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Political Iconography in the Sculptures of Tamilnadu

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The Indian sculptures accommodate a spate of themes which reveal aesthetic principles, religion, philosophy, socio-cultural aspects etc. The Indian monarchs made contribution and patronage to the development of art and architecture in terms of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. The South Indian kings like Pallavas, Pandyas, Cholas and Vijayanagara Nayaks indulged and ponder to depict some iconography in their temple. The favoured iconography of the kings reflects their state power, sovereignty and religious mindset. They consider the puranic and epic themes as model for the rule of their dynasty. The iconographical themes such as Somaskanta, Chandesanugrahamurti, Tripurantakamurti, Bhuvanaraha, Trivikrama, Govardhana (Krishna), Narasimha, deliberate the metaphor and imagery of the royal power of the dynasty. Hence, the main objective of the paper is to unfold the imagery and power of the South Indian kings through the iconography exhibited in the temples of Tamil Nadu.

For as Mr. Lawrence Binyon has well said, the supreme aesthetic quality of the great religious art of India lies in the fact that it is not self-conscious. Indian Art is essentially idealistic mystic, symbolism and transcendental. The divine power as god and goddess has another form of activity besides the creative one, exercised in the external conflict between good and evil, the *devas* and *asuras*. This is the constant theme of the Indian imager Siva crushing a dwarf demon under his foot or fighting the enemies of the gods, Vishnu in his lion incarnation slaying the impious king Hiranyakasipu etc.¹

Together with the extensive use of *silpasastras* of appearance, the attitude towards the inner experience and towards creating new becomes conscious. A critical distance separates the king visualized from the mode

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