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IJMASRI, Vol. 3, issue 1, pp. 395- 403, Oct. -2023

<https://doi.org/10.53633/ijmasri>

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY
ADVANCED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
(IJMASRI)**

ISSN: 2582-9130

IBI IMPACT FACTOR 1.5

DOI: 10.53633/IJMASRI

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**STUDY ON ARCHITECTURAL PLANING AND HISTORICAL EVIDENCES OF SRI
VEERATEESWARAR TEMPLE**

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Abstract

India is a country of temple, temple architecture were developed in India during ancient time. Evidence of temple architecture construction is in different style of architecture in various parts of India. In ancient temple architectures have three major type of architecture style is prominently ruled in India, those are based on regional style - Nagara, Vesara and Dravidian. The Nagara style of architecture in northern style, Dravidian style of architecture in Southern India and Vesara style architecture is a mixture style in western India, also have some regional style development of architecture in India. Temple architecture in Tamil nadu has rich evidences from cave temple developed into structural. The Veerateswarar temple is example of massive architecture feature and holds a numerical historical evidences. It is believed to be that Raja Raja Chola-I build a Brahadishwara temple after studying the architecture of this temple and so had a lot to explore the architecture feature of this temple and also have found epigraphy evidence of Raja Raja Chola-I. It is a birth place of Raja Raja Chola-I. This temple have many Hindu mythological stories, the important one is that eight special places where it is believed that Lord Shiva vanquished various demons and exhibited acts of bravery and this temple is one among them, known as VeerattaSthalams. Thirukkivilur is the second VeerattanaSthalam where the lord is believed to have vanquished the demon Andhakasuran. This paper dwells on salient feature of Sri Veerateswarar temple history, architectural planning, iconography, inscriptions, and discuss the other main features of the temple.

Key words: History, Architecture, Inscription and Sculpture.

Introduction

History of temple architecture started since Pallava period in south India. The earliest form of rock-cut architecture started in Pallava period in Tamil nadu. The Pallava's build a three stages architecture those are – Rock-cut, Monolithic and Structural temple.¹ In Mamallapuram the major land, where have evidence for all three stages of evolution architectural development of pallavas. Shore temple at Mamallapuram is an evidence of first structural form of temple. Which is the earliest evidence of Structural architecture of Dravidian style temple in Tamil Nadu. Pallava's are much involved in religious activities of both Shaivism and Vaishnavism. So, in period of pallavas have temple for both lord Vishnu and lord Shiva.² Later, Cholas is the notable kingdom in Tamilnadu, who used to construct a large massive structural temples. Large number of temples were constructed for lord Shiva in their dynasty. Chola period is famous for Architectural features, which has wide boundary enclosed wall, tallest Vimana and Gopuram. The Cholas are Saivism, so build a many temples for Lord Shiva.³ The present village Thirukovilur region was ruled by many dynasties from pallavas to Vijayanagara but the area was ruled by Malayaman chiefs and were in power under the chola dynasty.

Location

Thirukovilur is a town located in Kallakurichi district, Tamil Nadu. Which lies between 11°-12° 30' N latitude and 78°-37'-80° E longitude. Thirukovilur is about 35 km from Villupuram and southern about 50 km from Kallakurichi by bus. North-west 126 km from Katpadi railway line and with a total area of 11.99 Sq. Km (4.63 Sq. Miles).

History of Temple

History of this temple art and architecture goes back to pallavas. This village formerly known as Tirukkoalur, the home of the Malayaman Chiefs, popularly known from Sangam literature, who rules the region for centuries. Their capital, also called Koval (short for Kovalur). Tirumangai Alvar calls Him "TiruIdaikkali Alvar at Kovalur". In the eastern part of

Thirukkovilur the Siva temple lies and the presiding deity is called KovalVeerattaneswara of Kilur.⁴ Saiva Saints Appar and Sambandar (7th Century A.D) have sung hymns on the Lord of Shiva at this place⁵

Veerateswarar temple is one of the eight Veerattanams (Samharakshetrams) of Siva Known as Attaviratams and here, Siva is said to have overthrew the demon Andhakasura.

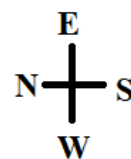
Inscription

This temple is not only famous for literary sources and also for it is epigraphical evidences. In the temple around the main sanctum, Arthamandapa, Mandapa and Gopuram also have an inscriptions. Totally, there are nearly 104 inscriptions carved on temple inner walls by many rulers in many sizes and periods, these inscription evidences have since Pallava ruler Dandivarman (813 AD)⁶ to Prantaka chola and finally, with Pandiyas (1276 AD) and Vijayanagara dynasty (1446 AD), he is last king ruled in the region, by these record have an information of rulers continue chronological order of dynasties ruled in the area, also have evidence for Rashtrakutas inscription also talk about Krishna-III being available in the Veeratteswarar temple, Thirukkovilur.⁷

The inscriptions in temple all of them are talk about Administration, maintenance of temple, and donations (Gold, Cow, lamp, etc). The inscription says the link with other countries, worship of temple and festival activities. Certain taxes were abolished for Brahmins. Some local ruler are do not instruct to not to collect a taxes for particular communities.

Form of Temple Architecture

Main sanctum of this temple is facing west. There is a wide distribution plan in the temple.



At the front of main shrine have a sixteen-foothall. Ahead is the Ambaal Temple is located on the right. There is an ancient three-tiered Rajagopuram in

Southern side of temple, north and western side have small entrance without gopuras, on the eastern side is with enclosed wall. On entering the shielded flagpole, in front of the flagpole is have a Nandimandapa. There is no any shrines/Niches outer side of main sanctum.

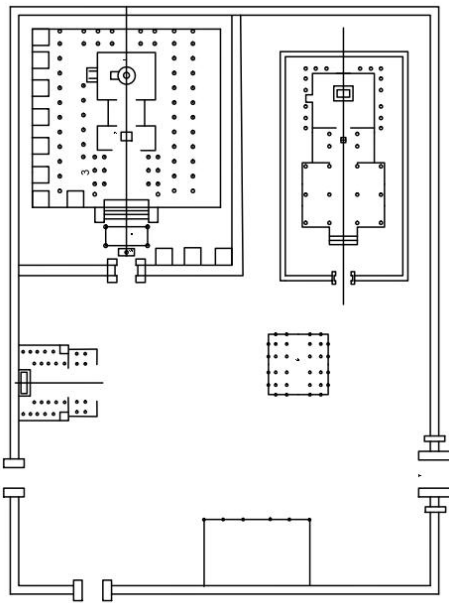


Figure 1: Plan of Temple

Panchamurthys are placed above the front gate. On the left side of the front pillar is a sculpture of MeiporulNayanar. To the right is the sannathi of Periyanaigandapati. Historians say that Gandapati was the one who removed Avvaiyar, who helped Avvaiyar reach Kailai before Sundar.

There is the SomaskanderSannidhi followed by the Maha Vishnu Sannidhi on the inner sanctum boundary wall. On the opposite pillar Lord Palani is present.

On the left side of the gate, Lord Arumuga is depicted with Valli and Deivanai. Adjacent are NatarashaS Sabha and GajalakshmiSannidhi. Manivasaka and Sivakami are nearby and there is Thirumipephera. Capillary icon is also available. If you go inside after bowing to the Thala Murthy, AndakasuraSamkaramurthy, there are the Utsavathirumenis of NarasinghaMundayaraiyar and MeiporulNayanar. Durga embodied in the kotama is shown standing with eight arms.

These sculptures are wonderfully carved in small niches. These sculptures in the temple during the mother of Rajaraja-I

To the right is the Theerthawari (well). After that, there are Bhairava and Navagraha shrines. Panchalingams such as SuriyalingamEkambareswarar, Vishwanath, Vishalakshi, images of Ardhanareswarar, Agathiyar, Surya, Sundarar etc. Jatamuni, Ayyanar, Veerabhatra, Brahma, Maheshwari, Vaishnavi, Varagi etc. all the figures are set in relief sculptures. Following VinayagarSannidhi are sixty-three moolathrimenis at southeast corner. It is said that ShivalingaThirumeni is Swayambu form outer side of moolavar have Two DwaraBalakas at both side of entrance.

ThiruVeerateswarar Temple belongs to Paranthakan I period. The temple evolved during each reign. The Shiva temple covers an area of four acres.

Sanctum (Main Shrine)

The sanctum is square in shape, the middle portion of sanctum have placed a Swayambu lingam, the lingam with a square structure base. The floor level of the sanctum is slightly lower than that of the Arthamandapam and the Mahamandapam. There is a small tank in the shape of a lion face to allow the ablution water from the sanctum to come out on the northern side. Adjacent to them, around the walls of the sanctum arthamandapa, Neerazhipatti is found at a height of about 1 foot. The well is believed to have been taken during the Chola period.

ArthaMandapam

Adjacent to the sanctum is an oblong square structure. Dwarapalakas are on either side of the gate of the Arthamandapam. These Dwarapalakas features Chola art may belong to the 10th-11th century.

Mahamandapam

This hall has six semi-pillars and fourteen full pillars. It is located with a cylindrical shape. The platform is built along the southern wall of the hall. It is a platform set up to arrange the utsavamurtis. A large wooden door is fixed at the gate of this hall.

Pre-Mandapam

Following the mahamandapam is the pre-mandapam, with a 26 full pillars (Animal and birds) and 8 half pillars adorn this hall. The first round goes through around this hall.

Vimana

The focal point of the temple is the sanctum and the building above the sanctum is called Vimana. This vimana is built with all the parts of the temple such as adhitanam, padam, wall, kapodhakam, kandam, sikaram, kalasam. Devakothams are arranged in the Dravidian style architecture pattern.⁸ The first part of the Vimana have two torises composed of Aditanam lass decoration with upanam, jagati, kumudam, kandam and pattikai elements from bottom to top.

The weak part is slightly buried in the earth. The adjacent wall has several quarter lines and devakosthams. In the semi-pillars on the wall, the pillars' anchors are designed from top to bottom as pothikai, veerakandam, panhalla, kandam, asyam, padmam, virutham, kalasam, adikatu, katumalai. The sanctum has a semi-pillar on both sides with Dakshinamurthy on the south, Lingotbhava on the west and Brahma on the north.

The height of Devakostam is 3 feet 2 inches. Devakottam are round in the middle with Bhadrathorana. Below the prasthara there are Bhoothavari and above it rows of lions' nests. A human figure and a flower-like structure are depicted within circular niches with lion heads. Airplanes are made of clay. Also, between the huts and the roads, Dakshinamurthy in the south, Narasingaperumal with Devi in the west and Brahman in the north are placed at three levels. To the west is a sculpture of Narasingha Perumal in a seated position with his left leg folded and hanging from his right. There are sculptures of Sridevi and Bhudevi.

On the north side the Brahman is seated with his left leg folded and his right leg hanging. On the four sides of the bivalve are hooded human figures (flying angels) bearing flight. Next to it there are nests in the lower row of the cervical region. Greevam is presented with a circular structure and sikaram with

vesarasikaram. The height of the plane from the nave to the stupa is a total of 24 feet 10 inches. The height of the adistana is 13.6 feet from the jagadi to the wall and 18 feet 1 inch from the wall to the jagadigriva, the vesara peak is 4 feet 3 inches and the casket is 2 feet 6 inches.

First Prakaras

The first prakaras contains the shrines of attendant deities Saptamathas, Periyanaiganaapati, Muruga and Chandikeswarar. Deities of Dakshinamurthy, Lingodpavar, Brahma and Nardhana Vinayagar and Durga are found in the Devakotams of the sanctum sanctorum.

Second Prakaras

The first prakara is followed by the second Prakara. Four steps are laid down to get to the second prakara. The second spiral platform is about 5 feet high. So sanctum, arthamandapam, mahamandapam and front hall are located below the second prakara. Large wooden doors are installed at the entrance gate of mandapa.

A small hall has been built next to it. The platform is set up like a platform with two full pillars on either side. On the upper part of the wall there are sculptures of Risapanthikar, Vinayagar, Bhutaganas, Valli, Deivayanai along with Muruga, Sundarar and Nandis and Peacocks on the second prakara wall. They have seven peacocks facing north, four nandi on the east wall, six nandi on the south and four nandi on the west.



Third

Fig. 2: Pakaras

Prakaras

A wall of about 12 feet height has been constructed followed the second prakara.

Pillars



Fig. 3: Pillars

The pillars are placed in sanctum, arthamandapa and mahamandapa.⁹ These pillars are categorized in two, those are: Full pillar (individual pillar) and hall pillar (attached with sanctum). There are 22 full pillars and 8 half pillars in the surrounding inner-wall the Veerateswarar sanctum (Gharpagrath). There are 18 pillars carved into the wall of the Arthamandapa. There are 40 cylindrical pillars lined up across the varandah area (with attendant deities) in the first circle. Also square (four-bar) and sixteen-bar pillars are present in the first circle. There are 16 pillars carved into the mahamandapa wall. Each of these pillars is carved with beautiful carvings. All these pillars are designed in the manner of Cal, Inter, Padmakattu, KalasamKudamPalikai, Panhwal, Veerakandam, etc. The pillars are square, the long band is quadrangular, and the middle part is konda with garland hangings.

Nandi Mandapam

The Nandimandapam, next to the tower entrance flagpole, is built with four pillars. Pillars are of four bar, eight bar, structure. There are nandi at the four corners of the prastharam, which looks like it is visible from all four sides.

The altar next to it, the UpanamJagati, the VriddhaKumuda, and the foot above it are decorated with lions' nests and flower-like arrangements.



Fig. 4: Nandi Mandapam

Flagpole

A long flagpole in the shape of a round cylinder is seen on the high pedestal, which is set up as a square shaped high taliya. In the middle of the flagpole, in the form of a square Nandi on the east side, Vinayaka on the south side, SomaskandarSipham with a (peacock) vehicle on the west side, Murugan, Valli and Deivayanai on a peacock vehicle on the north side are shown in copper plate relief sculpture.

Gopuram

The temple entrance tower is located. There is an ancient three-tiered Rajagopuram. This gopuram is made of stone from the foundation to the prastharam. After this, there is a complex structure with classes like kambu, upanam, padmam, kambu, jagati, kumudam, kambu, kandam, kambu, patti, kambu, kandam, kambu, vedika. It is called Kalkaram, and above it there are five kalasanchals on the top of the gopuram.



Fig. 5: Rajagopuram

TirukalyanaMandapam

There is a mandapam outside the temple. It is called KalyanaMandapam. To the left of this mandapam Shiva temple is Thirukalyanamantapam, there are 12-pillars at the front entrance where devotees come and sit. Each is cylindrical and square shape. After that, inner gate, there are 21 full pillars and 25 half pillars supporting the walls.



Fig. 6: ThirukalyanaMandapa

Iconography

In this temple have a many unique iconographic features of Gods and Goddess, Those are placed around all the directions of the Sanctum, Mandapas, and pillars, They includes Dhakshnamoorthi,

Lingobathvar, Brahma, Vishnu, Durga, Dhuvarabalagars, Muruga,Valli and Deyvanai, Gajalakshmi, Bairavar, Surya, Navagrahas, Saphthakanigal, Sandikeswarar and Ayyanar,¹⁰ Some important sculptures in the temple described below.

Moolavar

The ShivalingaTirumeni in the Sanctum sanctorum of Veerataneswarar temple is said to be Swayambu form.¹¹ It is said that when it was excavated at the time of restoration, it continued to go downwards for more than 25 feet, so it was left as it was and it was built around it with the addition of an audaiyar. The service rendered majestically by the moolava, dependent on the naga ornament, never leaves our eyes.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9: Lord Shiva

Periyanaigal Ganapati

AvvaiPratiyar, who is well-versed in Senthamil, worships Lord Ganesha every day with fragrant flowers. DeivaManangamalum will sing praises with songs. In this way, one day SundaramurthyNayanar and CheramanParthumalNayanar came to know that they were going to Thirukailayam. He also intended to go along. As usual, Ganapati thought to finish the puja soon and leave. In the same way, he hurriedly worshiped the elephant-faced Lord. Seeing Lord Vinayaka's title, Mother. They said what the hurry is. I will send before him to hear the truth; they said to do pooja calmly. Avvaiyar, who was happy to hear that, composed a song called Sithakalapa and worshiped. Lord Ganesha, who was so pleased; by his praise, avvai oppressed Pratiyar and left him in Kailayam. Thus they revealed the fact that Ganesha worship is beneficial to me. Lord Vinayaka took the form of Vishuvarupam while placing Avvaiyarin Kailayam, hence the name Periyanaigal Ganapati was given to him from that day.

Nayanmars

In this temple shrines are not only for God and Goddess but also for Poets who were sung hymns about the temple. On the southern side of the sanctum, there is a shrine of sixty three and four among them facing

north. The height of this statues are of 40 cm height and of 15 cm Width.



Fig. 10: Appar



Fig. 11: Manikavasakar

i. Thirunnasambandar

He is standing in a precarious position. He carries a cloth in his arms folded across his chest, and has a long crown on his head.

ii. Appar

He is standing in a dangerous position with both arms folded across his chest with a bald head and wearing Uttirakshamala around his neck and hands. He is seen as having long ears. The shaft is on the left side.

iii. Sundara Murthy

Sundaramurthy is standing in a precarious position with full clothes around the waist. In his right hand

(Palm leaf), he carries a stick and a long stick in his hand. He is seen in royal attire with a turban on his head and ornaments on both ears, neck and shoulders.

iv. Manikavasakar

He is standing half clothed in the middle leaning on the right side in a dangerous position. He is standing wearing an Uttiraksha garland around his neck, holding a pen in his right hand and a sounding board in his left hand.

Amman Temple

The temple entrance is facing west and has a sixteen foot hall in front. On the left side of Amman is the sanctum of MeiporulNayanar. Next to that, it is VinayagarSannadi. In front of the Amman temple is an ancient three-tiered Rasagopuram. Next to it, if you go inside, there is a MukhaMandapam. There are two pillars in it. These pillars are eight tiered with beautiful carvings.

On both sides of the front hall, DwaraVinayaka, DwaraMurugan are next to him on left and right, Valli and Deivana. Followed by Arthamandapam has four pillars around. The uniform pillars are placed in all corners. After that, there are DwaraPalaki at the mouth of Karuvarai. Andaram is located next to DwaraPalaki. The sanctum is in a square shape layout. Here Amman is seen standing in a golam with four arms bearing Abhayavaratha mudras. In front of it is the Nandi and the altar.



Fig. 12: Amman Gopuram

Vimana

The Atitanas area is of normal texture. Devakotta sculptures are found in the wall areas. There are sculptures in the prasthara (nostrils). The vimana is made of stone from the adittanam to the prastharam. It is called Kalkaram. Mud plaster were used for the construction. Vimana consists of vesarasikhara structure and kalas. There are goddess sculptures on all four sides. The cast also has sculptures of flying angels. There is also a bell mandapam above the mandapam in front of Amman temple. A large brass bell is built here.

Devagotas

On the outer wall of the sanctum along the road of Vimana, the Devakottams are situated in three parts namely south, east and north. Devakothams are located between the two semi-pillars.

Import notes on Temple

The temple holds a many literate sources about poets, who were sung a about the temple like Avvayar and Kabilar. By these evidences come to know the poets of ancient time and their years. Nayanmargal praised the Devaras about this temple at 7th century AD. Paari's daughters Angavai and sangavai marriage ceremony happened in the temple. In this temple in and around the complex carved a 104 inscription gives a sources of Pallavas, Cholas mostly engraved a large number of inscription in the temple. Later ruler are of Imperial Pandyas and finally, Vijayanagaras inscription found in the temple. All these, information gathered by the inscription. Chronological order of rulers, who controlled the region in their regnal years. The Rajaraja Chola-I, inscription gives an important record, that king Rajaraja chola –I who build the great massive temple of Brahadishwara is a got an idea from this temple plan, which is mention in the inscription. All the rulers regnal year is mentioned, few rulers, their activities and boundary ruled, also have evidence of donation and maintenances of the temple. The Shiva temple is constructed in chola period. Most of Shiva temple are facing in eastern direction in Tirukovilur region, but, the only temple of Veerateswara temple is facing western side. This is the unique and important evidence of the temple and evolution of Pillars.

Discussion

Thirukoyilur region is very wealthy in historical period as well as the regions are both the Saivism and Vaishnaism, that Saivism is prominent during Chola period. This temple is a good examples for how wealthy the historical period is expressed as a built environment, Cultural history of the whole region is understand through the Architectural uniqueness, Inscriptional richness, Iconographic lavishness. Here, Devi has separate Shrine and this glorious belongs to Chola period. The literary evidences of the temples helps us to reconstruct the religious history of the temple as well as general political conditions and this particularly gives a vivid idea about Post Sangam age and also shows the birth of many saints and scholars. The large number of inscriptions during the Chola reign shows the chronology of continuous rulers and their contributions to the Veerateeswarar temple. This temple is a granary of art and architecture of Thirukoyilur region.

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