

MAR GREGORIOS COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Block No.8, College Road, Mogappair West, Chennai – 37

Affiliated to the University of Madras
Approved by the Government of Tamil Nadu
An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution



DEPARTMENT OF TAMIL

SUBJECT NAME: HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIAN ART

SUBJECT CODE: BV5AD

SEMESTER: II

PREPARED BY: PROF.K. RAJAVELU

HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIAN ART AND CULTURE

Paintings in South India are famous for their intricate curves and bright colours. There are many schools for painting in South India like the Mysore, Tanjore, Nayaka, Chola and so on. Pallava period paintings are known to us from small fragments recorded in the little shrines to set into the area wall of the Kailashnath temple at Kanchipuram. Mural and album paintings from the last 2 or 3 centuries stay alive in some extent from the South Indian paintings; Hindu paintings from the more isolated past survived to much lesser degree.



History of South Indian Paintings

The art form dates back to the early 9th century which was an era dominated by the Chola rulers, who encouraged art and literature. Tanjore painting is an imperative form of classical South Indian painting was the subject to the town of Tanjore in Tamil Nadu. The Miniature Painting in India expressed realism with its complete subtleties. The diverse schools of Indian miniatures like.

The Pala, Odisha, Jain, Mughal, Rajasthani and Nepali did not cultivate after separation. The 11th century Pala miniatures were the earliest to appear. The Tanjore Paintings dates back to the early 9th century which was an era dominated by the Chola rulers, who promoted art and literature.

Features of South Indian Paintings:

The ideas consist of the story of Radha-Krishna, scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata temple activities and others. A significant feature of chitrakars is they utilize vegetable and sandstone colours.

Types of South Indian Paintings:

The tradition of South Indian painting has been carried on in the Indian subcontinent since the ancient times. With the time, South Indian paintings developed to turn into a kind of merge of the different traditions which were influencing them. There are different types of South Indian Paintings which are existing and some of them are as follows:

Thanjavur Painting:

Thanjavur painting is a traditional South Indian painting style, which was inaugurated from the town of **Thanjavur** and spread across the adjoining and geographically nearby Tamil Nadu. The art form draws its instant resources and inspiration from way back about 1600 AD, an era when the Nayakas of Thanjavur under the suzerainty of the **Vijayanagara** Rayas encouraged **art**. However, it can safely be surmised that Thanjavur painting, as we know it now, originated in the **Maratha** court of Thanjavur.

Mysore Painting:

Mysore painting is an important form of classical South Indian painting that originated in the town of Mysore in **Karnataka**. These paintings are known for their elegance, muted colours and attention to detail. The themes for most of these paintings are **Hindu Gods** and **Goddesses** and scenes from **Hindu mythology**. In modern times, these paintings have become a much sought-after souvenir during festive occasions in South India.

Karnataka Painting:

The original paintings of Karnataka are of the pre-historic era about 2000 to 1000 B.C. The depictions of **animals**, human figures etc. are painted under the projected rocks which formed the home place of the ancient people. The practice of paintings in Karnataka owes its beginnings to the western **Chalukyans** who embellished the walls of the caves in **Badami** with attractive wall paintings in 6th century A.D.

Hoysala Painting:

Hoysala paintings of South India are available in the painted **palm leaf manuscripts**, which are now well preserved in the Moodhidri library. They are illustrated manuscripts and thus do not contain only paintings but also the writing of the **Hoysala** period. The mural tradition has been a very vital practice in South Indian painting and images are accurately cut into rocks of the caves.

Chola Paintings of South India, Indian Paintings:



Chola Paintings

The Chola paintings of South Indian have very high significance in the history of art of the country.

Chola Paintings of South Indian have very high significance in the history of art. These paintings have great emotion in the faces, whether it is anger, compassion or any other expression. The era of the royal Cholas was an era of continuous development and enhancement of Dravidian art and architecture. They utilised their extraordinary wealth which were earned during their widespread invasions in building long-lasting stone temples and beautiful bronze sculptures.

Features of Chola Paintings of South India:

The murals of the Chola age bring out diverse emotions on many faces, a feature rarely seen in Indian art. The majestic temple of Brihadishvara in Thanjavur is an example of the great wealth and power of the Chola Empire. The art of paintings boomed, Figures were painted with realism. The ability of the Chola painters is seen on their paintings.

Most the paintings are massive and animated, which brings alive the greatness of the Lord who destroys evil and ensures peace. These paintings also depict a barely visible Dakshinamurthi (Shiva as God of knowledge) beneath a banyan tree on which monkeys are playing. The paintings of the Chola period have a stillness of body and astonishment on the faces of the sages worshipping Dakshinamurthi, in contrast to the energetic animals portrayed nearby. There are also flying apsaras and gandharas, who complete the scene of extravagant proportions. The paintings of Lord Shiva can be seen in the heart of the temple, which are protected by gigantic walls of stone. Here, a forceful Shiva is shown as warrior on a chariot, which is being driven by Brahma and fighting the demons who can be clearly recognised by their fearful appearance.

There is another Chola painting of South India, which shows a beautiful tableau of Rajaraja Chola I listening to his preceptor Karuvur Devar and the two are facing a study of

intense concentration. This is said to be one of the earliest royal portraits in Indian painting. In another panel, there are dancing apsaras and their faces are in the pose of abhinaya. Again, in the paintings are shown Rajaraja Chola and his wives watching in awe the magnificent ananda tandava, the dance of Nataraja performed in the golden mandapam of Chidambaram. There are also people with eyebrows like a bow and the compassionate eyes, who are shown wearing beautiful jewellery and jasmine bedecked hairstyles.

These beautifully featured people bring alive the massive compositions in bright colours. Most of the Chola paintings were rediscovered when the upper layer was removed to be preserved separately. Rajaraja-I and Rajendra contributed most for the growth of the art of painting throughout the Chola period. The big Chola king Raja Raja I built the Brihadisvara temple between AD 1000 and AD 1008 and the paintings were done between AD 1008 and AD 1012.

Cheriyal Scroll Painting:

Cheriyal Scroll Painting is a traditional Nakashi art indigenous to Cherial village, Andhra Pradesh which involve richly painted scrolls portraying folktales from Hindu epics and Puranas, said to be ushered in the country by the Mughals.



Attractive Cheriyal Scroll Painting

Cheriyal Scroll Painting is a remarkably specialized form of Nakashi art-form practised in Cheriyal village in Warangal District, Andhra Pradesh. These paintings represent the various legends of folklore and mythology, manifested through beautifully painted scrolls containing their narrative formats. Variety of bright hues characterise the Cheriyal scroll paintings, which has been the recipient of the Intellectual Property Rights Protection or Geographical Indication (GI) status in the year 2007. Cheriyal paintings are a unique pictorial presentation of the numerous tales from Hindu epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana and the various Indian Puranas. They acted as wonderful means of communication, particularly useful for illiterate people and conveyed significant moral virtues, motivating people to be virtuous.

History of Cheriya Scroll Paintings:

Historical sources have claimed that Cheriya Scroll Paintings have been introduced to the country by Mughal emperors and initially belonged exclusively to Rajasthan, especially during the 16th century. The 'Nakashi' artisans manufactured dolls and painted long tales in scrolls, which were said to be a crucial part of the cultural and sociological culture of Telengana, which constitutes the current-day districts of Kurnool, Mahbubnagar, Medak, Karimnagar and Warangal. Since the paintings are an integral part of the Cheriya villages, they are termed as 'Cheriya *Scrolls*'

Traditional Cheriya Scroll Paintings

The traditional art of Cheriya Scroll Paintings is intrinsically associated to 'Kaki Padagollu',

A story-telling community who travelled to different villages, singing verses from the epics or the stories from Indian Puranas,

after exhibiting the colour Cheriya scrolls. Their grand narration was mostly coupled with music and dances. In the ancient ages, Cheriya Scroll Paintings represented a rare, visual medium while the bard's song was an impressive audio medium.

The scroll flowed like movie rolls and measured about 40 feet in length and three feet in width, depending upon the kind of tale narrated. The scrolls follow a vertical format which communicates stories along horizontal panels. A building or a tree represents the linear narrative form while a floral border at the centre separates the two panels. Every panel of the Cheriya Scroll portrayed only a single portion of the story and each scroll consisted of 50 panels. While the bard proceeded on with his tale, the panel speaking about that very part of the story would be exhibited. The iconographic style of every deity was established bearing in mind the particular caste for which the Cheriya Scroll was made. However, currently a scanty number of artisans



Colourful Cheriya Masks

are skilled in this technique which had led to a reduction in the availability of such paintings. Singular items for the purpose of wall decorations and banners are the modern products which are employed instead of traditional Cheriyal Scroll Paintings.

Process of Cheriyal Scroll Paintings:

Preparation of the canvas for such paintings is a major process. Khadi cotton is effectively treated in a combination of white mud or '*suddha mati*', starch which is obtained from rice, gum water and a paste of boiled tamarind seeds. However, the painters must make sure that each coating should be dried properly prior to the application of the next. Thereafter, the outline is sketched over the surface of the canvas using a painting brush and these outlines are generally quite well-defined which depict the skilled craftsmanship of the Cheriyal Scroll painters. Natural hues are employed by the painters. The brushes utilized are made with a stick, tied to the hair of squirrels. The Cheriyal masks are manufactured with the aid of coconut shells and Cheriyal dolls are composed of tamarind paste, wood and saw dust.

Characteristics of Cheriyal Scroll Paintings:

Cheriyal Scroll Paintings are extremely beautiful, and the colour red is the main predominant hue painted in the background. One can easily relate to these paintings since they use popular themes, obtained from traditional folklore, mythology and literary accounts. Markandeya Purana, Shiva Purana, Mahabharata, Krishna Lekha, Ramayana and tales of communities like Madiga and Gauda are amongst the important themes. Simple rural lifestyle often finds expression in Cheriyal Scroll Paintings which involve rural festive events, womenfolk engaged in working in paddy fields and also in domestic chores. The garments and attires reflected in the paintings speak volumes about the regional costumes of the inhabitants of Andhra Pradesh, as it is here that they originated.

**Medieval
Indian**



**Kerala Paintings,
Paintings**

Medieval Kerala Paintings

Medieval Kerala paintings depicted the political scenario and the religious matters mainly.

Medieval Kerala Paintings portray myths and tradition, which were drawn on the walls

of temples and churches in South India, primarily in Kerala. The medieval Kerala was divided into small political units. During that time the art and paintings also got affected by the political powers. The Madurai Nayakas, the former feudatories of the Vijayanagara Empire had domination at that time.

Apart from the Vijayanagar traditions, the local traditions supported strongly by the Chalukya-Hoysala traditions of earlier periods led to the development of a new regional style in decorative art and paintings. The religious fervour along with the Vaishnavism, which was predominant in the medieval Kerala, gave birth to amazing pictorial narrations.

History of Medieval Kerala Paintings

The ancestry of the present fresco tradition of Kerala could be traced as back as the 7th and 8th century AD. The early Kerala murals with its architecture came closely under the influence of Pallava art. The oldest murals in Kerala were discovered in the rock-cut cave temple of Thirunandikkara, which is currently in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. The leaders of Kolikod, Kochi and Travancore were the leading figures in Medieval Kerala. The churches at Kottayam, Angamaly, Kanjoor, Cheppat, Ollur and many other places have paintings which are recognized for their wonderful execution and style.

Features of Medieval Kerala Paintings

The approach of the Medieval Kerala Paintings in the temple and palaces are much related to the woodcarvings and stucco figures. The themes for murals were received from spiritual texts. Palace and temple murals were settled with extremely stylized pictures of gods and goddesses of the Hinduism. Flora, fauna and other features of Nature were also pictured as backdrops in extremely stylized techniques. The typical 18th century paintings can be seen in the Padmanabhapuram Palace. All these are now well preserved and have a wealth of detail and iconographic interest. One of such paintings shows Durga on the cut head of a buffalo and Bhairava. The other themes such as Harihara, Ganesha are also executed with great skill.

Existing Medieval Paintings of Kerala

One of the temple of Kerala at Trichur has paintings of the same period depicts a theme with Rama seated in 'virasann' with the thumb and pointing finger of the right hand. It gives the impression that Rama is teaching the highest principle in philosophy to the assembled sages and his brothers while Hanuman reads the manuscripts. This can be found at Mattancheri also and is a favourite of the people of this region. The paintings depicting a battle of archers can also be seen in this temple. The earlier phase of the late 16-17th centuries is represented in the murals from the Triprayar temple, along with those from Tiruvanchikulam. All the paintings were drawn very minutely giving all details. The crown looks almost like a kalasa on the head with a full-blown lotus with its spread out petals occupying it almost entirely.

The paintings in the temple at Ettumanur are considered to be the earliest after those at Tirnandikkarai and go back to the 16th century. Among these, there is a painting, which depicts the 'Nataraja' with 16 arms dancing on 'apasmara'. This painting of medieval Kerala represents a fusion of northern and southern traditions.

The temple of Trichakapuram in Kerala contains paintings in the style that became more popular in the latter half of the 18th century. Another painting of the Krishnapuram Palace named 'Gajendra Moksham', shows Vishnu on Garuda coming to the rescue of the afflicted animal that cried for help. This painting is earlier by a few decades. The medieval paintings of Kerala had close association with woodcarving.

The Portuguese built the Mattancheri palace in Kerala (Cochin) in 1557. The long room of this palace contains the Ramayana murals called the 'pallyarui' forms, which is a remarkable collection of typical paintings of this period. During the beginning of 18th century, the paintings of the staircase room and that of the coronation hall were implemented with the themes such as Mahalakshmi, Bhutamata, Kiratamurti, coronation of Rama, etc. The most interesting among these paintings of medieval Kerala is the one in which Shiva was caught in a compromising position with Mohini by Parvati.

Nayaka Paintings of South India, Indian Paintings

The paintings of the Nayak phase of Madurai and Tanjavur was as important as the



Vijaya-nagara phase.

Paintings from the last two or three centuries stay alive in some extent from the **South Indian paintings** and **Hindu** paintings from the more distant past survived to much lesser degree. The

paintings of the Nayaka phase of **Madurai** and **Tanjavur** was as important as the Vijayanagara phase. The traces of Nayaka paintings can be seen at the **Tiruparuthikundram** apart from the Vijayanagara paintings. Most of these paintings of Nayaka period are of the 16th century and few are from the 17th century.

Depiction in Nayaka Paintings

These Nayaka paintings depict the scenes from the life of Rishabhadeva, the first **Thirthankara of Vardhamana**, of **Krishna**, the cousin of the Thirthankara, Neminatha as well as the life of Neminatha himself. These are all graphically portrayed in a long series with elaborate labels in **Tamil language** giving details of each painting which became the usual feature as such labels are seen in Chidambaram paintings and **Tiruvalur** etc.

Nayaka Paintings in Tanjavur

In the Tanjavur temple, there is a long panel facing west, in the circumambulatory passage. This shows **Lord Indra** on an **elephant**, **Agni** (the Lord of Fire) on a **ram**, **Yama** (God of Death) on a buffalo, **Niritti** on a human mount, **Varuna** (Rain God) on a **makara** and **Marut** (Wind God) on a deer. These Nayaka paintings depict the glory of Indra by repeating him on an elephant at one end. These paintings depict the '**samudra manthana**' scene, showing the rising of the objects from the ocean as it was churned. The things rose shown here include the Kalpavriksha (wish-fulfilling tree), Uchchaisravas (celestial horse), **Airavata** (heavenly elephant), Kamadhenu (the cow of plenty), **Rambha**, **Urvasi** (celestial nymphs) and others. It also depicts **Goddess Lakshmi** is towards one end on a **lotus**, with her hands in a posture of assurance of protection and prosperity and is approached by the devatas. Many other such valuable and noteworthy Nayaka paintings can be seen in various **temples of Kumbakonam** and other places in Tanjavur district.

Nayaka Paintings in Tiruvarur

The **Tiruvarur** temple is among the most famous **Saivite** shrines of South India. One of such paintings of the late 17th and early 18th centuries can be seen on the ceiling, between the rows of pillars in the thousand pillared mandapa. In this painting, the great devotee of **Siva**, Muchukunda Chola is portrayed as a great friend of Indra and as his great ally in overcoming the asuras. He is shown majestically riding on an elephant in a procession. He is received with great honor by Indra at the entrance of the city and beautiful celestial damsels are shown honoring him from their balconies, which is most beautifully represented.

Nayaka Paintings in Chidambaram

On the ceiling of the large mandapa of Chidambaram temple, there is a nice Nayaka painting depicting the story of the genesis of the **Bikshatana form of Siva** and **Mohini** form of **Vishnu**. The plan of **Siva** and Vishnu was to proceed to Darukavana to protect the rishis and rishipatnis (wives of the rishis) by assuming the guise of the naked beggar and the bewitching enchantress.

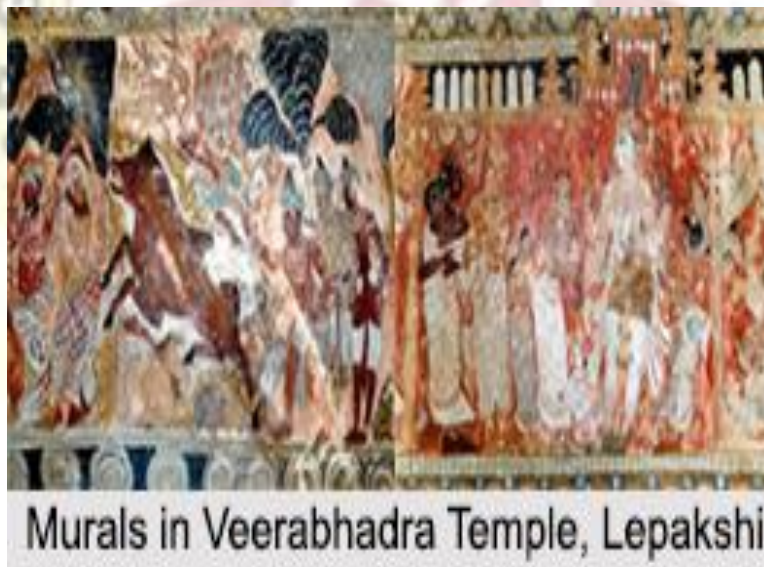
In one of the paintings **Ganesa** (the elephant faced god) and Umasahita are shown with rishis, **Skanda** (Muruga) with Valli and Devasena. This painting can be seen towards the other end of the mandapa. Here, one can also see **Nandi** conversing with Siva and **Parvati** in **Kailasa**, **Nataraja** as Sabhapati with Sivakamasundari (**Parvati**) surrounded by Ganas dancing and playing musical instruments. These Nayaka paintings here also depict several other stories from Sivapurana, illustrating the lives of saints.

Other Paintings of Nayaka Period

The temple of Tiruvalanjuli has vigorously painted panels depicting Vishnuanugraha Murthi (blessing Vishnu). The story of Muruga teaching Pranava to **Brahma** and that of Siva with chinmudra is inscribed here. The paintings of the Nayaka period continue the traditions of the **Vijayanagar** craftsmen and they influenced the art of **Mysore, Vellore, Penukonda** and **Srirangapattinam**.

Paintings of Andhra Pradesh, Indian Paintings

Paintings of Andhra Pradesh done using natural pigments and colours are crystal reflections of the state's tradition in the art.



The rich art and craft

culture of **Andhra Pradesh** is appealingly depicted through the paintings practised and indigenous to the South Indian state. Employing excellent craftsmanship and dexterity of adroit artists, these paintings traditionally showcase natural colours, be it **mural paintings** found on the ceilings of **Veerabhadra temple** in Lepakshi village or **Kalamkari** art done in fabrics.

Murals in Veerabhadra Temple, Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh:
Mural Paintings found on the ceilings of Veerabhadra temple in Lepakshi, a small village

in **Anantapur district** of Andhra Pradesh, are well-preserved outstanding examples of **paintings** and murals of the **Vijayanagara era**. They most vividly depict facets and features of murals existential during the Vijayanagara Empire, primarily dealing with mythological themes and depicting scenes from the epics and **Indian Puranas**. The high ceilings of the huge gateways of Veerabhadra temple are divided into a number of strips, and the individual strips are broken into square or rectangular panels. Each one of the panels displays a particular scene, or part of one, in keeping with the theme of representation in the central panel.

The paintings are detailed in very bright colours obtained from natural pigments, telling stories and legends of **Lord Vishnu** and **Lord Shiva**, mythological



Kalamkari Work design

characters **Rama**, **Krishna**, **Arjuna** and more. There are also murals dedicated to figures unknown, probably kings and queens of the time. The costumes and ornaments of drawn figures have been intricately depicted. The panels are bordered with decorative margins on four sides, going very well with the central panel. The figures in front are well captured due to the light shade of the background. A rather prominent aspect of the figures is that they have been shown tilting backwards, from the feet upwards till the waist, and then again forward from the waist to

the neck, with the head standing erect. In terms of both the brushwork and the lines, the parts of these murals do not attain synchronisation with the total figure.

Kalamkari Art, Andhra Pradesh

Kalamkari is the age old distinct art of painting fabrics with a "kalam" (pen). The "kalam" is no ordinary pen but a sharp-pointed pierced bamboo that regulates flow of colour on the fabric. The attractive mix of colours on the fabrics usually portrays characters from **Indian mythology**. During the 17th and the 18th centuries, the art of Kalamkari was popularized to an extent that it extended across the shores of India. Kalamkari is today very much prevalent in the holy town of **Srikalahasti** and **Machilipatnam** city in Andhra Pradesh. The colours employed in this art are extracted from vegetable dyes. Besides mythological themes, the paintings also showcase various forms of **lotus** flower, cartwheels, parrots and delicate patterns of leaves and flowers.

Paintings of Kerala, Indian Paintings, Kerala

Paintings of Kerala go back to the time when Ajanta period was coming to an end. Paintings of Kerala have been enriched by several renowned painters like Raja Raja Verma and Raja Ravi Verma since ages.



Mural painting

Paintings of Kerala have a rich tradition that goes back to the immediate Post-Ajanta Period. The murals of Tirunandikkara cave temple are the specimens of the finest art form in **Kerala** and they are believed to be of Pandiyan origin. Churches of Kerala also contain some valuable pieces of paintings. **Raja Ravi Verma** is one of the outstanding names in the art of painting in Kerala. The paintings of Raja Ravi Verma are considered as masterpieces and they adorn some of the notable art galleries of India.

People can say that the tradition of painting on walls began in Kerala with the pre-historic rock paintings found in the Anjanad valley of **Idukki district**. Rock engravings dating to the Mesolithic period have also been discovered in two regions of Kerala.

Significance of the Kerala Paintings

Swathi Thirunal, the great ruler of Travancore, extended generous patronage to the art of painting. Alagiri Naidu, a distinguished painter from **Madurai**, gave training to Raja Ravi Verma of the Kilimanur royal family and the latter in his turn trained up his nephew Raja Ravi Verma. The paintings of Raja Ravi Verma depict a fine technique of European oil painting and it helped him in achieving international recognition. The various pictures of Gods and Goddesses painted by Raja Ravi Verma are even today considered as objects of mass worship.

Dhuleechitram or powder drawing is a traditional way of painting mythical figures on floor using natural paints. This ritualistic art form is known as Kalam or Kalamezhuthu. Kalam is practised in temples and sacred groves of Kerala where the representation of deities like **Goddess Kali**, Lord Ayyappa, et al are made on the floor usually in five colors. The deities to be drawn are decided based on various factors. The presiding deity of the temple or sacred grove, the religions purpose that calls for the ritual, the particular sector cast who does it all are deciding factors as to the nature or figure on the Kalam. This is a traditional art and observes strict rules regarding what colours to be used to depict a particular part of the body, what to draw first and the order in which each part of the body has to be drawn etc.

The earliest of the murals paintings of Kerala are found in a small cave-shrine in the side of a great rock at Tirunandikkara (now part of **Tamil Nadu**). The themes of such paintings are drawn from Hindu lore; **Lord Ganesha**, **Lord Shiva** and **Parvati** being among the deities represented. But the best place to see sixteenth-century paintings is Padmanabhapuram, now part of Tamil Nadu. The themes are drawn from the story of **Lord Rama** and **Lord Krishna** and also from the **Indian Puranas**. Further, the **Udayanapuram temple**, Vaikom, has several ancient murals. These paintings are characterized by extreme simplicity and vigor.

Manuscript paintings of Hoysala dynasty



The Hoysalas ruled in ancient Karnataka area from the 11th to the 13th centuries A.D.

The Hoysala dynasty ruled in ancient Karnataka area from the 11th to the 13th centuries A.D. They constructed many beautiful temples in South India, which reflected a unique style of architecture and sculpture of them. They are still remembered for that unique feature of their art and architecture.

During, the rule of the Hoysala dynasty the art of painting also reached great heights. Murals of their time cannot be seen in the temples but samples of Hoysala paintings are available in the painted palm leaf manuscripts, which they have left behind. These can be seen now at Moodhidri, a Jaina pontifical seat in Karnataka. These Hoysala paintings can be seen on very large sized palm leaves, which are now well preserved in the Moodhidri library. They are actually illustrated manuscripts and therefore contain not only paintings but also the writing of the Hoysala period. A comparative study of the writings found on these palm leaves with the inscriptions of the Hoysalas discloses that the former belong to the time of the great Hoysala ruler Vishnuvardhana and his wife, Shantala Devi who was a follower of Jainism.

One of these manuscripts painting of Hoysala dynasty is the commentary of Virasena known as Dharala. It can be traced back to the 1113 A.D. and the Yakshi Kali is seen here with her vehicle the bull and standing close by are a few royal devotees, probably the ruler, his queen and the prince, all depicted with great beauty and delicacy. The other remarkable figures in these paintings include the figures of Mahavira, in both the standing and seated postures and also one of the Parshvanatha with snake hoods above his head and sitting on a lion throne. These manuscript paintings found in this library include the 'Yakshini Ambika', who is well represented in all of Jaina art. In one of these manuscripts here, she is shown under a mango tree with her two children and the lion. One of her children is shown riding on the lion while the other is standing close to his mother.

The quality of these Hoysala paintings is really outstanding and the writings found on these manuscripts are also noteworthy. The letters are painted in a flowery style and tell volumes of the skill and patience of these dedicated artists. The manuscripts are embroidered with beautiful borders, which too have been executed with deftness and sublime beauty.

South Indian culture South Indian culture refers to the culture of the South Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana. South Indian culture, though with its visible differences, forms an important part of the Indian culture. The South Indian Culture is essentially the celebration of the eternal universe through the celebration of the beauty of the body and femininity. It is exemplified through its dance, clothing, and sculptures

South Indian Culture and Heritage

Unique architectural that sings stories of the past, athletic and mesmerising Kathakali dancing, and the captivating cadences of Carnatic music – experience the richness and variety as we take you on a journey through our top 10 of South India Heritage and Culture.

10. Cinema

The silver screen is an ever-growing area of culture in South India, with a film industry worth around \$42 billion as well as the highest per capita movie consumption in India.

From the first silent film in 1916, the industry covers *all genres*, from thrillers and dramas to good old fashioned love stories. South Indian cinema has influenced politics and film personalities like C.N. Annadurai and M.G. Ramachandran have gone on to become Chief Ministers.

Films are produced in the four regional languages - Kannada cinema (Karnataka), Malayalam cinema (Kerala), Tamil cinema (Tamil Nadu) and Telugu cinema (Telangana and Andhra Pradesh).

<i>Language</i>	<i>Official in states</i>	<i>Hello</i>	<i>Goodbye</i>	<i>Please</i>	<i>Thank you</i>
Telugu	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Yanam	Nam-as-kaar-am	Selavu	Dayachesi	Dhanyavadhamulu
Tamil	Tamil Nadu, Puducherry	Vaṇakkam	Varukiren	Thayavu Seithu	Nandri
Kannada	Karnataka	Namaskara	Hogibaruve	Dayaviṭṭu	Dhanyavaadagalu
Malayalam	Kerala, Lakshadweep, Mahé, Puducherry	Namaskaram	Poyivaraam	Dayavaai	Nanni

9. Languages

As South India covers a vast area, it's unsurprising that you'll hear different dialects and accents as you travel from town to town. The majority of people in South India speak one of the four major Dravidian languages. Here's a quick guide, along with some useful translations!

8. Religion

South India is home to many people belonging to different religious schools of thought and, refreshingly, there is a very progressive and tolerant culture towards this.

Hinduism is the most popular religion, accounting for about 80% of the population, with both the Shaivite and Vaishnavite branches being practiced. Around 11% follow Islam, mainly in the Malabar Coast and Christianity is popular in the south, making up around 8% of the population.

One of the oldest Jewish communities in the world can be found in Kerala, who are rumoured to have arrived in the Malabar coast during King Solomon's reign.

You'll see many celebrations of religion in architecture, sculpture and arts and craft, not to mention the vibrant festivals honouring deities, saints and gods.



7. Clothing

Beautiful to behold, South Indian clothing is also a part of cultural identity. You'll see South Indian women traditionally wearing a saree (or sari), an unstitched draping garment that enhances the shape of the wearer. The stomach and navel are only partially covered to pay homage to Indian philosophy, where the navel of the Supreme Being is believed to be the source of creativity and life.

Unless in a formal or religious situation, South Indian men do not traditionally cover their upper body and wear either a colourful lungi or a white dhoti, types of sarong embroidered with typical batik patterns.

In parts of north Karnataka and in Andhra, men wear kachche panchey, tied at the back, and in the peninsular coastal region, lungis and saris are also tied at the back.



6. Art and craft

South India is a haven for art and craft, giving you a wide range of exquisitely made souvenirs for friends, family or yourself!

The handicraft sector in India is fiercely protected and promoted by the *Ministry of Textiles* within the Indian Government, making it a thriving industry producing beautiful pieces of work and that are key exports.

The amazing arts and crafts on offer include wood and stone carving, metalware, dolls, paintings, pottery, handwoven silk and cotton, bamboo work, weaving and embroidery.



5. Music

Carnatic music is the traditional music of southern India and its sound is diverse, unique and captivating. Evolving from Hindu traditions, it focuses heavily on the idea of song, with instruments imitating the sound of the human voice.

You are unlikely to see any musical scores being used, as Carnatic music relies on improvisation, retelling the thousands of melodies passed down from generation to generation.

The music is made up of melodic structures (râga) and rhythmic patterns (tâla), with each area of South India having their own versions of these. Musicians ‘inherit’ a repertoire from their teacher, which they will then expand, assisted by other tutors, or family and friends.



4. Dancing

South Indian dancing is spectacular – a variety of elaborate dance forms that tell stories and convey emotion in a twirl of bright colours accompanied by traditional music.

Here are some of the dances you may see:

Karnataka

Dollu Kunitha - a dance with quick movements, performed in rituals.

Beesu Samsale - dancers produce interesting sounds from hand cymbals.

Kerala

Padayani - dancers wear massive masks called 'Kolams'.

Oppana - a wedding dance where dancers circle the bride.

Perini - a dominant, acrobatic war dance performed while worshipping Lord Shiva.

Tamil

Nadu

Karagattam - dancers balance pots on their head.

Mayil Attam - known as the 'peacock dance', dancers dress and move as peacocks.

Paampu Attam - dancers dress as snakes.

Therukoothu - dancers wear dramatic make-up and clothing to tell stories from Hindu epics.

Garadi - dancers are dressed like monkeys and perform acrobatic moves.



3. Festivals

Move over Glastonbury! Experience the fantastic colours, rituals, history and magic of a festival in South India.

Karnataka

Karaga (March/April) - A nine-day event commemorating Hindu mythology with spectacular processions and rituals.

Chithirai Thiruvizha (April) - Officially the world's longest festival, a month-long celebration of the city of Madurai.

Mysore Dasara (September/October) - Marks the victory of good over evil and sees the Mysore Palace illuminated with 100,000 bulbs.

Kerala

Thrissur Pooram (April/May) - A festival honouring Shiva, with craft exhibitions, processions and fireworks.

Onam (August/September) - The national festival of Kerala with boat races, marching elephants and carpets made from flowers.

Hampi (November) - Colours, happiness, puppet shows, fireworks and processions fill the streets in this cultural extravaganza.

Tamil

Nadu

Pongal (January) - A four-day harvest festival similar to thanksgiving in America.



2. Cuisine

South Indian food may vary from region to region, but it is primarily made up of plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and spices, creating vibrant colours and authentic flavours balanced by rice and lentils. Don't be surprised to find your meal served on a plantain leaf rather than a plate, especially at formal events!

Culturally unique, you'll get the opportunity to experience new taste sensations made from a plethora of local ingredients, including aromatic curries, delicious seafood, coconut, pickles, south Indian coffee, pongal, rice, sambhar, spices and vadai.

South India is a haven for vegetarian food – if you get chance, try Sadya - a vegetarian feast of red rice, side dishes, savouries, pickles and desserts, all served at different times of the meal. Delicious!



1. Architecture

South India is famed for its incredible architecture, which you'll find equally impressive whether you're visiting one of the seven *World Heritage Sites* or taking a stroll around towns and villages.

Wherever you visit in South India, you can go on an enthralling journey through the centuries by visiting ancient temples, tall towers, sculptures and early cave temples carved from sandstone. Seeped in history, they tell stories of the culture, heritage and tradition, and show the ways of life in time gone by.

Marvel at the phenomenal craftsmanship on display, with the style differing as you move around, influenced by a variety of ruling dynasties over the years.

With over 30,000 ancient temples and countless other shrines and memorials, it's a great excuse to visit South India time and time again.



India can only be truly experienced by participating in its festivals, savouring its cuisine, knowing its architectural heritage, experiencing the charm of its beaches and exploring its destinations.

Each South Indian State has its own colourful culture consisting of several rituals and beliefs. The unique and vibrant culture of South India entices many a tourists from across the globe. The South Indian People are fully steeped into their traditions and beliefs. Be it dance, music, clothing or art and craft, South India is simply unbeatable. The traditional dress of a South Indian women is saree and the men wear a white pancha or a lungi.

The population of South India is approximately 233 million and the main **languages spoken** here are Tamil, Telugu, Kannad and Malayalam. People also know English. Tamil language has been give the tag of **Classical Language** by the Government of India in 2002. The primary occupation in South India is agriculture. South India has the highest literacy rate in India, Kerala being on top of the list having a literacy rate of 91 %.

The **food** of South Indian consists of rice, fish, coconut, idli, dosa, sambhar, uttapam and curries with lots of spice. Kerala Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are dotted with large **coffee plantations**. **Hinduism** is the dominant religion in South India but **Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity and Islam** are also followed by the people. Shaivite and Vaishnavite are the two important branches of Hinduism followed here. Christmas is celebrated with great enthusiasm in South India.

The mystical dance forms of South India are famous throughout the country. **Kathakali, Oppana, Kerala Natanam, Theyyam, Koodiyattam, Mohiniyattam, Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi are the most celebrated forms of dance of South India.** The South Indian music is called **Carnatic music** which straight away enters the heart of the listener. Some of the **famed composers** of South India are Purandara Dasa, Kanaka Dasa, Tyagaraja and Shyama Shastri. The film industry of South India is also growing at a fast pace giving birth to new artists. South Indian artists are highly skilled in creating marvel out of marble and stones. **Dravida** and **Vesara** style of rock architecture from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are the two different types of rock architecture prevalent in South India.

South India is an abode of countless **temples** built meticulously and beautifully. Tourists from far and wide come here to explore the beauty of these temples. Some of the well known temples are Kapileshwar temple, Brihadeshwara temple, Meenakshi temple, Navagraha temple, Krishna temple and Jain temple. South Indian culture is full of **festivals** which are celebrated with utmost zest by the people here. Pongal, Onam, Dance and Music festival, Hampi festival and Fire Walk festival are a few festivals celebrated enthusiastically out of many.

Early History of South India

- During the 1,000 B.C., the present states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala (in southern India) were inhabited by megalithic people.
- The important phase of the ancient history of south India is from the Megalithic period to about A.D. 300.

Megalithic Phase

- The literary meaning of the term megaliths is ‘big stones’ i.e. ‘*mega*’ means big and ‘*lit*’ means stones. But the big stones are not associated with the megalith culture.
- The megalithic culture is known for its burials.
- The abundance of iron tools and a Black-and-Red pottery with the burials is the main identifying features of the megalithic culture.
- The megalithic culture suggests that there was an abrupt change from the Neolithic stage into the Iron Age. And, they did not experience the intermediate Chalcolithic or Bronze Age.

Types of Megalithic Burial

The following are the major types of Megalithic burial –

- **Pit Circle Graves** – In this type of burial, the body was first exoriated and then buried. Pots and iron artifacts were placed in a grave. A stone circle is erected around the pit.



- **Cists** – These graves have a variety of forms. Cists which is stone coffin were made out of granite slabs with one or more capstones, with or without portholes. Cists are fully buried, half buried, or even on the bare rocks. They may contain single or multiple burials. A single or multiple stone circles erected around the cists.
- **Laterite chambers** – In Malabar region, the grave-chambers excavated into laterite instead of granite slabs.
- **Alignments** – It is a different kind of burial in which a large number of standing stones called '*Menhirs*' were arranged in squares or diagonals shape. They have been found in Gulbarga district and south of Hyderabad. However, in Kashmir, Menhirs have been found arranged in a semi-circle.
- **Sarcophagi** – These legged urns of terracotta sometimes have animal heads and are not very common.
- **Urns** – The practice of burying excoriated bones in urns seems to be taken from the Neolithic past. They are marked by capstones or stone circles, found mainly on the eastern coast.

Megalithic Tools

- Undoubtedly, there was a wide range of variety in Megalithic construction, but the typical identity was a Black-and-Red ware and distinctive iron tools. They have uniformity all over the peninsula.
- The pottery shapes include conical or looped lids, carinated vases, pedestalled bowls, spouted dishes, etc.
- The iron tool includes axes with crossed straps, sickles, tripods, tridents, spearheads, swords, lamp hangers, arrowheads, and lamps.



- Horse-harness bits and bells are also common finds.
- Iron Age, in the history of India, is a period when the use of iron for tools and weapons became common, but during this time, the dated literature also began to be written. Therefore, the period of Megalithics marked a point in time where prehistory ends and history begins.
- The builders of these Megalithics remain unknown to northern people because no reference to these monuments has been traced in Sanskrit or Prakrit literature though the early Tamil literature does contain descriptions of these burial practices.

Sources of Megalithic Period

- The earliest account about the people and kingdoms of the area are preserved in three forms
 - Ashokan inscriptions;
 - Sangam literature; and
 - Megasthenese's accounts.
- The Rock Edict II and XIII of Ashoka described the southern kingdoms of Chola, Pandya, Satyaputra, Keralaputra, and Tambapanni.
- Ashoka's kindness to these neighboring states has been very much proved by the fact that he made provisions for medicines and food items etc. for animals and humans of these kingdoms.
- In the *Hathigumpha* inscription of Kharvela, it has been found that Ashoka was credited for defeating a confederacy of Tamil states.
- A detailed description of south Indian states is found in *Sangam* literature belonging to the first four centuries of the Christian era.
- The Tamil language is the oldest among the spoken and literary languages of south India. Sangam literature was written in this language.
- The Pandyan kings assembled literary assemblies called as '*Sangam*'.
- *Sangam* literature consisted the collection of verses, lyrics, and idylls, which were composed by poets and scholars.
- *Sangam* literature preserves folk memory about the society and life (in south India) between the 3rd Century B.C. and 3rd century A.D.



South Indian women traditionally wear the [sari](#) while the men wear a type of [sarong](#), which could be either a white [dhoti](#) or a colourful [lungi](#) with typical [batik](#) patterns. The saree, being an unstitched [drape](#), enhances the shape of the wearer while only partially covering the midriff. In Indian philosophy, the navel of the Supreme Being is considered as the source of life and creativity. Hence by tradition, the stomach and the navel is to be left unconcealed, though the philosophy behind the costume has largely been forgotten. This makes the realization of *sharira-mandala*, where in *Angikam bhuvanam yasya* (the body is your world) unites with the *shaarira-mandala* (the whole universe), as expressed in the [Natyashastra](#).[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#) These principles of the sari, also hold for other forms of drapes, like the [lungi](#) or [mundu](#) or [panchey](#) (a white lungi with colourful silk borders in [kannada](#)), worn by men.[\[6\]](#) The lungi is draped over clockwise or counterclockwise and is tied at the back or fixed just along the waistline. It's sometimes lifted to the knee and tied at the waist leisurely or just held in hand to speed up walking.

Traditionally, South Indian men do not cover their upper body. Sometimes, in a formal situation, a piece of cloth may cover the upper body. Certain temples in South India even ban men from wearing upper-body garments when inside the temple. In Andhra and parts of north Karnataka, men wear kachche panchey where it is tied at back by taking it between legs. A similar pattern is seen in women. All over the peninsular coastal region, men wear coloured lungis and women wear saris in a manner of tying them at the back.



The Araimudi (araimuti) was worn by young [Tamil](#) girls.

The [Araimudi](#) (araimuti) ([Tamil](#): அரைமுடி, *araimūḍi*) is a small silver metal plate, shaped like a heart or a fig leaf, formerly worn by young [Tamil](#) girls on their genitals. "Arai" means loin and "mudi" means cover. The araimudi is also known as the "Genital shield" and an araimudi was mentioned in the "Guide to the principal exhibits in the Government Museum, Pudukkottai", by M. S. Chandrasekhar, published in 1966 as being displayed in an exhibit in the [Madras Government Museum](#). "A Manual of the Salem district in the presidency of Madras, Volume 1" said "The children sometimes, to the age of ten years or more, go in a state of nudity, relieved perhaps by a piece of string round the waist which sustains the "araimudi" or heart-shaped piece of silver, which calls attention to what it purports to conceal." The "Madras district gazetteers, Volume 1, Part 1" said "Little girls, up to the age of about 3, wear nothing but the little heart-shaped piece of silver suspended by a waist-cord (arai- mudi) " which calls attention to what it purports to conceal." "Percival's Tamil-English dictionary", defined Araimudi as "□□□□□□□□ arai múḍi, A small plate of gold or silver, appended to the girdle of female children, for the sake of decency".^[14] [Miron Winslow](#)'s dictionary, "A comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary of High and Low Tamil" defined araimudi as "□□□□□□□□, s. A small plate of metal worn by little girls over the private parts. The [Abbe Dubois](#) book "Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies", translated from French and edited by Henry King Beauchamp stated that "Even the private parts of the children have their own particular decorations. Little girls

wear a gold or silver shield or [codpiece](#) on which is graven some indecent picture; while a boy's ornament, also of gold or silver, is an exact copy of that member which it is meant to decorate." "Description of the character, manners, and customs of the people of India; and their institutions, religious and civil", also written by Dubois said "The children of either sex are likewise ornamented with various trinkets of the same form, though smaller than those of grown persons. They have also some that are peculiar. As all children in India go perfectly naked till they are six or seven years old, the parents, of course, adapt the ornaments to the natural parts of the body. Thus, the girls have a plate of metal suspended so as to conceal, in some measure, their nakedness. The boys, on the other hand, have little bells hung round them, or some similar device of silver or gold, attached to the little belt with which they are girt. Amongst the rest, a particular trinket appears in front, bearing a resemblance to the sexual part of the lad. Until the 1960s in the [Ampara District](#) of [Sri Lanka](#) girls wore the Araimudi.



The tradition of serving meals on [plantain leaves](#) endures in South India, especially at formal events.

Food habits are diverse even regionally and are largely based on the traditions. [Rice](#) is the staple diet. [Coconut](#) is an important ingredient in [Kerala](#) and coastal part of Karnataka of [South India](#), [Hyderabadi biryani](#) is also very special in [Telangana](#) and other neighbouring states whereas the cuisine in [Andhra Pradesh](#) is characterized by the [pickles](#), spicy aromatic curries and the generous use of [chili powder](#). [Dosa](#), [Idli](#), [Uttapam](#) etc. are popular throughout the region. Coastal areas like the state of [Kerala](#) and the city of [Mangalore](#) are known for their seafood. South Indian [coffee](#) is generally quite robust, and coffee is a preferred drink throughout the [Malabar region](#). [Tamil Nadu](#) is well known for its [Idli](#), [Dosa](#), [Pongal](#), [Sambhar](#), [Vada](#), [Puri](#), which are the common breakfast in [Tamil families](#). Among the [Malayalees](#), [Appam](#), [Puttu](#),

Upamav, Malabar biriyani are some of the common dishes. In Karnataka, Bisibele bath, Kara bath, Kesari bath, Raggi mudda, Udin Vada, Bene Masala Dosa, Paper Dosa are some of the common dishes.

Music

Main article: Carnatic music

There is a variety of music. It ranges from rural folk music to the sophisticated Indian Classical Music of South India is known as Carnatic music (after Carnatic, the name by which south India was known in the earlier colonial days. Sarang Dev coined south Indian classical music as Karnatic Music). It includes melodious, mostly devotional, rhythmic and structured music by composers such as Purandara Dasa, Kanaka Dasaru, Tyagaraja, Dikshathar, Shyama Sastri, and Swati Tirunal. It is difficult to discuss the culture and music of the four states of South India in a single breath. In Tamil Nadu, there is Tamil Pann, which is sung by Oduvars in Temples. They sing the works of famous Tamil Poets like Sambandar, etc. in various panns (another word for raagas).

Hindu Temple Music

The main instrument that is used in south Indian Hindu temples is the (nadaswaram) It is said to have been created when the very first temple was established in South India. The nadaswaram and the (thavil) were played together in South Indian temples to create a periya melam ensemble. Because of its harsh tone, periya melam is not favored by many Europeans, but to South India, it is a sound of pride and majesty. For many temple traditions, periya melam is necessary for worshippers to feel a spiritual presence. Periya melam is used to play for daily rituals inside the temples and annual rituals outside and around temples. Terada, Yoshitaka. "Temple Music Traditions in Hindu South India: "Periya Melam" and its Performance Practice." Asian Music 39.2 (2009): 108-51. ProQuest. Web. 24 Sep. 2013.

South Indian Dance



- Ancient Sanskrit drama tradition **Koodiyattam**.
Nātyāchārya **Padma Shri Māni Mādhava Chākyār** as **Ravana**.



- Thirayattam, an ethnic dance form of Kerala.

The South Indian culture is celebrated in the elaborate dance forms of South India: **Koodiyattam, Bharatanatyam, Oyilattam, Karakattam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Thirayattam Theyyam, Bhuta Kola, Ottamthullal, Oppana, Kerala Natanam, Mohiniaattam** and **Yakshagana**. Thirayattam is a Ritualistic Performing art of South Malabar region in Kerala state The Bharatanatyam is the celebration of the eternal universe through the celebration of the beauty of the body. This is done through its tenets of having a perfectly erect posture, a straight and pout curving stomach, a well rounded and proportionate body mass to the body structure, very long hair and curvaceous hips. These tenets bring to life the **philosophy** of **Natyashastra**, 'Angikam bhuvanam yasya' (The body is your world). This is elaborated in the *araimandi* posture, wherein the performer assumes a half sitting position with the knees turned sideways, with a very **erect posture**. In this fundamental posture of the Bharatanatyam dance, the distance between the head and the navel becomes equal to that between the earth and the navel. In a similar way the distance between the outstretched right arm to the outstretched left arm becomes equal to the distance between the head and the feet, thus representing the "Natyapurusha", the embodiment of life and creation

South Indian Architecture and paintings



The ruins at **Hampi** attest to the richness of **Vijayanagara** architecture.



• **Raja Ravi Varma's** paintings combined European techniques with a distinctly South Indian sensibility.

South India boasts of having two enchanting styles of rock architecture, the *pure Dravida* style of **Tamil Nadu** and the *Vesara* style (also called *Karnata Dravida* style) present in **Karnataka**. The inspirational **temple** sculptures of **Mahabalipuram, Tanjore, Hampi, Badami, Pattadakal, Aihole, Belur, Halebidu, Lakkundi, Shravanabelagola, Madurai** and the mural paintings of **Travancore** and Lepakshi temples, also stand as a testament to South Indian culture. The paintings of **Raja Ravi Varma** are considered classic renditions of many themes of South Indian life and mythology. There are several examples of Kerala Mural paintings in the **Mattancherry Palace** and the **Shiva kshetram at Ettamanoor**. South India is home, as of April 2006, to 5 of the 26 World Heritage-listed sites in India.

Sculptures and figurine



Sculptures at Hampi embodying human expression, Karnataka.

Sculptures became one of the finest medium of South Indian expression after the human form of dance. In this medium it was possible to etch the three-dimensional form in time. The traditional South Indian sculptor starts his sculpture of the divinities from the navel which is always represented unclothed by the sari. A koshta or grid of the sculpture would show the navel to be right at the centre of the sculpture, representing the source of the union of the finite body and the infinite universe. Sculptures adorn many of the temples around the complexes and also inside them. They are also depiction of dance steps of various stylizations and have served to preserve dance forms and revive it.

Literature and philosophy



Tiruvalluvar, the author of the Tirukkural.

South India has a literary tradition reaching back over two thousand years. The first known literature of South India are the poetic Sangams, which were written in Tamil around two to one and a half thousand years ago. The Kannada classic *Kavirajamarga*, written in 850 CE by King Amoghavarsha I, makes references to Kannada literature of King Durvinita in early sixth century CE. Tamil Buddhist commentators of the tenth century CE, *Nemrinatham* makes references to Kannada literature of fourth century CE. Distinct Malayalam and Telugu literary traditions developed in the following centuries. The artistic expressions of the South Indian people show their admiration of the magnificence of nature and its rhythms. Some of the works include *Silappadhikaram* by Ilango Adigal, *Tholkappiam* written by Tholkappiar, Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukural*, Kumaravyasa's *Karnata Bharata Katamanjari*, Pampa's *Vikramarjuna Vijaya*, *Andhra Maha Bharatamu* by the three poets namely Nannaya, Tikkana and Errana, *Shiva Sharana* by Basavanna and Akka Mahadevi's *Vachanas*. In South Indian literature and philosophy, women are considered very powerful. A married woman is regarded as auspicious, her shakti or feminine power, protects and empowers her husband and their children. Contemporary Kannada writers have received eight Jnanapith awards which is the highest for any Indian language.

Communities and traditions

The main spiritual traditions of South India include both Shaivite and Vaishnavite branches of Hinduism, although Buddhist and Jain philosophies had been influential several centuries earlier (recent studies suggest at least the Shaivite branch of Hinduism was present in Southern India before the arrival of Buddhism and Jainism as Ellalan a Tamil King who invaded Sri Lanka in the year 205 BCE is identified by Sinhalese Buddhists as a Shaivite). Shravanabelagola in Karnataka is a popular pilgrimage center for Jains. Christianity has flourished in coastal South India from the times of St. Thomas the Apostle who came to Kerala in 52 AD and established the Syrian Christian tradition today called Saint Thomas Christians or Nasranis.[30][31][32][33][34][35][36][37][38] There is a large Muslim community in South India, particularly in the Malabar Coast, which can trace its roots to the ancient maritime trade between Kerala and Omanis and other Arabs. Madras and Cochin is home to one of the oldest Cochin Jews and Paradesi Jews in the world who are supposed to have arrived in the Malabar coast during the time of King Solomon.[36][37][39][40] The oldest surviving Jewish synagogue in the Commonwealth of Nations is the Paradesi Synagogue in Kochi, Kerala.

The South Indian culture is celebrated in the elaborate dance forms of South India: Koodiyattam, Bharatanatyam, Oyilattam, Karakattam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Thirayattam, Theyyam, Bhuta Kola, Ottamthullal, Oppana, Kerala Natanam, Mohiniaattam and Yakshagana.

When it comes to south India temples, the state of Tamil Nadu dominates with its many ancient, towering Dravidian masterpieces. These temples, which display some of India's greatest temple architecture, are the backbone of Tamil culture

South India has a rich history in music, dance, culture, sculptures, clothing which were even spread across South East Asia. The iconic temple style prevalent in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala is also quite famous.

The Hindus in South India are followers of various Hindu branches such as Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism, Brahmanism and others. Hinduism was the state religion of most of the South Indian kingdoms.

South Indian Girls love to be simple, particularly in their dressing & attitude. And many (including myself) consider "Simplicity is the most beautiful ornament to wear" so they're considered more beautiful. South India was important for gold and other precious stones. It was also known for its spice trade. It had trade contacts with the Roman Empire and silk and spices were exported to Roman empire in return for Wine and other luxury products.

Tamil Nadu's net state domestic product is the second largest economy in India. Tamil Nadu is the second largest state economy after Maharashtra with a gross state domestic product of ₹2,134,395 crore (US\$300 billion). With GDP per capita of \$3,000 it ranks fourth among Indian states.

Historical South India has been referred to as Deccan, a prakritic derivative of an ancient term 'Dakshin' or Dakshinapatha. The term had geographical as well as geopolitical meaning and mentioned as early as Panini (500 BCE).
