

**Figure 4.** Entrance to the Darasuram Temple.



The temples and monuments under the control of the ASI are, for the most part, preserved in their original forms and with their significant attributes intact. Other temples, outside of the Survey's jurisdiction, have been built or restored according to modern requirements and therefore present challenges to the ASI.

### The stakeholders

A temple in India is considered 'living' when it is used for worship and religious activities and rituals are performed in accordance with the *Agamas* (codified sets of rules governing the practice of religion in temples). Historically, for the smooth functioning of temples, committees of people from various fields were appointed by the king. In addition to its religious role, the temple also acted as an official institution directly controlling the welfare of the state. This system continued until the beginning of British rule in India. Subsequently, temple administration was taken over by the government based on various laws.

Currently the stakeholders of the Chola Temples can be summarized as follows:

1. The Archaeological Survey of India – the three temples were declared “Monuments of National Importance” in accordance with the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904 (now the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958 and Rules 1959) in 1922, 1946 and 1954 respectively.
2. Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments – as the three temples enjoy 'living' status with regular traditional religious activities, they are also governed by the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act 1959.
3. Palace *Devasthanams* – the temples of Thanjavur and Darasuram are owned by the erstwhile Maratha royal family of Thanjavur under an autonomous body, the Palace *Devasthanams*, while the one at Gangaikondacholapuram is owned by the state.