

aisles, (4) *Stapana-Mandapa* with the shrine of Sri Tyagaraja, (5) *Narihaua-Mandapa* for the temple paraphernalia, where servants wait, (6) *Vadya-Mandapa* and portico for the musicians. It has three main portals named *Keralantakan கெரலாந்தகம்*—*Rasarasan ராசராசம்*—and *Tiruanukkan திருஅனுககம்*. These portals are guarded by *Dvarapalakas* or guardians of the gate. They are of huge proportions, and of exquisite workmanship. There are several sets of these in the temple, seven of them 18 feet by 8 feet. They are all monoliths, and in some instances are of very high artistic merit, especially those at the entrance to Sri Subrahmanya temple, which are of polished gneiss.

The *Sivalinga* of Sri Brihadisvara is probably the grandest in existence. This image was originally called *Adavailan* (one who is able to dance). Another name was *Dakshina-Meru Vitankan*. Both the names occur in *Tiruvistappa* as the names of the deity at Chidambaram. It is possible, that these names given to the chief image in the temple, indicate that the Saiva creed derived its support at the time mainly from Chidambaram.¹ Rajaraja calls the image *Rajarajesvaramudaiyar*,—"The Lord of Rajarajesvaram." The deities are now known as Sri Brihadisvara, the great God, and Sri Brihannayaki, the great goddess—a Sanskrit rendering of the original Tamil names *பெருமுருகையர்* and *பெரியநாயகி*. The tower over this shrine is named *Dakshina-Meru* after the abode of Lord Siva at Kailas, the *Uttara-Meru*. The religious rituals in this temple follow the *Makuta-gama*.²

(1) Rajaraja's great-grand-father Parantaka I had distinguished himself by his devotion to the Chidambaram temple. He had either built or at least repaired the Golden Hall at the place. It was therefore quite natural that Rajaraja should try to imitate his famous ancestor in his devotion to that most sacred Siva temple in South India. Practical as he appears to have been in everything he did, the king was not forgetful of his capital, Tanjore where he wanted to demonstrate his devotion to the Saiva religion, and accordingly built a temple there. In order to perpetuate the title "Sri Rajaraja" which he must have prized very highly, the temple was called "Rajarajesvaram".

(2) Vide Tanjore Palace Saraswati Mahal Library MS. Grantha—No. 15269 and Burnell's list No. 11428.

Sri Tyagaraja, also called Vitankar, worshipped within a portion of the *Stapana-Mandapa*, is the patron deity of the Cholas. The legend goes that their mythical progenitor Chola Muchukuntan helped Indra against the *asuras*, for which help, he was presented with seven images of Tyagaraja, which he installed in the seven holy places of Tiruvarur, Tirunagaikkaronam, Tirukkareyil, Tirukkolili, Tirumaraikkadu, Tirunallaru and Tiruvamur which are known to this day as the *Sapta-Vitanka-Kshetras*. Rajaraja was a devout worshipper at Tiruvarur ere he built this great temple, and, consecrated Sri Tyagaraja at Tanjore also, as a mark of his own piety and in commemoration of the exploits of his celebrated ancestor.¹

All around the main shrine are scattered *mandapas* and smaller shrines. The great *vimana* is of the Dravida style of architecture.² It rises to a height of about 216 feet, a tower of fourteen storeys, finely decorated with pilasters, niches, and images of the gods of the Hindu pantheon. The basement of the structure which supports the tower is 56 feet square. The *sikhara*, or cupolic dome is octagonal in shape and crowns the

(1) This is borne out also by the many similarities in worship found in both these temples: the location of Sri Tyagaraja's shrine adjacent to the central deity, the name of Vitankar given to Tyagaraja, the *ajapanatana* or dance and the peculiar *anjana* and *arava* (musical accompaniments) as Tyagaraja, sets out in the *vasantas* (festivities of eight days) and *puja* at Tyagaraja's shrine in priority to the central deity. These observances appear to have been instituted at this temple as originally in Tiruvarur and are followed to this day though they suffered a temporary interruption during the Nayak periods and were restored by the Marhattas.

(2) Burnell says in his pamphlet 'The Great Temple of Tanjore': This style arose under the Chola or Tanjore Kings in the 11th Century, A.D. when nearly all the great temples to Siva in South India were built and it continued in use in the 12th and 13th Centuries during which the great temples to Vishnu were erected. Up to the beginning of the 16th Century these temples remained almost unchanged but at that time as South India became subject to the Kings of Vijayanagar, and one of these named Krishna Raya (1539-30), rebuilt or added to most of the great temples of the South. The chief feature of the architecture of this later period is the construction of the enormous *gopurams* which are so conspicuous at Cooshevaram, Chidambaram and Srirangam. All these were built by Krishnaraya: they do not form part of the original style, but were intended as fortifications to protect the shrines from foreign invaders, and certain plunder and desecration, as the Hindus first discovered on the Mahammadan invasion of 1310, A.D. Also *vide* 'The Three Main Styles of Temple Architecture,'—Bulletin of the Madras Museum.

vimana. The gilded *Kalasa* (finial) over it is 12½ feet high. It is believed the *sikhara* and the *stupi* throw no shadow on the ground. The dome rests on a single block of granite 25½ feet square. Two *Nandis*, each measuring 6½ feet by 5½ feet beautify each corner of the stone which is estimated to weigh about 80 tons, and believed to have been conveyed to the top of the tower by means of an inclined plane commencing from Sarapallam (scaffold hollow) four miles north-east of the city.

The village takes its name from the above event, and around the stone several legends have collected. It is said, that this monolith was lying in the courtyard of a devotee, a cowherdess, 22 miles away, who longed to contribute it to the great temple then under construction, that God expressed His acceptance of the gift in a vision to the devotee and simultaneously to the King.¹ It was accordingly placed on top of the tower by the orders of the King, who, in admiration of the piety of the woman built a temple at her place and called it Darasuram.²

A story besides is told of how another cowherdess and devotee Alagiya Nayaki by name, a vendor of butter-milk to the artisans at work on the tower, supplied from her courtyard a keystone for this great slab to rest upon,

(1) Vide *Brihadisvara-Mahatmya*—Chapters XV—XVII.

This *Mahatmya* story is given further support by Mahavidwan Mornakhi-sundaram Pillai:—

“அக்தமயார் சிழலியா மமர்வோமென் தருள்செய்த,
செம்மயார் வீற்றிருக்குத் திருத்தஞ்சை
மயூரப்பராணம்” — திருகாட்பீடம் - 54

also by the author of தஞ்சைப் பெருவுடையாரஞ்சை:—

“பொன்னி
நதியுடைக்கோன் முன்னோர் கரைமுடியா வீழல்
வதிலின்றோ மென்ன வந்தான் வந்தான்” — 70.

(2) Darasuram is believed by some as a corrupted form of the original name Rajarajeswaram.

The *Sri Aivavatesvara* temple at Darasuram, a furlong from the Railway Station of the name is about two miles south-west of Kumbakonam. The puranic tradition of the temple is different, though the inscriptions speak of the deity as Sri Rajarajeswaramudayar; and Cholas, Rajadhiraja (A. D. 1018-23) and Kulottunga I (A. D. 1070-1118) had much to do with its construction or probably renovation. This temple has some of the best stone carvings in South India, and is worthy of a visit. Vide Annual Reports for Epigraphy, 1908 and 1920 for details.