

**VOL.III,NO.II,JULY-DEC-2015, ISSN NO:2321-8908**

**The Journal of  
Social Science and  
Humanity Research  
(BI-ANNUAL)  
An Interdisciplinary and  
An International Refereed Journal  
[PEER REVIEWED]**

**Joint Chief Editors: Dr.Mavali Rajan  
Binay Barman**

**JSSHR**  
[www.jsshrsaldiha.com](http://www.jsshrsaldiha.com)

## Artistic expansion under the Vijayanagara – Nayaks in Tamil Nadu (C.E.1529 – 1736)

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**Abstract:**

*The sculpture and paintings are the main sources of information for the study of the social life of the people under the Vijayanagara and the Nayaks rulers of Madurai and Tanjore. They gave a fresh lease of life to Vijayanagara architecture. Some notable temples, mandapas, gopuras and palaces were built by them. The Nayak style as it is called is only an extension and elaboration of the Vijayanagara style in all its essentials.*

*The first problem facing us will be the classification of the temples and determination of the usefulness or otherwise of these temples and buildings for the purpose of this study. There are several inscriptions of this period, which mainly deal with the different aspects of the social life, but rarely inform the foundation of the temples. One can assume the foundation of the temple, on the basis of architectural features.*

*Temple building in the Tamil region displays a stylistic consistency, evolving without major interruption over more than four hundred years. The architecture of Sangama period (A.D. 1336-1485) opens with a revival of Chola and Pandya plan types, basement mouldings, wall treatments and column forms. So truly do Sangama temples imitate earlier models that it sometimes difficult to distinguish Vijayanagara constructions from these prototypes. The problem is intensified by the fact that 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>*

*centuries projects are generally simpler and more modest in scale than those of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Under the Tuluvas (AD 1505-1570) and their successors, does religious architecture match and ultimately surpass earlier achievement. Temples dating from this time onwards are committed to grandeur of effect, the emphasis being on soaring gopuras and spacious mandapas. The stylistic development is the best example to study the Vijayanagara Nayak temple construction. This essay attempts to explain the artistic expansion from the earliest times in India to Vijayanagara Nayak period in Tamil Country with special emphasis on sculpture and paintings.*

**Key words:** Nayaks, Mandapas, Prakaras, Gopuras, Thiruparankundram, Kalugumalai, Meenakshi Sundaesvar.

**Introduction:**

From the second half of the 14th century the Vijayanagara Empire encompassed territories from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal, across the Deccan plateau and Southern India. These regions had once seen the rule of renowned dynasties of the Chalukyas, Cholas and Hoysalas, with different artistic traditions, each of which found its way into what was eventually to become "Vijayanagara Art"<sup>1</sup>. The Nayak art of the Tamil country is an imitation and extension of the

1A.L.Dallapiccola and Anila Varghese, Sculpture at Vijayanagara, Iconography and Style, New Delhi, 1998, p.7.