

## FAQs

### **1. Write a few lines on Chettinad history.**

- During the period of Cholas, the community of Chettiars, lived in a sea-side village called Kaveripoompattinam. They were known to be Seafarers and sailed in boats to many countries for trade. Sometimes they returned after a year or more. Yet, the businesses were profitable and the families wealthy.
- During one such trip when the men were away Kaveripoompattinam was washed away by a tidal wave. The Chola king allotted new lands for settlement. These lands were bordered by sea, Pran malai and two rivers. With the fear of flood still fresh in their minds, they refused to accept the land offered.
- Instead, they moved inland, as far away as they could from the sea and settled across 96 villages, which today is known as Chettinad.

### **2. Discuss the evolution of housing in Chettinad architecture.**

- The Chettinad houses were originally single-storied buildings made of sundried brick of mud and bamboo and thatch.
- They evolved to become tile-roofed with a small two-storied tower at both ends of the front elevation,
- They later expanded vertically into two-storied structures, and horizontally through the addition of numerous halls and courtyards that could accommodate guests at marriages and other ceremonies.
- It was not unusual for three generations to live together in one house. The Chettinad houses accommodate up to four generations before separate houses are built by individual sons.
- It was not unusual for three generations to live together in one house. The Chettinad houses accommodate up to four generations before separate houses are built by individual sons.

### **3. List some of the town planning features of Chettinad.**

- The Chettiars were efficient planners. They put their experience from the flood devastation, knowledge from travelling to other countries, the culture and climate into planning their towns and dwellings.

- The fact that floods had wrecked their homes previously led them to settle in extremely dry and arid conditions
- They planned their town layouts such that streets were in North South axes and the houses were aligned with courtyards to East West axes , thus not in any case exposing directly to intense morning sun or harsh evening sun
- they made sure their plinth was high to counter floods even in this dry area
- They also emphasised on water conservation as it was very scarce in this area.

#### **4. Discuss the spatial ideas of Chettinad architecture.**

- The Chettinad houses were conceived as fortresses, guarding both valuables and the even more valuable, cool air.
- So, from outside, you perceive no idea of the house's design. Thus instead of lawns in front of the house, the Chettians had courtyards inside.
- But they retained the *thinnai* (platform outside the house that projects towards the street from the house's front wall), typical of ethnic Tamil architecture.
- The *thinnai* ended in granaries on one side and a room, generally the accountant's room, on the other side.
- The heavy and elaborately carved front doors, with images of deities, Goddess Lakshmi especially (from the shiploads of Burmese teak) sometimes had precious gems inlaid on it.

#### **5. List and describe two construction techniques from Chettinad architecture.**

- Madras terrace roofing. - Handmade floor tiles from Athangudi, are inlaid on the madras terrace roof pattern with the joists imported from Burma, as patterns are melamine Burma teak.
- Madras plastering technique. - Lime egg plastering, another traditional technique used to paint walls white and keep the insides of houses cool that lasts virtually the entire life of the building.