



DESCRIPTION OF IRUNGOLISVARA TEMPLE AT LADDIGAM IN CHITTOOR DISTRICT

E. NAGARAJAN

Lecturer in History, Government Degree College, Puttur, Andhra Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Laddigam, a small village in the Punganur Taluk of the Chittoor district and situated on the Punganur-Kallur bus route, about five miles east of Punganur. Lord Nilakantesvara temple, otherwise known as Lord Irungolisvara Mudaiya Mahadeva temple located as an important Chola Temple which is the important archaeological monument. In this study we discuss about architectural plan of Lord Irungolisvara temple. Key plan to the Lord Irungolisvara temple are Sanctum; Antarala; Mukhamandapa; Pillared verandah; Devi Shrine; Navagrahas; Nandi mandapa; Base of Dhvajastambha; Chandesvara shrine; Entrance gopura.; Prakara.

KEYWORDS : Laddigam, Lord Lord Irungolisvara Mudaiya Mahadeva temple.

INTRODUCTION

Laddigam, a small village in the Punganur Taluk, from the Kalikiri railway station on the Pakala-Dharmavaram section of the southern railway. Lord Nilakantesvara temple, otherwise known as Lord Irungolisvara Mudaiya Mahadeva temple located here is an important Chola Temple.

There are some inscriptions in this temple which supply the information about the probable date of its construction.

One record, dated in the 9th regional year of the king Raja Rajadeva found on the south-wall, left of entrance, registers the gift of money for the merit of Uttamachola Ganga Vettam Amarabaranam by Akalankasiva Ganga alias Sittavida deva. The temple is said to be that of Irungolisvara mudaiya Nayanar of Koyarrur alias Uttamacholapuram in Vedapulinadu, a sub-division of Perumbanappadi in Jayankonda Chola mandalam. Another inscription dated in the 14th regional year of the chola king Uttamachola Ganga alias Sambaguchapati Nayanar found on the south wall of the Nilakantesvara temple, records the gift made to the temple of Irungolisvara mudaiya Nayanar at Koyarrur. An inscription dated in the 9th year of the Chola king Vikram Choladeva found on the south wall of the prakara of the same temple mentions the temple of Irungolisvara mudaiya Mahadeva at Koyarrur alias Uttamacholapuram. Another inscription dated in the 16th year of Rajakesarivarman alias Chakravarthin Sri Kulottunga Choladeva, registers the gift of the village of Madamangalam in Pulinadu, a district of rattapadikonda Chola Mandalam in (Gangaikonda Chola mandalam) to the temple of Irungolisvara Mudaiya Mahadevar built at Koyarrur alias Uttama Cholapuram in the same nadu by Adavalan Gangaikonda chola alias Irungolan.

An unfinished inscription dated in the 20th year of the Chola king, Kulottunga Chola deva found on the south wall of the shrine, right of the entrance refers to gift of 96 sheep for a lamp to the same temple. An undated inscription on the south wall of the shrine in the same temple, right of entrance, records the gift of money for three lamps to the temple of Irungolisvara mudaiya Mahadevar at Koyarrur alias Uttama Cholapuram. An undated inscription found on the gopura, refers to the praise of Adigesan i.e., Tagodur Adiayan Vidugadalagiya Perumal, whose name and emblem are engraved below the inscription. An undated inscription found on the gopuram of the same temple records the praise of the sword of Adiyan i.e. Adiyan vidugadalagiya Perumal, whose name and emblem are engraved below the inscription. An undated inscription found on the east wall of the entrance of the same temple, refers to the praise of Vidugadalagiya of Ten-Tagodu whose enemies were the Kadava, the Magada and the Ganga. The Chief was called Adigesan, was the feudatory of Kulottunga Choladeva III. An undated inscription found on the north wall of the same temple, refers to the praise of Kerala king Adhikendra Uyamukta Sravanojvala. The Tamil verses refer to his engraving, the bow on the wall of the Irungolisvara temple. the inscription has the Chera bow and other emblems on either side of it.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE:

The temple is surrounded by a prakara whose walls are built of large blocks of black granite accurately fitted. The wall is lined with Nandis on all sides. The only entrance in the prakara in the east is a gateway with a sala at the top. The base, walls and the sala top are built of black granite stone. The adhishthana of the gateway contains from bottom upwards – upana, broadpatta, tripatta, gala and alingapattika. The wall above the adhishthana is decorated with pilasters of the Chola style. The malasthana of the pilasters are decorated with floral designs. Above it is the padmabanda. Then there are kalasa, kumbha, padma, phalaka and virakanta. Above it is the potika. It is surmounted by an uttira. The top most portions are valabhi which is connected with the bhutamala. The interspace between the pilasters is plain. Above the wall portion there is the bhutamala adorned with dwarfs or bhutaganas in various dance poses. The cornice is decorated with simhalalata gables and on its edge is a row of lions with tails curled upward. Above it is the phalaka with four Nandis facing the four cardinal points. The griva of the sala top contains devakoshtas on four sides. The interspace between the devakoshtas is cut into compartments by pilasters. The griva contains bhutamala on its top portion. The devakoshtas houses deity figures viz., Vishnu in the western deva koshta, Brahma in the Northern deva koshta, Indra in the eastern deva koshta and a four armed deity in the southern one. Above the griva is the sala top which is surmounted by a single kalasa.

There is a small monolithic dipastambha in front of the main shrine. To the west of the dipastambha is the base of a dhvajastambha. Very close to it there is the Nandi mandapa built on four pillars. It houses a couchant Nandi which faces towards the Linga of the garbhagriha. The pillars of the Nandimandapa are square at the base and the shaft is round.

Main Shrine:

The main shrine consists of the sanctum, antarala, mukhamandapa and a porch. All these members stand on an adhishthana which contains from bottom upwards, upana, broadpatta., tripatta, gala cut into compartments, patta, gala cut into compartments and alingapattika.

The outer surface of the wall portion of the sanctum is adorned with square pilasters. The wall portions in between the middle and the cantoning pilasters are inscribed. The central shrine has devakoshtas one on each side of the south, west and north walls by the sides of which are found engraved a Chera emblem (bow) with a parasol above and two chauris and inscriptions on either side. The pilasters have the usual component parts, kal, festoon decoration, kati, kalasa showing padma decoration, tadi, slightly projected above the kalasa, bulbous kumbha, padma or pali, thin phalaka, virakantha and potika. The devakoshtas are flanked by pilasters carrying the same parts as noticed above besides a projecting lintel, uttirapadmadala, vajana. Over this the makara torana is absent. The torana is replaced on the southern deva koshta containing an image of seated Dakshinamurti, by

spreading foliage and lions at the end over the western niche by the lions in the centre and the makaras on either end and over the northern deva koshta by the vyalā and creeper motif on either side. The southern deva koshta houses Yoga Dakshinamurti. The western deva koshta contains Vishnu and the northern one houses Brahma. On the top of the wall and below the cornice is the bhutamala. The kapota is decorated with simhalalata gables. Above it is a row of lions. Above it is the phalaka which contains four couchant Nandis facing the four cardinal points. The griva contains devakoshtas housing deity figures on all sides containing Brahma in the north., Yoga Narasimha in the west, Bhairava in the south and Indra riding an elephant in the east. The griva and sikhara are circular and belong to the vesara order. Above the sikhara is a single kalasa. The entire structure from top to bottom is built of black granite stone. In the interior the sanctum houses the Linga. The doorway is plain a faces the east.

Antarala:

The adhishtana of the antarala is of the same type in continuation of that of the garbhagriha. Two dwarapalakas are seen flanking the entrance of the antarala. The walls of antarala have two devakoshtas one on the north and the other on the south. The pilaster decoration on the walls of the antarala is similar to the pilasters of the garbhagriha. Three pilasters are seen on each side of the antarala wall, besides the shorter pilaster flanking the devakoshtas. These pilasters carrying a projecting lintel etc., on the top. Over the lintel of the deva koshta enshrining Ganesa. On the south wall of the antarala are a row of four lions the central ones facing each other and the other ones facing out. The north wall of the antarala has a deva koshta enshrining Durga, over the projecting lintel of this deva koshta is a Gajalakshmi relief flanked by a simha motif and a lamp on either side.

The Mukhamandapa:

The walls of the mukhamandapa are decorated with pilasters and niches. They are empty and are flanked by pilasters. Each niche is surmounted by a sala top. The sala top is decorated with scroll design. In the eastern wall the niche contains a perforated screen window. Above the wall portion and below the cornice is the bhutamala. The bhutaganas are in various dance poses. The cornice is decorated with simhalalata gables. Above it is a row of lions. The pillars inside the mukhamandapa have square bases, circular shafts, the tips of which are decorated with horse-shoe shaped, round malasthana, round kalasa and kumbha. There is a couchant Nandi in the centre of the mandapa facing towards the Linga. The mukhamandapa faces the south. The doorway is decorated with padma and creeper designs. In front of the mukhamandapa there is porch, built on four pillars. The porch is approached by flight of steps on either side, i.e., on the east and west. Each pillar of this porch has a polygonal shaft, malasthana, padma bandha, octagonal kalasa and octagonal kumbha. All the pillars are supporting the roof.

THE DEVI SHRINE :

This shrine is situated on the north-western corner of the courtyard. It is a recent addition. The Devi shrine houses the image of Parvati, the consort of the Lord. In front of the Devi shrine there is a vedi which contains 'Navagrahas'. In the northern side very close to the sanctum there is a small shrine housing the stone image of Chandesa, facing towards the gargoyle of the sanctum. The gargoyle contains lion head.

There is a rectangular empty shrine in the south-western corner of the courtyard, which is in dilapidated condition. Originally this shrine consisted of the sanctum and antarala. Now the wall in between sanctum and antarala is removed. The antarala is built on four pillars. This shrine faces the north. This shrine faces the north.

DATE OF THE TEMPLE :

S.R.Balasubramanyam has stated that this temple is to be assigned to the reign of Rajaraja I. According to Harle "The small all stone Gopura of the Irungolisvara of Laddigam, although somewhat later in date, probably represents quite well the typical gopura of the Early Chola period." Although in this temple some important

developments in the architectural style took place in the later Chola period beginning from the reign of Kulottunga I(A.D.1070 to 1279), this temple is assigned to the reign of Rajaraja I. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has stated "another all stone gopura is a small and beautiful one of Nilakantesvara at Laddigam (North Arcot) of the time of Rajendra I." B. Venkataman has stated that all the above views require to be modified and he ascribes the temple to the age of Kulottunga I.

PUJAS AND FESTIVALS:

The Pujari is a Brahmin; the priest-hood is a hereditary right. Mahasivaratri festival is celebrated every year. Daily pujas are performed regularly. During the festival occasions the villagers donate money for the celebration of the festivals.

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