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## ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF SRI VAHEESWARA TEMPLE AT KEERANUR OF DINDIGUL DISTRICT



### ABSTRACT: -

**T**he earliest temples are found near the hill tops and on the banks of sacred tanks or of holy rivers. It was believed that the godly element was actively at work in places of natural beauty. The images might have been simply enshrined under the trees in early days. The sthalavirukshas or the sacred trees of the temples emphasized the fact of its association with the temple. The earlier temples were built with perishable materials like timber and clay. Cave temples, stone temples, or temples built with bricks came later. Heavy stone structures with ornate architecture and sculpture belong to a still later period. Tamil nadu is replete and reputed for its ancient temples. These innumerable ancient temples situated in villages and towns are the centres of our civilization, culture and social activities. Besides temples are instrumental for the growth of religion. Present study highlights the architectural features of Sri Vaheeswara temple at Keeranur of Palani.

**KEY NOTES:** *Tamilkoorum nallulagam, Cheranadu, Cholanadu, Pandya nadu, Thondai nadu, Kongu nadu, Stalavirukshas, Sri Vaheeswara temple ..,*

### INTRODUCTION:

As with the Indian art, Tamil art which

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included architecture, sculpture and painting, stresses the plasticity and fluidity of forms. Most traditional Tamil art is atleast nominally religious, usually centred on Hinduism. Although the religious element is often only on occasionally humanist themes. Tamil sculpture ranges from the elegant stone sculptures in the temples of the bronze icons, with exquisite details. There are numerous temples in Tamilnadu which have been sung about by great religionists from time to time. The Tamil country far south of the Vindiyas was called variously as Tamilaham or Tamilkoorum nallulagam and Tamilnadu in ancient times. This was divided into three principal kingdoms and five or more feudatory chieftains; broadly speaking, the Tamil land was divided into five main territories and the minor chieftains were their neighbours. These were named as Cheranadu, Cholanadu, Pandya nadu, Thondai nadu and Kongu nadu.

### METHODOLOGY

Here both descriptive and analytical methods are inevitable. The Hindu temples have served as places of worship and pilgrimage centres establishing a nexus among Deities, devotees and priestly intermediaries. Art history of Tamilnadu is antiquarian and glorious. Southern Tamil nadu has many pilgrim centres that contain beautiful monuments representing treasure houses of native art, architecture and sculpture. Tamilnadu is culturally the most advanced part of India. Its socio- cultural and religious practices date back to antiquity. Thus temples played an important role in the life of the people.

### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCES:

In the architecture of India, the impact of the

Dravidian art has had its consummate stage. The element upana has been buried under the earth. Next is the Athisthana ie., in the padapandha type. In the Adhisthana are the Jagathi, Muppattai Kumuda, Kanda, Pattihai and Vethikai. These are well wrought in block stones. The Jagathi is a feet in height while the Thripattai Kumuda also of the same height. The height of the Upana is nearly five feet. This kind of Adhistana can be found in the Tirumal Temple of Koduvai and Vira Choleswara Temple in Periakottai. One can see the inscriptions that belong to the Kongu chola days in parts of the Adhistana. Next to the Adhistana is the pada. The temple Sastras and Agamas refer to this as pitti and wall. This part consists of many inscriptions can be linked to this temple architecture. In the pada portions there are the pilasters. On the pilasters artistic portions like the malasthan, Thadi, Idhazhl, Palahai and Virakanda have been carved according to the agamas.

On the pada portions such type of pilasters has been carved. This can be referred to the Kongu Chola artistic traditions.<sup>2</sup> The pothikai found in the pilasters are of an ordinary sort. The pillars found here are all of pilasters with eight sides. Each pilaster are at a height of nearly five feet. To each side there are four pilasters. On the walls there are many Deva Kosthas are not like sculptures but are like the Madakuzhi ie., niche. On either side the pilasters have been carved ordinarily. But the Pilasters bear all the elements that have been dexterously carved. The Kodikkarukku on the top of the pilasters and elegant with the lion face. In the same Devakostas the Kodikkarukku with the Mahara face can also be found.

### **PRASTHARA :**

This is quite different from other temples and is slightly decorated. The Prasthara Kudus are in the faces of the simha. But on the upper part of the prasthara, there are no butaganas or the rows of the lions. In a few temples there are the craftsmanship and decoration can be found. In the junction where the prasthara and the first thala meet there are structures of Neertharai ie., Pranala with the lions faces.

This temple bears the elements of the ordinary architecture and also has only one floor. One can see the engravings like the relief sculptures and relief panels, the pilasters and the Kostha. According to the four directions the Kosthas have been installed and relief sculptures are found. In the first thala are the Sala and Kudas. The vimana thala has been borne by the male and female sculptures which are stucco in nature. Next to this is the vimana which bears the griva portion and the Sculptures are carved accordance with the agamas. Next to the griva kosthas, the sikhara with four sides are carved aesthetically. On the four sides, the Mahanasi Kudus are found. The Kalasa that is found here has the basis of the artistic workmanship of the present day.

The temple Vimana from the Upana to the Prasthara are beautiful in stone craftsmanship. The other portions like the thala, sikhara, grieva and stupi are of stucco structures and bears the architecture of the later days of the Kongu Cholas. In comparing this temple with other Saiva Temples, the architectural designs found in the Vimana are systematic and consummate with the decoration about them. In the devakostha, the present day craftsmanship can be seen.

### **ARTHAMANDAPA :**

The architectural designs found in the Vimana are also found in the artha mandapa. Here the Upana has been concealed under the earth and the adhisthana bears many important information. Like the adhistana in the sanctum here also there are the jagathi, Thripatta Kumuda, Kanda, Pattikai and Vethika. Next to this in the pada portion the devakostas structures and pilasters are engraved like the ones found in the Vimana. The prasthara has been fully carved and the pilasters are four sided. The architectural designs are well carved with the needed measurements. There is the simple prasthara and near it the four Kudus, which exhibits the magnificent growth of the art. On the upper and lower portion of the prasthara many decorations and buthagana structures are found as in the sanctum. Hence in the art of architecture the sanctum and arthamandapa possess the same craftsmanship on the outer sides. The architecture found in the Mahamandapa are all made of stones.

### **MAHAMANDAPA :**

The Mahamandapa bears the Architectural style of the Dravidian style exhibited in the block stone as that found in the sanctum and arthamandapa. Here one can see the samples of the pilasters and the simple

adhishtana. On the Pada portion of each side there are two pilasters. There is simple prasthara and beside it the upper roof ie., Vidhana which is made in the block and hard stone workmanship. The pada portion of this mandapa is nearly to feet height with fifteen feet in length. Its breadth is more than fifteen feet. The circle shaped four pillars found in the inner side of the mandapa. Props its Vidhana, the sculptures that are fully decorated also reveal the oldness about them.

#### **MUKHAMANDAPA :**

In this temple there is Mukhamandapa which is otherwise the mukhyamandapa can be seen. Here there is not the adhishtana and the pilasters. The pada structures are made of block stones along with that are the prasthara and the kudas. This mandapa is nearly twenty feet in length as against twenty feet in breadth and are of stone work. In a few Kongu Chola Padas the relief sculptures will be carved. But here no such structure are found. In the inner and outer sides of the padas of the mandapa many information are engraved.

#### **KALA BHAIRAVA SANNITHI :**

To the north prahara of this temple on the north eastern side in the sub sannithi of Bhairava facing to the south. If one examines the art of architecture followed in the carvings these points can be mentioned. Since it is a subshrine there is an ordinary adhistana. Similarly there is the simple pada and prasthara architectural design they have fully followed the right measurement on the sides of the pada, there are no Kosta structures and pilasters. But in the Prasthara portions Kudas have been carved. This sub sannithi also has the beautiful Vimana, the griva kosthas, the radius shaped Sikhara and sthupi. In the four corners side of the Vimana the bhutaganas sculptures are in relief forms. On the four directions of the Sikhara there are Mahanasi kudas and rare kudas. This vimana, from adhishtana to prasthata has been sculptured with the block stones. The other elements are of the relief structure with the present artistry. Since it is the sub Sannithi, a beautiful Mukhamandapa has been constructed. The two pillars that have been installed in the mukha mandapa props the Vidhana part. These two pillars have the brahma kanda structure ie., four sided, and the Vishnukantha structures ie., the eight sided structure. Besides it also has the simple pothika. These pillars are eight feet in length props nearly eight feet in height possesses the four feet circumference. Though they abound in the simple structure.

#### **OTHER SUB SHRINES :**

For the Lord Chandeswara, a sub-sannithi has been constructed of the relief workmanship of the present days facing the Moolavar. Though the craftsmanship is relief in nature the features of architecture have been well followed. There is another sub sannathi being put up in the west prakara for Ganapathi. These sub sannithies are built following the agamas, vasthu sastras and traditions.

#### **THE MANDAPAS PILLARS :**

At the entrance of the Muhamandapa, on either sides there are the decorative arches and two pilasters. The Vahana seated in the Muhamandapa as a sample for architecture, there are the four pillars in the circular form. There four pillars bear the ordinary pothikai about them. The four pillars found in the mandapa and constructed at a height of nearly eight feet. Including the Uthira portion they are at a height of nearly nine feet and four feet in circumference. All the pothikas have been carved facing to the east western directions. Its Vithana portion has been put up to the north southern direction.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Finally we can say the following suggestions. In this temple, the four pillars are simple to understand the development in architecture. Other pillars have been annexed to the wall. Each pillar is nearly seven feet in height and four in breadth and bears the Uthira portion. The gap between the pillars are nearly nine feet. In the corner side of the pada of the mandapa there are inscriptions bearing information. The pillars are of four sides, fourteen sides and eight sides. But the four sided pillars are found in plenty. There are two relief structures and decorative workmanship. The potikai found in this mandapa are also carved to the east western direction. In

certain portions of this type is conjectured to be after the days of the Kongu cholas. In this mandapa there is the individual sculptures of Kannappa Nayanar. The Vidhana structures are carved to the North Southern direction. This mandapa has twenty feet length and twenty feet breadth about if it is considered significant since it has the sanctun, the on the mandapa and mukha mandapa in a while entity. The palipita and Vahana are very ancient in nature the traditional South India architecture is reflected in the temple completely. The Vidhana designs, the inscriptions, the pada are also noted here.

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