

# Reviving Chettinad Architecture: A Cultural Legacy of Tamil Nadu

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**Abstract:** Chettinad Architecture stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu, showcasing the timeless artistry and architectural marvel of the region. This article explores the revival efforts aimed at preserving this unique cultural legacy. Chettinadu mansions, with their intricate craftsmanship and distinctive design, represent an architectural style that has been cherished for generations. However, the passage of time and changing lifestyles have posed challenges to the preservation of this cultural treasure. This abstract provides an overview of the ongoing endeavors to revive Chettinad Architecture and underscores its importance as a symbol of Tamil Nadu's rich cultural heritage. The article delves into the history and significance of Chettinadu architecture, the challenges it faces, and the innovative approaches that are being undertaken to ensure its continued existence. By highlighting the efforts to revitalize Chettinad Architecture, this article seeks to inspire a renewed appreciation for this cultural legacy and the importance of its preservation for future generations. Furthermore, the article delves into the history of Chettinad Architecture, tracing its origins to the Chettiar community, who were prominent traders and financiers in the region. These magnificent mansions, often referred to as "Chettinadu Palaces," are known for their splendid use of materials like teak, granite, and Athangudi tiles, creating a visual tapestry that reflects the opulence of a bygone era. The article also sheds light on the intricate details of the architecture, which often features spacious courtyards, finely carved pillars, and grand hallways, all contributing to the grandeur and uniqueness of these structures.

**Keywords:** Chettinad Architecture, Cultural Legacy, Tamil Nadu, Chettinadu, Mansions, Architectural Revival, Historical Significance.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Chettinad Architecture is a unique blend of traditional Tamil design with Western influences. It incorporates outdoor and indoor verandahs, central courtyards, and women's areas. The architecture reflects a balance between Tamil heritage and Western aesthetics, particularly on the front facades and upper floors. Saratha Vilas is a prime example of Chettiar architecture, showcasing its grandeur. While individual mansions may display extravagance, Chettinad villages are known for their architectural unity and well-planned layouts. The Chettinad architectural style, with its distinctive features and cultural significance, tells a story of the Chettiar community's prosperity and their cosmopolitan influences. It

seamlessly blends local materials such as teak, granite, and the vibrant Athangudi tiles into its design, creating a visual spectacle. The architectural layout, including central courtyards, verandahs, and separate women's quarters, highlights the societal values and lifestyle of the Chettians. The Western architectural elements incorporated in the facades and upper floors, reminiscent of classical styles, serve as a testament to the community's global exposure through trade networks. The collective architectural brilliance of Chettinadu not only celebrates the individual opulence of the mansions but also the harmonious coexistence of this style within the villages, making it a treasure trove of cultural and historical significance. (Pandya, Y. 2005).

## II. TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN CHETTINADU



Fig 1 Temple Architecture in Chettinadu

Temple Architecture in Chettinadu is a splendid representation of the region's deep spiritual heritage and exceptional craftsmanship. These temples are characterized by towering gopurams adorned with intricate sculptures and vibrant colors, offering a sensory journey into the divine realm. Inside, the finely carved pillars and sanctum sanctorums, housing divine idols, reveal the profound devotion and artistic skill that have shaped these sacred sanctuaries. They serve as living embodiments of Chettinadu's rich cultural and spiritual legacy, often becoming the heart of religious festivals and cultural celebrations. The commitment to preserving this unique temple architecture provides valuable insights into the region's history and unwavering reverence for the sacred. (Bubbar, D. K. 2005).

Initially constructed by ancient Tamil dynasties like the Cholas, Chettinad's temples stand as enduring testaments to the deep spiritual beliefs of its inhabitants. These temples are scattered throughout the region, each possessing its sacred tank known as "oorani," where water lilies play a central role in holy rituals. Even today, a significant part of Chettinad's daily life revolves around vibrant temple festivities. Notable temples include Vairavan Kovil, Karpaga Vinayakar temple, Kundrakudi Murugan temple, and Kottaiyur Sivan temple. The Cholas significantly influenced Chettinad's religious landscape during their reign, with temples serving as integral focal points of town planning and development. Virtually every corner of this region boasts a temple, some with origins predating the Chola dynasty.

The Cholas undertook the construction of new temples and meticulous upkeep of existing ones, deeply shaping the cultural and religious landscape. The abundance of temples in the region reflects the deeply ingrained cultural and spiritual heritage of its people. Each temple features its sacred tank

adorned with the beauty of water lilies, serving as the centerpiece for sacred rituals. Ongoing archaeological efforts are uncovering additional temples associated with the Chettians or Nagarathars, who initially hailed from Poompattinam before settling in Chettinad. Historians regard these temples as invaluable repositories of history, with inscriptions on stones, copper plates, and manuscripts offering insights into historical events. Affluent members of the Chettinad community generously sponsored the construction of these temples, enriching the tapestry of religious heritage. (Bernard Dragon, Michel Adment, 2010).

## III. CHETTINADU PALACE



Fig 2 Chettinadu Palace

Chettinadu Palaces, also known as "Aathangudi Palaces," are magnificent symbols of architectural opulence and cultural heritage in Tamil Nadu's Chettinad region. These grand mansions, constructed by the prosperous Chettiar community during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, are renowned for their unique features, historical significance, and cultural value. They exhibit impressive dimensions with multiple courtyards and spacious living areas, reflecting the affluence of the Chettinad community during the peak of Chettinad's trade and finance. Notable for their intricate wooden carvings and meticulous craftsmanship gracing doorways, ceilings, and pillars, these mansions are adorned with elaborate frescoes depicting religious and mythological scenes, enhancing their aesthetic appeal. The Chettinadu Palatial Mansions also stand out for their thoughtful architectural design, incorporating elements that facilitate natural ventilation and temperature control, crucial for coping with the region's extreme weather conditions. (Samyukthaa N 2015)

The history of these mansions is closely tied to the Chettiar community's economic success, as they were constructed using wealth amassed from overseas trade, particularly in Southeast Asia. This history is evident in the



fusion of architectural styles, blending indigenous South Indian, colonial, and Southeast Asian influences, resulting in a distinct Chettinad architectural identity. These mansions hold immense cultural significance as living repositories of Chettinad's heritage, offering insights into the lifestyle, traditions, and values of the Chettiar community. In recent years, efforts have been made to preserve and restore these mansions, recognizing their historical and architectural importance. Today, they continue to draw visitors from around the world, providing a glimpse into the grandeur of a bygone era and celebrating the enduring legacy of Chettinadu's Palatial Mansions. (Chidambaram, P. 2001).

#### IV. CHETTINAD PALACE ARCHITECTURE

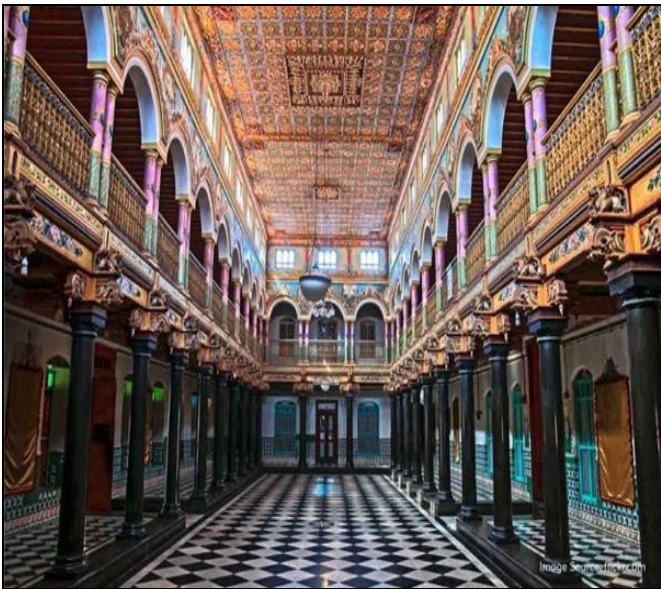


Fig 3 Chettinad Palace Architecture

Chettinad Palace is a remarkable embodiment of traditional architecture and rich cultural heritage. Constructed with exquisite marble and fine Burma teak, the palace features spacious courtyards, expansive rooms, and a distinctive two-storeyed tower that gracefully evolved into two-storeyed structures over time. The palace's walls were polished with an egg-white-based cream, enhancing its resplendent beauty. The inner courtyard's tiled floors were so impeccably finished that even a simple pin was said to be visible. The interior decor of Chettinad Palace draws inspiration from around the world, with materials and furnishings sourced from East Asian countries and Europe. Italian marble, Burmese chandeliers, Indonesian tableware, and Belgian glass were incorporated. Carpentry and masonry techniques were influenced by European forts, particularly from France. The architecture brilliantly combines traditional Indian design with various European influences, reflecting the intersection of trade, travel, and time-honored traditions. Chettinad Palace is a testament to the cosmopolitan influences that have shaped its architectural and cultural identity over the years. (Blarrow.tech.2021).

#### V. THE DESIGN FEATURES OF CHETTINAD HOUSE



FIG 4 The Design Features of Chettinad House

Chettinad houses, located in the Chettinad region of Tamil Nadu, are a unique blend of traditional Indian and European architectural influences. These opulent residences, built by the affluent Chettiar families, are known for their longevity, natural light, and ventilation. They feature vibrant color palettes, intricate wooden craftsmanship, and materials sourced from around the world, including Burmese teak, Italian marble, and Belgian glass. While they reflect a rich cultural tapestry with brassware and Tanjore paintings, traditional Chettinad vernacular architecture has somewhat declined with the rise of modern designs. These homes typically have single-story layouts, athangudi tiles, marble accents, teakwood furnishings, and cherished traditional antiques, making them a remarkable embodiment of cultural and architectural heritage in the Chettinad region. (Blarrow.tech. 2021).

##### ➤ Athangudi Tiles



Fig 5 Athangudi Tiles

These colorful tiles come from the hamlet of Athangudi in the Chettinad region of Tamil Nadu. They are a visual treat with their variety of hues and patterns and have a special shine that makes them the perfect tile for indoor and outdoor applications. I made the tiles from locally sourced clay that has been burned and glazed, which is skillfully created by hand into patterns of varying colors and patterns. They are used for wall cladding and flooring in residences.

#### ➤ *Carved Pillars and Doors*

The Chettinad house is renowned for its exquisite carved doors and pillars, typically reserved for the construction of grand edifices like palaces, temples, and mansions. These masterpieces of artistry hold immense value for their beauty and impeccable craftsmanship, drawing admiration from people around the globe. These intricately carved pillars and doors are crafted from a range of materials, including wood, stone, and granite. Particular attention was dedicated to the design of the pillars, with meticulous detailing on both the upper and lower sections. The doors, similarly, undergo intricate carving to bestow upon them a majestic and stately appearance.

#### ➤ *Wall Plastering*

Wall plastering constitutes a pivotal aspect of traditional Chettinad house construction. This process involves the application of plaster in several layers, with each layer allowed to dry before the subsequent one is administered. Following the complete drying of the plaster, accomplished artisans employ specialized tools to craft intricate designs and patterns onto the surface. These designs frequently encompass geometric forms, floral motifs, and depictions from Hindu mythology. The outcome is a strikingly textured and visually captivating surface that harmoniously blends functionality with ornamental elegance.

#### ➤ *Multiple Courtyards*

Chettinad homes were meticulously designed, featuring expansive courtyards, often at least two, and generously shaded verandahs that seamlessly connected with the interior spaces. This thoughtful layout facilitated a harmonious indoor-outdoor connection, welcoming abundant natural light, promoting cross-ventilation, and effectively maintaining cool interiors during the sweltering summer months. The courtyards held a special role as spaces designated for hosting guests and fostering familial togetherness during festive occasions and religious ceremonies.

#### ➤ *Courtyards*

The courtyards within traditional Chettinad houses are expansive open areas enclosed by rooms on all sides. These courtyards play a pivotal role as central gathering spots for families, providing not only a source of natural ventilation and light but also serving as vital components of the region's cultural heritage. Revered for their combination of beauty, functionality, and historical value, Chettinad house courtyards remain an integral facet of local architecture and continue to captivate and impress visitors from around the world.

#### ➤ *Architectural Layout*

Chettinad houses feature a unique architectural fusion, blending traditional Indian elements with colonial influences. Typically, they are organized around a central courtyard, with interconnected rooms surrounding this central space. These houses can reach two or three stories in height, often accessed by a grand staircase leading to the upper levels. The ground-floor rooms are characterized by high ceilings, large windows, and elaborately decorated doorways, reserved for hosting guests and adorned with intricate wood carvings and frescoes. In contrast, the upper floors serve as living quarters and are usually more subtly decorated. Chettinad houses incorporate smaller windows to ensure privacy and protection from the region's intense heat and humidity. Additionally, they often feature expansive open verandas or balconies overlooking lush gardens and courtyards, adorned with intricate tile work, offering a cool and shaded space for relaxation and social gatherings. This architectural layout is celebrated for its harmonious blend of aesthetics and functionality, reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage and the diverse influences of colonial powers over the centuries. Today, Chettinad houses are key attractions in the region's tourism sector, captivating visitors from around the world. (Vilasadmin).

#### ➤ *Stucco Work*

Stucco work is a decorative plastering technique extensively used in Chettinad house construction. It involves applying a mixture of lime, sand, and water to surfaces and sculpting it into intricate designs inspired by traditional Indian motifs. In Chettinad houses, stucco work embellishes the ceilings, walls of central courtyards, and exterior walls, typically featuring traditional Indian elements like floral patterns, geometric shapes, and mythological figures.

The stucco application is a layered process with each layer left to dry before the next is added. Skilled artisans use specialized tools to etch intricate designs and often enhance them with paint or gold leaf, creating a visually striking result. Stucco work in Chettinad houses plays a vital role in preserving the region's cultural heritage and traditional construction techniques. The process demands a high level of skill and expertise, showcasing the craftsmanship and artistry of local artisans and adding a unique and exquisite dimension to the already stunning architecture of Chettinad houses.

#### ➤ *Pitched Roofs*

Pitched roofs are a defining feature of Chettinad houses, known for their unique architectural style and meticulous craftsmanship. These roofs have sloping surfaces on both sides, a practical choice for areas with heavy rainfall or snow. In Chettinad, these pitched roofs are typically made from clay tiles or thatch, effectively shielding the house from the frequent monsoon rains. Wooden beams or columns support these roofs, often adorned with intricate carvings, adding artistic sophistication to the design. Chettinad's pitched roofs are steeply sloped, ensuring rapid rainwater drainage, thus keeping the interior of the house dry. They are an integral part of Chettinad house architecture, celebrated for their blend of aesthetics and functionality, and for their historical significance. These roofs provide insights into the region's



traditional construction methods and the various influences of colonial powers over the centuries.

## VI. CHETTINADU HOUSES

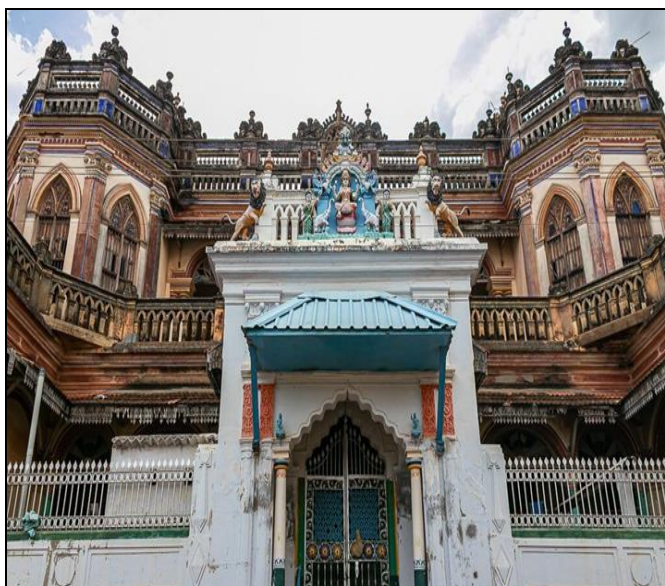


Fig 6 Chettinadu Houses

Chettinad houses have a rich architectural history, initially single-story structures that later expanded to include multiple levels with distinctive tile roofs. These spacious houses were designed to accommodate several generations of the family, often up to four, and featured numerous large rooms. Each room was rectangular, contributing to a rectangular layout with a central courtyard. This design ensured optimal comfort and space for hosting ceremonies and festivals with room for guests and family members, accommodating up to a thousand people during special occasions. Chettinad houses were organized into public, semi-private, and private spaces, with public spaces at the front, semi-private in the middle, and private spaces at the rear. The design emphasized symmetry, creating a sense of balance and harmony throughout the house.

## VII. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE OF CHETTINAD ARCHITECTURE

The Chettinad architecture in Tamil Nadu is a remarkable ensemble of palatial houses that reflect the unique lifestyle and rich cultural heritage of the Chettiar community. This architecture seamlessly blends various influences into Tamil traditions and exemplifies exceptional urban and rural planning. It emphasizes sustainable practices, especially in rainwater harvesting and storage systems, tailored to the semi-arid and hot climate of the region. Chettinad houses are intricately connected to the Chettiar community's lifecycle rituals, designed to accommodate a wide range of functions and celebrations from birth to death, as well as temple and village festivals that mark the Tamil year. These mansions are adorned with materials sourced from around the world, including teak wood, marble, and chandeliers from various countries, enriching the cultural splendor of Chettinad. (Mansions of Chettinad, 2014).



Fig 7 Outstanding Universal Value of Chettinad Architecture

Chettinad villages are thoughtfully organized, with houses constructed around central courtyards that provide shade, natural light, cooling, and ventilation. The Chettiar community has also made substantial efforts in rainwater harvesting, expanding and refining traditional techniques on a significant scale. Chettinad architecture is not just about stunning buildings but also a reflection of a way of life deeply rooted in tradition and sustainability.

## VIII. ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN TEMPLE

In addition to safeguarding their heritage and culture, the Nagarathars are deeply committed to preserving and advancing their religious practices. Historically, until the First World War (1914-18), the majority of Nagarathar charitable endeavors were channeled into religious initiatives (Muthiah et al, 2002). Their religious contributions encompass several aspects (1) The construction of new temples, (2) The restoration and repair of ancient temples, (3) The support and sponsorship of religious festivals and rituals both within and outside temples, and (4) The provision of material and other forms of assistance to priests and temple personnel.

## IX. CONSTRUCTION OF NEW TEMPLES

The Nagarathars have made a significant and visible impact through the construction of new temples. Building temples has been a deeply meritorious and auspicious act in Hinduism, signifying prosperity and joy for the builders and their families. Nagarathars have been actively involved in temple construction throughout their history, establishing temples in locations where they conducted business and in key Hindu pilgrimage sites across India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and other regions. While many of their temples are dedicated to Lord Shiva due to their Shaivite tradition, temples dedicated to deities like Muruga or Kartikeya were built outside India to accommodate non-Brahmin priests. These Nagarathar-built temples are revered not only by the community but also by various Hindu groups. Notable



temples include village temples in and around Chettinad, Kathiresan temples in Sri Lanka, the Chettiar Temple in Myanmar, and the Thenday Yutthapani Temple in Vietnam. In Myanmar alone, Nagarathars are known to have erected temples in 60 locations, and similar temples can be found in Mauritius and other overseas regions. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

## **X. RESTORATION AND RENOVATION OF TEMPLES**

The Nagarathars played a crucial role in repairing and preserving old temples in Tamil Nadu, including their nine clan temples. While these clan temples were granted to the Nagarathars by local rulers in the eighth century A.D., they took it upon themselves to restore and embellish them. Furthermore, they extended their efforts to revive numerous ancient Hindu temples scattered across Tamil Nadu. Their restoration work involved clearing overgrowth, re-plastering dilapidated walls, and repainting ceilings and pillars. These endeavors were driven by their deep faith and commitment to preserving cultural heritage. Nagarathars also took care of Vaishnavite shrines, with the Perumal temple at Ariyakudi being an example. Temples like the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple in Madurai, the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram, and others were restored and even adorned with inscriptions detailing the Nagarathars' restoration efforts, ensuring the survival of these historic structures.

## **XI. CONTRIBUTION TO TEMPLE RELATED RITUALS AND FESTIVALS**



Fig 8 Contribution to Temple Related Rituals and Festivals

As part of their commitment to uphold and preserve the Hindu religion, the Nagarathars have played a pivotal role in facilitating traditional rituals and festivals in numerous temples. They have generously supported financially struggling village temples, ensuring the continued observance of essential daily pujas (rituals) as per tradition. The Nagarathars have been instrumental in the revival of age-old

temple festivals and rituals, often introducing new celebrations. An example is the ten-day festival established in 1924 in honor of Pattinathar, the community's patron saint, in Kaveripattinam. This festival, held in the Tamil month of Audi (July-August), features reenactments of significant events from the saint's life, given that he spent a substantial part of his life in Kaveripattinam. Additionally, the Nagarathars have initiated a three-day festival at Tiruvottriyur, situated in the northern outskirts of Chennai and believed to be the site of Pattinathar's tomb. This festival takes place in the Tamil month of Aavani (August-September). Many of these newly introduced festivals remain relatively unfamiliar to those outside the Nagarathar community.

## **XII. WOOD CARVING**



Fig 9 Wood Carving

Wood carving in Chettinad is a testament to the Nagarathar community's artistic prowess and cultural contributions. They imported teakwood from Burma and satinwood from Sri Lanka, expertly crafting ornate and practical items. Skilled carpenter families in Chettinad produced intricate carvings, often featuring Hindu deities, animals, and motifs on grand entrance doors, interior doors, and wooden columns. Plain wooden windows occasionally showcased yali (mythical lion) carvings, and stained glass windows displayed British and Gothic influences. Woodcarvers in Chettinad also created everyday items like coconut scrapers, vegetable cutters, toys, cupboards, and manuscript covers. These items were sometimes part of a bride's dowry. The tradition extended to crafting "kavadis," palanquin-like objects for devotees during temple pilgrimages, particularly during the Tai Poosam festival in honor of Lord Muruga. The wood-carving heritage in Chettinad reflects the Nagarathars' artistic contributions, deeply embedded in their homes and daily life. (Livspace Magazine) (Muthiah, 2016)

### XIII. PAINTING

Painting is a significant aspect of Chettinad's cultural heritage, gracing both temples and houses. Temple paintings often depict religious themes, while house paintings are well-preserved, featuring scenes from daily life, hunting, parrots, floral motifs, and intricate designs above windows. Some Chettinad houses showcase portrait paintings in the Maratha style of Tanjavur, highlighting the influence of Tanjavur artists in the region. Traditional Chettinad paintings primarily used vegetable pigments but gradually incorporated other paints after World War I. A noteworthy feature of Chettinad art is the Nagarathars' admiration for the works of Raja Ravi Varma, a renowned South Indian painter. His lifelike depictions of Hindu deities in natural settings gained immense popularity, and many Nagarathar families began collecting Ravi Varma paintings and lithographs. Today, a remarkable collection of over 100 Ravi Varma lithographs is preserved in a Nagarathar house in Thekkur.

The Nagarathar community also supported the Tanjore school of miniature painting, characterized by vivid multicolored and gold-leaf embossed paintings. Themes often revolved around God-child Krishna and the coronation of Lord Rama. Tanjore paintings from Chettinad can be found in Nagarathar homes and offices, particularly in cities like Chennai. Kumararani Meena Muthiah from Kanadukathan in Chettinad played a pivotal role in preserving this traditional art form. She established the Kumararaja Muthiah School of Traditional Arts and Crafts, which imparts training in Tanjore paintings, preserving and promoting this unique artistic heritage. The artists trained at the school have contributed to the revival of Tanjore painting not only in India but also in Europe and the U.S.A., breathing new life into an art form that was on the brink of obscurity just two decades ago. (Ramaswamy, 2016).

### XIV. METAL WORK

Chettinad's metal workers were highly skilled and created a diverse range of items, from kitchen utensils like copper containers to silversmith-crafted lunch plates, tumblers, cups, and containers adorned with intricate carvings of Hindu deities and floral patterns. They also produced toys, lamps, icons of Hindu deities, and silver replicas of traditional items. Their craftsmanship extended to architectural elements like iron nails, door fixtures, locks, and wrought iron grills in Nagarathar houses. However, due to market changes, many skilled metal workers have left Chettinad, and their products are now sought after by art collectors and antique enthusiasts in local and international markets. Chettinad metal artifacts are highly valued for their craftsmanship and cultural significance.

### XV. STONE CARVERS

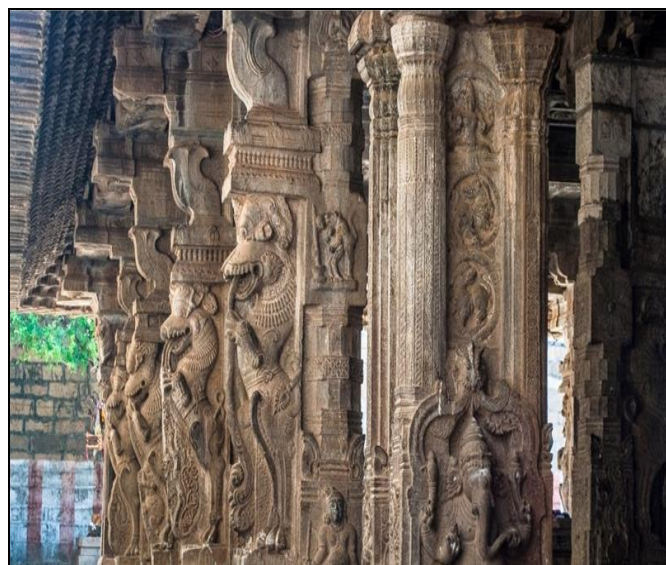


Fig 10 Stone Carvers

Stone carvers in Chettinad craft various stone items, including stone toys, kitchen grinding stones, and vessels made from local soapstone known as Maakkal. The granite used for grinding stones is sourced from the nearby Eastern Ghats mountain ranges and is highly regarded as some of the finest in India. In Chettinad houses, stone is used to create columns, with designs ranging from simple straight columns with leaf motifs in the corners to more elaborate figural carvings at the base. Stone carvers also design lampstands on front doorsteps, ornate stone platforms for seating in outer verandahs, and carvings of birds, animals, and floral motifs on exterior walls and foundations of the house.

### XVI. JEWELLERY MAKING



Fig 11 Jewellery Making

The Nagarathars in Chettinad have a deep affinity for gemstones and jewelry, with many of them having gemstone-inspired names. They have been involved in the gemstone business, acquiring diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds



from various sources. Inspired by these gemstones, Chettinad jewelers craft a wide range of heavy ornaments, including headpieces, earrings, necklaces, bangles, bracelets, and toe rings. Notable pieces include the "kaluthooru," a chain with 31 gold components worn by brides, diamond necklaces, the "oddianam" waist belt with a diamond-encrusted buckle, and the "maalai," a neck chain made of sacred rudraksha seeds. The "navaratna" finger ring, embedded with nine sacred gemstones representing celestial bodies, is believed to bring protection and good fortune. These jewels play a significant role in the bride's dowry and are worn during festivals and lifecycle rituals, such as weddings. However, not all Nagarathar families have preserved these traditional jewels, as some have melted or sold them due to financial pressures. Modern jewelry designers are also incorporating Chettinad jewelry designs into contemporary pieces for urban elites, keeping this cultural heritage alive in new forms. (Krishnaswamy, Murali N.2017)

## XVII. WEAVING



Fig 12 Weaving

Traditionally, the Nagarathars of Chettinad predominantly wore cotton garments due to the hot South Indian climate, reserving silk for special occasions like weddings. Men typically donned dhotis, veshtis, angavastrams, and turbans, but with increased foreign cultural influence, they began adopting Western clothing. The Nagarathars' appreciation for fine clothing led to the promotion of weaving in Chettinad during the 19th and early 20th centuries. One notable product of this tradition is the Chettinad saree, a durable 6-meter-long cotton saree known for its ability to withstand rough washing. These sarees feature earthy colors with contrasting borders, often displaying temple tower designs known as "temple borders." Chettinad sarees, once exclusive to Nagarathar women, have gained popularity and are commonly worn in cities like Chennai. Weavers in Chettinad experiment with contemporary designs while adhering to traditional patterns favored by the local community. Silk sarees with zari (gold thread) are not typically produced in Chettinad; Nagarathars acquire silk sarees from other places like Varanasi and Kanchipuram, treasuring them as heirlooms passed down through generations.

## XVIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Chettinad architecture stands as a remarkable testament to the rich cultural legacy of Tamil Nadu, specifically in the Chettinad region. This unique architectural style, deeply intertwined with the life and traditions of the Nagarathar community, showcases exceptional craftsmanship, a harmonious blend of diverse influences, and an unwavering commitment to preserving the cultural heritage. The architecture of Chettinad houses, palaces, and temples reflects a fusion of Indian and colonial influences, resulting in distinctive features such as ornate wooden carvings, intricate stucco work, pitched roofs, and spacious courtyards. These architectural elements not only provide aesthetic appeal but also serve functional purposes, ensuring natural ventilation and temperature control, which are vital in the region's extreme weather conditions. The Chettinad region, with its architectural ensemble, represents the way in which the Nagarathar community lived and celebrated their cultural traditions. The thoughtful integration of urban and landscape elements, rainwater harvesting, and the adaptability of the houses to serve various lifecycle rituals and celebrations add depth and significance to Chettinad architecture. Furthermore, the traditional arts and crafts of Chettinad, including wood carving, painting, metalwork, jewelry making, weaving, and basket making, are integral parts of this cultural legacy. These artistic traditions have played a vital role in shaping the lifestyle and values of the Nagarathar community. In recent years, efforts have been made to preserve and restore Chettinad architecture and the related crafts, recognizing their historical and architectural importance. This revival not only safeguards the cultural heritage but also opens the door for contemporary interpretations and adaptations of these traditions. Chettinad architecture and its associated arts and crafts continue to be celebrated not only in Chettinad but also beyond its borders, contributing to the cultural tapestry of Tamil Nadu and India. They stand as living testaments to the Nagarathar community's commitment to preserving their unique cultural legacy, which continues to inspire and captivate people from around the world.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT (HEADING 5)

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