



ISSN:2582-9513

Pranav Journal of Fine Arts

(A Peer Reviewed Quarterly Online Journal)

THE ARCHITECTURE OF BRIHADISHWARA TEMPLE- GANGAIKONDA CHOLAPURAM

Raghi Jana. J. M

Ph.D. Research Scholar (Bharatanatyam)
Bridge Academy College of Media and Fine Arts,
Affiliated to Tamil University – Tanjore.



ABSTRACT

India is a multi-century-old nation with a vibrant artistic and cultural heritage. Many of the practices and traditions are still observed and accepted. Each of the kingdoms that reigned over Tamilnadu made an effort to further its growth. Patronage of Pallava, Chola, Maratta, and Nayaka Rulers who ruled Tamilnadu over a number of centuries left behind a treasure trove of important information in the form of inscriptions, manuscripts, etc. as well as a visual treat through their artistic prowess displayed through the sculptures and paintings in Temples. This article is an attempt to bring out the architectural features of Brihadiswara temple – Gangaikonda Cholapuram.

AIM

The aim of the research is to project the architectural beauty and sculptures carved in the walls of the temple to showcase the contribution of the kingdom

KEYWORDS:

Chola, Architecture, Temple, Inscription, Sculptures, Dance & Music

INTRODUCTION:

Rajendhra Cholan, the son of Rajaraja Cholan, built (1039 AD) another temple at a village about 26 miles from Thanjavur on the model of the Big Temple with great expectations and named the place Gangaikonda Chola Puram⁽¹⁾. The place was also his capital for some time. Rajendra took an expedition towards North with his army and reached up to the river Ganga, subduing many kings en route. On his victorious return, he built the temple and named it as the Gangaikonda Choliswaram. The temple is similar in architectural design to the Big Temple in many respects.

After Rajendhra I, his successors continued the temple constructions in a smaller scale for about another hundred years until the Pandiyas took the stage. Many of the temples created during this period have become the nucleus of larger complex temples later. After Rajendhra III (1246-1279) the Chola dynasty declined with the rise of the Pandiyas from south and due to the pressure of the Rastrakutas and Western Chalukias from the Northwest.

Both the rulers and the artisans who created the two temples seem to have paid more attention to the huge rock structures and their greatness than the sculptured art in them. It's an ambitious attempt by Rajendhra, son of Raja Raja Cholan, after his victorious return from the expedition to north. The surrounding walls have few relief sculptural in the niches on the lines of The Big Temple. On the eastern side an impressive flight of broad stone steps lead to the temple interior but the door seem to remain closed most of the time.

The temple of Gangaikondacholapuram, the creation of Rajendra Chola I, was intended to exceed its predecessor in every way. Completed around AD 1030, only two decades after the temple at Thanjavur and in much the same style, the greater elaboration in its appearance attests the more affluent state of the



அண்ணா பல்கலைக்கழகம், சென்னை
(பொறியியல் தொழில்நுட்ப தமிழ் வளர்ச்சி மையம்,
கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை & கட்டுமானத்துறை)
தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக்கழகம், தஞ்சாவூர்
(கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை) மற்றும்
பிரணவ் நுண்கலை ஆய்விதழ்
இணைந்து நடத்திய பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம்
"தமிழரின் கட்டிடக்கலை தொழில்நுட்பம்"
Special Issue - Volume -2 Issue -2





ISSN:2582-9513

Pranav Journal of Fine Arts

(A Peer Reviewed Quarterly Online Journal)

Chola Empire under Rajendra. This temple has a larger Siva linga than the one at Thanjavur but the Vimana of this temple is smaller in height than the Thanjavur vimana.



Brihadisvara Temple, Gangaikonda Cholapuram

THE CHOLAS ARCHITECTURE

The Cholas were prolific temple builders right from the first king Vijayalaya Chola after whom the eclectic chain of Vijayalaya Chozhisvaram temple near Narttamalai exists. These are the earliest specimen of Dravidian temples under the Cholas. His son Aditya I built several temples around the Kanchi and Kumbakonam regions⁽²⁾.

Temple building received great impetus from the conquests and the genius of Aditya I Parantaka I, Sundara Chola, Rajaraja Chola and his son Rajendra Chola I. Rajendra Chola I built the Rajaraja Temple at Thanjavur after his own name. The maturity and grandeur to which the Chola architecture had evolved found expression in the two temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram. He also proclaimed himself as Gangaikonda. In a small portion of the Kaveri belt between Tiruchy-Tanjore-Kumbakonam, at the height of their power, the Cholas have left over 2300 temples⁽³⁾, with the Tiruchy-Thanjavur belt itself boasting of more than 1500 temples. The magnificent Siva temple of Thanjavur built by Raja Raja I in 1009 AD as well as the Brihadisvara Temple of Gangaikonda Cholapuram, completed around 1030 AD, are both fitting memorials to the material and military achievements of the time of the two Chola emperors. The largest and tallest of all Indian temples of its time, the Tanjore Brihadisvara is at the apex of South Indian architecture. In fact, two succeeding Chola kings Raja Raja II and Kulothunga III built the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram and the Kampahareswarar Siva Temple at Tribhuvanam respectively, both temples being on the outskirts of Kumbakonam around AD 1160 and AD 1200. All the four temples were built over a period of nearly 200 years reflecting the glory, prosperity and stability under the Chola emperors⁽⁴⁾.

Chola emperors patronized and promoted the construction of a large number of temples that were spread over most parts of their empire. These include 40 of the 108 Vaishnava Divya Desams out of which 77 are found spread most of South India and others in Andhra and North India. The fact is, the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam, which is the biggest temple in India and the Chidambaram Natarajar Temple were two of the most important temples patronized and expanded by the Cholas and



அண்ணா பல்கலைக்கழகம், சென்னை
(பொறியியல் தொழில்நுட்ப தமிழ் வளர்ச்சி மையம்,
கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை & கட்டுமானத்துறை)
தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக்கழகம், தஞ்சாவூர்
(கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை) மற்றும்
பிரணவ் நுண்கலை ஆய்விதழ்
இணைந்து நடத்திய பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம்
" தமிழரின் கட்டிடக்கலை தொழில்நுட்பம் "
Special Issue - Volume -2 Issue -2





ISSN:2582-9513

Pranav Journal of Fine Arts

(A Peer Reviewed Quarterly Online Journal)

from the times of the second Chola King Aditya I, these two temples have been hailed in inscriptions as the tutelary deities of the Chola Kings. The Brihadeeswarar Temple (11th century), Tanjore has a vimana tower that is 216 ft (66 m) high, a classic example of Dravidian architecture.

Temple shrine on the Koneswaram temple promontory extremity and the Ketheeswaram temple and Munneswaram temple compounds contained tall gopuram towers by Chola rule of Trincomalee, Mannar, Puttalam and Chidambaram's expansion that escalated the building of those syncretic latter styles of Dravidian architecture seen across the continent picture⁽⁵⁾.

The two Brihadisvara Temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram as well as the other two Siva temples, namely the Airavatesvara Temple of Darasuram and the Sarabeswara (Shiva)Temple which is also popular as the Kampahareswarar Temple at Thirubhuvanam, both on the outskirts of Kumbakonam were the royal temples of the Cholas to commemorate their innumerable conquests and subjugation of their rivals from other parts of South India, Deccan Ilangai or Sri Lanka and the Narmada-Mahanadi-Gangetic belts.

The Chola period is also remarkable for its sculptures and bronzes all over the world. The best example of this can be seen in the form of Nataraja the Divine Dancer and many fine figures of Siva in various forms, Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi. Though conforming generally to the iconographic conventions established by long tradition, the sculptors worked with great freedom in the 11th and the 12th centuries to achieve a classic grace and grandeur⁽⁶⁾.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE BRIHADISHWARA:

The Vimana over the sanctum is about 185 feet slightly shorter than the Thanjavur temple, having a slight concave shape in the middle. The Mandapam is a long hall with two rows of pillars in front of the sanctum with the entrance guarded by two statues of Dwarabalakas. The entrance is reached by two flights of steps on the two sides of the high porch. The main Mandapam has a door way on one of its sides with steps leading down to the ground. Beautiful Sculptural arts adorn the sides of the steps. The outer walls of the temple have niches with fine relief images of Gods. They are more or less similar to those found in the Thanjavur temple. A huge Nandhi sits on a high platform in front of the temple.

The rectangular temple stands in the middle of vast ground with high compound walls; and the main open entrance is flanked by about thirty feet high granite piled structure with two images of guardian deities on either side. In spite of its greatness and attraction the temple stands isolated within a huge walled complex. The daily rituals for the deity are being attended by a single priest. It is learnt that some celebrations and events are being sponsored to attract more admirers to this temple.

Near the landing of the steps an attractive relief sculpture is seen and an story is narrated by the locals about the image. In the sculpture Lord Siva is crowning a person sitting at his feet, the image of the person is purported to be that of Chola king Rajendhra, who is known to be an ardent devotee of the God. Symbolically it is to imply that the king is receiving the blessings of Lord Siva. The relief Sculptures are few for the size of the two temples in Thanjavur and Gangai Konda Chola Puram but they are well-defined and expressive. The creators seem to have more concerned with the structure grandness than the sculptural art.

The greatness of the two temples, the Brughadeswar and the Gangaikonda Chola Puram temples, show



அண்ணா பல்கலைக்கழகம், சென்னை
(பொறியியல் தொழில்நுட்ப தமிழ் வளர்ச்சி மையம்,
கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை & கட்டுமானத்துறை)
தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக்கழகம், தஞ்சாவூர்
(கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை) மற்றும்
பிரணவ் நுண்கலை ஆய்விதழ்
இணைந்து நடத்திய பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம்
"தமிழரின் கட்டிடக்கலை தொழில்நுட்பம்"
Special Issue - Volume -2 Issue -2





ISSN:2582-9513

Pranav Journal of Fine Arts

(A Peer Reviewed Quarterly Online Journal)

case the prosperity and affluence of the country under the Raja Raja and his son Rajendhra Cholan's rule. These temples served not only as places of worship but also as the centre for cultural and economic activities. Rocks and granites have never seized to inspire man. He skillfully transferred his thoughts, imaginations and creativity into stones.

The stone blocks in the peripheral walls of the Big Temple, Thanjavur are full of inscriptions giving valuable information for the scholars to study the past period.. The fifteen feet high stone wall on all three sides of the Srisailem temple in Andhra Pradesh containing hundreds of small sculptured panels looks like an illustrated picture book.

SCULPTURES OF GANGAI KONDA CHOLAPURAM TEMPLE

On entering through the gopura, one sees, beyond the dali-pitha, a huge bull, which, unlike its counterpart at Thafijaviir, is not monolithic. Two flights of steps, on the northern and southern sides, as at Thafijavir, lead up to two dzdra-pélas—huge monoliths that guard the first entrance to a long closed mandapa. The plinth of the entire mandapa up to the ardha-mandapa and mukha-mandape of the main temple is a part of the original structure itself, though its wall appears to have been renovated; the pillars and the platform are later additions.

The ardha-mandapa of the temple is approached by two flights of steps from the north and south. Here the mukha-mandapa is guarded on either side by two pairs of dodra-palas, and a third pair may be seen at the entrance to the east leading on from the main mandapa to the mukha-mandapa. Yet another pair of colossal dvara-palas guards the entrance to the sanctum. In the mukha-mandapa, the walls on the east, on either side, are decorated with carvings representing Siva in different aspects of anugraha (favour), such as Vishnvanugrahamiurti (bestowing grace on Vishnu who worships him with his lotus-eye), Ravandnugraha-mirti (blessing Ravana who is penitent after having raised mount Kailisa), Devyanugraha-mirti (bestowing grace on Devi who worships the liga), Kalyinasundara-mirti (going forth for his marriage attended by his bhita-ganas, goblins, and the marriage itself with all the incidental rejoicing and merry-making), Markandeyanugraha mirti (blessing his devotee Markandeya by rescuing him from Yama, the god of death, whom he overcame) and Chandesanugraha-miirti (blessing Chandeeá, who did not refrain from cutting off his father's legs for having interfered with his worship of Siva and bathed the liaga with the milk of cows in his care). To the northeast is a beautiful large-sized panel, a masterpiece of Chola art, which shows Siva bestowing his grace on Chandikegvara.

The sculptures in the temple are less numerous than in the Thafijavir one but are of the same nature. Here again we have representations of princely warriors, with swords and shields. Lakshmi and Sarasvati are shown seated in niches as at Thafijaviir. In the northern and southern niches of the central shrine are Bhiksha- tana-mirti and Chandesanugraha-mirti (pl. VII), the former disfigured with a plaster-coat. In the southern niches a figure, presumably that of Dakshinamirti, is missing: the rest variously represent dancing Ganeéa, Ardhanarisvara beside the bull, Hari-Hara and Nataraja (pl. VITT A)⁽⁷⁾ dancing along with Kali and Bhringi atten- ded by ganas and Karaikkalammaiayar playing cymbals. On the sides of the niche Vishnu plays the drum, Ganega and Karttikeya approach the scene on their vehicles, and Devi, with her arm resting on the bull beside her, watches the dance. To the west is Siva as Gangadhara appeasing Devi who is forlorn and sullen on account of her lord having received Ganga on his matted locks. On the sides of the niches is narrated the story of Bhagiratha's penance to bring Ganga down to the earth. Then there are Lingodbhava, Vishnu with his consorts and Karttikeya or Indra and Siva as Uma-sahita. On the walls of the niche with Uma-sahita, Vishnu is shown adoring him by offering his eye as a flower. The northern niches contain the 'figures of Kaldntaka with the story of Markandeya on the sides of the niche, eight-armed Mahishamardini standing beside her lion, Brahm&



அண்ணா பல்கலைக்கழகம், சென்னை
(பொறியியல் தொழில்நுட்ப தமிழ் வளர்ச்சி மையம்,
கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை & கட்டுமானத்துறை)
தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக்கழகம், தஞ்சாவூர்
(கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை) மற்றும்
பிரணவ் நுண்கலை ஆய்விதழ்
இணைந்து நடத்திய பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம்
'தமிழரின் கட்டிடக்கலை தொழில்நுட்பம் "
Special Issue - Volume -2 Issue -2





ISSN:2582-9513

Pranav Journal of Fine Arts

(A Peer Reviewed Quarterly Online Journal)

with a beard, accompanied by his consorts Savitri and Sarasvati (pl. IX A)⁽⁸⁾, Bhairava with eight arms, Siva as Madanantaka burning Manmatha (pl. VIII B), one of his hands in tarjani (threatening) attitude, Manmatha and his consort Rati, the former first shooting with a bow and then helpless, and other gods intervening on his behalf. The lowest series of panels on the base of the temple shows seated lions with one of the paws raised and rearing in an attitude usually found in the Pallava temples of the time of Rajasiraha (690-715)⁽⁹⁾ and with analogues at Prambanan in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION:

The core of our nation could be said to be art and culture. The majority of them date back centuries and have changed over that time as a result of influences from numerous religious traditions, conventions, and other elements. Through numerous references found in temples, inscriptions, and literary works even centuries later, it is possible to observe how Kings contributed to the growth and progress of the fine arts. Many experts are still looking for more useful data about the contribution of Kings to the growth of the Fine Arts. It is clear that several leaders of our nation laid the groundwork for the fine arts that are so common today. More research will throw more unknown information about their patronage thereby helping us understand better the lifestyle and passion of the people centuries ago.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Ponnuswamy karamadai, Nov 2015, The living rocks, New Century Book House Pvt, Ltd., ISBN :978-81-2343-094-2, PG NO -47
2. Tripath, S.M. (2001). Psycho-Religious Studies of Man, Mind, And Nature. Global Vision Publishing House. ISBN 9788187746041.
3. Article -Dr. Shivanand Yalala, Unique Features of Dravidian Architecture in India: A Retrospect,
4. Cynthia, Talbot (2001-09-20). Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra. Oxford University Pres. p. 37. ISBN 9780198031239.
5. Grimes, John A. (1996). A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy: Sanskrit Terms Defined in English. State University of New York Press. ISBN 9780791430682. LCCN 96012383.
6. Embree, Ainslie Thomas (1988). Encyclopedia of Asian history: Volume 1. Scribner. ISBN 9780684188980.
7. C. Sivaramamurti – The chola temples
8. Ibid
9. Ibid



அண்ணா பல்கலைக்கழகம், சென்னை
(பொறியியல் தொழில்நுட்ப தமிழ் வளர்ச்சி மையம்,
கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை & கட்டுமானத்துறை)
தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக்கழகம், தஞ்சாவூர்
(கட்டிடக்கலைத்துறை) மற்றும்
பிரணவ நுண்கலை ஆய்விதழ்
இணைந்து நடத்திய பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம்
" தமிழரின் கட்டிடக்கலை தொழில்நுட்பம் "
Special Issue - Volume -2 Issue -2

