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## Art and Architecture of Veera Choleeswara Temple at Kolumum – A Study with Historical Perspectives

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### Abstract

*Kolumam popularly called as Then Thanjai (Thanjavur of the south is noted for hoary past, rich antiquity, History and tradition. In the early centuries of the Christian era Kolumum was ruled Sangam monarch called Kirnanan and hence the place is also called Kumanapuri. Later on the word got corrupted and came to be called as Kulumur and then as Kuluman. The inscriptions mention the place as Sangaramanallur and Koluman. This paper deals the historical perspectives of Veera Choleeswara Temple.*

**Keywords:** Historical Perspectives, Art, Veera Choleeswara Temple.

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### Introduction

Kolumam popularly called as Then Thanjai (Thanjavur of the south is noted for hoary past, rich antiquity, History and tradition. In the early centuries of the Christian era Kolumum was ruled Sangam monarch called Kirnanan and hence the place is also called Kumanapuri. Later on the word got corrupted and came to be called as Kulumur and then as Kuluman. The inscriptions mention the place as Sangaramanallur and Koluman. Kolumum was one among the 24 divisions of the Kongu country and is located on a highway between Palani and Udumalpet. The temple was situated on the banks of the river Amaravathi. The Veera Choleeswara temple at Kolumum was constructed by Kongu Chola king called Veera Rajendra with simple style of Architecture. The VeeraCholeeswararat Kolumum played a vital role in determining the History and Culture of the region. During the medieval period, the temple contributed an Important role in shaping the religious, cultural and social life of the people.

### The Artistic Aspects of Arulmigu Choleeswarar Temple Sanctum

In the art of sculpturing this temple has attained certain levels of craftsmanship. The temple's Upanam, has been fully immersed inside the earth except for "Jahathi" and Kumudain "the Athistanam. Other organs cannot be seen fully. The "Kumuda" has been carved in a dishevelled manner. Next to this the part of the "Kala", "Pattihai" and "Atka Padmam" are in the simplest

features. These parts are fully decorated by sculpturing. Next to this the part of the "Kala", "Pattihai" and "Atka Padmam" are in the simplest features. These parts are fully decorated by sculpturing. Next to the "Athistana" the beautiful leg portion has been clearly shown. In the leg portion there are the wall pillars that bear the traditional art about them. Among them the "KalasaThadi" and "Palakai" represent the art of sculpturing of these days. The Veda part to the upper part of the half -pillars are carved in accordance with the place. The "Deva Koshtas" that are fully decorated are beautiful but the sculptures that are on them belong to the later age. The western part of the "Deva Koshta" are full of arches. For each side there are four half-pillars. It is carved in such a ratio and they bear the sculpture of the days of the Kongu Cholas<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly in the religious days of the Pandya kingdoms such reputable architecture can be found in the temples<sup>2</sup>. The wall - pillars that are installed in the corners of the outside of the sanctum link the walls on either sides. The lower part of the half- pillars reach up to the "Athitanam". Next to the legportion is the "Kaboatham". It reveals the development than that of the earlierage Cholas. The structure of the "Kaboatham" stands as an example for the artistic development and encouragement. To the upper and lower portions are "Poothakangas" "Yali" and elephants in rows engaged in their respective works. It is one of the salient features of the art of sculpturing of the Cholas. Next is the "Kirava" portion which represents the modern craftsmanship. The "Vimana" portion which contains four sides according to the "Giriva Koshta" has many beautiful covers. These covers and the covers in the kabadan can be related though in the artistic traits they

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resemble the same the row materials used are different for the covers in the "Kabodha" are madestones. The covers found in the "Deva Koshta" are relief stones. Thoughhead bears four sides the artistics traits belong to the modern times. The "Sthubi" found on the top of the head also is of the craftsmanship of today<sup>3</sup>.

The traditional artistic features followed in the sanctum can also be seen in the "ArthaMandapa" and "MahaMandapa". One, can see the gap that divide the sanctum and the "ArthaMandapa" on the wall of the outside of the The "Athisthanam" of the temple The "ArthaMandapa" and the "Maha Mandapa" is seen on the earth concealed. In this part also different particulars are revealed in the inscriptions. At the entrance to the south side of the "Maha Mandapa", there are two pillars. The "Pothigai" parts of the pillars though imple of the methodical features of the art the western part of the pillars has 4 ides, the pillars lower part bears the "Prema Kanda" structure which shows the in between artistic traits. The two pillars are ornamental and is beautiful at .the entrance. The Lord in the sanctum in the sitting posture faces towards the east. The "Artha Mandapa" which is next to the sanctum 'is a little bigger, but, the pillars reveal the days of the Cholas. The "Maha.Mandapa" is put up on twenty four pillars fully completed. A few of then are concealed towards the walls. Each pillar has either four or eight sides. The "Pothigai" part of the pillars installed in four rows is a bit different in its structure. All are put up to the south western direction. Though it bears the artistic qualities of the Cholas the Kongu Cholas development in sculpturing is also manifested. There are the relief sculpture at the entrance of the ArthaMandapa which remind us of the Cholas.

The pillars that are uniform is structure props the "MahaMandapa" beautifully. Like the half pillars found in the Deva koshta there are decorations on the entrance to the "ArthaMandapa". Along with this there are the pillarshaving many walls. The sanction belongs to a later age than the "ArthaManadapa". The parts of the wall, that bears only the pillars was built later. Near the MahaMandpa the Lords, "Vahana" is also stationed. The "Mandapa" that is fully completed is the simple MahaMandapa of the temple."<sup>4</sup>

On either side of the entrance to the "MahaMandapa" there are the joint "Sannathi". of ArulmiguBalaMurugan and ArulmiguGanapathi. Though both are structured like the minor Deva Koshtas being small "Sannathi" is great. In relation to the aspects of the art they are ancient, and are as decorations on the upper part of the entrance of the "MahaMandapa" To the opposite of this "Mandapa" (VaathiyaMandapa) there are the "PaliPeedaand Nandhi"<sup>5</sup>

#### **Kodimaram, PaliPeeda and Nandhi**

To the opposite of the Lord who faces the east there are the "PaliPeeda" "Koimaram and Nandhi". The "Upapeeda" is in the ordinaryarchitectural design this "PaliPeeda" with four pillars bears also asmall "Vimana",

On the four pillars there are ordinary sculptures. The "Vimana" structure on the UpaPeeda highlight the Vimana structure on the important sanctum. The numberless sculptures on the Giriva portion and the four sides of the Siharam are the artistic excellence of later days<sup>6</sup>.

#### **Gopuram**

In accordance with the Vimana structure the "Athisthanam" has beens hown very tall. To the front of the Gopurapillars, that are eight sided are installed. To the left side are the four wall pillars and to the rights side also four wall pillars. Amidst these the tall "Deva Koshta" parts are shown. But there are no figures of the left ities. On the upper part of the "Devakoshta" are the different ornamental arches. Similarly in other parts also these structures can be seen Except for the "Deva Koshta" the other parts of the "Gopuram" are protruded a little outside. "Pirastharam" and its covers, the rows of "Pootha Kanangars" and the elephants in rows on the top remind one of the days of the Cholas. The "Gopuram" that has been completed to the "Puastharam" has thesculptures belonging to the traditional art of the later days. It is a hypothesis, that if this "Gopuram" has been fully completed it would have been more ofthe greatness of the Kongu Cholas. There is a bare place with two pillars in the inner portion of the Gopuram. Likewise to the right side also there are bare places with two pillars<sup>7</sup>.

The central part of the pillar is sixteen sided and the top part bears the Pothigai" common to both. But there is no "PushpaPothaigai" here. The "Vithana" part which is the inner part of the "Gopuram" has a beautiful square shaped structure of the Like the outside structure of the "Gopuram" the eastern and the western sides also bear the artistic structure in common.

#### **Piruha NayakiSannathi**

The Arulmigu PiruhaNayaki Temple has a complete "Athistana" structure than the other temples. The temple also bears the significant sanctum architecture. The "Deva Koshtas" appear as "Maadapuras". This kind of architecture can be found in the artistic style of the early Pandya temples. The "Athistana" is as follows "Jakathi", "Thiripatta KumudamKandan" "Pattihai" and "Athapadmam". The "Vimana" structure in "AmbalSannathi" belongs to the "Thuvithala" kind. Till the "Prestharam" it is constructed of black stones while the other portions bears the very earliest relief craftsmanship. The rows of 'Yalies' found on the upper part of the "Prestharam" are not to be found. The "Pothigai" part next to this remind us entirely of the days of the Cholas. The four pillars bearing the uniform structure cannot be seen in any other temples. In the midst of the "MahaMandapa" is the "PaliPeeda" One cannot find any inscriptions here, as is found in the Choleeswarar Temple.. But thither and thirther there are a few inscriptions<sup>8</sup>.

### Arulmigu Thandeswarar Swamy Temple

The Natarajar Sannathie have a close relationship with the Siva temple. In all the Saiva temples much importance is given to Natarajar. In the later days of the Vijayanagar Nayaks rule before the "Sannathi", the "Naatiya Mandapa" and the "Vaathiya Mandapa" were built. The Natarajar Sannathi in the holy dance posture always gives fame to this temple. According to traditions after the four sided pillars the "Nagapandams" have to be shown. Showing the "Nagapandam" on one pillar with the head down unique. Putting the four "Nagapandams" on a pillar in the straight posture and showing the other four topsy-turvy is also another novel artistry sides the developed "Pushpa Pothigai" reminds one of the age of the Naickers. The cross beams put up on the top of the "Pothigai" part are faced to the south northern direction. This kind of architectural structures can be found in the Vaathiya Mandapa and the "Pirathana Sannathi" in the "Maha Mandapa"<sup>9</sup>. This kind of installation cannot be found elsewhere. In the parts of the walls and in the parts of the "Upa Peeda" many inscriptions are found.

### Joint Sannathies

The Surya Bhavan "Sannathi" that is constructed facing the Moolavaris to the right side. The architecture of the temple belongs to the days of the modern period. But the simple "Athistana" and the leg portion belong to the earlier days. The "Pristharam", "Girivam", "Siharam" and "Sthubi" belong to the modern days. The "Siharam" which is in a circular shape has in itself four "Kama" covers. The "Kalasam" has been kept nowadays. In the Choleeswarar Temple to the right side there are the four Naayanmars seen facing to the west. Directly to the opposite of them is the significant Natarajar Temple. The four Naayanmars namely Appar, Sundara, Maanikavasahar and Thirunavukarasu sculptures are in the standing postures according to their nature. Arulmigu Dajaiamoorthy "Sannathi" belongs to the later age.

Arulmigu Vinayagar Sannathi has to itself the "Upa Peeda" the beautiful "Athistana" and many small wall - pillars. These belong to the early days. Like the sanctum, the features of the art of sculpturing is found in the Vinayagar "Sannathi". In the "Athistana" portions of this joint Sannathr one can see the changed Kumuaa,. To the "Prestharam" this temple has been of black stones. Though it is small in size it has the methodical structure found in the significant temples<sup>10</sup>.

### Agneeswarar Sannathi

The Arulmigu Agneeswarar "Sannathi" has to itself the artistic traits of the later Kongu Chola days, the features of the Cholas and certain traits of the days of the Nayaks. One is amazed to see a very beautiful sanctum and decorative "Front Mandapa". The decoration that are found at the entrance of the sanctum, the arches, the aspects of the climbers and the lotus petals are really thought provoking.

The Arulmigu Chandikeswarar "Sannathi" is on the northern side of Arulmigu Choleeswarar Temple. It is opposite to the northern side "Devakoshta" facing to the south. It is of the ordinary architecture and belongs to the earlier days. Until the "Prestharam" it is so the other parts are relief works of the modern days. On the "Praharam" of Arulmigu Choleeswarar Temple one can see many joint "Sannathies". Among them the Kaalabairavar Sannathi carves a special niche. The Moolavar is seen facing to the south. There are no special traits found over here. Till the "Prestharam" this temple is built of black stones. Like the Deva Koshtas at the entrance there are the half -pillars. On the half pillar the "pothaigai", "Palhai", "Thadi" and "Maalasthanam" half - pillars the "Pothigai", "Palahai", "Thadi" and "Maalasthanam" have been shown. Besides at the entrance there are many structures in the form of arches. Though the "Siharam" is circular in shape including the "Sthubi" and other parts belong to the modern days.

The "Navakirahas" that are installed are constructed in the modern days. With no kind of ornamental works there is another joint "Sannathi" which is the Shanthi Bhavan "Sannathi", Except for the "Athistana" of this "Sannathi" which faces to the west the other parts are of relief works. The Vimana has four wings and the work is skilfully done. In this temple next to the "Kodimaram" and "Pali Peeda" facing the Moolavar is a small "Sannathi" known as "Santhi Bhavan Sannathi" Till the "Athistana" it is made of stones while the other parts are relief works. This temple has a circular shaped beautiful "Vimana" and "Sthubi".

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