

ARCHITECTURAL GRANDEUR OF SRI ADHI RETHINESWARAR TEMPLE - A STUDY

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When we talk at temple arts, we cannot forget that in Tamil land Arts like sculpture, painting, music and dance have grown with the temples either as part of temple architecture or as part at temple ritual or both quite early in their history. The Tamils had realized that it could be used as the best form at spiritual expression and that true art was fundamentally found in our temples, find a progressive growth in its content, quality and excellence from age to age, and each age representing a new phase in its spiritual advancement and mental evolution.

Architecture being a technical art, forms have been handed down traditionally and its principles practiced almost mechanically the higher phonetic arts, however, at sculpture and painting admit up no such mechanical treatment. They need an individual polarization and intensity a higher from at emotive and intellectual expression for which environmental peace at heart are essential.

Grants inscribed on copper plates proclaim a degree of aesthetic and artistic attainment that could well quality and the pattern of Architecture during the period of Pandyas was by way of adding massive compound walls to the temples.¹

There is evidence at transfer at skill from wood work to stone work, and the indigenous origin at the primitive hut in to a temple. The forms of architecture changed slowly and the development is primarily one at ornamentation, so much so the history of Dravidian architecture reduces itself to the history at ornamentation. There is not much structural development, the

methods of its construction are heavy elements though the sculptural part of the work is exceedingly interesting²

As the development of Art and Architecture largely depended on the regal patronage, this short survey at the political history will help in assessing the evolution at the twin arts, architecture and iconography in this region. In this paper an attempt has been made to reveal the architectural glory of sri adhi rethineswarar temple at thiruvandanai.

Thiruvadanaï which is popularly known as Ajagajapuram in Sanskrit is the ninth among the fourteen sacred Sivasthalams in Pandya Nadu. The temple is said to have been built by Pandya Kings. It was well maintained by the Nayak kings of Madurai. The inscriptions in the temple throw light on its antiquity. The great saivite saint Thirugnana Sambandar who has composed a sacred padhigam in praise of this sthalam has visited this reputed shrine, which is now under the patronage of the Raja or Ramanathapuram. Sri Arunagirinathar has also glorified this sthalam in his famous Thiruppugazh.³

The temple which covers an area of about 10 acres has a gigantic 139 feet high rajagopuram with nine tiers and presents an inspiring view. The gopuram is a specimen of Dravidian art. It was recently renovated. It has two prakarams and two sanctum sanctorum apart from a beautiful mandapam in front of the Swamy Sannadhi called Chockuttanchari mandapam which consists of about 291 artistically carved granite pillars.⁴

Moolavar Sri Adhi rethineswarar is facing east situated in a separate sanctum stands his divine consort Sri Snegavalli, who is also known as Ambayiravalli. According to a legend, it is said that Sri Surya Bhagavan (or) Sun made this beautiful Lingam from a blue diamond, installed it here, offered worship to it and regained his lost powers, when one of the wheels of his divine chariot and one of his seven horses stopped all of a sudden. The sacred surya theertham is also supposed to have been created by sun god. It is also said that the great sages Agasthyar, Vasishtar, Markandeyar Romesar and the Devas Sri Varunar, Varuni, Kamadhenu and Arjuna and King Musukunda had offered worship to the Lord here and attained salvation Sri Viswanathar, Visalakshi, Varadaraja, Peruma, Sri Devi, Bhu Devi, Suryar, Chandrar, Saneeswarar,

Bairavara, Vinayakar, Subramaniyar⁵, Dakshinamoorthy and the Panchalingas are the other deities here. There also several festival idols available made of panchahgam.

Ramanathapuram contains seven of the fourteen reputed Sivasthalams in the Pandya country. With a majestic 150 feet gopuram signaling welcome to the devotees, this old sculptured Siva temple was founded by Sundara Pandya and Kulasekara Pandya during 30 A.D. The temple is 432 feet long and 252 feet broad and is surrounded by a wall. Koothan Sethupathi who ruled over Ramanathapuram during 1621-1635 made additional endowments to Thiruvadanaï temple Sadaïka Thevar who was in Ramanathapuram during 1605 to 1621 made grants to the temple. Hiranya Garbhayaji Sethupathi has also made grant to this temple and has recorded it in two copper plate sasanams.⁶

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Adhi Rethineswarar (Moolavar), Mandapam, Nandi, Balipeedam, Dwajasthambam, Suriyan, Kalyana mandapam, Madapalli, Sixty three nayanmars, Dakshinamoorthy, Vinayagar, Somaskandar, Varunalingam, Viswanathar Visalakshi, Subramaniar, Valli & Deivayanai, Mahalakshmi, Chandikeswarar, Natarajar, Sivakami & Manickavasagar , Karuvoolam, Vairavar, Chandran, Dandayudhapani, Front Mandapam, Yagasalai , Snegavalli Ambal, Chandikeswari, Palliyarai, Vahanamandapam, Mandapam.

The front view of the enchanting Rajagopuram of Adi Rethineswarar temple, Thiruvadanaï. Some of the beautiful images on the Rajagopuram of the temple are attracts the impression of the people. Festival images of Lord Natarajar and Sivakamy Amman Images of Candikeswarar with Suryan a rare feature in the temple. A view of the gopuram and vimanas in the temple of more aesthetic Another view of the gopuram. The paintings of the temple depicting sthalapuranam of the region.⁷

Siva is the third member of the Hindu trait and is generally worshipped in the form of Linga fixed on a pedestal. The common name applied to His is Rudramurthi and He has four hands of which the upper ones hold the

kettle. Drum and the 'deer' the two lower hands showing the abhaya and the varda postures. He has three eyes, Standing images of Siva generally belong to the class known as Ashtamurtis. The Linga with five faces called panchamukha-Linga⁸.

Nataraja

Nataraja is known well dancing form of God Siva. He has four arms and holds udukkai and another arm represents abhaya. The arm holds fire and the other is in gaja-hasta pose. The dance is known as ananda tandava. One leg is placed on the back of the demon apasamara.

Urdha Tandava

The god has his right leg raised straight up so as to reach the top of the crown. There was once a dispute between Siva and his consort Kali as to who was better in the art of dancing. Siva in order to suppress her pride, lifted up one of his leg. Kali was too modest to imitate Siva in this performance and she accepted the superiority of Siva.

The agamas speak of 7 dancing postures of Siva. The first called ananda thandava or the joyous dance. The second is his evening dance sandhya tandava. The third is Uma tandava that is dance with his consort Uma. The fourth, Gowri tandava, one of the left hands of Siva held a serpent. Nandi stands on the right side and parvai (Gowri) is on the left. In the fifth form kalika tandava, the god had only two eyes but eight arms. The dance is called samhara tandava 'the death-dance' shows the god with 3 eyes with 8 arms. The left leg is placed on apasmara and the right leg is raised.

Dakshinamurthi

This image generally occupies a niche in the south wall of the central shrine. This is the form of Siva engaged in yoga. The general posture of the image is the right leg bent vertically and placed on the body of the demon Apasmata. When Dakshinamoorthi holds in his fore-arms and He is called Vinadhara-Dakshinamoorthi.

Lingodbhava

Lingodbhava is a familiar figure of Siva seen on the west wall of the central shrine of Siva temples. He is represented within a huge Lingas Brahma in the form of a swan is censoring up on the left side of Siva. While, on the right side, Vishnu is delving below into the depths of the earth in the form of a boar.⁹

Bhikshatana

When Siva cut off one of the heads of Brahma He incurred the sin of killing a brahmana and the skull of Brahman, it is stated, struck to Siva's pajmand would not drop down. In order to get rid of the sin Siva had to wonder about as a naked beggar. This form is known as Bhikshatana, as demon called Kundodara, with protruding teeth, stands on the left side of the god carrying on his left side of the god carrying on his hand a begging bowl. The Bhikshatana-murti at Perur has eight arms and holds different weapons in each of them.¹⁰

Kankala Murti

Kankala Murti form is closely ailed to Bhikshatana and in his upper right hand he holds the peacock's feathers and skeleton (kankald) and in the upper left the tanks. A serpent is coiled round his lions and he has a knife struck into the girdle on the right side of his waist. Some times he may presented also as carrying on his shoulder a Kankala tied by a rope to the staff.¹¹

Kalyanasundara Murti

The form of Siva decorated as a bridegroom is called Kalyanasundara Murti. In this form he is represented as a fair youth, with three eyes and four arms and Parvati stands on his right side.

Somaskanda

Somaskanda is found in graved on the back wall of a niche in the second story of the Dharmaraja ratha at Mahabalipuram. Siva and Uma with the child skanda standing (or seated) between them. Both the God and Goddess are seated comfortably (Sukasana) with one leg hanging down. The god holds axes

and deer and the lower exhibits varada, abhaya, postures. The Goddess hold a lily in her right hand and shows the varada pose. Skanda has the crown Karandamakuta and holds in one of his hands flower, a wood-apple or a mango.¹²

Uma Sahita

Uma Sahita a seated Siva with Uma by his side. In his right upper hand he holds a furious serpent. To the right of Siva's shoulder is brahma with the water pot in one hand and in the left shoulder Vishnu is holding the discuss and the conch.

Uma Maheswara

Uma Maheswara consists of Siva and Parvathi. the former having eight faces and two hands. The left hand of the god is stretched over the shoulder of the Goddess.¹³

Vrisharudha

Vrisharudha is a figure of Siva seated on the bull and has Ganapati on his right side and Gowri on his left. He holds tanks and antelope.

Chandrasekaramurti

Chandrasekaramurti either alone or in the company of the goddess Gowri, when alone he stands on the pedestal holding the antelope and the kettle drum and presenting abhaya and varatha posture. When accompanied by the goddess he may be seated. The right lower hand shows the abhaya and the left passes round the back of the goddess. The goddess also with her right hand touches the right side of the waist-band of the god. She figures of Chandrasekara are called Alinganamurti.¹⁴

Ardhanari

The drapery on the right side and the tiger's skin on Siva, while on the left side it is the finely embroidered muslin suitable for Parvati. Parvati had four hands. The two right hands show a hatchet and abhaya and two left hands

are richly decorated with wristlets, the upper one holding a flower and the lower one being stretched down to the waist.

Sankara Narayana

In this posture, the left half is Vishnu and the right half is Siva. We see on the left side the conch, the mark Srivatsa and brilliant ear ring characteristic of Vishnu, on the right side the skull, the garland of bones, the river Ganga, the serpent so too the colour of the body is blue on the left and white on the right Sankaranayinar temple in the Tirunelveli district has a famous temple dedicated to this combined form of Siva and Vishnu.¹⁵

Ganasamharmurti

Siva represented as the slayer of the elephant - demon the image has eight hands. In the three right hands are held the trident, the kettle-drum and the noose. Two of the three left hands held the tusk (or shield) and the skull, while the third exhibits the posture, indicating astonishment (Vismaya). The left leg is placed on the elephant head of the giant.

Gangadhara

‘The bearer of ganga’ is a form of Siva. The ganges flow out of his master hair as a tiny rivulet. He stands on a lotus pedestal with the right leg straight and the left slightly bent. The image is represented as embracing Goddess Gowri. Consoling and assuring her that his effects would not be transferred to the river-Goddess (Ganga).

Kalaharamurti

According to the Agamas he is represented as placing his right leg on the Linga. His left leg, which is bent and raised is placed on the breast of Kala (yama). The god wears zjatamakuta and has an angry look protruding teeth, three eyes and four or eight hands and holds trident, axe, noose, etc.¹⁶

Two other forms of Siva connected with puranic stories are: ripurantakamurti and Kiratarjunamurti. The first was assumed by Siva when he

killed the three demons called Tripura and reduced their three magic cities to ashes. During this campaign the earth is said to have served Siva as a chariot, and the sun and the moon as its wheels. The four veda were the four horses, the mountain merit was the cow, Vishnu murti is that form of Siva. Up which he is supposed to have appeared before Arjuna.¹⁷

Chandesamugrahamurti

Chandesamugrahamurti is a form of Siva which was assumed by him in order to confer blessings on his fervent devote chandesa. In this form Siva is seated in the sukasana and Parvati is also seated by his side. Chandesa sits on the ground at the foot of Siva with bending knees and folded arms.¹⁸

Sarabhamurti

Sarabhamurti is supposed to have been assumed by Siva in order to suppress the pride of Narasimha. He has eight legs, three eyes, long hails. The image has a lion's face and two wings.¹⁹

Pasupatamurti

Pasupatamurti is another fierce form of Siva. The figure has four arms and a fierce face and holds trident and skull. Two other agharamurti had four faces and eight hands. In these, he holds the axe, noose, goad, kettle-drum, rosary, trident and the skill.

Bhairava

Bhairava his general form shows matted hair, three eyes and a red coloured body. His symbols are the trident, sword, noose and the kettledrum. He is naked and is represented as being followed by all kinds of demons and riding on a dog.²⁰

Forms of Bhairava

Govinda-Bhairava Samhara Bhairava has four arms and holds conch, discus, drinking cup. Kals-bhairava has a fear some face with protruding teeth, a garland of skulls, the dog which is the vehicle is seen biting a human head. Maheksla another fierce form of Siva, is quite like Bhairava but holds a serpent.

The hoary historical and cultural heritage of this temple have a proved of influence on the pilgrims. The art and architecture of the temple are motivating factors for all the tourist.

END NOTES

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