



## Hindu Temple – A systematic Study

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**Abstract:** *'The Hindu Temple' Apart from the knowledge of architecture and sculpture, inscriptions, regional history, folk traditions, temple rituals etc., have contributed much to the understanding of Hindu Temple. Presenting these aspects in a prescribed manner shall form part of systematic study. K.V.Soundara Rajan in his book, -"Early Temple Architecture in Karnataka and Its Ramifications". while preparing notes on photographs has devised a format to record the characteristic features of a temple. This is a very simple attempt in this direction. Efforts are made further to strengthen the same covering many other aspects related to temple.*

**Key words:** *Architecture, Dwaparayuga, inscriptions, traditions and styles, vimanatata-devatas, Gopura and Pratima mandapa etc.*

### Introduction

Ever since the study of temple architecture began, the problem faced by the band of scholars was, what are the details to be furnished under the big head 'The Hindu Temple' Apart from the knowledge of architecture and sculpture, inscriptions, regional history, folk traditions, temple rituals etc., have contributed much to the understanding of Hindu Temple. Presenting these aspects in a prescribed manner shall form part of systematic study. K.V.Soundara Rajan in his book, -"Early Temple Architecture in Karnataka and Its Ramifications". while preparing notes on photographs has devised a format to record the characteristic features of a temple. This is a very simple attempt in this direction. Efforts are made further to strengthen the same covering many other aspects related to temple. It is believed that this approach will pave way for further studies in the field. Under this method, a temple will be described under these sub heads in detail.

- The temple and its location
- Historical background
- Tradition, style and special features
- A detailed description
- Sculpture and other aspects.

**The Temple and its location** : A temple is identified in two ways; one by its popular name, the other is by its inscriptions. Popular name may be of folk origin. Majority of the temples claim their origin to the days of great epics. It is either Sri Rama of Tretayuga or Panca Pandavas Of Dwaparayuga who consecrated the main idol of the temple. Several local deities have acquired puranic background to establish their supremacy. In this process the name of the deity as well as the place name get sanskritised.

Ancient temples are also associated with inscriptions. The name of the main deity is found different from the popular deities. Majority of the inscriptions records several grants donations made by the rulers, devotees for running the day today administration of the temple from time to time. The geographical location of the temple may be furnished along with longitude, latitude and revenue details. Several temples are situated on the banks of the rivers. The river is the cause for the existence of the temple and the sanctity or popularity attached to the place. Temples are also found situated on hillocks and hill stations; altitude may be furnished in such cases.

**Historical background and its Date** : Very few temples have inscriptions that disclose the date of consecration as well as the devotee responsible for construction. This is a direct evidence. The structure of the temple and various decorative motifs are parallel sources in deciding about the date. Original temple structures are lost due to ravage of time ; several portions are restructured and renovated. Temple complexes have come up adding annexes from time to time. which can be identified chronologically.

These temples were popular centers of education and socio-cultural activities. They took in local administration. Temple building activity, continued to be patronized by the contemporary ruling dynasties. The kings and sovereigns after their conquests visited the temples of their domain and paid homage: renewed old grants and issued fresh gifts to the institutions. It was a part of their political activity. These aspects are recorded in several inscriptions. Temple building activity is identified along with political activity. Temples were grouped under these dynasties earmarking the characteristic features. Classification of temples acquired new dimension. Temple styles were named after these ruling dynasties.

**Tradition, Style and Special features** : Individual temples are to be identified to which tradition and style they belong. These traditions and styles are based on the ancient texts, vastu shastras. Study of these texts has revealed the existence of two traditions. Auttareya and Dakshinatya. This classification is mainly based on the sikhara structure of each temple. Each tradition exhibits different styles. The names of some of the styles are often repeated in the other tradition. Though the characteristic features expressed are different. This has to be carefully examined, The land Of Karnataka is considered as unifying and rejuvenating bridge between both the traditions. Representatives of different styles do exist here. A brief classification of these traditions and styles is furnished here under.

#### **Traditions**

Dakshinarya

Auttareya

#### **Styles**

Nagara / Dravida / Vesara / Salakara / Lupakara

Phasanakara / Kalinga / Bhumija/ Latina / Vimana nagara /

Auttareya Dravida

Some temples depict special characteristic features; these features may be either sculptural or architectural importance. Few temples have poetic inscriptions. which are worthy to be mentioned.

The temple of Beluru Channkeshava is known for its bracket figures or madanika sculptures. Brahmesvara temple of Kikkeri and Mallikarjuna temple of Kuruvatti have similar figures. Exuberant sculptural panels occupy bhitti portion or jangha portion around garbhagruha at Beluru and Halebidu. These images are masterpieces of art worthy to be mentioned. Chaturvimsati Vishnu murties are carved and arranged in perfect order around garbhagruha of Sivalaya at Arsikere. The star shaped natyamandapa is another special feature of this temple. Doddahasappa temple at Dambala has a star shaped garbhagruha and mandapa. Mandapa and natyamandapa of Jarakesvara temple at Hanagal have carved vitana structures with decorative pillars. Samvarana structure of this temple is a rare feature among the temples of Karnataka.

Mule Sankaresvara temple of Turuvekere, Sadasiva temple at Nuggehalli. Ganapati temple of Hanagal, Sikharesvara temple of Hattaragi display northern styles in sikhara formation. Doddagaddavalli temple complex has an inscription, which mentions several architectural sub-styles in its last two lines,

**A Detailed Description :** The description of southern temple in brief will be as follows. Each portion of the temple with its variable characteristic features is furnished. A temple will be described with its elevational parts in ascending order. It is known as urdhvakrama. A Shadvarga temple structure has Adhishthana, Pada, Prastara, Kantha, Sikhara and Stupi as its elevational parts. Upapitha is seen below the Adhishthana. Additional storey will have additional Pada and Prastara for each bhumi or rala racana. A temple will be described with its talavinyasa parts. It is known as Tiryak krama. Garbha grha, Antarala / Ardha mandapa. Pratima mandapa / Navaranga. Natyamandapa / Natyasala, Mukha mandapa etc.,

**1.Urdhvakrama :** A temple will be described with its elevational parts in ascending order. It is known as urdhvakrama.

**Upapitha:** Three varieties of upapithas are seen. They are, Vedibhadra, Pratihhadra and Subhadra.

**1) Vedibhadra Upapitha:** Most simple form; it has three sub-varieties. They are a)Ashtanga b)Shadanga and c)Pancanga

- a) Asthanga: Mouldings are eight in number.
- b)Shadanga: Mouldings are six in number.
- c)Pancanga: Mouldings are five in number.

**2) Pratihhadra Upapitha:** Kapotha is seen prominently with Prati and Vajana above. The mouldings are Pada, padma, kampa, kantha, kapota, alinga, patrika, prati and vajana.

**3) Subhadra Upapitha:** Multimoulded structure. Elephant, lion or Yali motifs on kantha portion. Mouldings are too many in number. Viz., Upana, padma, kantha, Padma, mahapattika, padma, kampa, kantha, padma, kantha, etc.

**Adhishthana:** The two varieties of adhishthanas are seen Viz., Padabandha and Pratihbandha.

a) **Padabandha Adhishthana :** Usually is with tripatta kumuda. If kumuda is placed in between adhupadma and urdhvapadma. it shall have vrta kumuda. The mouldings are Upana, jagati, kumuda, kantha, and pattika.

b) **Pratihbandha Adhishthana :** Usually with vrta kumuda: adhishthana ends with vajana and prati members. The different mouldings are Upana, jagati, kumuda, kantha, prati and vajana.

**The Pillar:** The pillar is very unique feature in temple. It is mainly divided in to three parts. Namely, padamula, padamadhya and padagra portions.

a) *Padamula* : Pitha portion of the pillar with padmasana is padamula.

b) *Padamadhya*: Sasraya and Nirasraya are two types.

Sasraya : Lion, elephant, vyali or hamsa motifs above padamula or Pitha

Nirasraya: Simple danda portion above padmasana.

c) *Padagra* : Stambha bhushana and vishkambha are synonyms of padagra, the pillar capital. The members or components of pillar capital are Bodige. virakantha, phalaka, padma, madhyamula, kumbha, Kantha. asya, padma, lsuna and malasthana are seen.

*Bodige*: Components are kshepana and chayabhaga. Three varieties of bodige are 1) taranga, 2) musthibandha and 3) padmamukulakara

1) *Taranga Bodige* : The middle portion of Chaya bhaga is plain and it is known as madhyapatta. Wavy undulating structure that is seen on either sides of madhyapatta is taranga bhaga; hence it is taranga bodige.

2) *Mushtibandha* : Scrolled kshepana projection with vyali motif in front of kshepana. Chaya portion is with simple bend and plain surface.

3) *Pgdmamukulakara*: Chaya bhaga is provided with Urdhvapadma and Adhopadma. Urdhvapadma projects upwards and touches kshepana. Adhopadma projects deep below like a banana flower.

*Virakantha or Virakanda* : is a square shaped bridge member between bodige and phalaka.

*Phalaka and Padma*: Phalaka is flat plain, plank like structure covered by petals of Padma that projects from below.

*Mudhyamula*: It is again a bridge member similar to Virakantha between padma and Kumbha.

*Kumbha* : Vase or pitcher shaped structure below madhyamula

*Asya* : Saucer shaped structures placed one above the another.

*Malasthana*: is the lower most portion of the pillar capital with embossed relief work of garland of pearls hanging around.

### Shape of the Pillars:

Square	-	Brahma kanta
Pentagon	-	Sivakanta
Hexagon	-	Skandakanta
Octagon	-	Vishnukanta Sixteen
Angled	-	Chandrakanta
Circular	-	Rudrakanta
Stambhamula	:	Square
Stambhamadhya	:	Octagonal.

*Stambhagra*: Circular Samyoga-Stambha: 1-2-4-6-8 Upastambhas ; Upastmbha with Yali, Gaja and Simha motifs.

*Bhitti* : The walls of Three types; a)Jalaka bhitti, b)Phalaka bhitti and c)lshtika bhitti.

Jalakabhitti: Latticed windows are of three types. They are

a)Gavaksha. 2)Kunjaraksha and 3) Gulika Jalaka

Gavaksha: Latticed structures with odd number of sides and corners.

Kunjaraksha: Latticed structures Ivi,'h even number of sides and corners.

Gulika Jalaka: Latticed circular structures.

Ornamentation of Latticed Windows: Nagabandha,Pushpabandha, Vallibandha etc.,

b)Phalakabhitti: Wall with phalaka or planks between the pillars.

c)Isthikabhitti: Wall with bricks or Ishtika.

Ornamentation of Bhatti: Embossed relief works with Torana, Kumbhalata, Vrttasphutita etc.,

Torana ; are three types: 1) Kudya torana 2) Stamha torana and 3) Dvara torana.

Ornamentation of Torana : Three types : a)Patra torana. b)Citra torana and c) Makara torana

a)Patra torana : Crescent shaped with foliage ornamentation above the pilasters.

b)Makara torana: Five-fold structure with alligator's motif on both sides above pilasters. purima in the center.

c)Citra torana : Alligator's face on either sides. purima in the centre; lion, elephant or yali motifs with demigods like vidbyadharas etc..

2)Stamha torana : Usually between antarala and mandapa. Torana is seen above the full-fledged pillars without bodige. with richly ornamented-Jashala portion.

3)Dvara torana : Ornamented torana portion above the doorframe. Citra torana. Makarasya, ashthamangalas etc.. are displayed. Ashthamangala: Different combination of any eight auspicious symbols, one such example is. Vrshabha, Yugmacamara. Srivatsa. Svastika. Sankha, and Dipa. Srivatsa or Sula to be placed in the middle portion.

*Kumbha-lata(kumbha panjara)* : Three types: 1) Kumbha -kumhhalata. 2) Stamha Kumbhalata and 3) Citra-Kumbhalata

Kumbha-kumbhalata/padma-kumbhalata : Embossed relief structure with Padmasana. Kumbha and (with kumbha, Manda ornaments) from the mouth of kumbha. Kumhha/ padma / panjara is placed above the phalaka of the pilaster. Creepers are seen stretched on either sides of kumbha. Virakanda is absent.

*Stambha-kumbhalata* : Same as above; virakanda is present.

*Citra-Kumbha lata*: The description is vague.

*Vrttasputita* : Above the two pilasters Kuta, Sala or Panjara form, An image of a minor deity in between two pilasters i.e., Guba

*Bhaga*: The whole structure is covered by Torana ornamentation.

**Prastara**: Prastara is another important aspect in temple architecture. It Consists of three parts; 1) architrave.

2) cornice and 3) frieze portions. They are also known as

1) Kapota purva, 2) Kapota and 3) Kapotottara Bhaga.

*Architrave*: The mouldings Of Kapota purvabhaga are utara, vajana, valahhi. (Bhutamala or hamsamala), mustibandha, padma and vajana.

*Cornice* : It is the main portion of Prastara. Kapotanasi or Kshudranasi is seen at regular Intervals with vallimandala design at corners. Kapota-panjara is placed between Bhadra and Kama Bhaga. Kshudranasi is seen in pairs. it is also known as Netranasi. Kapota projects downwards deep up to Valabhi.

*Frieze* : The mouldings are alinga. antarita, prali and vajana. Prali is ornamented in its frontal end. The ornamentation is makara, citra-khanda. Nagavatkra. or Hastitunda. Above the prastara, nandi or vahana of main deity is placed at each corner

**Tala Racana**: Number of Cala or bhumi racana may go up to twelve or sixteen.

*Hara* : Kuta. Koshta, Pajara. Alpanasi and Harantara are the components of Hara formation.

*Kuta* : or Kamakuta is square, octagonal or circular in outline. Members Of Kuta Structure are Stambha, Prastara. mastaka or karnasirsha and stupi. Nasika is seen in Karnasirsha portion with an image in Gubha Bhaga.

*Kostha* : or Sala has vaulted roof with oblong structure, Lalatanasi on either sides at its edges: Mukhanasi at front portion.

*Alpanasi* : has Gada and Saktidhvaja its components. Gada or Navagada is with Kukshi and vallimandala: Saktidhvaja is with yala and Kinnarivatkra. Below the Alpanasi, Sucipada is seen,

*Panjara* : Nasika type of formation. Salakara in front and hastiprslltha or hamsalunda On its rear-end. Components of Panjara are adhisbhthana, pada, prastara. ardhakoti and saktidhvaja. Adhisht/aana is similar to vedika.

*Harantara*: Interconnecting member of Hara where alpanast is placed.

*Vedika*: Above the Prastara or last bhumi, Vedika is placed. The members of Vedika are Kantha. Kampa. Padma and Kampa. Galapada is seen in Kantha portion. Vedika is square Or octagonal in shape.

**Griva** : The style of the temple is partly decided by the structure of Griva also. The members of Griva portion are Uttara, vajana. mushtibandha, dandika and valaya. Pada portion of Vrttasphutita is also located in Griva bhaga

**Sikhara**: is equal to the height of vedi. Sikhara and griva are similar in shape: Square / circular/ hexagonal / octagonal / salakara depending upon the temple style.

Mahanasi / Bhadranasi / Inlanasi / Vrttashpurira one fourth or one third of sikhara width. Foliage ornamentation is seen on either sides of Mahanasi. Members of sikhara are valabhi. vajana. nivra; Phalikamandala is seen at the top. It is one fifth of sikhara in height. Verra is seen below the Phalikamandala.

**Stupi** : Stupi is the most upper point of the temple. The members of stupid/ finial are Padma, Karnika, Kumbha, Kandhara. Valagna and Kudmala.

**2.Tiryak Krama**; A temple will be described with its talavinyasa parts. It is known as Tiryak krama. Garbha grha, Antarala / Ardha mandupa / Pratima mandapa / Navaranga / Natyamandapa / Natyasala, Mukha mandapa etc.,

*Prakara* : Five Prakaras are identified one after another. They are Antar- mandala, Antar.hara, Madhya- hara, Maryada and Maha maryada. Prakara Bhatti is also known as Sala.

The capstone or Salasirsha of Prakara bhitti is ornamented. The first two enclosures, that is Prakaras are provided with Avrta mandapa. They are similar to corridor (Pattasala) or Malika mandapa. of two or three storeys. Minor deities are rarely housed in Pattasala and provided with jalandra

*Gopura / the Main Entrance* : The number of gateways may go up to five. They are Dvarasobha. Dvarasala. Dvaraprasada, Dvaraharmya and Dvaragopura. The number of storeys may go up to 3-4-5-6-7 respectively. The gopura is with oblong, wagon roofed salakara sikhara. It is provided with Mahanasi and finials. Each tala racana is ornamented with Karnakuta, panjara, kshudranida, sala or kosktha etc.,

### **Sculpture and other aspects:**

Apart from the main deity of the temple. there are several other sculptures in the temple complex as a part of ornamentation and canonical rule. The prescription or canonical rule provides for specific images to be installed at different levels in the temple. The images placed above the garbhagruha are vimanatata-devatas and attendant deities placed in between the temple and the prakara are parivara-devatas. Apart from this, the

superstructure of Gopura and Pratima mandapa are also provided with sculptures. Similarly Dvara-devatas are placed at the door front. A brief description is furnished.

*Dvaradevata* : Nandi and Hahakata (Siva Harmya) Chanda and Prachanda (Vishnu Harmya)

*Mandapa* : Right side, in front of Garbhagruha or Antarala : Dakshina koshtha- Natyamurti or Vinayaka. Left side, in front of Garbhagruha or Antarala : Soumya koshtha - Durga.

*Prasada Bhatti* : South side : Madhya koshtha - Vyakhyana Dakshinamurti,

*Griva koshtha* - Geya murti or Virabhadra.

West side : Madhya koshtha - Lingodbhavamurti or Ardhanarisvara, Griva koshtha – Kesava, Narasimha or Achyuta

TWELVE : Rushubha, Kamalaja, Guha, Han, Ravi, Gajavadana, Yama, Matr, Jalesa, Durga, Dhanada, and Chanda.

Some of the other Parivaradevatas prescribed under sixteen are, Anala, Virabhadra, Katyayani, Vishnu, Asvinidevata, Pitamaha, Vaivasvara, Rohini, Marut, Rudra, Sarasvati, Lakshmi etc..

North side : Madhya koshtha - Brahma (Standing), Griva koshtha : Dhanada or Kamalaja

East Side : Griva koshtha - Gajarudha Indra, Purandara or Subramanya

Parivaradevatas : 8-(12)-16-32 images are prescribed. The prescription differs from text to text. Eight in antarmandala; sixteen in antarhara and madhyahara portion. The images prescribed are:

EIGHT : 1) Rushabha, Ganadhapa, Kamalaja. Matr, Guha, Arya. Achyuta, chandesa,

2) Vrishabha, Aryaka, Saptamatrika, Ganesha. Subramanya. Jyeshthadevi, Kesava, Bhaskara.

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