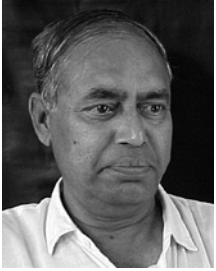


## About the Author



**S. Swaminathan**, was born in Pudukottai, Tamilnadu in 1940. After professionally qualifying in Mechanical Engineering, he worked in Indian Institute of Technology - Delhi for more than 30 years and retired as Professor of Mechanical Engineering,.

As a serious teacher he has attempted a number of experiments in teaching, like no-classroom teaching and holistic approach to engineering disciplines. In his view the thrust of the science and technology establishment should be towards helping the 'poorest of the poor'. His research and development activities were primarily in this direction. He is also a social activist and participates in socially relevant projects. He worked in Centre for Rural Development in IIT Madras, Bharath Gyan Vigyan Samithy, Delhi as the National Coordinator for watershed development and Integrated Rural Technology Centre, Palakkad, Kerala.

Holding to his belief that technology must be human-centred and that there exists a cultural route to development, he even taught a course titled 'Art and Technology' at Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi along with a colleague of his.

Realising that Indian youth have an inadequate understanding of our heritage, and consequently lack a sense of identity, Prof Swaminathan decided to acquaint the students of IIT Delhi with various aspects of our culture. Not being an expert in the field, he found, may sometimes be an advantage, as audience are not put off by jargon, and interact with the speaker in an uninhibited manner. The topics included Indian music, Sanskrit, ancient Tamil literature, Tamil prosody, development of scripts, Gandhian philosophy, etc.

He has made a very detailed study of Ajanta paintings. His lectures on Ajanta are especially popular. He has also prepared a folio on Ajanta Paintings containing some 300 leaves that can be used as exhibition panels also. IIT Delhi has published a CD-ROM making use of his expertise.

He possesses a huge collection of articles, pictures, political cartoons etc. on a host of topics. Collected over 35 years, these are arranged in a number of albums. His Email Id is [sswami@gmail.com](mailto:sswami@gmail.com).



# Lalitankura Pallava Griham

Pallava treasure on the Tiruchirappalli Rockfort

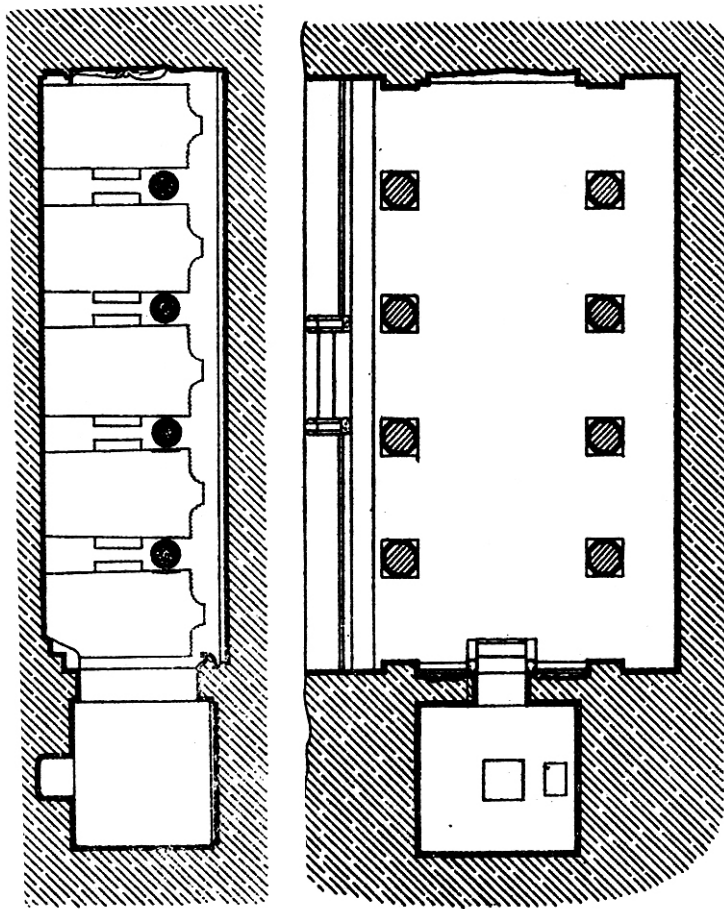


- S. Swaminathan



## Annexure IV

Lalitankura Elevation and Plan view



# Lalitankura Pallava Griham

A neglected Pallava treasure on the  
Tiruchirappalli Rockfort



There are two iconographic compositions which owe considerably to the Pallava-s: the Somaskanda and the Gangadhara. Perhaps the former is a special Pallava conception. Both these have captivated artists through the ages.

The earliest, (or is it one among the earliest?), is Mahendra Pallava's Gangadhara in the cave temple in the Rockfort complex at Tiruchirappalli. The popular shrines of Tayumanavar and of the Uchchipillaiyar are much fancied by the devout and only an occasional art-buff enters the precincts of the cave temple that houses this Siva composition. Then there are pilgrims who rest their tired limbs on their way back from the strenuous climb atop, and the noisy hangers on who crowd every place of religious or cultural fame. The cave temple deserves better.

It is not the cave temple alone that deserves better. There are at least two more ancient sites that should have been in the itinerary of the public. One is an ancient site, older to the Pallava cave by about 500 years. It is a cavern, a holy resort of Jain ascetics, To attest this, we have stone-beds where the holy men practised severe austerities and a number of inscriptions, the earliest being in Late Tamil Brahmi of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Unfortunately this is lost, again due to our negligence. Three inscriptions in Early Vattezhuttu have been found and these are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. All these mention the name of the patrons of the Jaina ascetics.

At a lower level is another cave temple. This was excavated by the Pandya-s perhaps a century later to the Pallava one above. A family lives in the precincts, unhelpful enough to drive away straying visitors. I suggest that the Trichy-wallahs pay a visit to this temple also, as this is believed to have been designed following the Hindu Shanmatha doctrine of Adi Sankara. (I wish some God-person attributes some divine powers to the gods hiding in these caves. Perhaps this is the only way today to make people ‘honour’ these divinities!)

## Importance of the Temple

First let me state in brief why the Pallava cave temple is important. Firstly, it is one among the earliest cave temples of the Tamil country. It is believed that the Pallava-s introduced excavating hard rock in the south. May be the Pandya-s were doing this around the same time. At least Mahendra Pallavan boasts so in his Mandagappattu cave shrine. The Tiruchy cave is the southern most cave of the Pallava-s. How come he came all the way to Tiruchy to excavate a cave temple in an inaccessible hill, we don’t know. Was it under his rule at that time, I am not clear. But here we have one which is important in the art and religious history of India. We must try to imagine how this hill would have looked with out the Tayumanavar Koil, Uchichi-p-pillaiyar Koil and all the sundry shrines, and then we may wonder hiw Mahendra chose the site at a height of 200 feet and how his artisan managed the excavation. Like the other Pallava monuments this cave temple also holds some puzzles.

## The Temple

The cave temple, a typical early Pallava style, is dedicated to Siva. Mahendra calls the shrine Lalitankura-pallavesvara-griham. Lalitankura is one among the many titles of Mahendra, and it means ‘charming-scion’. This name is found on the girder connecting the two inner pillars of the cave temple. The sculptural content includes two Pallava dvara-pala-s guarding the now-empty garbha-griham and the famous Gangadhara panel in bold relief. This panel is an exquisite composition.

## Stanza 8

शिलाक्षरेण जनिता सत्यसन्धस्य भौतिकी ।

शिलाक्षरेण जनिता सत्यसन्धस्य भौतिकी ।

śīlaakshareNa-janita-satyasandhasyaa-bhautikee

शिलाक्षरेण जनिता सत्यसन्धस्य भौतिकी ।

Stone-inscription-out-of created-has-been satyasandha’s bodily

मूर्तिः कीर्तिमयीञ्चास्य कृता तेनैव शाश्वती ॥8॥

மூர்த்தி: கீர்த்திமயிஞ்சாஸ்யகருதாதேநைவசாசுவதி (8)

Moorthih keertimayeeñchaasya-kRtaa-tenaiva-śāaśvatee

मूर्तिः कीर्तिमयीञ् च अस्य कृता तेनैव शाश्वती ॥8॥

Image fame-full-of and his made-has-been it(stone)-by eternal

*This bodily image [of Satyasandha (God/king)] was created out of the stone inscription [silaksharena] of Satyasandha [the poet-king]. By the same imperishable character, an embodiment of His/his fame was made imperishable.*

## Note on Transliteration:

Into Tamil: I have followed the traditional method of using subscripts for hard consonants. Thus we have क, क<sub>2</sub> क<sub>3</sub> and क<sub>4</sub> for क, ख, ग and घ respectively. For श I have used श (श underlined) and for ऋ I have used ठ (ठ in the subscript), both in the initial and medial positions. Thus क<sub>ॠ</sub> and ऋ<sub>ॠ</sub> stand for कृ and चृ respectively.

Into Roman: I have generally followed the Kyoto-Harvard method for easy readability. I have also deviated in certain respects, which would be self evident. I have not given any diacritical mark for ङ.

गुणभर-नामनि राजन्यनेन लिङ्गेन लिङ्गिनि ज्ञानम् ।

guNabhara-named king-this-by image-by image-having-become-embodied-in  
faith

प्रथताञ्चिरायलोके विपक्षवृत्तेः परावृत्तम् ॥6॥

ப்ரததாஞ்சிராயலோகேவிபக்ஷவருத்தே: பராவருத்தம் (6)  
prathataañchiraayaloke-vipakshavRtteh paraavRtam .6.

प्रथताञ्च चिराय लोके विपक्ष वृत्तेः परावृत्तम् ॥6॥

Renowned-be for-long the world enemy circle-from brought-back

*As the king called Gunabhara has become embodied in this image [lingini=Kaveridhara/Gangadhara], let the Faith, which has been brought back from the encircling opposition, be forever spread by this same image [lingena] throughout the world!*

## Stanza 7

चोळविषयस्य शैलोमौलिरिवायं महामणिरिवास्य ।

சோளவிஷயஸ்யஹைலோமௌலிரிவாயம்மஹாமணிரிவாஸ்ய.  
choLvishayasya-śailo-maulirivaayam-mahamaNirivaasya

चोळ विषयस्य शैलो मौलिर् इवायं महा मणिर् इवास्य ।

Chola province-of mountain diadem like-this great jewel like-his

हरगृहमेतज्ज्योतिस्तदीयमिव शांकरं ज्योतिः ॥7॥

ஹரகூஹேமேதஜ்ஜோதிஸ்ததீயமிவசாங்கரம்ஜ்யோதி: (7)  
haragRhametajjotistadeeyamiva śaamkaram-jyotih .7.

हरगृहम् एत ज्योतिस् तदीयम् इव शांकरं ज्योतिः ॥7॥

Hara-abode this (his Chola province) splendour hi (crest jewel's) like  
Sankara's splendour

*This mountain is like the diadem of his [Mahendra's] Chola province, this abode of Hara his (diadem's) chief jewel, and the splendor of Sankara [Gangadhara] is, as it were, his [Mahendra's/Kaveridhara's crest-jewel's] splendor.*

It is a pity that all of us miss it. I shall be discussing about it in greater detail alter.

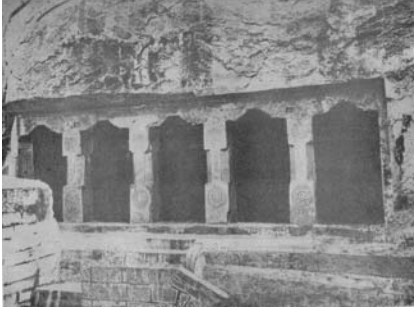
## Inscriptions

That the cave contains some important inscriptions is another special feature. Some of them are the routine listing of the innumerable titles (*biruda*-s) of Mahendra Pallava, a disease that infects our rulers of the past and the present. There are 80 of them engraved in this shrine, mostly on the pillars. (Mahendra can boast of almost 130 titles! His great-grand son, Rajasimha, had even more, about 250!) But a poem consisting of eight couplets, most likely composed by the king himself, not only describes the Gangadhra panel that it encloses, but also presents a puzzle, an example of *dhvani* normally met with in Sanskrit poetry, here for the first time in a sculpture, to be handled again by his son in the Great Penance panel in Mahabalipuram.

## Pallava Grantha script

I may take this opportunity to mention some thing about the script in which the inscriptions are written. The language of the couplets is Sanskrit, and they are written in the script called Grantha, or more appropriately, Pallava Grantha, giving credit to the inventors. It is a script used in the Tamil country to write Sanskrit. It was so till the last generation. It is also the one from which developed the script for Malayalam, and, hold your breadth, script for most all the languages of the East: Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Thai, Laos, Khmer, Combodia, Vietnam etc. This happened through the political and cultural conquest of the East by the Indian rulers, starting with the Pallava-s.

## General description of the Temple



To start with I will give a general description of the cave temple. When you cross the gate that takes you to the Uchchi-p-pillaiyar temple, you find on the left the cave temple, called by a mouthful name, Lalitangura Pallavesvar Griham. What you see is a cave supported by four pillars with two half pillars

(technically called pilasters) on each end. (Figure on the left) The façade looks rather simple. The pillars are plain, square in cross section at the bottom and top, but eight-sided in the middle. This is typical of early Pallava-s. The pillars become more and more sophisticated, and to some extent the design of the pillars gives clue to the chronology of the caves themselves. There are circular low-reliefs on all the four sides of the pillars. They are beautiful geometrical shapes, worth a close look. The brackets above the pillars are again plain. Titles of King Mahendra are inscribed on the faces of these pillars, mostly in Pallava Grantha and a few in the Tamil script.

Beyond the pillars is a *mandapa* (hall), and in the rear the hall is a series of four pillars very similar to the ones in the front. The medallions on the faces of these pillars are again worth a few minutes. To your right, that is, on the eastern wall of the cave, is the garbha-griham (sanctum).

## Garbha-griham

Many of the features of the garbha-griham proclaim its Pallava origin. First let us look at the *dvaral-pala*-s (gate-keepers) that guard the shrine. One on each side, they are carved in bold-relief. They are similar in certain respects. Both are in semi-profile, two-armed turned towards the shrine-entrance, standing with one leg bent and raised up and the other planted firmly on the ground, carry a massive club, their palms resting on it, etc. When you find time you may look at the sacred-thread they

देवोवीक्ष्यनदिप्रियः प्रियगुणामप्येषरज्येदिति ।

தேவோவீக்ஷ்யநதி3ப்ரிய: ப்ரியகு3ணாமப்யேஷரஜ்யேதி3தி.  
Devoveekshya nadipriyah priyaguNaamapyesha raajyediti

देवो वीक्ष्य नदिप्रियः प्रिय गुणाम् अपि एष रज्येद् इति ।

the-God on-seeing river-lover pleasing qualities-possessor also this desiring thus.

साशंकागिरिकन्यकापितृकुलंहित्वेहमन्येगिरौ

ஸாசும் காகி3ரிகன்யகாபித3குலம்ஹித்வேஹமந்யேகி3ரௌ  
saaśamkaagirikanyakaapitRkulamhitvehamanyegirau

साशंका गिरिकन्यका पितृकुलं हित्वेह मन्ये गिरौ

with-suspicion mountain-daughter of-father's-family having-left-here I-guess mountain-on

नित्यन्तिष्ठतिपल्लवस्यदयितामेतंब्रुवाणानदीम् ॥5॥

நித்யந்திஷ்ட2திபல்லவஸ்யத3யிதாமேதம்ப்3ரு வானாநதீ3ம் (5)  
nityantishThati pallavasya dayitametambruvaaNaanadeem.5.

नित्यन् तिष्ठति पल्लवस्य दयिताम् एतं ब्रुवाणा नदीम् ॥5॥

forever stations (Herself) Pallava's wife this calling river

*Suspecting that the God [Siva], who is fond of rivers, on seeing the Kaveri, whose waters please the eye, who wears a garland of gardens, and who possesses attractive qualities, might fall in love with her also, the 'Daughter of the Mountain' [Ganga] has left her father's family to reside, I reckon, permanently here on this mountain, calling this river [Kaveri] the beloved wife of the Pallava (king).*

## Stanza 6

गुणभरनामनिराजन्यनेनलिङ्गेनलिङ्गिनिज्ञानम् ।

கு3ணப4ரநாமநிராஜந்யநேநலிங்கே3நலிங்கி3நிஜ்ஞாநம்.  
guNabhara-naamani-raajanyanena-lingena-lingini-jñāanam

शैलीं हरस्य तनुमप्रतिमामानेन ।

சைலீம்ஹரஸ்யதநுமப்ரதி மாமநேந.

śaileem harasya tanumapratimaamanena.

शैलीं हरस्य तनुम् अप्रतिमाम् अनेन ।

stone Hara's body incomparable him-by.

कृत्वा शिवं शिरसि धारतात्म संस्थमुच्चैः

கருத்வாசிவம்சிரஸிதா4ரதாத்ம ஸம்ஸ்த2முசை:

kRtvaa śivam śirasi dhaarataatma samsthamuchchaih

कृत्वा शिवं शिरसि धारतात्म संस्थम् उच्चैः

made-having Siva head-on holder-by-heart firmly-fixed-in lofty

शिरस्त्वमचलस्य कृतं कृतार्थम् ॥4॥

சிரஸ்த்வமசலஸ்யகருதம்கருதார்த்த2ம் (4)

śirastvamachalasya kRtam kRtaartham. 4 .

शिरस्त्वम् अचलस्य कृतं कृतार्थम् ॥4॥

mindedness mountain's made-was reality.

*By first raising Siva, the God within (his) heart, to his head, an incomparable stone figure of Hara [Siva] was then, with pleasure, raised to the top of the mountain by this Purushottama [Mahendra]. And by thus himself first bearing, and then by making the mountain bear, God immanent, on top, the 'Exaltedness' of the 'Immovable One' [acalasya] was made a concrete reality by him.*

*The inscription continues on the southern pilaster:*

Stanza 5

कावीरीनयनाभिरामसलिलामाराममालाधराम्

காவீரீநநயநாபி4ராமஸலிலாமாராமமாலாத4ராம்

Kaaveereen-nayanaabhiraama-salilaamamaalaadharaam

कावीरीन् नयनाभिराम सलिलाम् आराम्-मालाधराम्

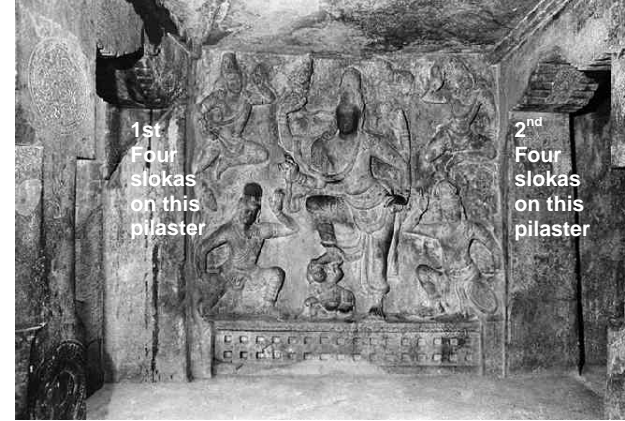
Kaveri eye-pleasing water-possessor garden-garland-bearer



are wearing, their dress and ornaments. These would reflect the contemporary fashion.

The *garbha-griham* is almost a cube of about 9-foot each side. There are two pits, one, we can guess, is for the lingam to be installed. But what about the other? Was lingam the object of worship in the Pallava cave temples is the question that is being debated by pundits. I shall also be touching upon this later.

## Gangadhara Relief Sculpture



Now let us look at the western wall, the main object of our study. Here is the celebrated

Gangadhara panel. This is a large composition. In the center is Siva as Gangadhara with attendant figures on the sides and top.

Let us start with the hero. The four-armed Siva is standing with His left leg planted firmly on the ground. His right foot is raised and is held up by the head and an arm of a crouching Siva-gaNa below. Siva's upper right arm holds a strand of His tresses into which Ganga is descending. Ganga is shown in the human form, a small female figure with both the hands in the 'namaste' posture.

The lower right hand of Siva holds the tail of a serpent with its hood raised up. His upper left holds an *akshara-maala* and the lower one rests

on His hip. These are conventional postures. Now let us look at the make up. His sacred-thread is *vastra-yajnopaveeta*, namely, made of cloth. The ornaments can be listed: coiled *valaya-s* around the wrists, elaborate *keyoora-s* above His elbows, *makara-kunDala-s* on both ears, large enough to rest on His shoulders, a broad necklace, an *udara-bandha* round His belly.

Siva's head-dress is an elaborate *jaTaa-makuTa*, a rather unusual one. It is decorated on the front and held in position by a coronet. Rest of the *jaTaa* is coiled on the top. On the top right side is the characteristic moon and at the bottom, but on the left side is a skull.

Behind the head is the *siraschakra*.

Let us look at the dress. His *veshTi*, reaching up to both the ankles with the central fan-like pleat of the *kachcha* hanging between legs, is worn the way it is done even today, a example of continuity in tradition. But the artists have done this excellently, every fold, clear and crisp. Round His waist He wears a *kaTi-bandha*. Another *uttareeya* hangs loose in a loop in front and has tassels on either side. Isn't this a remarkable composition?

Now let us follow the other actors in this scene. I have mentioned the *gaNa* whose head and palm are supporting the right leg of the Lord. The crouching *gaNa*, identified with Kumbhodara, holds a serpent on his right hand. On the other side, corresponding to the descending Ganga is found an animal, not easily distinguishable. Because of the prominent hump it could be a bull. Is it taking the place of *vRshabha-dhvaja*?

On either side on the top are two flying *vidya-dhara-s*. Below, kneeling on either side of Siva, are two identical figures. All these four figures are attired very similar to the Lord, with the lower pair being somewhat less ornamented. Their one arm raised in adoration and the other on the hip. Who could these people, in the royal dress in Siva's camp? They look out of place in the *Shambo-ki-baraat*! We shall come back to this later. Behind the two kneeling figures are two identical rishis, identified

विभूतिञ् चोळानां कथम् अहम् अवेक्षे य विपुलां  
wealth Chozhas-of how I see-well which abundant

---

नदींवाकावीरीमवनिभवनावस्थित इति ।

நதீம்வாகாவீரீமவநிப4வநாவ ஸ்தி2த இதி.

nadeem vaa kaaveereemavanibhavanaavasthita iti.

नदीं वा कावीरीम् अवनि भवनावस्थित इति ।

river and Kaveri earth abode-remaining thus.

---

हरेणोक्तः प्रीत्याविभुरदिशदभ्रंलिहमिदम्

ஹரேணோக்த:ப்ரீத்யாவிபுரதி3ஈ தப்4ரம்லிஹமித3ம்

hareNoktah preetya vibhuradiśadabhramlihamidam

हरेणोक्तः प्रीत्या विभुर् अदिशद् अभ्रं लिहं इदम्

Hara-by-asked-having-been affection-with the-king ordered cloud licking this

---

मनुप्रख्ये [राज्ये] गिरिभवनमस्मैगुणभरः ॥3॥

மநுப்ரக்2யே [ராஜ்யே]கிரிப4வந மஸ்மைகு3ணப4ர: (3)

Manuprakhye [raajye]-giribhavanmasmai-guNabharah. 3.

मनुप्रख्ये [राज्ये] गिरि भवनम् अस्मै गुणभरः ॥3॥

Manu-famous [country-in] mountain-abode Him-for Gunabhara.

*Having affectionately been asked by Hara [Siva], 'How can I, while remaining in an earthly abode, see the abundant wealth of the Cholas and the river Kaveri?', this Supreme Ruler, Gunabhara, the fame of whose empire rivals that of Manu, ordered for Him [Siva] this sky-scraper ['cloud-licking'] mountain-abode.*

---

#### Stanza 4

निर्मर्षापितामिति मुदा पुरुषोत्तमेन

நிர்ம்மாபிதாமிதிமுதா3புருஷோத்தமேந

nirmaapitaamiti mudaa prishottamena

निर्मर्षापिताम् इति मुदा पुरुषोत्तमेन

made-was thus pleasure-with Purushottama-by

---



स्थाणुः स्वयञ्च सह तेन जगत्सु जातः ॥1 ॥

fixed himself-also together Him-with world-in become-has

---

When King Gunabhara [Mahendra] established a stone figure [the relief image of Siva-Gangadhara] in the wonderful stone abode on top of the King of Mountains [the Rock-Fort Hill], this ruler, (entitled) 'Vidhi' [the Creator], made Sthanu [Siva] true to His name ['sthau': stationary / firmly fixed] and became himself sthanu [fixed, immortal] together with Him, on earth.

Stanza 2

गृहमकृतशत्रुमल्लोगिरीन्द्रकन्यापतेर्गिरावस्मि ।

க்ருஹமகருத-சத்ருமல்லோ-கி3ரீந்த்3ர-கந்யா-பதேர்க்3கி3ராவஸ்மிம்  
gRhamakRta-śatrumallo-gireendra-kanyaa-paterggiraavasmim

गृहम्-अकृत शत्रुमल्लो गिरीन्द्र कन्या पतेर्-ग् गिराव् अस्मिम् ।

abode-made śatrumalla mountain-king daughter-of husband's mountain-on  
this

---

गिरिशस्यगिरिशसंज्ञामन्वर्थीकर्तुमर्थापतिः॥2 ॥

கி3ரிசுஸ்ய-கி3ரிசு-ஸம்ஜ்ஞாமந்வர்த்தீ2-கர்துமர்த்தா2பதி: (2)  
Giriśasya-giriśa-sajñāamanvartthee-kartumartthaapatih.

गिरिशस्य गिरिश संज्ञाम् अन्वर्थी कर्तुम् अर्थापतिः॥2 ॥

giriśa's mountain-dweller name meaningful to-make wealth-lord (2).

---

The lord of wealth, Satrumalla [Mahendra], made on this mountain an abode for the husband [Siva] of the 'Daughter of the King of Mountains' [Ganga], so that the meaning of His [Siva's] title 'Girisa' (i.e., 'Mountain Dweller') would be made literally manifest.

---

Stanza 3

विभूतिञ्चोळानांकथमहमवेक्षेयविपुलां

விபூ4திஞ்சோளாநாம்-கத2மஹமவேசேஷ்ய-விபுலாம்  
vibhootimñchoLaanaam-kathamahamaveksheya-vipulaam

by their huge jaTa-s and bearded face. Their inner hands too are raised in veneration.

Now let us take a few steps backwards so that we can get a full picture of the panel in order to appreciate the beauty of the composition. This bas-relief is an outstanding composition. It is also the earliest composition in the Tamil country. That the artist could achieve aesthetic excellence on their very first attempt is astounding. This must have inspired his illustrious son, Narasimha Varma, to attempt the world's first open-air bas-relief in Mahabalipuram. I may mention that Mamalla's unique contributions to the world of art are two: the monoliths and open-air reliefs. The former had inspired quite a few, including the incomparable Kailasanatha Temple in Ellora, but none attempted the open-air reliefs there after!

The whole composition is an illustration of total balance. It exudes the Pallava grace, every square inch of it. Every character is perfectly modelled. There is no overcrowding, no dramatisation. It is beauty in simplicity. Worthy of contemplation, so savour the scene as best as you can. I don't want to say any thing more, it would speak for itself. (Proverb)

On either side of the panel are two half-pillars (pilasters, if you are too technical) on which is written 8 couplets, four on each side, in Sanskrit in the Pallava Grantha script. I have mentioned before this inscription is important. It is important for variety of reasons. First it is a great poetry composed by the king himself. We may keep in mind that Mahendra Pallava was an all-rounder. His political achievements are legendary. He also initiated excavating cave temples in hard rock in the south. He wrote two satirical plays, Mattavilasam and Bhagavatajjukam. He was also a great painter/artist: chitra-k-kaara-p-puli is one of his titles (self-given!).

The inscription caught the attention of the early epigraphists and the meaning of the epigraph is debated even now. The first to translate was E Hultzsch in 1890 and his reading is more or less followed even today

by most epigraphists. May his tribe increase! We should salute these pioneers. But I am going to follow the interpretation of Miachael Lockwood and his multi-disciplinary team from madras Christian College. This is because their interpretation appeals to me. (You may wish to follow Hultzsich if you desire. After all we live in a democracy.)

I propose to give a gist of the inscription first and then point out the differences with the interpretation of Hultzsich. To help you to follow the inscription at the site I am including the inscription, its transliteration and translation as an appendix.

*The first sloka states that King Mahendra established a stone figure of Siva in the cave temple of on the top of this hill in his own image, and became 'immortal', like the God, on the earth.*

*The second stanza explains why Mahendra chose a hill. He says that he chose the hill to justify Siva's name as Girisa (mountain-dweller).*

*The third verse purports to explain the circumstances and the manner of choice of this hill. Mahendra says that when proposed an earthly abode, the God wondered how he can remain on the earth without seeing the fertile country of the Chozhas and the river Kaveri. Then the king chose the spot atop this Tiruchy hill facing the river.*

*The fourth describes how the temple became a reality. Here there is an identification of God and the king. Later you may read the verse as well as the translation given in the annexure to appreciate the import.*

*The literary composition continues on the right pilaster. In this fifth one the king is mischievous. Ganga, the daughter of Himavan, now fearing that the Lord may become infatuated with the river Kaveri, let Her mountain-dwelling to reside here along with the Lord. Here Lockwood et al differ from the popular conception. Hultzsich read this stanza as Parvati feeling worried came to reside with Her husband. I will talk about this a little later.*

*The sixth verse says that he (Mahendra) himself has become embodied in the image of Gangadhara. The whole poetry is supposed to be full of*

## Annexure III

### Lalitankura Pallava-griham, Rockfort, Tiruchirappali

Transliteration and translation of  
Mahendra Pallava's inscriptional poem  
on the pilasters on either side of Gangadhara panel

The stanzas are transliterated into Devanagari, Tamil and Roman script; they are also translated word for word and for each stanza

On the northern pilaster

Stanza 1

शैलेन्द्रमूर्धनिशिलाभवनेविचित्रे

ஹைலேந்த்3ர-மூர்த4நி-சிலா-ப4வநே-விசித்ரே

Śailendra-moordhani-silaa-bhavane-vichitre

शैलेन्द्र मूर्धनि शिला भवने विचित्रे

Mountain-king top-of-on stone abode-in wonderful-in

शैलिनन्तनुगुणभरोनृपतिर्निधाय ।

ஹைலிந்-தநும்-கு3ணப4ரோ-நஃபதிர்-ந்-நிதா4ய

śailin-tanum-guNabhara-n-nRpatir-n-nidhaaya

शैलिन्-तनु गुणभरो नृपतिर् न् निधाय ।

Stone-body Gunabhara king established-having

स्थाणुव्यधत्तविधिरेषयथार्थासंज्ञां

ஸ்தா2ணும்-வ்யத4த்த-விதி4ரேஷ-யதா2ர்தா2-ஸம்ஜ்ஞாம்

sthaaNum-vyadatta-vidhiresha-yatharthaa-samjñāam

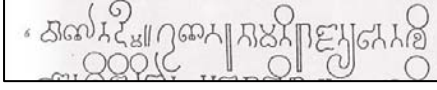
स्थाणुं व्यधत्त विधिरेष यथार्था संज्ञां

sthaaNu made creator-this meaning-true-to name

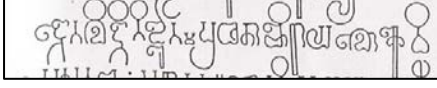
स्थाणुः स्वयञ्चसहतेनजगत्सुजातः ॥1 ॥

ஸ்தா2ணு:-'ஸ்வயஞ்ச-ஸஹ-தேந-ஜக3த்ஸு-ஜாத: (1)

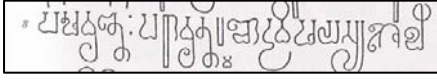
sthaaNuh-svayañcha-saha-tena-jagatsu-jaatah. (1)



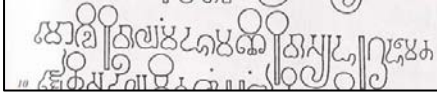
वाणा नदीम् ॥5॥ गुणभरनामनि राजन्यनेन लि  
 வாணாநதீம் (5) குணப4ரநாமநிராஜந்ய  
 நேநலி



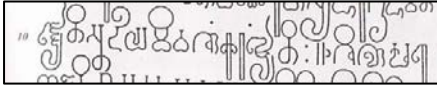
इणो लिङ्गिनि ज्ञानम् । प्रथताञ्चिराय लोके वि  
 ங்கே3நலிங்கி3நிஜ்ஞாநம்.  
 ப்ரத2தாஞ்சிராயலோகேவி



पक्षवृत्तेः परावृत्तम् ॥6॥ चोळविषयस्य शैलो  
 பசஷ்வருத்தே: பராவருத்தம் (6)  
 சோளவிஷயஸ்யஹைலோ



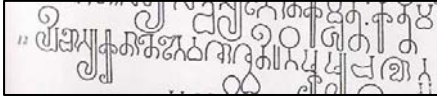
मौलिरिवायं महामणिरिवास्य । हरगृहमेत  
 மௌலிரிவாயம்மஹாமணிரிவாஸ்ய.  
 ஹரகரு3ஹமேத



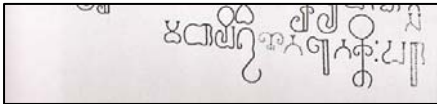
जोतिस्तदीयमिव शांकरं ज्योतिः ॥7॥ शिलाक्षरे  
 ஜ்ஜோதிஸ்ததீ3யமிவசாங்கரம்ஜ்யோதி: (7)  
 திலாசஷரே



ण जनिता सत्यसन्धस्य भौतिकी । मूर्तिः कीर्त्तिम  
 ணஜநிதாஸத்யஸந்த4ஸ்யபௌ4திகீ. மூர்த்தி:  
 கீர்த்திம



यीञ्चास्य कृता तेनैव शाश्वती ॥8॥  
 निष्कृष्याचला स  
 யீஞ்சாஸ்யகருதாதேநைவசாச்வதீ (8)  
 நிஷ்கருஷ்யாசலாஸ



मधायि गुणभरे भक्तिः परा...  
 மதா4யிகு3ணப4ரேப4க்தி: பரா...

double-meaning, more than one meaning. Sanskrit literature is famous for this, called Dhvani. I will explain what this means slightly later.

The next verse says that the mountain was the crest-jewel of Mahendra's Chozha province, this abode of Siva its chief jewel.

This last one is important. It says that through this stone-Siva, a physical embodiment of Satyasandha (a title of Mahendra) was created, and through this form, his fame was made eternal. By the way the traditional understanding, that is, of Hultzsch and his followers, differs from this.

I have included the poem along with its translation in the annexure.

## Dhvani in Sculpture

I mentioned before that the poem and the sculpture are examples of *dhvani*, an essential ingredient of Sanskrit poetry. Also mentioned was that Mahendra was a great literary figure. His being a *sakala-kala-vallavan* resulted in the *dhvani* being used in sculpture. And it is the first time in history. His son contributes another first in his magnum opus, in the Great Penance composition in Mahabalipuram, that is *dvi-samdhaana-kaavya* (double-entendre poem, that is, a two-in-one poem). At least some think so.

What is *dhvani*? Poetry may possess two levels of meaning: direct meaning and a suggested meaning. This suggested meaning that appeals to an aesthete is really the soul of poetry. This feature is called *dhvani*. Thus the 8-stanza poem has both direct and suggested meanings. So the sculpture too.

The poem directly refers to Siva as Gangadhara. The suggested meaning could be Mahendra. Now let us look at closely. You may recall that Mahendra specifically says that the Lord is made in his image. (What a vain-glory!) So in the suggested meaning we may start with the hero being the Pallava king himself. But what about the other characters in the scene. Normally one finds a few divine characters, like Brahma,

Vishnu, Narada etc. In addition there would also be a few rishis and a few *bhoota-gaNa*-s in attendance. In fact, the *darbar* of Siva has earned the sobriquet *Shambu-ki-barat* ('Shambu's-friends-and-relatives-in-His-wedding-entourage') because of its motley composition! We have a *gaNa*, four princely characters who can be taken for some divinities though unidentified and two rishis in the background. We have an animal – we couldn't decide whether it is a bull or a dog – above Siva's upper left hand. A *rishabha* can be taken as appropriate, but if it is a dog, what is it doing in this place? By the way dog is found in the Gangadhara panel in another Pallava creation, the Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram, and again in the Kailasanatha Temple in Ellora, a Rashtrakuta miracle. Various theories float around, and it looks these are not convincing even to the floaters.

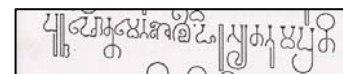
We shall then listen to Lockwood on the suggested meaning. The panel is a celebration of Mahendra also. In the centre stands the Emperor majestically. The four princely figures are the feudatories of the Pallava-s. Two of the dynasties are represented here. The western Ganga, identified by the namaste-ing Ganga seen on the left and the Kadamba-s identified by the dog on the right. But how do you connect the Kadamba-s with dog? It happened this way. Lockwood, while going through old journals on Indian history, found that the Kadamba-s used dog-emblem in their copper-plate grants"! While there is no doubt that Mahendra Pallava was very creative, we now must accept that Lockwood is also very imaginative!

Let me now point out the contributing factors to this double meaning. The most important are the extraordinary and numerous titles of Mahendra. I mentioned that he assumed more than 130 titles for himself. Many of them are also the names of Lord Siva. The king skillfully weaves these names into his poem to effect this double entendre. GuNabhara (I and VI slokas), Purushottama (IV sloka) and Satya-sandhaa (VIII sloka). Further he has skillfully employed words which could be understood in more than one way. For example, the mountain itself may mean the Himalayas or our own Tiruchy rock, it may be Parvati or Ganga by daughter of mountain (*gireendra-kanya*)



मस्मै गुणभरः ॥3॥ निर्मापितामितिमुदा

மஸ்மைகுணப4ர: (3) நிர்ம்மாபிதாமிதிமுதா3



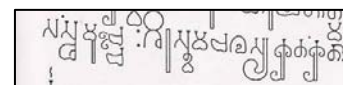
पुरुषोत्तमेनशैलींहरस्यतनुमप्रति

புருஷோத்தமேநஹசலீம்ஹரஸ்யதநுமப்ரதி



मामनेन । कृत्वाशिवंशिरसिधारतात्म

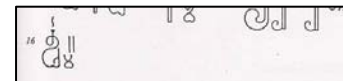
மாமநேந. கருத்வாசிவம்சிரஸிதா4ரதாத்ம்



संस्थमुच्चैः शिरस्त्वमचलस्यकृतंकृता

ஸம்ஸ்த2முசை: சிரஸ்த்வமசலஸ்யகருதம்கருதா

र्थम् ॥4॥



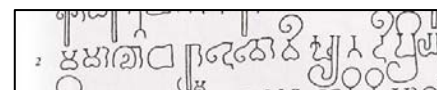
ர்த்த2ம் (4)

.... and continues on the southern pilaster



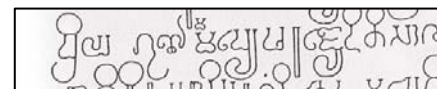
कावीरीन्नयनाभिरामसलिलामारा

காவீரீந்நயநாபி4ராமஸலிலாமாரா



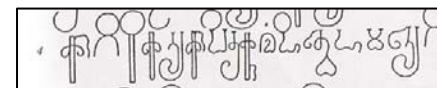
ममालाधराम्देवोवीक्ष्य नदिप्रियः

மமாலாத4ராம்தே3வோவீக்ஷ்யநதி3ப்ரிய:



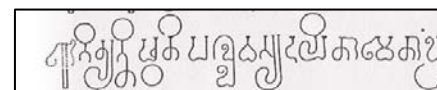
प्रियगुणामप्येष रज्येदिति । साशं

ப்ரியகு3ணாமப்பேயஷரஜ்யேதி3தி. ஸாசம்



का गिरिकन्यका पितृकुलं हिवेहमन्ये गि

காகி3ரிகன்யகாபிதருகுலம்ஹித்வேஹமந்யே  
கி3



रौ नित्यन्तिष्ठति पल्लवस्य दयितामेतं ब्रु

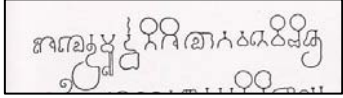
ரௌநித்யந்திஷ்ட2திபல்லவஸ்யத3யிதாமேத

ம்ப்3ரு

## Annexure II

**Lalitankura Pallava-griham, Rockfort, Tiruchirappali**  
Facsimile of Mahendra Pallava's inscriptional poem  
on the pilasters on either side of the Gangadhara panel

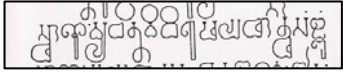
*The inscription begins on the northern pilaster:*



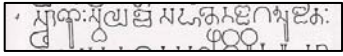
சேலேந்திரமூர்த்தி நிஷிலாபவநேவிசு  
சைலேந்திரமூர்த்தி நிஷிலாபவநேவிசு



சேலிந்திரமூர்த்தி நிஷிலாபவநேவிசு  
சைலிந்திரமூர்த்தி நிஷிலாபவநேவிசு



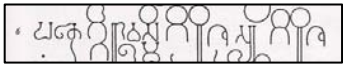
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா



ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா



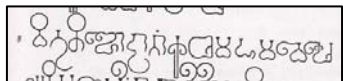
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா



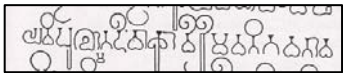
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா



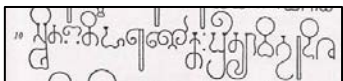
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா



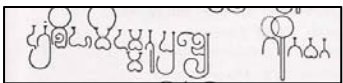
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா



ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
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ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா  
ஸ்தாந்ஸம்வயதத்தவிதி4ரேஷயதா2ர்தா2ஸம்ஜ்ஞா

etc. To add to the poetic *alankaram* words have been used adroitly. For example, *sthanu* is used in two meanings, one to refer to the God himself and the other to mean fixed, immortal, that this, the king has this become 'immortal'.

The Pallava-s, as a dynasty, seemed to enjoy teasing. Many of the Pallava monuments are puzzles. Some look to be intentionally made by the Pallava-s themselves. There are so many, particularly connected with the monuments in Mahabalipuram. Here the puzzle is: 'Where is situated the God mentioned in the poem?'

## Lockwood's new interpretation

Now let us look at two different solutions to the puzzle. As for as this Gangadhara panel Hultsch translated the word '*nidhaaya*' as 'placed'. He also took *gireendra-kanya* to mean Parvati. So he, and the subsequent people, looked for an anthropomorphic (sorry for art-ese, it simply means 'human-like') idol of Siva and Parvati, naturally, in the *garbha-griham*. To add to the confusion, there are two pits in the *garbha-griham*. OK, one for Siva and the other, His consort. That fits in. But what does not fit in is that Parvati image was not generally installed in the sanctum. (Also, it is generally not a lingam that is installed in the early Pallava sanctums. It could be a Somaskanda in panel on its rear wall.) Hultsch and the others did not consider that the poem could refer to the Gangadhara panel, around which the poem is engraved. This is in spite of the fact that the poem explicitly states that the builder has made the God in his image. Another error of judgment on the part of Hultsch was, according to Lockwood, understanding the expression 'daughter of mountain' as Parvati. Lastly, Hultsch misread (again according to Lockwood) another word. The word was *silaakshara* in the 8<sup>th</sup> stanza. Hultsch thought it is scribal error and corrected it editorially as *silaakhara*, and translated as 'stone-chisel'. But the word is bold and clear. Why did he do that? He simply felt that this fits in with his interpretation.

Now our recent Poirot (all of you know this chap, the detective in the Agatha Christi novels) cleared all these. Firstly, Lockwood translates the word *nidhaaya* to mean ‘established’. Then he is of the view that by ‘daughter of the mountain’ the author refers to Ganga, and not Parvati. Then was Ganga a daughter of Himavan? For this he points out that in Ramayana, where the story of Bhagiratha is narrated Ganga is mentioned as the eldest daughter of the King of Himalayas. Lastly, Lockwood considers that there was no scribal error in *silakshareNa*, and this means ‘imperishable stone’, and then this meaning also fits in. And there can be a few more interpretation. You may attempt. But, then you will have to visit the shrine. Then my purpose is fulfilled.

You may ask me why I go into such a depth. If the matter is so important to result in a number of research papers in reputed journals, and if this is about one of our own monuments, shouldn't we be aware of it? May be we can also look at it our own way and come up with more innovative theories.

### Annexures

I have given the following as annexures.

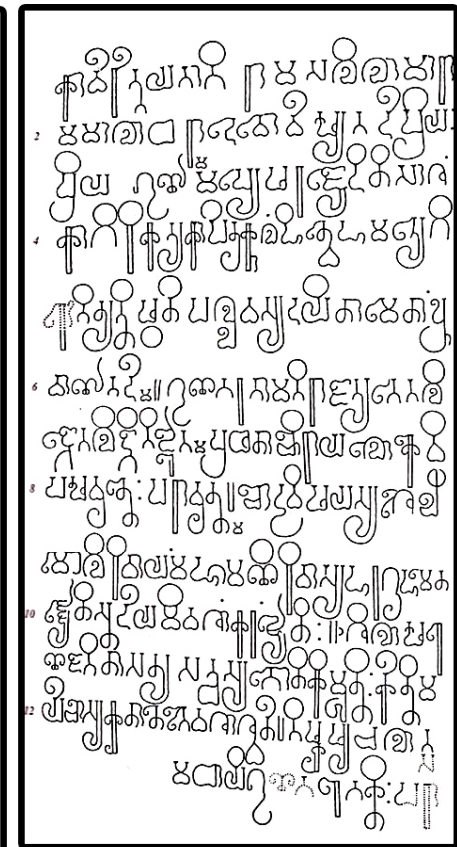
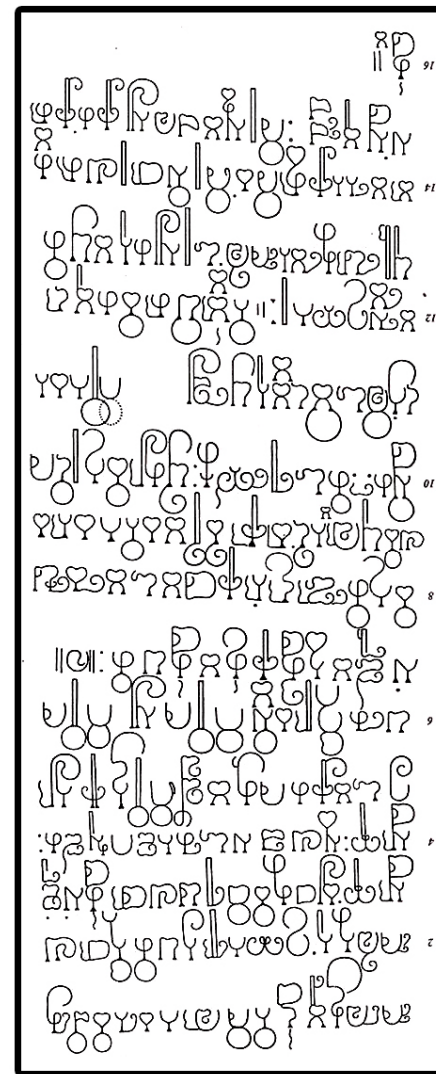
The first is a facsimile of the inscriptional poem from the two half-pillars with transliteration into Roman, Devanagari and Tamil script. You can take this with you to the caves and attempt to follow the poem line by line.

The second is the poem translated, first word by word and then for each couplet. This could be used conveniently in your drawing room.

This gives you also a feel of Pallava Grantha, calligraphically rendered in this monument.

I hope this attempt kindles interest in our priceless monuments strewn around the whole country, fast disappearing uncared for.

### Annexure I Inscriptional Poems



Inscription right panel ↑

← Inscription left panel