



## Arulmighu Dandhayudhapani Swamy Temple, Palani – Tamilnadu

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### Abstract

Palani, situated at the foot of Western Ghats in one of the notable pilgrim centers in India. In India, the history and cultures of a region often centres around temples and it is especially the case with south India. About the construction of the hill temple in Palani, Cholan Poorva Pattayam states that the Chola king Karikala constructed a temple facing west to kumara at Thiruvankudi. In honour Lord Muruga, the Chera king Cheraman Perumal created a village called Thenpalani (Southern Palani) and constructed a temple on the hill for Lord Muruga. Dhandayudhapani swamy temple is facing west. This paper describes the temple history and its characteristics.

**Keywords:** Temple, Pilgrim, Palani.

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### Introduction

Palani, situated at the foot of Western Ghats in one of the notable pilgrim centers in India. In India, the history and cultures of a region often centres around temples and it is especially the case with south India. Where temples have made not only impressive contribution to religious life of the people but also have served as the nucleus around which the social and cultural life of the people revolves. There is a proverb in Tamil Nadu “கோயில் இல்லா ஊரில் குடி இருக்க வேண்டாம்” (Do not live in a place where there is no temple) So in almost all the places a temple or atleast an idol is dedicated to God. Today Palani is well known as a prominent pilgrim centre and is considered to be one of the earliest towns in South India. The temple at Palani is an ancient one and is popular throughout the state especially in the Southern part as the abode of Lord Muruga, the principal deity of the Hindus.

### History of the Temple

There is one pithy saying in Tamil- “குன்றிருக்கும் இடமெல்லாம் குமரனிருக்கும் இடம்” (wherever hills, there Lord Muruga resides). This proverb is used to have been uttered by Umadevi when she came to pacify Lord Muruga who was infuriated by the actions of His parents over the fruit offered by Narada. From then onwards Palani hills became the favourite residence of Lord Muruga and it was sage Bhogar by tint of his ability and intellect create an

Unique statue for Lord Muruga by mixing nine varieties of medicinal herbs and from then onwards thousands of devotees from all over Tamilnadu began to pour into Palani.

About the construction of the hill temple in Palani, Cholan Poorva Pattayam states that the Chola king Karikala constructed a temple facing west to kumara at Thiruvankudi. In honour Lord Muruga, the Chera king Cheraman Perumal created a village called Thenpalani (Southern Palani) and constructed a temple on the hill for Lord Muruga<sup>1</sup>. The main shrine was perhaps built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD by a ruler of Kerala king Cheraman Perumal. He digged vaiyapuri tank and from that soil he constructed a temple for Balasubramanya in saktigiri facing west on the Sivagiri. He also created the village Balasamudram in the name of the Lord. A figure of a king on horseback is inscribed in stone near the various subshrine in the exterior of the northern wall of the sanctum sanctorum. Another stone panel of a royal figure of horseback is found on the outside of a small shrine of Cheravinayakar, identified as Cheramanperumal gives evidence to the Chera tradition of the temple<sup>2</sup>. The inscription carved out on the wall of the Palani hill temple records that the principal shrine was constructed by Jatavarman sundra pandya and JatavarmanVirapandya in 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D<sup>3</sup>. The Mukha or Paravel Mandapa, The Navaranga mandapa, the compound wall and other inner shrines and the Rajagopura were built by the religious minded Zamindar of Balasamudram named Vijayagiridurai in 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D<sup>4</sup>. The other structure in front of the hill temple were a gift given by the Nayaks during 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>5</sup>. The life size figures of Nayak style found in the pillars of the front mandapa testify to this fact.

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### Architectural Style of Palani Hill Temple

Dhandayudhapani swamy temple is facing west. In the garbhagraha of this temple Upana is inside the land. Adhistana consists of jagathi, sudrapadmam and kadaka viritha kumudha. In the jagathi inscription are there. After sudrapadma kambu, kandam also ended with kabota. In the kabota many small kudas with kodikarruku with Patigai and Ashtapadmam are seen<sup>6</sup>. In the lower part adhistana of Padma is filled with water. So it make the garbhagraha is cool and look like floating in the water.

### Pada

In the pada south and north side so many inscription are seen<sup>7</sup>. In the pada, half pilasters are decorated upto kabota. In the pilasters siva, dhandayudhapani, naga sculptures and kodikarukku are engraved to beautify the outer wall of garbhagraha. The part of half pilasters are Varimanam, Nagabanda, Malasthana, torana, Kalasa, kamba, idal, palagai, potigai and Uttiram. The kodaikarruku in the half pilasters are not the same and the half pilasters have eight sides or four sides. But most of them are eight side pilasters are called Vishnu gandha part.

### Prastara and Kabota

The Prastara part is seen like lotus in uplifted position. In the eastern side there are four prastara kudu and North and south have eight kudas ended with yaliwari and kodikarukku decorations. This type of architecture belongs to first Pandyas and second Pandyas and Cholas period.

### Vimana

Vimana is Tritala type. First two tala is square shape and have grivakosthas. In the first and second tala of north side Lord Muruga was standing with his consorts Valli and Deivanai, and sitting on the Lotus Flower<sup>9</sup>. (Fig 1) In the third tala Lord Muruga was sitting on his Vahana with his consorts. In between the sculptural pilasters, kudu's, salai and haras decorated the place.

### Sikara

Sikara is round in shape, on its four sides beautiful karnakudu and tarana are there. On the southern side of the Vimana Dakshinamurthi is seen and on his two sides Rishi's are standing and in the second tala Dakshinamurti is appearing in chinmudra with rishis in sitting position. On the Western side of the vimana, Lord Muruga with his peacock Vahana is seen with Idumpan is nearer to him. In the second tala Lord Muruga is standing as Dhandayudhapani<sup>10</sup>. (Fig 2)

### Devakostha

In the garbhagraha, devakosthas sculptures are established recently. In south and north side of garbhagraha, the devakostha of siddhas sculptures are notified. The upper part of devakosthas have beautiful kabota, salai and kudas. In between the salai and kabota

beautiful Muruga sculpture and swan, cock, Vel is there. In some of the devakosthas prastara kudas have Boothagana sculptures decorated.

### Kumbhapanjara

In the south Indian Architecture, in between the garbhagraha and Ardhamandapa outer wall have kumbhapanjara with beautified decoration<sup>11</sup>. On two sides of kumbhapanjaras torana with small sculptures are deeply attracted. The parts of the kumbhapanjaras are Malasthanam, Idal, kabota and palagai. In this temple the upper part of kumbhapanjara looks like Vimana of this temple.

### Ardhamandapa

The same architectural style of garbhagraha is repeated in Arthamandapa too. In the garbhagraha, suvar, adhistana, devakostha, prastara and kodikarukku are repeated in between Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa. The sculptures of KannappaNayanar and Chera king on the horse in action pose are seen in the northern side of Ardhamandapa. The Architectural style of the temple is repeated in Idumpan temple and Periyanyaki Amman temple. So all these temple belong to same period. In the Prahara of garbhagraha and Ardhamandapa have pillars. In garbhagraha inner prahara have 16 pillars and Ardhamandapa of outer prahara have 20 pillars respectively. The pillars have different decoration, small sculptures, animal sculpture and flower decorations lower part of pillars have four sides, upper part have sixteen sides, middle with Nagabandha ended with potigai. In some pillars lower part have four sides, and then 12 sides and centre of the pillars have four sides and 12 sides potigai is not in developed condition. In the entrance of the mandapa, the sculpture of the Nayak women is exhibited in the pillar. In the eastern prahara donars sculptures are there. Other than these numerous sculptures like that of flower decoration elephant, monkey, yali, siddha's, women, horse, rishi's, linga, vel, trisul, Vinayaka and Boothagana sculptures are also worthy to be mentioned.

### Mahamandapa

In the Mahamandapa of this temple has 20 pillars. The pillars are not seen easily because they are hidden inside the wall. In the centre of mahamandapa, square shape of 12 pillars showing potigai in the same side very beautiful curved. This mandapa resembles the Navaranga mandapa of Periyanyaki Amman temple. Vidana of this mandapa having twelve rasis sculpture is beautifying the place. Each pillar in the Mahamandapa has different type of sculptures like siddha, yali, boothagana. The women sculptures are getting more importance with more ornaments. The pillars are having four sides, eight sides, twelve sides and sixteen sides with nagabandha. The sculptures are mostly 3 feet height and they are opposite to each other. All the sculptures are having two hands and in standing position. The mandapa belongs to Nayak period.

### Sub- Sannidhi in Mahamandapa

In the right side of the Mahamandapa, facing south is located the palliyarai (bedroom), vehicle room. Nearer to Shanmugar with Devi, Natarajar with his consort and Manickavasakar are facing East. Siva, Parvathi and Vinayaka, the three sannidhi's suvar are the same. The three sannidhi generally have one Adhistana, pada, prastara. This is the great example for architectural style. Vimana's are Ekatala type, Prastara is like kodugai with kudu's are very beautiful. The same architectural style is followed in garpagraha, Ardhamandapa, Mahamandapa upapita and adhista. In the outer prahara various pillars are decorated with donars sculptures, linga, naga and Dhandayudhapani sculptures etc.

### Paravel Mandapa

In the outer mandapa more than 30 pillars are seen.(Fig 4) Some pillars are like that of Pandya potigai. Some pillars have four sides, eight sides, twelve sides and sixteen sides<sup>12</sup>. Paravel mandapa is otherwise called as Yali mandapa. In two lines totally sixteen pillars are erected to beautify the place. In the pillars the notable sculptures are Siva's various avatars, Vishnus, Dasaavatara, Saraswati, rishi, human, fish, tortoise, Vinayaka, Boothagana, Linga, Natarajar, Venugopalaswamy, swan, kali and Naga are remarkable.

### Dwarapalaka

In the Mahamandapa entrance Dwarapalakas are standing on two sides and they do not belong to same period. The sculptures belonged nearer to 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century itself. In the pita, Dwarapalakas are in standing position, in left leg bending, right leg is straight. Both the figures have protruding canine teeth. In his right hand show canka and left hand holds Gadhayudha. Dwarapalakas makuta have Yali face top to feet various ornaments decorated their body<sup>13</sup>. The two dwarapalakas are having various ornaments with difference. In the centre of the paravel mandapa, Vahana, Palipeedam, Dwajasthamba are constructed and on the right side of paravel mandapa Vinayakar is seen facing western side. In the Palani hill temple, there are four gopuras i.e, in east west north and south gopura and each have five kalasas. In the upapita Mahamandapa kanda, kabota was made. In kabota beautiful kudas and kandas so many sculptures are found. In the adhista of gopura, jagati, Virutakumudha, kanda, Patigai and various half pilasters are clearly notified. In the half pilaster kumba, Idal, Palagai are generally ended with potigai upto prastara was built in stone. Above the prastara to stupa is made up of Suthai. In the inner part of Gopura two women sculptures beautified the place. In the Gopura is Gajapirushta type. In griva village sculpture, God and Goddess sculptures, Vahana and Boothaganas are constructed and depict the lively features of architecture. The gopura (Fig 5) has numerous gods and goddesses and it reveals the fact that "God is one". The temple is belonging to Muruga so from birth to marriage various

stages of Purana sculptures are engraved<sup>14</sup>.

### Nayak Mandapa

Nayak mandapa was belonged to later Nayak period. More than hundreds of pillars are seen in the mandapa. Nearly fifty mandapas are seen as decorated pillars. Some pillars have developed potigai. Some pillars are 3 feet height and are beautified with various sculptures and flower decorations. Some pillars have four sides, sixteen sides, eight sides, four sides with different flowers. In some pillars the images of god and goddess, animals, birds, Devars, donators, surya and chandras are engraved. As a part of Nayak style of architecture, in the centre of the mandapa a four pillar mandapa was constructed.

### Arulmigu Vinayakar Temple (Nayak Mandapa)

The 17<sup>th</sup> century architectural style is followed in the temple. The Vinayakar temple look like garpagraha of Tiruavinankudi temple and Periyannayaki Amman temple, Upana of the temple consists of kanda, potigai, padmam, kalam, kabotam parks. In the kabota, kudas have no sculptures. Next to upana adhista is clearly engraved. Firstly, in the adhista, jagati, viruttakumuda, kanda, kabota are given. In kabota, kudas have Padma Idal beautified the place. Ashta Padma is a special feature. After Adhista, pada have half pilasters, i.e, in round shape. In between the pilasters small sculptures of Dwarapalaka, Rishis, Yali, Swan also are seen. The Devakostha is adorned with uncountable decoration.

The garpagraha of this temple have Mulavar (fig 6) belong to early period itself. The image of Lord Muruga has created by sage Bhogar with Navabashana (nine different kinds of medicinal herbs). The Ardhamandapa has two pillars with various decoration, with beautiful sculptures of siddha, Vinayaka, Dhandayudhapani, man with musical instrument veenai (lute) sharpened pusphapotigai belong to later architectural style. In the southern side of Nayak's mandapa the Vijayanagar Nayak sculpture are seen in sitting position. In the eastern side vasantha mandapa is located. In the vasantha mandapa eight side pillars (vishnukhanda) is decorated with beautiful sculptures. In the entrance of Nayak mandapa four feet height Vinayaka sculpture in standing posture. And he is seen with four hands holding Pasa, Ankusa, tusk, rice flour sweet (Modakam). In the entrance of Nayak mandapa are located shrines Arunakirinathar, Nakkirar. The mahamandapa have eleven developed pillars and eleven undeveloped pillars and it looks like a reception Hall. Different type of gods sculptures belong to various sect of Hinduism are beautifully engraved in the mahamandapa.

### Vahana

In the Vahana mandapa, upapita was constructed to heighten the mandapa on par with sanctum sanctorum. Upapita consists of mahapadma,

kanda, kabota and above that four beautiful pillars are made. In between them Lord Muruga's Vahana peacock is installed. The four pillars have many sculptural works like beautiful lady, a lady holding the hand of her children, a elephant, Yali, swan, Lord Muruga's fight with asura, prastara, potigai, Ekatala Vimana and all these belonged to Nayak period.

### Dwajasthamba

Dwajasthamba is located in between Vahana and palipeedam. In the adhistana of Dwajasthamba are upapita with padma, jagati, kabotam are noticed. In the kabota, human sculptures, Linga, and Yali are seen as important features. Dwajasthamba base is called Brahmagandha, a part having four sides and is decorated with sculptures of Vinayaka, peacock, vel and Pasupatiswarar etc. The vishnugandha Dwajasthamba, a part which consists of eight sides Rudrakanda Dwajasthamba, a part with twelve sides are beautifully decorated with Nagapandam. The Dwajasthamba is heightened with architectural features like malasthanam, Padmabanda, Kalasa, Tadi, kudam, Padma, Idal and Palagai. In the prahara various sannidhis for god and goddess like Kailsalanathar sannidhi, Chandikeswarar sannidhi, Dakshinamurthi sannidhi, Vinayakar sannidhi, Bhogar sannidhi, Valliammai sannidhi are located. In each direction there is a Vahana mandapa<sup>15</sup>. Other than these pada Vinayakar sannidhi, Arulmigu Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, Azhagu NachiammanTirukovil and Mahisaswamarthini temple in Giriveethi of Palani hill add beauty to the Palani city.

### Poojas and Festivals

Prayer and worship are standard methods of worship in most religions. The poojas and festivals are conducted in the temple and they are a major source of attractions to the pilgrims. Always the temple at Palani is in festival mood. There are so many festivals like daily rituals, weekly festivals, monthly festivals and annual festivals, are conducted. Among them 'Thai Poosam' 'PanguniUthiram' are significant major festivals. The pilgrims who offer their prayer to Lord Muruga takes pleasure in visiting Palani by Pathayatra (by foot) in the season of festivals like Thaipooosam Panguni Uthiram and VaikasiVisakam.

### Thaipooosam

Thaipooosam is one of the important festivals celebrated after the harvest season in the tamil month of Thai (January, February). Though Thaipooosam festivals is celebrated in almost all the temples of Lord Muruga, it is celebrated at Palani in a very grand manner. The festival is celebrated for ten days in Palani hill temple and Peria nayaki amman temple. All procession are starting from Perianayaki amman temple, Palani. There are various procession and astonishing parade of people bearing kavadis(Fig 8) through Padayathra. During the procession to the temple the 'Kavadichindu' is sung by a trained singer and is repeated by other in chorus. There

are several types of kavadi like milk kavadi, tender coconut kavadi, cock kavadi, Theerthakavadi, flowerkavadi etc.; It is estimated that during Thaipooosam more than a lakh kavadis came from different places.

### Panguni Uthiram

Panguni Uthiram is celebrated when the full moon and star Uthiram appear in the sky. There are references in Sangam literature about the celebration of these festivals over 1000 years ago. The people never forget their tradition and they reach Palani by foot (padayatra) with their kavadis and Theertham<sup>16</sup>. This festival is celebrated for ten days in the month of Panguni (March-April) when the star Uthiram is rising in the sky. To enable the agriculturist and other rural- folk to participate enthusiastically in this festival it is conducted during the off-season. On each day the Utsavamurthi Muthukumaraswami along with his consorts is taken in procession in ivory palanquin in the forenoon and kamadhenu, golden peacock, attukida, silver elephant, silver chariot, golden horse and other Vahanas at night along the streets. On some days the procession covers the Giriveedhi around the hill temple of Lord Dhandayuthapani. Devotees and groups of trained Thevaram musicians sing Thiruppuhazh and other hymns in praise of Lord Muruga during the processions. In the vaikasi Visaka in Peria nayaki amman temple all the rituals are as usual. The festival is celebrated for 10 days with the car festival on the Visakam day.

Sashti, the sixth day of the full moon and sixth day of the new moon are favourite days for Lord Muruga. The devotees of Muruga undertake full or partial fasting for these six days. The Sashti falling in on the waxing moon period in the month of Aippasi (oct-Nov) is regarded as the day in which the Lord overwhelmed his enemy Surapadman. This is commemorated on the sixth day festival of kanda-sasti as a symbol of perpetual destruction of Evil by God. The kandasasti festival is celebrated in the hill temple. During the festival only the Utsavamurthi chinnakumarar comes down to Adivaram. After killing the Asuras at four directions – corners he returns back triumphantly to the hill temple. This happened in sixth day of sashti day. In the Seventh day, Thirukalyana Utsava is celebrated and Lord weds Valli in the hill temple and Deivanai in the Perianayaki amman temple. Agni Nakshatra, a fourteen day festival is celebrated in the hill temple. During this festival devotees go around Giriveethi early in the morning and in the evening. The devotees from kodumudi bring Cauvery water for the abhishekam of Lord Muruga. On the concluding day of the festival Goddess Perianayaki amman marches to adivaram and there is a majestic procession around giriveethi. The Karthigai star of every month is considered to be auspicious day in all Muruga temples and especially in Palani a large number of Muruga devotees used to visit the temple on this day.

### Vara Pooja

Two weekly poojas are observed in Palani temples. Somavara (Monday) is auspicious to God Siva, while Saravana (Friday) is pertaine to god Murugan<sup>17</sup>. As both these gods find place as Mulavas in Palani temples. The Sukravara pooja is celebrated both in Thiruavinakudi and at the hill temple. Special poojas are performed to god Dhandayudhapani, the Utsavar chinnakumarar and God Shanmuga. There will be procession of the Utsava deity daily in the golden Chariot in every evening. Palani area obtained a marked place in history due to the hill temple.

### Conclusion

The socio-economic and cultural life of the people is woven around the temple. The temple dedicated to Lord Dhandayudhapani swamy is run at present by Hindu Religious and charitable Endowment Board of Tamilnadu Government. The devotees who visit Palani get the grace of Lord Muruga and every year the number is increasing. The temple authorities and the Municipality in Palani are doing commendable services for welfare of the devotees

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**Figure I.** Vimana of Lord Dandhayudhapani swami temple



**Figure II.** Sikara



Figure III. Mahamandapa pillar



Figure IV. Paravel mandapa



Figure V. Gopura of the temple



Figure VI. Mulavar Lord dandayudhapani swamy



Figure VII. Vahana mandapa, deepasthampa



Figure VIII. Kavadi