

Western Aesthetic Styles in the Dravidian Visual Art Forms: A Study with Nallur Kailayanathar Pillaiyar Temple in Jaffna

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Abstract

Several ancient Hindu temples with buildings, sculptures and paintings in Dravidian Art Style are standing in the Jaffna Peninsula as art repositories. The ancient forms of several of the building structures of Hindu Temples had been destroyed due to several reasons such as, colonial rule, natural disasters and war environment. It is notable that, current structures of the Hindu temples are mostly found to be renovated structure. It could be observed here that during the periods when Sri Lanka was under the colonial rule of Portuguese, Dutch and the English, Western Art Forms had been absorbed into the traditional visual art forms of Hindu Temples. These could be identified in the visual Art forms expressed in the Dome, columns and wall paintings of Nallur Kailayanathar Pillaiyar Temple. The main objective of this study is to identify the influences of Western Art forms in the Dravidian Art forms and to bring them out through visual Art forms. This study is undertaken through historical approach, descriptive method, comparison method, observations and interviews. The dome structure found on top of the main sanctorum of this Temple is a structure built in accordance with the Hindu scripture. The matter of how sculptures with Western Cultural background came to be installed on the dome of this Temple, constructed in Dravidian tradition is analyzed here. The construction of columns of the *Artha Mandapam* of the Nallur Kailayanathar Pillaiyar Temple in Pallavar architectural style reveals Dravidan Art style. However all the columns that had been constructed in the *Maha Mandapam* are found to be constructed with designs of the western style? Particularly, columns of Roman era (Tuscan pillars) could be identified here. Epical stories had been depicted as wall paintings on the Northern and western walls of the Nallur Kailayanathar Pillaiyar Temple. The concept, body expression, costume and ornaments of the paintings found here exclusively reflect Hindu religion, While, the background scenes, handling of colors, three dimensional constructions, figure reliefs, and color flow had been expressed to reveal western style. A diversity comprising of both the Art Styles of traditional customs prevailing from ancient times and Western style could be marked, compared and identified through the dome, columns and wall paintings found here. This study is undertaken by analyzing through Visual Arts, several changes such as the Dravidian traditional customs being broken and new Art forms being absorbed due to reasons of effects of rule of foreigners, adopting the western aesthetic styles even after Sri Lanka becoming Independent.

Key words: Visual Arts – Dravidian Arts – Western Art Forms – Dome – columns