. Rhapsodies are just words and sculpture is a domain of art beyond the ken of the word-ridden mind.



MAHARISHI - TEUKKAS
MAHARISHI - TEUKKAS
MAHARISHI - TEUKKAS

SILVER

MADRAS

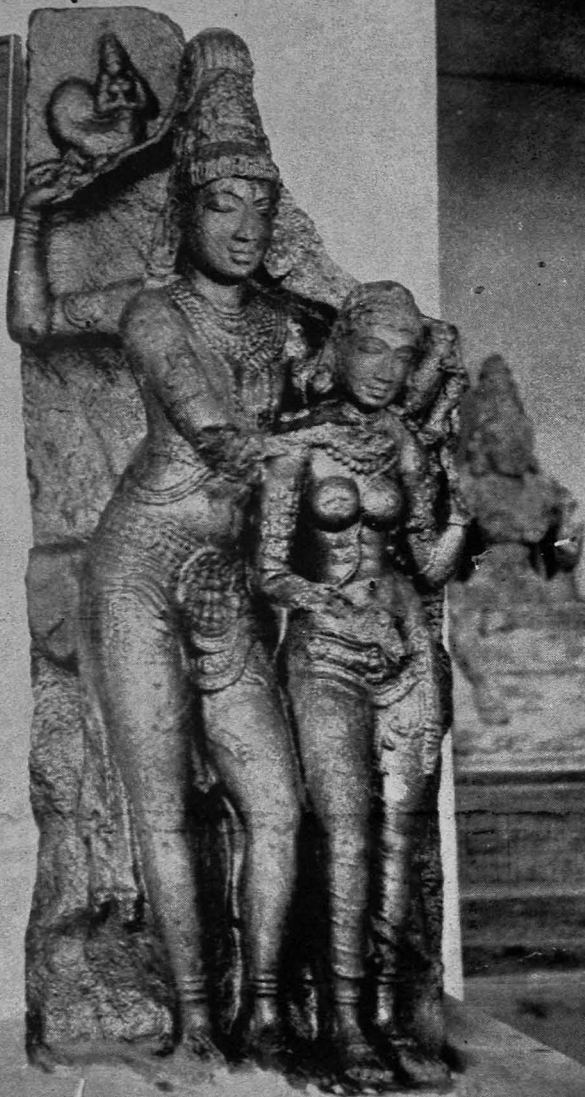
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GANGADHARAR—A TORSO

Sagara who was descended of the line of Raghu performed an *Aswamedha Yaga*. The sacrificial horse wandered into the *Parnasala* of a Rishi without his knowledge. Under the mistaken impression that it was the sage who had secreted the horse Sagara's sons gave him trouble and invited upon themselves the holy man's curse. They were instantaneously reduced to ashes. Nothing less than the touch of the Ganges would resurrect and purify their souls from the effects of their ignominious death. That his forefathers had met with such an ignoble end was a dead weight on the mind of Bagiratha. He performed life-long penance to efface this blot. The celestial Ganga was pleased to descend upon the earth, but she was a proud stream of the skies who threatened to inundate the earth. Lord Siva intervened and Ganga was caught like a dew-drop in the maze of his spreading locks. Ganga was humbled but later permitted to trickle down and accomplish her mission of purification which she continues to do, down to this day.

There is no limit to the fertility of human imagination. The Descent of the Ganges has given rise to another offshoot. The story runs that Parvathi was chagrined at a third person, and a woman at that, sitting on the locks of her Lord. It would seem the new comer had supplanted her in the affections of her constant companion who had even shared his body with her. She was cross. Lord Siva felt that some conciliatory measures were called for. Hence the loving embrace and the tender caress. Parvathi was wooed back and all was well with the world.

And thereby hangs a tale. And what a tale! This motif has been handled by artists over the centuries and it has steadily gained in effectiveness. Parvathi is nowhere in evidence in the Gangadhara in the Rock Fort at Tiruchirapalli built by Mahendra Varma Pallava. It is only in the Chola temples the Gangadhara has come to real life. The transition between chagrin and reconciliation is a psychological state which it is almost impossible to be portrayed in such a difficult medium as granite. The rich curves of Parvathi's figure are emphasised by her slender waist-line. Lord Siva is more than ordinarily pliant. He has need to be! It is no joke dealing with marital jealousy. Lord Siva seems to enjoy the joke as much as conciliating his wife. But what has been the havoc done by the hand of a Vandal?

NARAYANI

By what myriad names have our ancients referred to the Divine Mother! The list in such beautiful names as Velnedunkanni, Kaviyamkanni, Vandamarpunguzhali, Elavarkuzhali, Karambadusolli, Pandadunayaki, Thiripurasundari and Periyarayaki is so obviously musical and of such picturesque association that the Tamil speaking world has found spiritual solace by merely repeating these names. Such is the power of the divine name!

The Eternal Mother has been conceived in three aspects. As the embodiment of peace, beauty and serenity, she is figured as Parvathi, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. As the symbol of the terrible, the self-same Goddess assumes the names Durga, Bhairavi and the Mahishasuramardhani. In between these two extremes, she appears as Parvadarajaputri, the wife of Lord Siva and Narayani, sister of Narayan. The figure opposite is the deity of this *via media* in spiritual rigour. She derives her conch and discus from her brother Narayana. Her own attitude is one of tranquillity.

It is well known what easy grace the *tribhangi* can impart to static figures. Narayani is beautiful unaided by the *tribhangi*—the triple bend. Much painstaking work is in evidence in the tapering crown and the other decorative details.





கலியாணசுந்தரர்
சிவமணக்கோலம்

திருவின்காட்டில்
புதைந்து கிடந்தவை

KALYANASUNDARAR—THIRUVENGADU

After the inception of the Art Gallery at Tanjore, many idols of great artistic worth have come to see the light of day after probably centuries of internment under the earth. Eight pieces unearthed at Thiruvengadu constitute a veritable treasure. Four of these make the fine tableau opposite.

The theme of the wedding of Parvathi is as old as time itself. The Daughter of the Mighty Mountain as her name "Parvathi" would signify performed *tapas* to get Lord Siva himself as her husband. She was put to severe tests. Lord Siva himself appeared in the guise of an old brahmin to wean her away from her seemingly unattainable object. Parvathi was not to be so easily dissuaded. Pleased with her constancy and devotion Lord Siva himself gave her *darsan* as the bridegroom and took her to wife. So runs the theologic legend.

The sculptor has been at very great pains to impart to these figures the very highest degree of grace and beauty. The groom is quite at ease and not a little dignified. He well might be! He is no doubt conscious of his being the hero of the piece. The bride is just the picture of coyness. Mahavishnu is naturally quite complacent at this happy turn of events. Who could make a better brother-in-law to him than the Lord of the Universe?

Sri Devi and Mahavishnu are both giving away the bride but proprieties require that the male has to take only the second place where brides are concerned. Narayana therefore holds himself away, a trifle stiffly perhaps. Sri Devi makes up for this by her tender thoughtfulness for the bride who might otherwise feel altogether lost but for her understanding chaperon. And such understanding! Sri Devi looks discreetly away lest the newly-wed feel embarrassed. One would think the bronze might blush! So it would indeed if it could be rubbed down. And to think that all this beauty was underground for no one knows how long. We might as well have lost them for ever but for the accident of discovering them!

RISHABHADEVA—THIRUVENGADU

By present day standards, Thiruvengadu is an obscure little place about seven or eight miles away from Sirkali. In days of yore, the deity of temple at this place, Vengadar by appellation was the subject of hymns by Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar. The *Agora Sivam* of Thiruvengadu is perhaps more reputed than Vengadar himself. Equally famous are the holy waters in the *prakaram*—Soma Surya and Agni Thirthams.

Thiruvengadu has shot into fame after the discovery of the eight bronzes from under the earth. Four of these pieces—the *Kalyanasundarar* group have received mention elsewhere in this brochure. The best specimens are however the *Rishabhadeva* and his consort *Uma* reproduced here. That the bull is absent makes no difference. He is not less at ease on that account. The figure inclines to be slim but is of manly proportions nevertheless. The curious coiffure made up of snakes intertwined with the locks must have been quite a job.

There is a graceful poise about the stance of the consort with a faint suggestion of demureness.





THE DWARAPALAKA—A TROPHY OF WAR

The Tamilians are never tired of referring with justifiable pride to their victories over the rulers of North India. That Karikala Chola's banner with the emblem of the leopard flew from the snowy peaks of the Himalayas and that the Sera King Senguttuvan defeated Kanaga and Vijaya, kings of North India are their constant theme. "Gangaikondan" was the title assumed by Rajendra Chola who led a victorious army to the north.

In the domain of art however, no such jingoism seemed to have been at work. Allowing for reasonable local variations of theme and style, there is a remarkable unity of means and ends in the artistic heritage of Greater India. It was no war of conquest in which Kanaga and Vijaya were vanquished. It was an episode in an expedition made in the interests of art. Seran Senguttuvan's first and foremost object was the ceremonial selection of a stone from the Himalayas for making the effigy of Kannaki, the Goddess of Militant chastity. Stones must certainly have been available by the legion in his own mountain country. He wished that the temple to be built by him for the Goddess of Chastity should be speak the tribute paid to her by the entire sub-continent. She was to be the representative of Indian womanhood. Her effigy was therefore to be carved out from stone contributed by the Himalayas and bathed in the holy waters of the Ganges.

The spirit of tolerance has ever been the key note of culture in this land. The greatest tribute that Kamban paid to Agasthia was that the former had traversed the entire domain of Tamil and reached to the very boundaries of Sanskrit.

It was not always that the rulers of the south were animated by purely artistic motives. Rajaraja II meant real war when he laid siege to Kalyanpur, the capital of the west Chalukyan Empire. It is not surprising that this scion of a royal line which had given single-minded devotion to Art and architecture, took for his trophy, not the ephemeral wealth that the Chalukyas had laid up in their vaults, but the Dwarapalaka reproduced on the page opposite. A mortal prisoner of war might have been a lot of trouble on his hands. The Dwarapalaka for all his weight must have docile enough capture *en route*.

Inscriptions in the Iravatheswarar temple bear this out in ample measure. Rajaraja II must have been attracted by the striking unity between the artistic methods of Chalukyas and the Cholas. To the untrained eye, Chalukyan sculpture is bewilderingly like Chola sculpture. While princes and potentates warred with each other and parcelled out territory, the artists seem to have had an undivided empire of tradition in this vast sub-continent of many languages and many races.

RAJA RAJA II AND HIS QUEEN

Vijayarajendra who has been described elsewhere as the victor of Kalyanpur and a man of refined taste was after all no Adonis in personal appearance and his wife embarrassingly plain for a princess. So it would seem from the plate opposite which is a photograph of what are claimed to be the effigies of the builder of the Iravatheswarar temple at Darasuram and his royal consort.

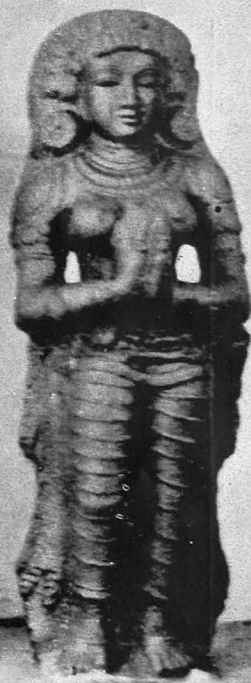
We are naturally reluctant to believe that this great warrior was a non-descript person and that his partner in life had plebian features. Vijayarajendra had at his beck and call hand picked sculptors who could fashion such wonders as the Bhikshadana, the Rishipathnis, the Gajasamharamurthi and the Thiripuranthaka. We cannot, therefore, suppose that the sculptors who worked on the effigies were incapable of reproducing his likeness. And supposing they did, what a terrible piece of disillusionment!

Evidently, these masters were not the men who worked on the figures. The king, as is the way with the great men of this country, should have discouraged the best craftsmen from working on the symbols of this personal commemoration. It would have seemed an act of gross impiety. The best even in talent must be dedicated to God. And so a novice came upon the job. Even his bungling could not fail to bring out the sweet smile on the face of the queen so demure and *petite*. How we do pose for a photograph now a days and what a lot of touchings up we permit so that the print may be flattering. Values have changed. One wonders whether they have not changed for the worse!

It is some satisfaction for the realistic-minded that it was not all "O! so beautiful" even in the hey day of Chola architecture. There was plenty of mediocrity of talent among the sculptors. That should tell us what titans must have been at work on some of these creations which have stood the test of time and of changing tastes!



వెంకటేశ్వర స్వామి
మూర్తి





VIJAYARAGHAVA NAIK

The last of the line of Nayak kings who ruled over the destiny of the Tanjore State. It was he who built a greater part of the Palace and its outer-walls at Tanjore, the Pushyamandapam at Mayuram and the beautiful Mandapam on the banks of the Viracholan river at Tiruvidadimarudur. One of his acts of piety was the construction of the outer-prakarams of the Rajagopalaswamy temple at Mannargudi. The other was the construction of twelve storeys to his palace so that he might see the towers of Srirangam nestling in the waters of the Cauvery and worship Renganatha from his home at Tanjore every day.

This great builder was no less a scholar of repute. He has celebrated the victories of his father in his beautiful drama in Telugu "Raghunatha Abhyudam". This drama has many references to Sevappa Naik whose fertile imagination and love of the fine arts gave rise to the Sangeetha Mahal. With the help of his sagacious minister Govinda Dikshidar, he tried to maintain peace and tranquility in his country and in the end faced heroic death with his son Mannar Dasa beside him, in his last battle with Chockanatha Naik of the Madura line of Naik kings

The well proportioned form of this mighty ruler in bronze stands at the entrance to the gallery, with his hands joined in an eternal salute of welcome while the anklet of the heroes adorns his muscular feet that trod the field of battle. It is not inappropriate that the cap of the devout bhagavata rests on his head which was held high above the clouds of mundane care and in perpetual contemplation of the grace of his family deity Sri Ranganatha whom he worshipped from the topless towers of Tanjore every day and all the year round.

RAJA SARFOJI

After the Cholas and the Nayaks, the Mahrattas ruled over the Tanjore State. Coming of the same stock of intrepid warriors from which the heroic Sivaji hailed, it was no wonder that the Mahrattas were dauntless fighters. The rise of the Mahratta power was not merely a secular event. It had its roots deep down in a spiritual and cultural Renaissance of which Sri Samartha Ramadoss, the spiritual preceptor of Sivaji, was the head. With such Dharmic force behind their military power, it was not a matter for surprise that the Mahrattas built up a vast system of charitable institutions over the foreign soil they captured in the South. Sarfoji was the finest flower of that illustrious race and he has achieved undying fame as a patron of the arts. The son of Thulaja by adoption, Sarfoji brought to his unexpected responsibility of kingship rare qualities of intellectuality. He was a linguist and a man of parts. He was not unmindful of the value of western culture and way of life. He has tried to fuse the arts of the west with the rich heritage of his own mother land and to start a University. Saraswathi Mahal was built up by him as a fore-runner to this dream of his. Rare books from all over the world have been collected and preserved by him. He has likewise collected the palm-leaf manuscripts scattered over the country, whatever the subject matter of the treatise—medicine, astrology, philosophy and literature both sacred and profane. It is easier to say what Saraswathi Mahal has not got than what it has. What it lacks is just what is not worth having.

The British, to whom the State inevitably passed due to the compelling force of contemporary political trends had an honest admiration for his personality. When they wished to pay him a tribute by erecting his statue and sought his approval his request was that it should be in the attitude of prayer. He stands to this day, his hands joined in prayer invoking the blessings of the Goddess of Art, whose votary he was, on his monumental work which is by far the most valuable Bibliotheque of the South.





THE ARSENAL TOWER—TANJORE

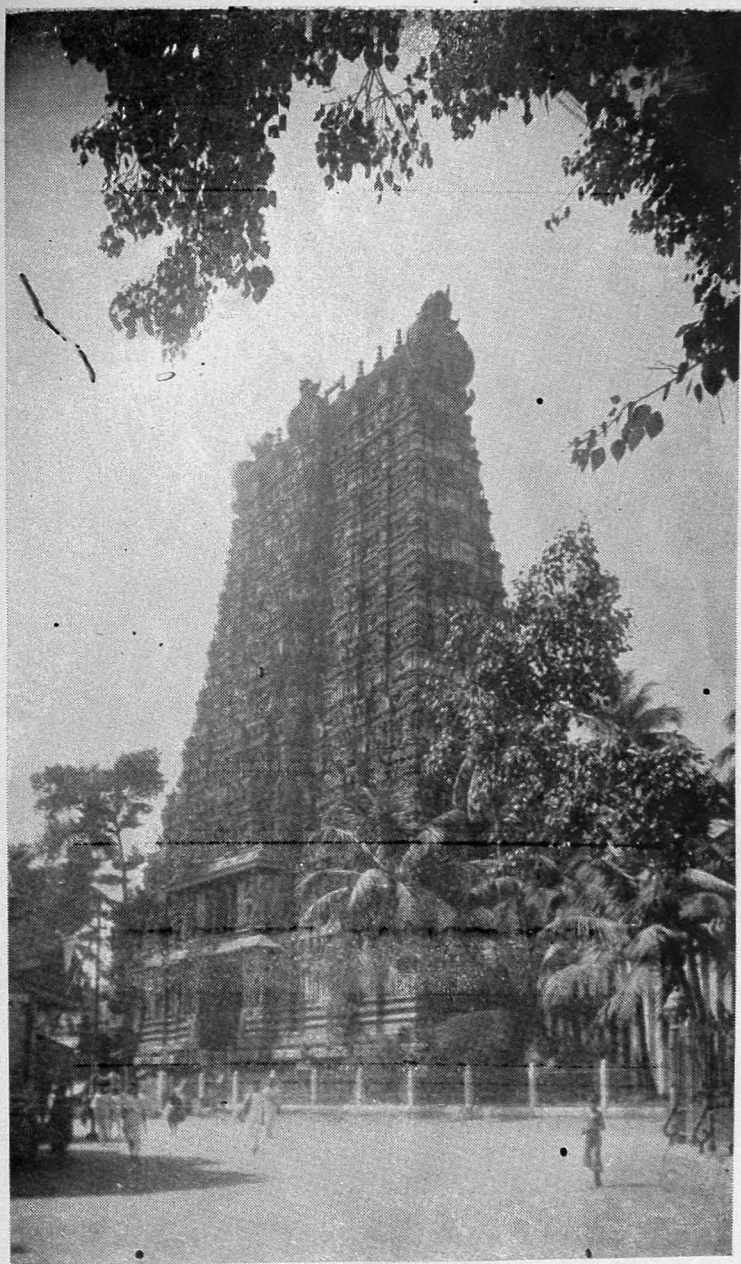
The imposing Gopuram of the Big Temple at Tanjore is not the only spire at Tanjore drawing the tourists' attention. The Arsenal Tower, secular though its origin and associations, vies with the former. From miles away, we can see these stabbing the horizon—one the gigantic polyhedron surmounted by a hemisphere under which the Formless Form of the Lord has his *sanctum* and the other a pyramid, massive if some what shorter, in the secret recess of which one Horatius might hold ten men at bay. The Art Gallery—mind you no temple of sanctified grime—rests under the aegis of this very secular institution belonging to an earlier age of medieval warfare and still more medieval defences. The artistic traditions of this land are such that they will not tolerate ultra cubism on the one hand and mid-victorian ornateness on the other. It should be neither drab nor fantastic. The Arsenal Tower strikes the right note in this direction. It is archaic without being grotesque and modern without being stream-lined.

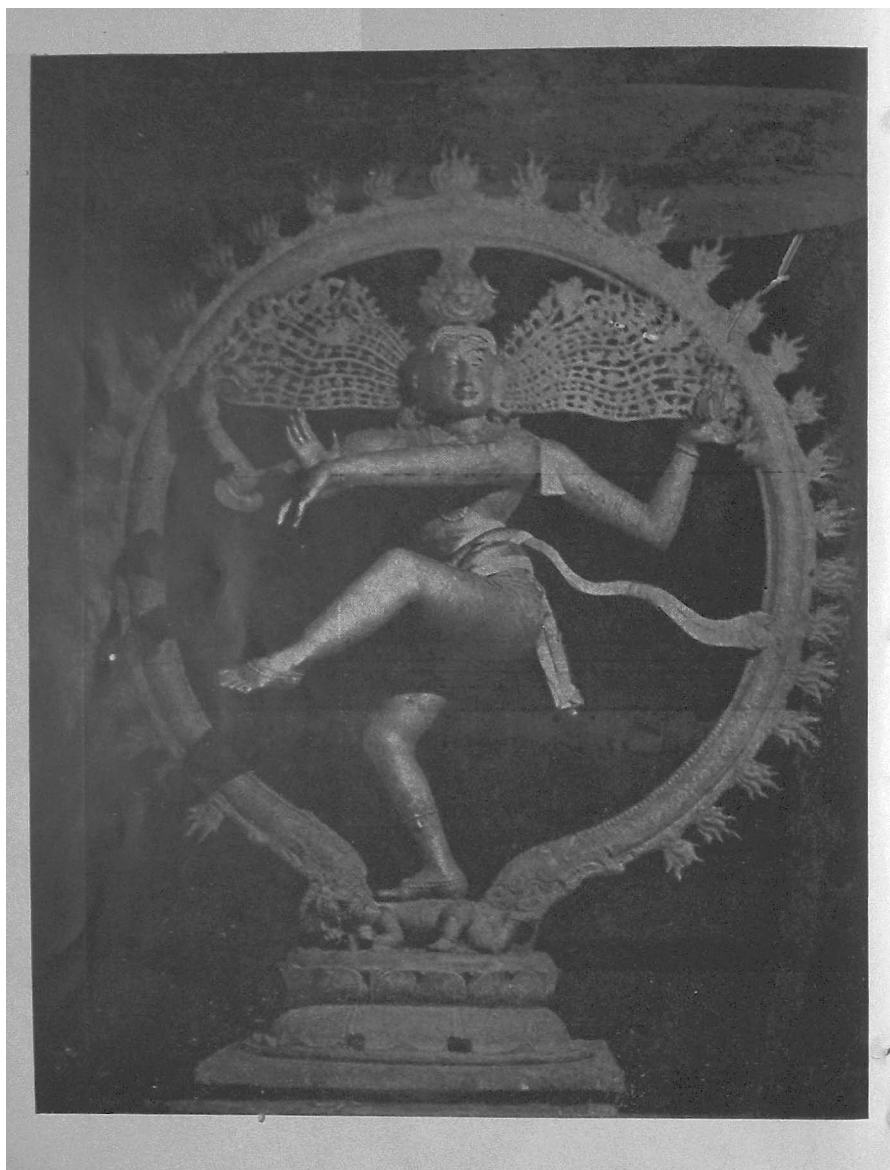
MEENAKSHI TEMPLE—MADURAI

Tamil Nad is the home of temples. While Mahendravarman had his temples carved out of the living rock his, son Mamalla had them erected on the banks of the Palar with gigantic stones cut and chiselled accurately to shape.

Likewise on the banks of the Cauveri, the Cholas built their temples sky-high in granite and commissioned inspired sculptors for carving out beauty from stone. The Big temple at Tanjore, Gangaikonda Choleswaram and the Iravatheswarar temple at Darasuram are all justly famous as the immortal creations of Chola kings.

The credit for covering the length and breadth of the land with temples goes to the Nayak Kings. Of all the temples built by the Nayaks, the temple of Meenakshi Amman at Madurai is the best and the most stupendous. Madurai city which is a model of ancient town planning, has this temple right in its heart and its four gopurams open outwards into the town in all the four cardinal directions and the main arterial roads of the town take off radially from the temple. The southern gopuram is a structure of striking majesty and proportion—a veritable poem in stone—proclaiming the grand conception of these imaginative designers and the consummate skill of those sculptors and craftsmen.





THE ANANDA THANDAVAM

Madame Pavlova, the Russian dancer had just danced her last number on the programme and retired to the green room. It was a glorious hit. A connoisseur was powerfully moved but had not understood just what it all meant. He lost no time and rushed after her, right into the green room and enquired of her, "Please, may I know just what your last dance signified". She replied, "If I could say that in words, I need not have danced it"

Wit apart, how powerfully true her statement is! The Ananda Thandava of Nataraja portrays a grand synthesis and an yet more grand antithesis of the supreme enigma and the perfect revelation.

The unmanifest and formless God comes down from its celestial home to limit himself into visible forms and to motivate the entire universe from within by his immanence and from without by his transcendence as if he were the very flesh, life and spirit of it all. He is the very principle of perpetual motion inside the atom whether in its animate or inanimate configurations. He is himself in motion while he moves everything. Indeed the universe will cease to move if the deity ceased to move himself. These thoughts and dogmas of the faith have slept deep down in the hearts of the artists. They have eternally prayed for the revelation of the truths of our scriptures in a visible form. Truth has at length revealed itself in this form which has found expression in pigment and in metal and stone. Among these, the master-piece which appears along side has the most striking rhythm and perfect proportion and poise. From base to pedestal this icon measures eight feet. It has been acclaimed by connoisseurs of art as the very best. The original is in the precincts of the Konerirajapuram temple near Kumbakonam. The journey is well worth making to see this cosmic dance in three dimensions.

KALYANASUNDARAR—VELVIKUDY

To Manickavasagar, the saint-poet steeped in the mysticism of Hindu religious experience and rich theologic legend, the wedding of the Divine Mother and the Father of the Universe has been a source of perennial poetic afflatus.

“ He wed before the sacred fire
That the world might see at large
The golden daughter whose noble sire
Is the Mighty Mountain King ”.

He has also pictured to us what dire consequences would befall the world and how everything would be nought if this wedding of the inexorable male principle with the all-merciful female did not take place. We might pertinently repeat the sentiment with some emphasis on art. But for that wedding which has been a source of inspiration to the artist all our art would amount to nothing. All that is best in our iconographic tradition has found expression in this wedding scene in bronze.

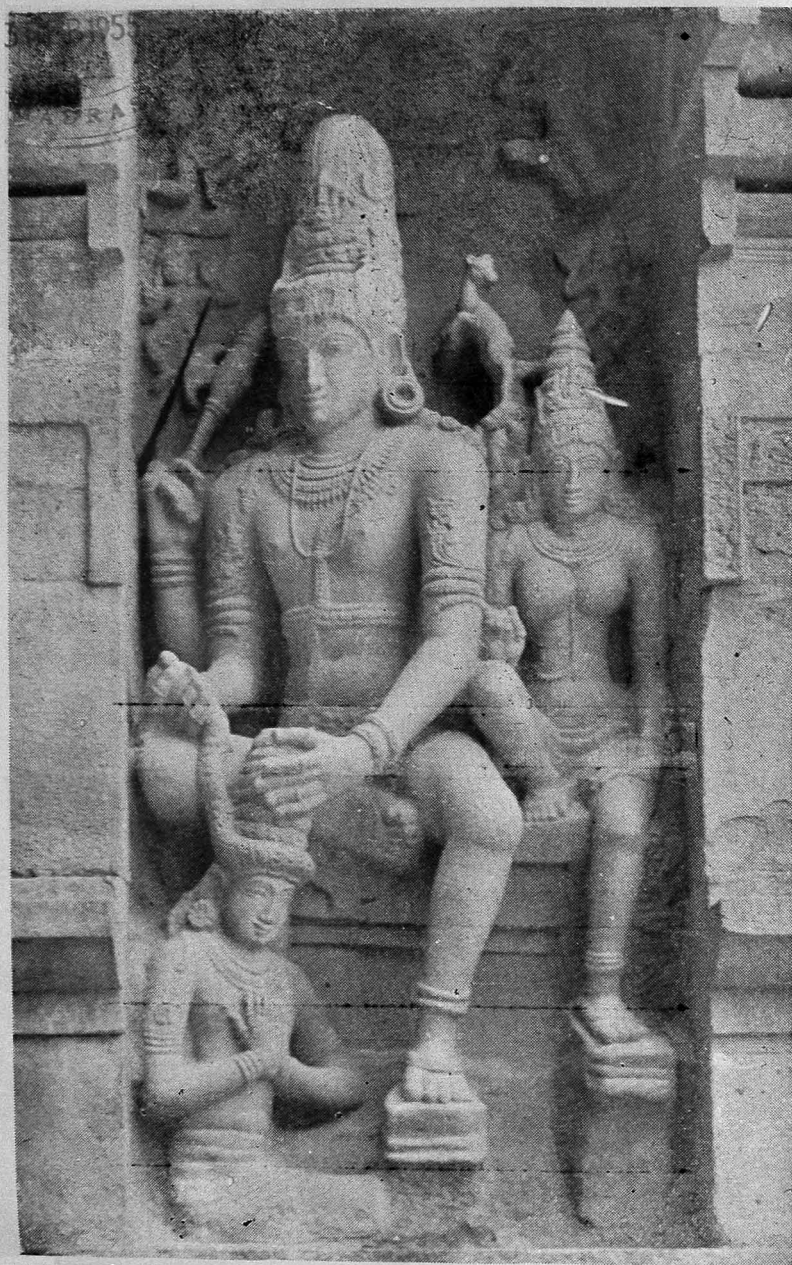
The story runs that just when a prince and his betrothed bride were about to be wed, the parents of the latter died and the happy union could not come off as planned. The *deus-ex-machina* in the shape of Lord Siva and his consort intervened and the wedding was solemnised by the highest authority known.

The place Thiruveldikudy gets its name from the *Yagna* legendarily said to have been performed there before the wedding. It is to be presumed that the supervening deities who descended from their heavenly home were themselves newly-weds as indeed as they are! The wedding of the Eternal Father and the Ageless Mother is as recent as it is dateless. It is always here and now with them who dwell in space and time without measure.

Velvikudy popularly corrupted as Vilakkudi is a small village near Kuthalam. The pair are treasured in the semi-darkness of the Siva temple of this obscure place.

Every curve of the Devi breathes the shyness of the newly wed bride. It is notorious how young newly weds are obtrusively happy and what pains they take to prevent others seeing that they are. All this is in striking evidence here pulsing with the life that only an inspired artist can impart to his creations. The Lord's majestic stance is very much in the fitness of things. He has good reason to be proud. It is no bride of mean order he has won. It is no less than the Divine Mother!





THE CANONISATION OF CHANDIKESA

Legend has it that Lord Siva immortalised Chandikesa with his own attributes as the well-merited reward for no less an act of the latter than the severing of his father's feet! The occasion for this seemingly unfilial act was when the irate parent interfered with the devotion of youthful Chandikesa mistaking it for a peurile and wasteful prank. The tableau opposite depicts the scene of the coronation. The language of Saivism has become richer by a word "Chandikesapatham" which has come to signify a status in the hierarchy of spiritual states.

"I award thee the status of Chandikesa", quoth the Lord and taking his own crescent woven garland of *Konrai* blossom set them upon his golden locks.'

So sang Sekkilar of this Beatification. That God vouchsafes to those who worship him with single-minded devotion, victuals, raiment and ornament sanctified by his own participation is a statement highly significant to those who have had the tight kind of spiritual experience in the Hindu way of life. That is how the story has appealed to the artist in whose hands the words of the great Saivite Bard have crystallised into permanent shape. This group finds place in the Gangaikonda Choleswaram temple built by Rajendra in the grand tradition of his father, Rajaraja the Great. Himself, the greater son of a great father, Rajendra must have found great temperamental appeal in the story of Chandikesa, the son who dwarfed his father by his devotion.

It will be too much to claim that the entire group is of outstanding artistic value. The prime character of the drama, Lord Siva is undoubtedly of a high order. The shapeliness of the body and the generous proportion of the crown, no less than the carefully wrought ear-rings and the *thodu* have all contributed to making his figure quite attractive. One wishes the image of Parvathi was a shade larger than it is. Within its limits the figure is well executed.

It is quite a coronation, though there are only three persons to it. Not one too many we hope because the presence of the consort is a *sine-qua-non* in divine matters in the Hindu Way.

GNANASARASWATHI

It is only in the fitness of things that Saraswathi, the Goddess of Knowledge should find a place in temples which were in the past nurseries of the fine arts. In the Art Gallery, there are quite a few specimens of Saraswathi, all static and on a small scale ranged beside the colossal sedent Brahma of historic antiquity and contemporary fame.

One hears quite a lot about the Saraswathi at Kuthanur between Nannilam and Peralam. It has to be admitted however that much cannot be claimed for it as a work of art although it has attained a high degree of celebrity as having been worshipped by Ottakoothar, the poet as his tutelary deity.

Real artistic worth is on the other hand in ample evidence in the piece of the same subject at Gangaikonda Cholapuram. As you ascend the steps from the southern prakaram leading into the *sanctum sanctorum*, you will see this Gnanasaraswathi facing eastwards in a sedent attitude. It is a rare combination of majesty with beautiful grace. The full and tapering crown, the rosary of rudraksha and the *Kalasam* with the well-wrought lotus seat are all quite a feast to the eye. Being in bas-relief, the nether forearm on the right has suffered from inevitable fore-shortening. The uplifted finger seems to inculcate the lesson of unity of the God-head. She may give a thousand thoughts that do lie too deep for words to those who contemplate her form with faith.





THE BHIKSHADANAR—VAZHUVUR

The *rishis* of Darugavanam were learned in the scriptures and were masters of supernatural powers. With the growth of their knowledge their egoism grew apace. Nothing seemed greater to them than themselves and their sacred rites and powerful incantations. The touch of grace had vanished from their personalities resulting in a spiritual barrenness. They had to be shown their littleness to make them realise that there was a power greater even than themselves. Siva and Vishnu set about this by the former assuming the role of the nude mendicant and the latter that of a seductive Mohini. When Siva walked through the forest of Darugavanam as the Bhikshadana the wives of the *rishis* lost their heads over his handsome person. Elsewhere Mahavishnu seduced the learned *rishis*. The sages and their worthy wives were after all frail flesh!

So runs the story in all its *naivete*. It has, however, been the spark that kindled a vision in the mind of the sculptor and we see the vision opposite as it emerged from stone. The All Merciful God who gives to the world its material and spiritual sustenance is here pictured as the mendicant. He begs of us to surrender ourselves to him. If only humanity could hear his voice the world would be a better place than it is. That is the homily of all the religions of the world.

Nudism is no new idea to this land whose civilisation is as old as the human race itself. In this country it was no cult of the senses. The nude which is physically real will never go deeper than the eye. It must be spiritually true while being of course, just real enough to avoid offending the senses and antagonising them. If that is the test the Bhikshadanar is a grand victory for the art of the East.

The deer which leaps up to eat the grass off the hand of the majestically erect figure is symbolic of all animate life on the earth which looks up to Him for its sustenance. The hand with the drum and that with the skull held out as the begging bowl, the decorations on the crown have all been wrought with consummate skill and care.

To see the original you will have to make a journey to Vazhuvur just a little way from Mayuram.

GAJASAMHARA-VAZHUVUR

Vazhuvur is just a small village five miles to the south of Mayuram. It is celebrated as one of the Ashtavirasthalams (Places of Heroic Episodes). It is here that we meet with Lord Siva as Bhikshadana and Mahavishnu as Mohini.

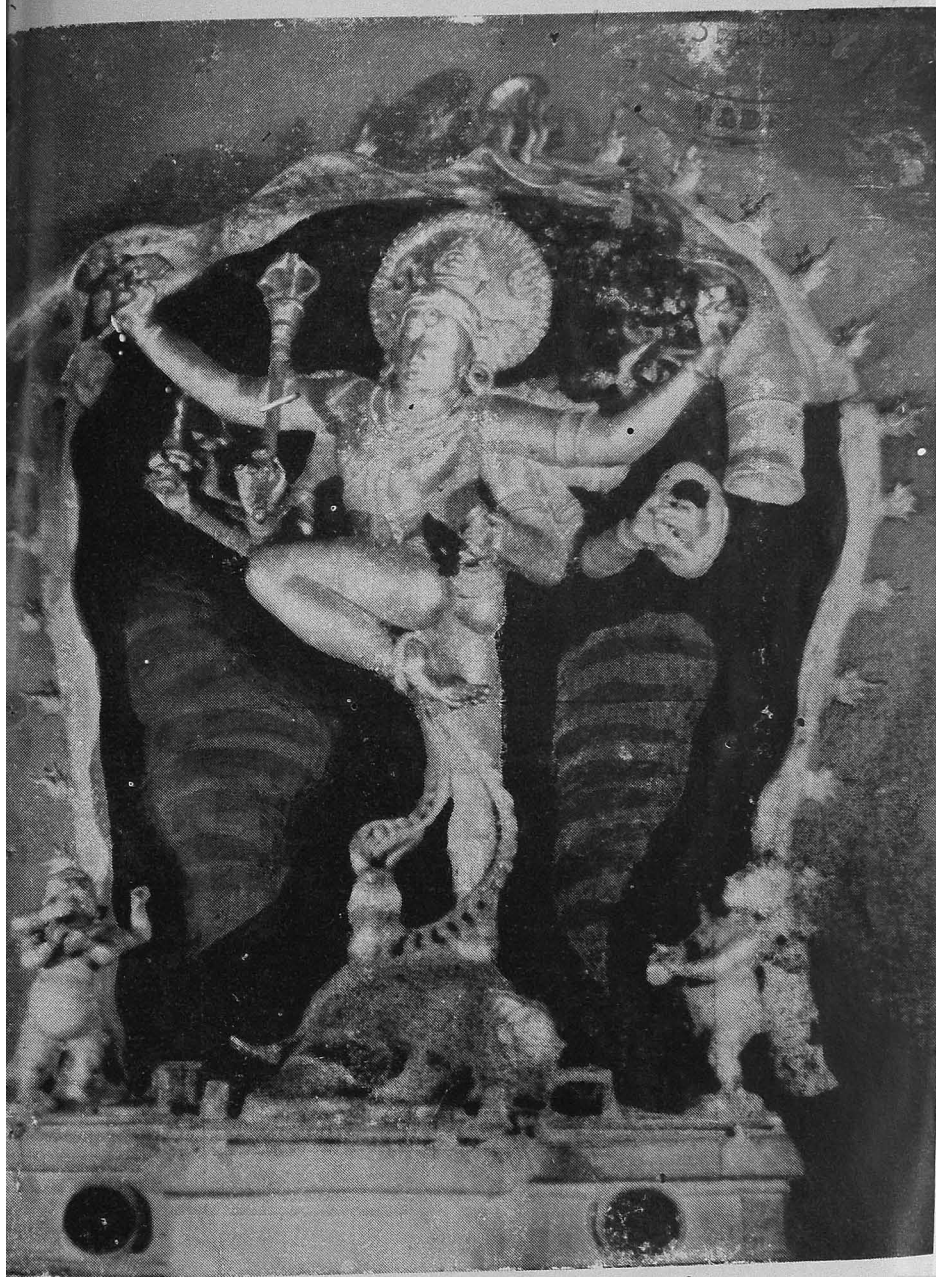
More valuable than these is the Gajasamhara which is a piece of rare beauty. "The rishis of Darugavanam raised a snake from the fires of their un-holy rites and sent it against Lord Siva who snatched it up and adorned himself with it as if it were a garland of flowers. Next came the demon Muyalaka only to be crushed in his turn under the feet of the Lord. The leopard followed but He killed it and girt His loins with its hide. The last to issue from the fires was the gigantic elephant. The Lord entered its entrails and tore it up from within." Thus runs the allegorical legend which is considered by those learned in the scriptures as the exposition of significant concepts of theology and philosophy.

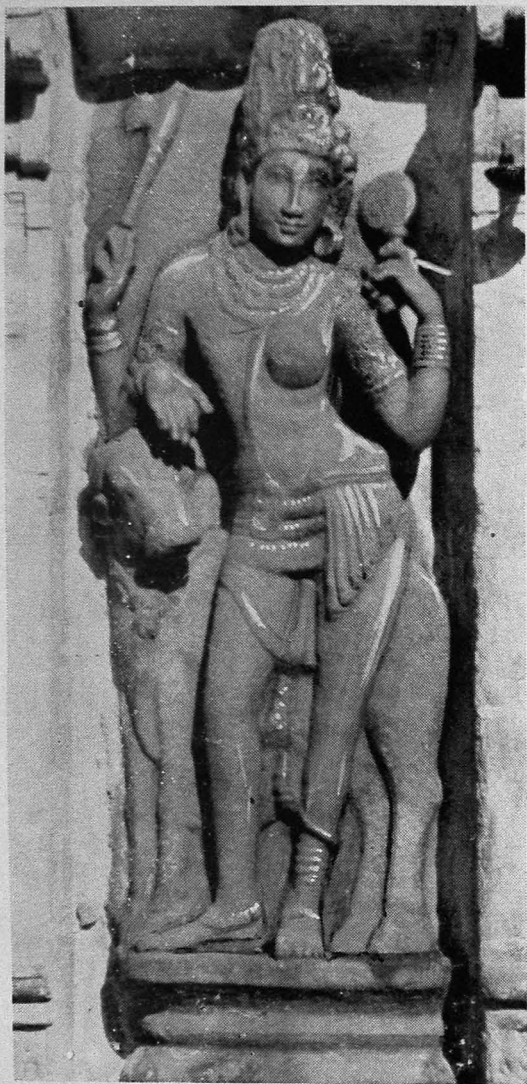
To the artist however, it is no mere allegory. To him it is a vision of action; His aim is to capture in stone the most dynamic moment of an intense drama of strength. One leg is planted firmly as the pivot and the other bent upwards to help the arms to rend the beast asunder by the outflung arms. The body is twisted at the waist to emphasise the concentration of strength in the supreme effort. It is all on the human level of truths and values and not on the level of allegories and parables. It is significant that the sculptors of ancient India were not less aware of the torsions and tensions of the muscle than the Greeks. It will be an interesting study in comparative acsthetics to compare the Gajasamhara with the statue of Loacoon and his sons and the Samson. It will be easily conceded that the Hindu conception of art is one that raises itself on the stepping stones of the dead real to the perennially living ideal.

This subject has been of inexhaustible inspiration to sculptors through the centuries. Much careful workmanship is in evidence in some of them, particularly in the piece at Darasuram where Rajaraja II, son of Gangaikonda Chola built on as grand a scale as his illustrious forebear. The Cholas were all great builders, able statesmen and warriors. Kamban's immortal lines

"Of all the waters the Cauvery
Of all the Kings the Chola
Of all the lands of the earth
Cholamandalam is the best"

must mean something.





ARDHANARI

The social reformers of to-day are never tired of repeating that men and women are equal. Lord Siva has from time immemorial symbolised this truth by giving a half of his body to Parvathi, his consort.

All living creation can be divided into the male and the female. The world grows by the union of these two divergent principles, whereby new life, flesh, blood and mind and spirit come into being. Nothing can come into existence if these two principles stand apart. God Almighty symbolises this great truth to us in this hermaphrodite form.

Even before the time of Rajaraja, the Ardhanari has been a celebrated form. We find this concept finding expression in stone at Mamallapuram. It must however be conceded that this form has achieved the living touch only during the Chola period. Though the male and the female are equal, they are nevertheless different. The female whose role is the bearing and rearing of the child has naturally an abdomen and pelvic girdle shaped differently from the male. In uniting the two halves of the idol, the artist must have faced quite a problem. The credit goes to him that he has succeeded in solving it. The beauty of the lithe female body is captured on the left half of this 'Murti' by giving it an extra touch of grace and by enlarging the pelvic girdle on that side. The bold experiment in assymetry has resulted in a grand victory. This wonderful piece stands ensconced in the western Prakaram of the Nageswaraswami temple at Kumbakonam. The unforgettable lines of saint Manickavasagar :

“O! Thou that art ancient as Time
With the hide and the draped silk
The ear-ring and the *Thodu*
The holy ash white as milk
And the sweet perfumed paste
The trident and the bangle”,

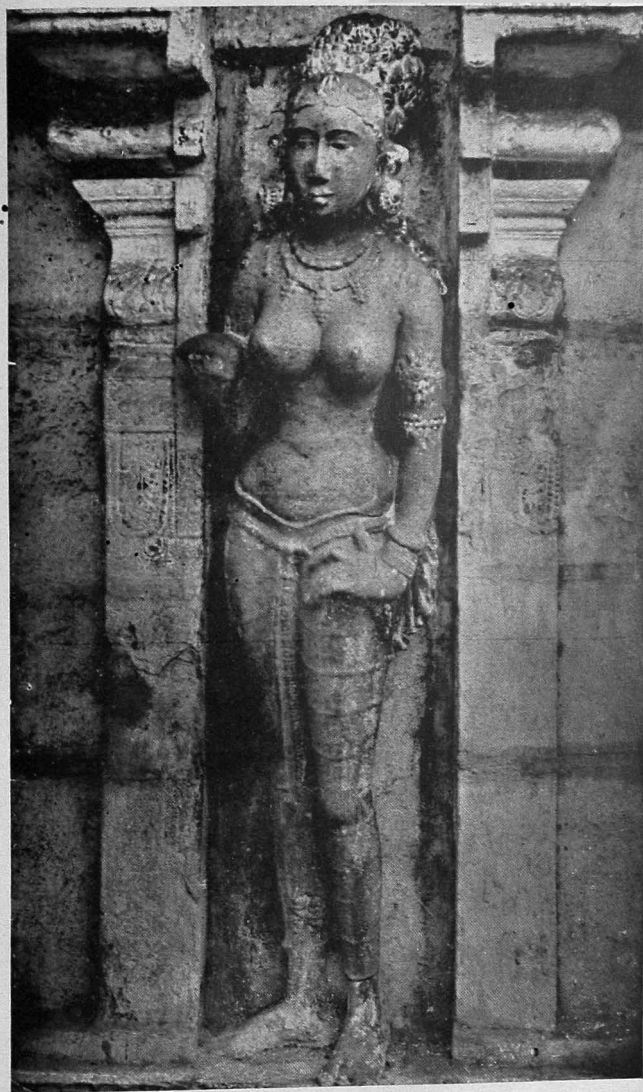
must certainly have been inspired by this visible form of beauty.

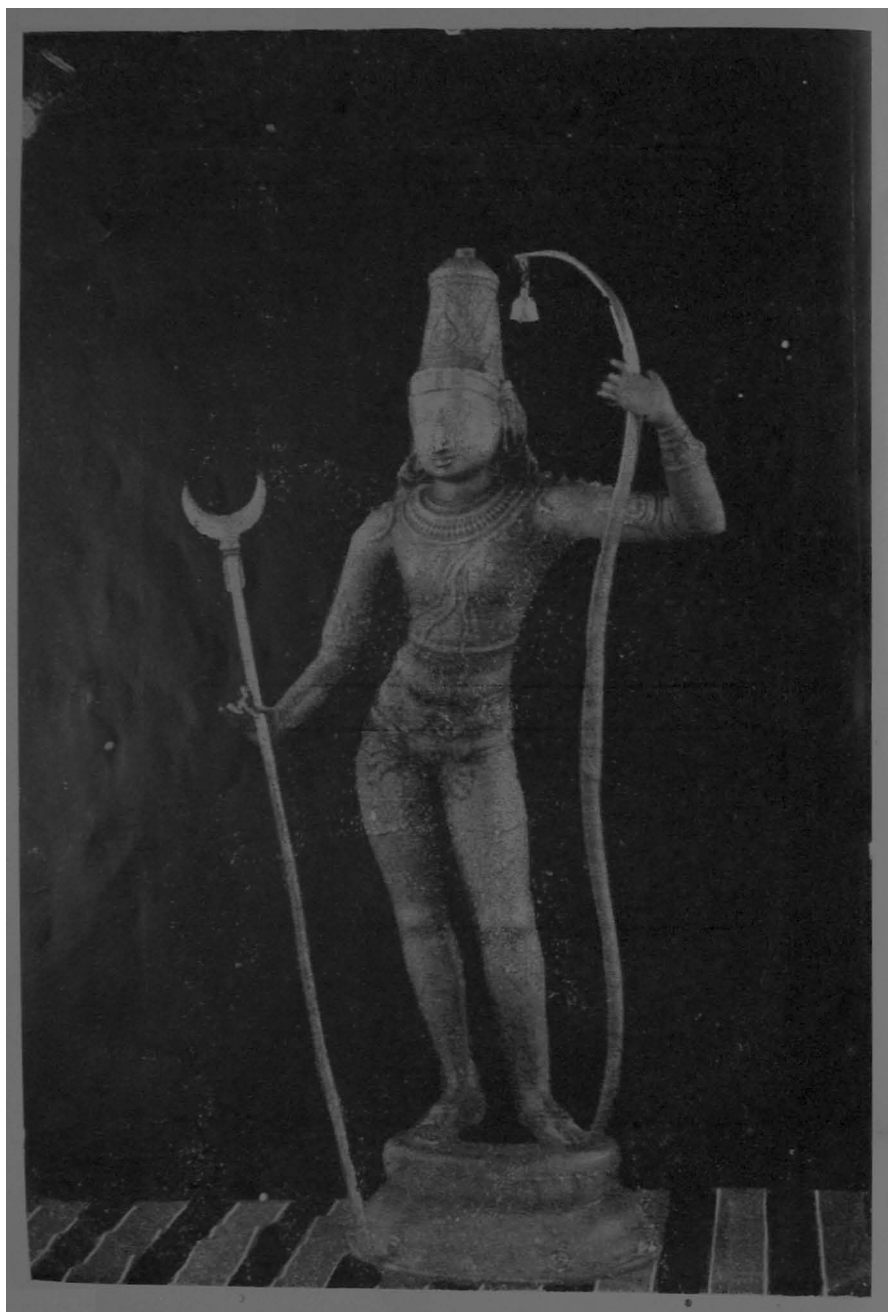
THE PRINCESS BEAUTIFUL

This unknown belle adorns the prakaram of the Nageswaraswami Temple at Kumbakonam. Some have mistaken it for the effigy of Kannaki, the Goddess of chastity celebrated in the Epic *Silappathikaram* by the hermit poet Ilango Adigal. It is not only unfounded; it is not even remotely probable.

Kannaki should naturally have been depicted with her hair undone and the solitary anklet in her hand — the anklet from which the epic derives its name. She would have been the very embodiment of that tragic and forced virginity which it was decreed that she should preserve even in the married state — a state forced on this inexorable goddess of retribution by the consequences of a previous life.

The unknown belle is as voluptuous and earthy as the restrained traditions of Hindu art would admit of. The lines and curves of her figure are extremely human. There is all the rhythm of a sensuous poem about her. Probably fashioned in a spirit of extreme secularism in art when the Chola period of sculpture had reached its high water mark, she has won her way into a temple and the heart of the *rasikas*. Goddess or just plain woman she is a creature of beauty.





SRI RAMA—ADAMBAR

That Sri Rama and the great epic Ramayana came from the North seems to be enough reason for a numerically small section in Tamilnad to anathematise his name and proscribe the epic. Yet it cannot be gainsaid that Sri Rama has found his way into the innermost heart of the Tamil people at large.

The reason is not far to seek. The Tamil mind has always set high store by ethics. The ideals of rectitude, of fidelity to the spouse, of wealth untainted by foul means and of ultimate renunciation of worldly ties have always had an irresistible appeal to the Tamils. Unchastity even of the mind is repugnant to the Tamil tradition. The ideal of monogamy to which Sri Rama pledged himself and the beautiful and clean love-at-first-sight episode which occurred at Mithila before Rama won her by his prowess have endeared him to the hearts of the Tamil people to whom he is no longer an alien *Avatar*. The Tamil bard has sung his legend, the artists have immortalised him in murals and sculptors have captured his form in stone. His myriad names have found their way into every household—Kalyanaraman, Kothandaraman, Venkataraman, Seetharaman and Raghuraman are but a few of the many names commonly heard in Tamilnad. Sri Rama has become native to this soil and has found his permanent home in the south.

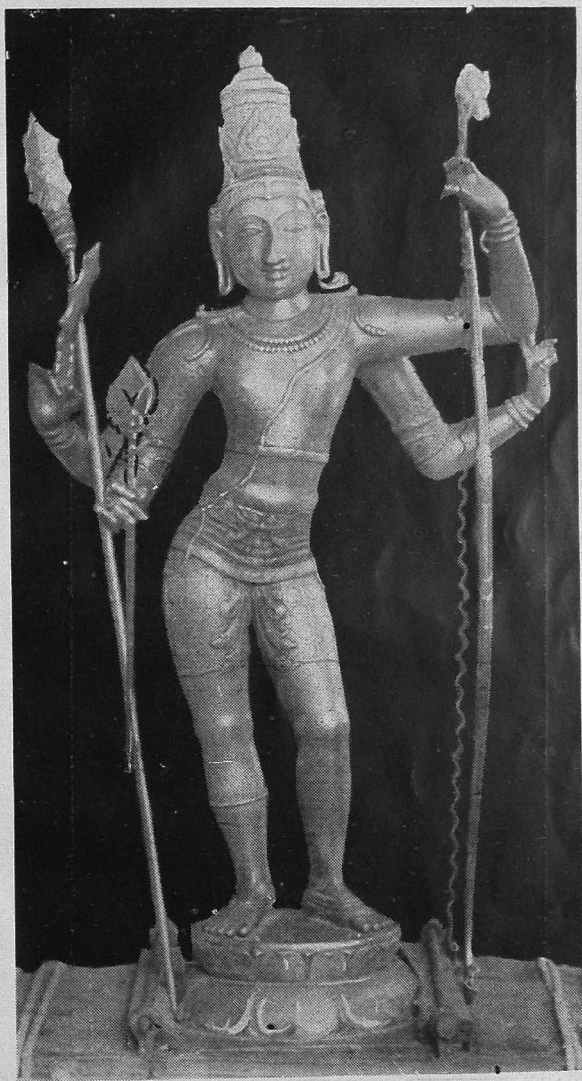
At Adambar near Nannilam, there is a small temple that does not boast of a *gopuram* or *vimanam*, having fallen into ruins from efflux of time and renovated by private charity. The beautiful group you see reproduced opposite is installed in this obscure temple from where it radiates the message of beauty to the artistic minded and of infinite grace to the devout and the pious. The immortal bard of Tamil Nad, Kamban was captivated by the beauty of Rama's personality which was ever before his mind's eye. Time and again he has described him as beauty unbounded which cannot be delineated by art by its finite means. On seeing this image one wonders whether Kamban was not after all wrong in saying so. To those who contemplate on this image the silver tinkle of the bells on the Kothanda, the invincible bow, will deliver an audible message of grace. Those who fail to hear that celestial music must blame nothing but their ears which are incapable of being tuned in to the music of the spheres.

THE DHANUSH SUBRAHMANYA

The God of the Tamils. He is the embodiment of eternal youth and of beauty, rich and mellowed, dancing atop of every hill. Such are the associations in the Tamil mind when the word Kumara "The Son" is uttered. His spear and the peacock have always symbolised to the faithful the staff of life which sustains them through life's troublous journey. No wonder that they bowed down before him as the Supreme God who rids them of the unending cycle of births and deaths and of causes and effects.

Muruga who invariably bears the lance—the *Vel*—is sometimes conceived as bearing the bow as well. He is the supreme War Lord of the celestial hordes. It is a field for speculation how this rare concept came into being.

Tamilnad has been notorious in the past for polemical wars of the Saivites and the Vaishnavites. Yet of all the gods of the Saivites Kumara has never been repugnant to the Vaishnavites. The high ethical ideal exemplified in Rama's life has in like manner endeared him to the Saivites. It would not be altogether wrong to suppose that an attempt at conciliation has been made in the sphere of art by giving the lance to Sri Rama and the bow to Subramanya. This Dhanush Subrahmanya is presently at Saikadu near the village Kaverippoompattinam where once the city of that name flourished and is celebrated in history and Epic. There is no mistaking the image for one of Sri Rama with the Lance. He walked this earth as a human being and his story is an eventful drama of poignant emotions and subdued tragedy. He is therefore always portrayed humanly with just two arms only. The four-handed gesture of divinity and grace marks him immediately as the Eternal Son and Precptor of Lord Siva himself.





THE SUN-GOD OF SURYANARKOIL

“He that comes across the vaulted hill
And is worshipped by the high, the wise
By his touch he doth the darkness kill
When the sea-girt earth doth see him rise”

The cult of sun-worship has been in existence right from Vedic times. Believing as they did that all the manifest forms of the Universe are the result of a supreme act of self-limitation by the Un-manifest God, they had naturally no difficulty in deifying the Sun as the Visible God.

While the people of ancient times made their obeisances to the Sun directly he came upon the blue sky and counted him as one among the nine heavenly bodies governing the destinies of the human race, they did not think it necessary to build temples for him. Temples dedicated to the Sun are therefore rare. Notable among them are the Sun-temples at Konarak in the North and Suryanarkoil in the South. In these the principal deity of worship is the Sun. “Usha”, the Matin and “Sandhya”, the Vesper-hour are the two consorts. The rampant horse takes up the place of the couchant bull. In the outer-walls the heavenly bodies have assumed their places one facing away from the other.

Facing you as you read this is the image of the Sun at Suryanarkoil. The lotus which keeps a night-long vigil of virgin expectation for the day-break and opens out to the warm caress of the first long rays of the sun is his symbol nestling in his hand and over the shoulder. His ornaments are quite a number. He can be easily recognised by the halo round his head.

“The earth-drawing sun who makes the dexter turn and the world rejoice. Great is his fame.” Thus wrote Nakkirar in his chaste classical idiom of another age which spoke a Tamil at once forceful, simple and austere. One is tempted to believe that these words were inspired by this very God of di-urnal Effulgence.



SAKALA KALAVALLI MALAI

HYMN TO SARASWATHI BY SAINT KUMARAGURUPARA SWAMIGAL
FOUNDER OF KASI MUTT, TIRUPPANANDAL

[It is not easy to capture the dove-tailed rhythms and cadences of Tamil poetry in the fundamentally different rhythms characteristic of English metrical composition. The subtle consonantal harmonies of the *ethukai* and the vocalic euphonies of the *monai* embellished by the assonance of the *Santham* are not accidental or arbitrary but constitute an integral part of the whole composition. Woven into the texture of the poem there is an elusive thread of deep spiritual experience which conditioned the *corpus* of the composition at the time of its birth. The translator has to rise to at least half the height of the composer to be able to capture even a fraction of the grace of the original. Considering what a Titan Saint Kumaraguruparar was in spiritual stature and what a master he was of Tamil poesy the nearest approach one can make to him is in the medium of rhythmic English prose.

What follows is just the intellectual and imagic content of the original. To enjoy its poetic excellence there is no way but to be born on Tamil soil.]

Saraswathi, Goddess of all Learning! While the Lord of Preservation is asleep and the Lord of Dissolution has gone crazy the Lord of Creation is happy in you, his sweet consort. Your abode is the white lotus. But can You not condescend to rest your feet on the cool lotus of my simple heart?

Sweet Goddess of all Learning! Goddess of beautiful breasts and five moded hair! Goddess of slender golden figure who rests in the lotus throne! May You graciously make me sing songs in the four metres, songs with beautiful ideas, couched in sweet language.

Goddess of all Learning! The peacock dances in ecstasy on the approach of showers. So also You rejoice when poets rain showers of song of deep thinking and clear expression. When shall I experience the beauty of Tamil, the crystalline nectar that You can bestow? When shall I immerse myself in the ocean of Your Grace?

Goddess of all Learning! Ocean of Mercy! You rest on the grateful tongues (lips) of poets and preserve the sea of Sanskrit scholarship and the rich heritage of Tamil songs. May You grant that I become proficient in the deep and varied branches of Learning! May You grant me the gift of singing felicitous songs!

Goddess of all Learning! You rest, as on the lotus throne, on the tongue (lips) and the heart of Brahma, the Creator whose banner depicts the Swan which rests on the lotus with the long stalk. Your beautiful soft lotus feet are painted with rouge. Cannot those lotus feet bloom in the cool waters of my heart?

Goddess of all Learning! You pervade everything: You pervade the Vedas, the five elements, namely, ether, air, fire,

water and the earth ; You fill the vision and the hearts of Your devotees. Grant me this boon ; make me proficient in all the arts whenever I wish. Make me proficient in music, in dance, in learning and in singing sweet poems.

Goddess of all Learning ! Like the white Swan which separates water from milk, You also show discrimination in approving of the songs sung by poets. Grant me your benign look : vouchsafe unto me this boon that all song, meaning of song and the goal of all singing, namely, righteousness, wealth and happiness, be integrated in my life.

Goddess of all Learning ! You are the Giver of the supreme everlasting wealth, namely the imperishable wealth of wisdom through learning. The Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, who has her abode in the red lotus, cannot bestow this wealth. Grant me eloquence of tongue, skill of attending to many things simultaneously, and the art of singing good songs. Grant me this boon and make me Your servant.

Goddess of all Learning ! The female elephant and the queen swan are celebrated for the beauty of their gait. But they pale into insignificance before the graceful gait of Your lotus feet. You are the manifest Form of True Wisdom that pervades all word and thought. Who can comprehend You ?

Goddess of all Learning ! There are myriads of gods, and celestial beings like the Creator. But is there one to equal you ? Grant me this boon that all monarchs, who rule over the earth, bow unto me the moment I sing my poems.

