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Art and Architecture of Arjuneshvar Temple at Kadathur – A Study

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Abstract

Kadathur, Arjuneshwarar temple is located on the banks of river Amaravathi. The available inscriptions prove that the temple was constructed by the king Vikrama chola in the 12th century. About the construction of this temple, the original structure of this temple was constructed during the kongu Chola period and was developed by Pandya and the Vijayanagara period. The temple faces East. The first rays of the sun reflects from the water and fall on the lingam each and every day of the year. This paper describes the temple history and its architectural style.

Keywords: Temple, Architecture, Kadathur.

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Introduction

The Arjuneshwarar temple is located on the banks of the river Amaravathi in Kadathur. The temple was constructed by King Vikrama chola in the 12th Century A.D. The temple consists of Vimana ardhmandapa, muka mandapa and mahamandapa. The central shrine houses the huge image of Lord shiva and his consort Gomathi Amman has separate shrine on the left side of the temple. The temple is noted for hoary past, rich history beautiful architecture and is one of other masterpiece of arts of Kongu Cholas. The Arjuneshwarar temple is found in a small village called Kadathur. It is located near Kaniyur, between Udumalaipettai (Udumalpet) and Palani and the Udumalpet taluk, district of Tiruppur. The temple is remote one from the village and located on the banks of the river Amaravathi. The available inscriptions prove that the temple was constructed by the King Vikrama Chola in the 12th Century Common Era."¹ "Though the legends, the Lord is called Marudha Vaneswarar, since he was found under a marudha maram (tree)."² Since the roots of the tree have medicinal properties, worshipping the Lord here is believed to cure one of many ailments. It is especially believed that a king was cured of diabetes, by praying to the Lord, so today, with diabetes growing more and more common, the temple is attracting a growing attention, offering a cure, to the disease by worshipping the Lord. The Lord's consort is Gomathi Amman, and has a separate shrine on the left side of the main shrine. In front of the Amman shrine, a huge ant hill is believed to be the residence of snakes. In this

temple snakes and the ant hills are considered to be sacred and its presence only enhances the importance of the deity and the temple."³

The temple is simple and square in ground plan. The temple faces east and the Lord looks over at the Amaravathi river as flows alongside. It is said that the first rays of the sun reflects from the water and fall on the Lingam, each and every day of the year. The original structure of this temple was constructed during the Kongu Chola period and was developed by the Vijayanagara and the Pandya period"⁴. This temple consists of the vimana, preceded by an ardhmandapa, mukamandapa and the mahamandapa all in an axial line. The central shrine houses the image of Lord Siva in the form of Linga. In the vimana, the upapita is the lower most anga of the temple elevation. This is found in between the ground level and it is concealed by the cement floor. Its forms and functions are mentioned in Vastu, as well as agamic text, as the bearer of the whole temple on its head. The upapita is not an essential anga of the vimana. The adistana is a type of pada-panda and above the upana the architectural motifs like upapita, jagati, kantam, kampu, kapotham are found"⁵.

The entire pada is covered with inscriptions. The bhitti portion contains the devakosta flanked by salai and the arathoonkal. The kostams are typically designed with square and it motives in an alignment"⁶. The devakostams are surmounted by salai. The devakostams and the antarala intermediate portion is a simple wall structure and the corners are filled by the arathoonkal. The arathoonkal are constructed by the kal, thadi, idaikattu, thamavari, virakandam, kalasam and palagai. The prastara or the roof is square shaped. The prastara is ornamented with kudu motifs and vyalamalas. The form of roof is well designed and finely finished. The prastara

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over the wall consists of the uttiram."⁷ The uttiram is consists of there are three parts such as, bhutavari, kodungai and the yalavari. In the bhutavari, a frieze of ganas followed by kapota carrying the kudu arches. The kudu arches are decorated with the divinities in the scroll design in a circle while the simhamukha finials over these arches. The kapota is decorated with the kodikarukku design at the corners. Above the kapota here is a vyalavari in a row facing each other in pair. In the kudus are decorated with kodikarukku motifs and the inner part human face is sculptured."⁸

In the super structure of the vimana, the griva or kanta and vedi are important in this temple. Wherein the vimana devatas are accommodated. Above this rises the pyramidal vimana facing East in five storeys, but the griva of the sikara is eight sided. Each storey consists of a row or hara of kutas, salas and panjaras."⁹ The kutas adorn the four corners of this prakaras with salas and panjarams in between. The salas are much smaller and look like a miniature shrine, pilasters and niches containing statues decorate the exterior walls of each storey. The top most storey contains a series of nandis are seated on the parapet wall. The sikara is square in shape with the kudu motifs. The super structure of its vimana is no longer a mere stepped pyramid but has assumed as a more tapering from like a spire. The final portion of the sikara is found with kalasas."¹⁰

The ardhmandapa is small and sqttare in plan. It contains the base with similar parts of the pada. The pada portion' comprises of conventional kostas with pilasters on either side of the kostas and the cantoning pilasters. The ardhmandapa also connected with antarala consists of upapita, adistana, pada with devakostas and covered by prastara."¹¹ The adistana and upapita mouldings follow the garbhagriha members. In the pada apart from the arathoonkal there are two empty kostams on two sides, one on the southern side and other On northern side. There are two entrances with a covered mandapa and leading to the steps are found in the both side of the side walls. In the ardhmandapa the square type pillars are found in two rows. The pillars signify the temples earlier and the style of early Chola especially in the Kongu Chola style."¹² In the pillar, architectural motifs are like podhigai, palagai, padmam, amalakam, virakandam, kudam, thamavari and kal. The mahamandapa is a large square and pillared structure. The inner side of the mandapa consists of square pillars and is covered with beams and stone slabs. The pillars are designed in the pusphapodika, pattam, saduram, nagabandham and asvapadam with eight in number."¹³ The pillars are massive in size adorned with abacus. The, pattern of podika is clearly of the early Vijayanagara style.

The Nandi mandapa of this temple is constructed in a measurement of 5x5 square feet. The mandapa have the mouldings like the upana, padma, jagati, kumuda, pattigai and the floor for seating the Nandi. All the architectural members with miniature vargabedas resembling those of the main - sanctum. Four

difficult Chola style pillars covered the roof structure. At the centre of the mandapa a seated Nandhi facing the deity Arjuneshvarar in a Westward direction. In the same axis, just on the back of the Nandi and in front of the Balipita, is in stone with lotus moulded designs. As the dvajastambha fell on the ground and the dvajastambha is not to be seen its place now. The Amman shrine is simple in construction and the Kongu Chola style. The Goddess Gomathi Amman shrine lies on the left side of the Arjuneshvarar shrine. This shrine consists of the vimana preceded by an ardhmandapa and a mukamandapa. All the architectural motifs with miniature vargabedas are approaching those of the main shrine. The adhishana of the vimana consists of usual segments. Over and above the adhishana the wall portion contains the kostams on three sides of the outer walls. These kostams are empty, shallow and long wherein the images are absent. The devakostas are flanked by the arathoonkal one on either side in the recessed portion of the walls. Above the capital the prastara contains the uttira and the vajana below with a yali representing human figures. The kapota mouldings carry the kudu arches containing heads of human figures. There is a frieze of yali all around the portion above prastara. The super structure is built of brick and mortar and carries the sala, kostas, nasika panjaras with devakostas are housing the images."¹⁴ The square sikhara above the griva is surmounted by finial. The ardhmandapa adjoining the mukamandapa, possesses the following mouldings of upapita, pada and prastara."¹⁵

The ardhmandapa is consists of four pillars designed in the Chola style. The inner side of the mandapa consists of a raised platform. It is used as the alankara mandapa during the utsava time. The ceiling of this mandapa is supported by pillars erected at equal distance in two rows in a horizontal direction. The upapita of the mandapa is simple with two flight of steps leading to it. The pillars are totally different from those of the temple. The pillars have only saduram and the ettupattai. The mukamandapa is later added structure and built on the Kudamuzhu time (20th Century Common Era). The walls covered by the brick and mortar and white washed. The inner part of the mandapa the pillars are absent. It is used as the alankara inandaKauring the utsava time. The temple kitchen is located on the south-eastern corner of the temple court. It is built up of brick and mortar construction being divided into two rooms and a pillared pavilion having the entrance facing east. This mandapa consists of adistana, pada, prastara and stupi. The adistana and pada are simple in their structure. At the centre of the mandapa a pillared pavilion is found. The inner side of the pavilion consists of a raised platform. The ceiling of this mandapa is supported by four pillars erected at equal distance in two rows. The roof of the structure is designed with beams and stone slabs.

The Vinayagara shrine is located south western corner of the temple complex. The temple appears a small bas-relief model of an ekatala vimana of kuta

sikhara belonging to the Dravidian order. This miniature shrine consists of a garbhagriha, built by brick and mortar with all the six angas such as, adistana, pada, prastara, griva, sikhara and stupi. All the architectural members of this structure are simple and plain and lack decoration.

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