

FAQ's

1. What are the characteristic features of Chola architecture?

- chola art is a continuation of the Pallava times
- Began modest in size, and later ones were with huge vimanas and the Gopurams dominating landscape
- Pillared halls / mandapas
- Main shrine – most dominant feature
- Exquisite sculptures

2. What are the features of a temple town?

- The temple is the geographic and ritual center of the ancient temple town.
- The temple walls, streets and finally the city walls (ancient) were built around the temple usually in concentric squares.

3. Give two examples of ancient temple towns

Two examples of ancient temple towns are Madurai and Srirangam.

4. Explain the features of Chola architecture with an example

- Three stone temples, built by the Chola Kings, which are architectural marvels, exist at Thanjavur, Darasuram near Kumbakonam and Gangaikondacholapuram in Perambalur district. The uniqueness of all these three temples is that they are similar in architecture, style and are replete with sculptures and epigraphs.
- **Brihadeeswara temple** – built in 1010 CE by Raja Raja Chola I, the great
- Largest, highest & ambitious structure to be built on granite (which was not available in the nearby areas)
- Completed in a record time of six years
- Inner prakara is 241m long and 122m wide
- One gopuram on the east and three ordinary thoranas on the other three sides
- Main structure is 55m long and shikara is 60m high
- Compound wall height 15 m
- Gopuram is made with single stone of 80 tonnes.

- A huge statue of Nandi measuring 6 m length and 3.7 m in height faces the inner sanctum. It is also made up single piece of stone which weighs about 25 tonnes.
- It has several structures combined together: a nandi pavilion, a pillared portico, a large assembly hall and an outer wall which encloses these structures.
- The main features of the entire scheme is the grand tower of the vimana at the western end which dominates everything in its vicinity.
- The sanctuary is approached by a porch, then a columned Mandapa, ante chamber at last a narrow passage to the cella.
- There are three parts. Square vertical base tall tapering body and the graceful domical finial. Vertical base 82' side, 50' height from the pyramidal body mounts up in 13 diminishing zones, until the width of its apex equals 1/3 of its bases. It ends in the octagonal dome like roof.
- In the middle of the sanctuary is colossal linga 3.66m (12') high, which is elevated on a circular pedestal. The surrounding passageway is divided into chambers, sculptures here include a large dancing siva image (north wall). paintings also adorn the walls and ceiling.
- A short distance to the east of the temple is a tall lamp-column and a monolithic nandi image sheltered by a 16th century pavilion. The pavilion has slender column with carvings of devotees on the shaft.
- Among the subsidiary building is the chandeshvara shrine, which faces southwards towards the main temple. The sanctuary of this small building is crowned with an octagonal roof, the basement and wall details imitate those of the main temple but on a smaller scale.
- The long prakaram surrounds the great temple (500 feet/250 feet) which is attached with the outer wall. The statues of 63 nayanmars and persons who wrote about the glory of lord were placed in the colonnade.
- The multiplication of parivāra shrines and the introduction of a separate shrine for the goddess are the two significant changes in the temple complex effected during this period.
- The temple is approached from the East via two gopuras. Unlike the later practice in Southern India, these gopuras are smaller than the shrine tower. its entranceway is flanked by two very large dvarapalas; the carvings below represent various Shaiva legends.
- The sanctum, the ardhamandapam, the mukhamandapam and the Mahamandapam, although distinct, form a composite unit with an imposing appearance that awes visitors, forcing one to wonder how such timeless architectural feat was executed about a 1000 years ago.
- Another shrine North West of the main temple is dedicated to subrahmanya. The finely finished monument dates carved basement moldings and wall pilasters

- A treasury, museum and library are also included within the courtyard.
- There are also shrines like dakshina moorthy, ganesh are placed with in the compound but detached from the main temple.