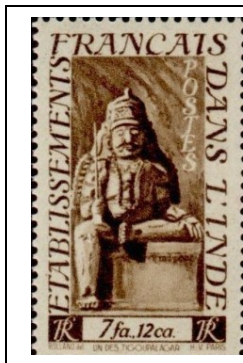


French-Indiastamps onVillageDeitiesofTamilNadu

From time immemorial, people of Tamil Nadu worship village deities like, Ayyanar, Karuppasamy and Sudalai Madasamy who have believed to sacrificed their lives while doing something for the common good of the village. The villagers, in commemoration of the former's self-sacrifice, must have first made them heroes and later, into deities. In several villages of Tamil Nadu, one can come across hero-stones planted in prominent places and people worshipping them.

The French-India (French Settlements in India) during their rule from 1673 to 1950/54, maintained postal service in the enclaves of Pondicherry, Karikal, Yanam on the Coromandel Coast, Mahé on the Malabar Coast and Chandernagorin Bengal.Theyopened the first post office in 1853 and started issuing postage stamps from 1860.

During the period they issued few stamps depicting the images of the local village deities of Pondicherry and Karikal, part of Tamil Nadu, as seen below. Besides, they also issued stamp depicting a Kali Temple near Pondicherry and Shiva Temple in Chidambaram. (The stamp on Chidambaram temple was later withdrawn since the area was not part of French-India territory.)



Ayyanar: This village deity is considered as the protector of village people, crops and cattle. People use to conduct festivals for Ayyanar to show their honor and gratefulness. Ayyanar worshipping will take place many times in villages, for example before start of rainy season, sowing seeds and while harvesting the crops. People consider that Ayyanar will protect them from harm like war or famine or disease or other evils.



Dwarapalaka is the guardian deity or the gate-keeper at the temple entrance. It is a common feature of almost all Tamil Nadu temples that the Dwarapalaka statue stands at the entrance on both sides. It is a common belief that by worshipping the Dwarapalakas one can escape from grave unforeseen dangers.

Apsaras are considered as supernatural beings that appear as young women of great beauty and elegance who are proficient in the art of dancing. Apsaras has been referred in ancient stories and legends as well as in the fairy tales, describing them as angels, nymphs and sirens.



Kali Temple near Pondicherry

