Veerashaiva temple architecture, sculpture and iconography

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Abstract

A Hindu Veerashaiva temple should be designed to maintain its ancient aesthetics, mysticism, philosophy, design principle, components, quality, nature and comfort. This can be done with incorporating the Vaastu in building Hindu Veerashaiva temple s. Vaastu is a study related to Building Science hence can be called Science of Building Technology of ancient time, which is also very similar to the modem one. This Science is Universal therefore can be applied to other buildings as well. Latest technology on materials and construction can be incorporated in a Hindu Veerashaiva temple , as long as it does not affect the Vaastu. In order to understand this study, the beliefs of Hinduism, types and characteristics and the components of Hindu Veerashaiva temple s are discussed. The study is analysed according to the Primary and Secondary Data. The case studies, the Primary Data are analysed according to The Site and The Veerashaiva temple Design. The analysis of The Site consists of The Sun Movement, The Slope and The Substructures. The Veerashaiva temple design consists of Shapes and Proportion, Measurements, Materials,The site analysis according to Vaastu is basically good and would reap benefits. But the building itself and the materials do not comply fully to the rules and regulation of the Vaastu.

The Veerashaiva temple built according to Vaastu should be able to provide psychological needs like peace and tranquillity to the visitors. The case studies prove that Vaastu is important but is not fully incorporated in planning and construction of the Veerashaiva temple s in India. This study is hoped to bring the awareness of the importance of Vaastu, which is gaining recognition nowadays. over the centuries, from the Vedic altar, Brahmanical shrines,Buddhist and Jaina stupas, as well as relic worship and rock cuts, a sophisticated groundplan for the Hindu Veerashaiva temple emerged. The impersonal powers of nature, the fecundity associated with earth, and the lofty resourceful gods of the sky were grounded in visible, concrete and material embodiments, housed in elaborately decorated god-houses (garbhagrihas) (actually oil-lit chambers), and attended to as highlyhonoured guests (atithi).

Key words: Veershiava temple architecture, sculpture, Vastu, Hinduism.

Introduction

After the 3rd century CE, when Hinduism heralded a new era of revivalism under the Gupta regime in the north, image-representation and construction of simple shrines and temples were undertaken with some zeal in order to promote a more popular acceptance of Hinduism and Hindu culture, hitherto eclipsed by the dominance of Buddhism on the Indian scene. These had become quite prominent by the close of the 4th century CE, as recorded in the copious notes taken by Fahsien, the Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled to India at that time. By the 5th century CE, under the Chalukya dynasty, which was powerful in the south, temple structures had attained their recognisable form.

Indeed, the earliest temples that survive in India date from this period. By the 6th century, stone had replaced bricks and timber, and by the 7th century, under the Pallavas (CE 600–900), temples were constructed as rock-hewn, pagoda-style monoliths, as found in the shore temples of Mamallapuram (or Mahabalipuram), just outside Chennai. The years between 6th and 8th centuries CE also saw the rise of wonderful rock architecture in north India, such as the Hindu rock-cut caves of Badari, Elephanta, and the famous Kailasa Temple in Ellora (probably a reaction to the earlier Buddhist structures in Ajanta and Ellora). The leogriff motif of the Pallava style, which dominated the south, was a type of pilaster with a prominent, moulded, lion on it surrounded by carvings and ornately fluted beams. Several temples were built in this style in Tamil Nadu, but they were located in open space rather than hidden behind the façade of rocky cliff faces. The Chalukyan temples of Aihole and Mahakutesvara, and the Pallava temples of Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram, as well as the early temples of Bhubaneswar in Orissa (8th century), are monuments to this exciting era of temple architecture in India.It was the Chola dynasty (c. CE 900–1150) that contributed overhanging cornices, façades and, more significantly, sikhara over vimana (pyramidal tower) in a multi-tiered structure.

It is said that with the Cholas the genius of Dravidian architecture attained its profoundest expression. The Cholas were succeeded by the Pandyas (c. CE 1100–1350), who added further visual art and elaboration to the outer structures, particularly to enhance the façades with elaborate crutches, corbels, florid ornamentation and so on. The outer surrounding grounds or patios were also landscaped and the courtyard aesthetically integrated with the temple precinct. This feature is exemplified in the Lingaraja (c. CE 1000) and Raja-Rani temples of Bhubaneswar in Orissa, the Rajarajesvara and Brihadishvara temples of Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, the Kandariya Mahadeva (c. CE 1000) and other (erotic) Temples of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh, and the Nilakantheshvara Temple of Udayapur in Nepal. The increased elaboration of temple decoration, between the 12th and 16th centuries, especially in south India, is exemplified in the Nataraja Temple of Chidambaram and the temples of Tiruvannamalai (post-Chola), the Pampapati and Hazara Ramasvami temples of Hampi in Karnataka, the site of the city of Vijayanagara, and the stupendous Sun Temple of Konarka in Orissa. Such latter-day temples as these, in the words of Stella Kramrisch (1946: 6), teem with forms which have the urge and fullness of Indian nature in their towering shapes to the last point of their height, step by step, level by level, they lead the eye and mind of the devotee from this world to the worlds above. The temples rise from a broad base: differently built according to specific types, they have their variations in time and place and their shapes were elaborated in many schools.

Objective:

This paper seeks understand Veershiava temple architecture and iconography . Also study the sculpture of those temples

Temple architecture and design

T As they are today in southern India their high superstructures ascend in pyramidal form, while in northern India they fling their curvilinear faces towards a meeting point above the sanctuary.Heidegger paves the way for us to now examine in more detail the imagery of the Hindu temple, which resonates with Heidegger's topology of 'temple-work', but in other ways stands out as something unique and particular to the religio-spiritual culture in which the temple has its origins. Heidegger makes no mention in his account of the space of the divine or the sacred or rather the 'transcendental' non-work peculiar to the telos or purpose of the Hindu oikos or templum. Thus, we may note that

everything about the Hindu temple design and particularly the location — i.e. the earth on which its stands, the image of the rocky hill, the running water, the axial elevation of the superstructure that looks out into the world, and so on — signify a sacred geography that goes towards breaking down the boundaries between the human and the 'other world'. As Georg Michell puts it: 'A sacred mathematics is created, composed of a language of precise measurements, which permits a symbolic realisation of the underlying cosmic ideas' (Michell 1977: 61). This is the symbol of the mandala that permits, through dynamic rituals and ceremonies, the realisation of these ideas so that the Hindu temple functions as a place of transcendence, where the human may progress from the world of illusion to a universe of knowledge and truth. Basically, as a geometric symbol, a mandala may be a closed polygon or square that can at the same time be converted into a triangle, a hexagon or an octagon, while retaining the basic measurement (pramana) for the model desired. And there can be other variations, also, such as the multiple overlays of triangles to form a tantric yantra, as in the well-known Sri Chakra used for the worship of the Hindu feminine deity. Again, a mandala can be structured so as to encapsulate the analogous relationship between the body (sarira, purusha), the groundplan, representing the microcosm, and the superstructure, as an edifice (vastu or alaya), representing the macrocosm, i.e. the universe. It is this latter signification of the mandala that concerns us most here. It may be noted in passing that Buddhists have a somewhat different conception of the function of mandala. The geometric principles are, by and large, the same for Hindu and Buddhist mandalas, but more specifically the Buddhist mandala 'is essentially a vehicle for concentrating the mind so that it may pass beyond its usual fetters' (Arguelles and Miriam 1972: 15). In Buddhism, therefore, the function of a mandala is therapeutic, as it assists an individual to become aware of the levels of consciousness within, as well as the energy that unifies him or her with the environment.

Mahadeva Temple – Overview

The temple's carvings, sculptures, pillars and tower stand proof to the immense talent of Chalukyan artists. One of the inscriptions on the walls of the temple calls it Devalaya Chakravarti (Emperor among Temples). This temple is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India.

The temple consists of a shrine connected to a hall by a vestibule. The sanctum of the main temple bears a linga and the rest of the shrines surrounding it bear their own linga. The closed mantapa or hall has a doorway on its either side, the doorway on its west leads to the sanctorum while the other leads to an open mantapa. This open mantapa has 64 pillars and of these 24 are fully built and support the main ceiling while the rest are only half pillars which are constructed from the parapet wall around the mantapa. The stonework on the ceilings and in the halls is interesting while in some places the work appears to be plain and simple.

The Mahadeva Temple is located in Itagi which is 35km from Gadag the nearest railway station and 64 km to the west of Hampi. Buses, private transport and even taxis are available frequently from Gadag, Hampi to Itagi. You should make it a point to visit this temple to appreciate its wonderful architecture. The right time to visit Koppal is the rainy season or the winter. Anytime between July and March is ideal.

Brihadeshwara Temple

Built by Raja Raja Chola I in 1010 AD, Brihadeshwara Temple is an ancient temple at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. The deity of the temple is Lord Shiva—in his dancing pose—who is called the Nataraj. The temple is also known as Rajeswara Temple, Rajarajeswaram and Periya Kovil. The temple was built, like a fortress on the shores of a river, by the king to grace the Chola Empire. This thousand-year-old temple is now part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site adding to its exceptional historical and cultural value.

The temple is a magnificent architectural construct that will never stop surprising anyone visiting the temple. Built using over 130,000 tons of granite, this fabulous structure shows the architectural prowess and affinity of the South Indian kings.

The major attraction of the temple is the 216-feet-tall tower that is built above the Sanctum of the temple. This flamboyant tower can be seen by anyone entering the city from afar. Another breathtaking thing that will sure stupefy the visitor is the magnificent Nandi statue built at the temple; it is about two meters in height, six meters in length and two-and-half meters in width, and weighs around a whopping 20 tons for a statue built from a single stone. Various postures of the famous classical dance, Barathanatyam, are carved carefully on the exterior walls of the upper storey of the temple.

There are several shrines added to the temple by most of the following rulers such as the Pandyas, the Vijayanagara rulers and the Marathas, too. The temple architecture marvels at housing a myriad of surprises for everyone taking a look at this great temple. Another important architectural feature of the temple is that the shadow of the temple never falls on the ground at noon. The architecture of the temple is done so cleverly that the temple casts no shadow on the ground when the sun is at its peak. This is a phenomenon that attracts thousands of tourists and architectural enthusiasts from across the world to unravel the architectural mystery of the temple.

Brihadeshwara Temple is also the first all-granite temple in the world, and the fact that granites are not available within the 100-mile radius of the temple only makes it all the more astonishing. Granite is as heavy a stone to carry as it is to carve, but none of that seemed to have shied the king from realizing the temple the way he envisaged.

When the temple was built in AD 1010, it was the tallest temple in India hitherto, and it took only seven years to complete. The topmost structure of the temple, called Vimana, weighs around 80 tons, and it is a mystery how the builders got it up there. There are several musical pillars, which make different sounds when taped, at the temple. Upon visiting, anyone can understand that the temple is a brilliant testimonial of the opulence of grand South Indian architecture.

Temple of Mahabalipuram

South Indian temple architecture, also called Drāviḍa Style, architecture invariably employed for Hindu temples in modern Tamil Nadu from the 7th to the 18th century, characterized by its pyramidal, or kūṭina-type, tower. Variant forms are found in Karnataka (formerly Mysore) and Andhra Pradesh states. The South Indian temple consists essentially of a square-chambered sanctuary topped by a superstructure, tower, or spire and an attached pillared porch or hall (maṇḍapa, or maṇṭapam), enclosed by a peristyle of cells within a rectangular court. The external walls of the temple are segmented by pilasters and carry niches housing sculpture. The superstructure or tower above the sanctuary is of the kūṭina type and consists of an arrangement of gradually receding stories in a pyramidal shape. Each story is delineated by a parapet of miniature shrines, square at the corners and rectangular with barrel-vault roofs at the centre. The tower is topped by a dome-shaped cupola and a crowning pot and finial.

Shore Temple, complex of elegant shrines (c. 700 CE), one among a number of Hindu monuments at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram), on the Coromandel Coast of Tamil Nadu state, India. It is considered the finest early example of medieval southern Indian temple architecture.Unlike most of its neighbours at the site, it is built of cut stones rather than carved out of caves. It has two shrines, one dedicated to Shiva and the other to Vishnu. Its style is characterized by a pyramidal kutina-type tower that consists of stepped stories topped by a cupola and finial, a form quite different from the northern Indian sikhara. The Mamallapuram monuments and temples, including the Shore Temple complex, were collectively designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984.

The origins of the Drāviḍa style can be observed in the Gupta period. The earliest extant examples of the developed style are the 7th-century rock-cut shrines at Mahābalipuram and a developed structural temple, the Shore Temple (c. 700), at the same site.

The South Indian style is most fully realized in the splendid Bṛhadīśvara temple at Thanjāvūr, built about 1003–10 by Rājarāja the Great, and the great temple at Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōḻapuram, built about 1025 by his son Rājendra Cōla. Subsequently, the style became increasingly elaborate—the complex of temple buildings enclosed by the court became larger, and a number of successive enclosures, each with its own gateway (gopura), were added. By the Vijayanagar period (1336–1565) the gopuras had increased in size so that they dominated the much smaller temples inside the enclosures.

Somnath temple

Maintaining the original site, the present temple is said to have built for the seventh time. The first temple of Somnath is regarded as a structure in Gold, made by Moon God himself. In the 7th century, Somnath Temple was reconstructed by Maitraka kings of Vallabhi in Gujarat. The second structure was destroyed by the Arab governor of Sind by the name of Junayad in 725. Again in 815, the third structure was built by Nagabhata II, who was a Pratihara King.

This structure was erected out of red sandstone. In 1024, the temple was raided by Mahmud Ghazni, who took camel-loads of jewels and valuables from here. The Paramara King Bhoj of Malwa and the Solanki King Bhima of Gujarat (Anhilwara) took the initiative to rebuild the temple during 1026-1042. For the fifth time, the wooden structure was replaced with a stone structure by Kumarpal.

Consequently, the temple was destroyed in 1297 by the Sutanat of Delhi and once again in 1394. The last attack was made by the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb in 1706. The present temple was built in 1995 by Shree Somnath Trust in the company of the Government of India. Today, Somnath Temple is under the maintenance of Shree Somnath Trust.

The seven-storied structure of Somnath is tall to 155 feet. Constructed in the Chalukya style of architecture, Somnath Temple reflects the expertise of the Sompuras that are master masons of Gujarat. The temple is sited in such a manner that no mass of land can be seen from Somnath seashore till Antarctica. This information is presented in an inscription, written in Sanskrit, on the Arrow-Pillar of the sea-protection wall at the temple.

In the words of Dr. Rajendra Prasad (the first president of India), "Somnath Temple signifies that the power of creation is always greater than the power of destruction". The great history and religious importance of Somnath temple attracts pilgrims as well as tourists from India and abroad.

Somnath TempleSomnath Temple is a significant temple, comprising one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. Located in Prabhas Kshetra near Veraval, Somnath Mandir falls in Saurashtra region that lies on the western coast of Gujarat. The temple of Somnath can be easily reached from anywhere in Gujarat. Bus services to Somnath are available from all the cities and towns of Gujarat. To ensure a comfortable journey, one can also opt for taxis that can be hired throughout the state of Gujarat.

Somnath Temple stands as a symbol of rich cultural heritage of India. The mention of this ancient temple has been made in the scriptures like 'Rig Veda' of the Hindu origin. The term Somnath suggests 'the protector of Moon God'. Lord Shiva is depicted here in the form of a Jyotirlinga (linga of light), as the protector. The incredible temple of Somnath is called as 'the Shrine Eternal' since, the temple has been shattered for not less than six times and every time, it has been reconstructed.

Conclusion

The architecture of Veerashaiva temples evolved over a period of more than 1,000 years and there is a great variety in this architecture. Veerashaiva temples are of different shapes and sizes — rectangular, octagonal, semicircular — with different types of domes and gates. Temples in southern India have a different style than those in northern India. Although the architecture of Veerashaiva temples is varied, they mainly have many things in common.As the race progressed, temples became important because they served as a sacred meeting place for the community to congregate

and revitalize their spiritual energies. Large temples were usually built at picturesque places, especially on river banks, on top of hills, and on the seashore. Smaller temples or open-air shrines can crop up just about anywhere - by the roadside or even under the tree.

Unlike other organized religions, in Veerashaivaism, it is not mandatory for a person to visit a temple. Since all Veerashaiva home usually has a small shrine or 'puja room' for daily prayers, Veerashaivas generally go to temples only on auspicious occasions or during religious festivals. Veerashaiva temples also do not play a crucial role in marriages and funerals, but it is often the meeting place for religious discourses as well as 'bhajans' and 'kirtans' (devotional songs and chants).The Veerashaiva religion and its philosophy greatly influenced Veerashaiva temple architecture in its evolutionary process which continues till this date. Therefore this dissertation through archival research and other documentary, literary works and theoretical investigation on ancient treatise and modern research works on the temple architecture of India brings out the concepts that have been adopted since ancient times for the construction of the sacred Veerashaiva temples, the science involved in the construction of the temple structure and the processes involved along with the skill it took to build such edifices. Together these aspects bring out the art, science and philosophy behind the construction of the Veerashaiva temple which is as relevant today as it used to be in the ancient times. A continuity of tradition and a science which has its root in the dawn of human conciousness. Every style of building construction reflects a clearly distinctive basic principle that represents a particular culture and era. In this context the Indian Veerashaiva temple architecture are not only the abode of God and place of worship, but they are also the cradle of knowledge, art, architecture and culture. The practices and traditions of temples exist not only in history but also in present time which greatly influence the socio-cultural life of its people and gives continuity to traditional Indian values. The evolution of Indian temple architecture is marked by a strict adherence to the original ancient models that were derived from religious consideration- and that continued over many centuries. The main purpose of the early building art in the Indian sub-continent was the representation of the existing religious perception of the people in a tangible form. Therefore early Indian architecture in theform of various sacred monuments is essentially a representation of its religious beliefs. The earliest significant known buildings relate to Buddhism and Jainism. Those related to Veerashaivaism were to followsoon after the beginning of the Christian era when the Vedic Gods were superseded by the Trimurthyof modern Veerashaivaism. The Veerashaiva temples that came to be known for their ornamental value are alsosymbolism of Veerashaiva philosophy

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