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History

SRI KAYANIRMALESWARAR TEMPLE IN ATTUR - A HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

KEY WORDS:

Kayanirmaleswarar, Vasishteswarar, Architectures

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to describe the history of Sri Kayanirmaleswarar temple at Attur in Salem district of Tamil Nadu. A t t u r i s situated 51 K.M east of Salem is famous for the temple dedicated to Lord Kayanirmaleswarar. ("Blemishless Body") It is situated one mile north of Gandhi-Nagar Railway station in Salem District of Tamil Nadu. Attur is divided into two parts by the river vashista on the northern part the old fort stands near the Hamlet of Mulluvadi and on the south of the river proper Attur is situated. Kayanirmaleswarar is one of the five temples dedicated to Lord Siva. Siva temple which is near the main gate is dedicated to Kaya Nirmaleswarar. It is said that vasishta Maharishi installed Pancha Lingas (five) on the banks of Vellar or Vasishtha Nadhi. The Lingam was installed in this temple. The God is also known as Vasishteswarar. There are sculptures of Bairava, Dakshinamurthi and Durga, belonged to the Chola period.

Introduction :

It is situated one mile north of Gandhi-Nagar Railway station in Salem District of Tamil Nadu. Kayanirmaleswarar is one of the five temples dedicated to Lord Siva. There is a traditional story about the construction of this temple. When the territory was ruled by a king known as Anandhar the town and the presiding deity were named after him the former Anandhagiri and the latter Anandheswarar. When the territory came under Gattimudaliar, the temple as well as the town seemed to be in ruined condition. It is believed that he had a dream of treasure trove intended for the renovation of the temple and reestablishment of fortified town. Every thing went on as per the dream and the treasure was found in the temple. After the renovation the presiding deity was known as Kayanirmaleswarar and his consort Akilandeswari. The temple occupies space about 200' x 120'. There is only one praharam, but there is no gopuram. The idol of siva is about four feet high and made of Panchalogram.

INSCRIPTIONS

In 1913, five inscriptions were copied from basement of Karuvarai outer walls of Kayanirmaleswarar temple by the Government epigraphist. Twenty eight line inscription of parantaka chola I (907-955 A.D) found on the lower Thala of the temple. In 921 AD 14th regnal year of Parantaka I alias Parakesari, temple servants Perumal, Kaman and Perumangala Mudiyan were donated Paddy to the temple. Another Chola inscription found on the west prakara wall. In the thirty second regnal year Kulotunga III alias Vannenja Perumal donated two hundred kuli wetland to the temple for maintaining the lamp another unfinished inscription describe about the Kulotunga IIIrd period chieftains, Vidukathalugia perumal, Mahathai Perumal Vannilaikanda Perumal and Thayaluhalla Perumal. It also referred Kulotunga III as Vannancha Perumal.

Two inscription of Krishna devaraya found on the north and south prakara walls of this temple. One of the inscription was issued by the Krishnadevaraya on 8th April 1513 AD found on the South base of the prakara wall. It records that Attur polygar Akkithimma Nayak granted villavarayanatham village to Sri Rangaraja Bhattar son of Arunagrinatha of Iraivanaraiyer the granted village received the surname Akkithimma Nayaka Chatur-Vedimangalam. Another Inscription of Krishnadevaraya of 1523 AD found on the north base of this temple. It records that, Akkithimma nayak the governor of Attur region granted Kallanatham village to parpahabha Bhatta, son of Arunagrinatha of Iraivanaraiyur unfinished inscription of Krishnadevaraya period of 1528 found on the west base of the Kayanirmaleswarar temple. It records that the grant of a village for the merit of king.

This temple is dedicated to Kayanirmaleswarar and Akilandeswari. Sri Kayanirmaleswarar temple has massive structure with lofty mandapas. Its present form was constructed by Anandar dynasty, Later cholas, and Later Pandyas, Later Nayaks constructed more mandapas. So this temple has the architectural impact of Later

Cholas and the Nayaks of Madurai.

Generally, the temples are constructed facing the east, according to Hindu agamas Srikayanirmaleswarar temple was also constructed facing the east. This temple was exclusively constructed by stones. The layout is the beginning stage for art of construction of temple. This is the first stage in accordance with the principles laid down in the respective Agama. This temple situates in an area of half acre and 5.5 cent (" 5.5) compound walls 200 feet in length and 120 feet in width. The entrance gopura is of 70 feet. The basement of the entrance **gopura** is of 40 feet made granite stone 30 feet of about super structure made of bricks. This renowned temple is famous for Agnilingam without spouse. Vasista muni setup the Audai of the lingam and small shrine.

GARBHAGRAHA

The Garbhagraha, Andarala, Arthamandapa, Mahamandapa, have the same Adhithana, Pada prastaras, Griva, Sikhara and stupi have been built on the Adhithana in accordance with Hindu Agamas. Vimana to the main deity is higher than other vimanas.

The Adisthana has some principal features. They are Upana, plain palaka, Tripitta-Kamudakantha with flowers and **pattika**. On Padmapida Lord Siva is seen in standing posture. The characteristic pyramidal tower of the gopuram rest on a single or two storeyed oblong base sanctum sanctorum of Lord is known as Karuvarai which is enclosed with walls on three sides except at front fitted with double halves doors to open and shut. Thus Mulavar, the primary deity kept under protection around it pragarams are provided and on top of the Karuvarai vimana is constructed. Srikayanirmaleswarar temple vimana is of '30' feet height and Karuvarai is in square shape Kapotha pantha upapidam includes Upandam, Padmajagathi pattikai, small yali Row, kapotnam, Kandam. the central shrine faces the east. The length of garbhagraha of lord Kayanirmaleswarar is fourteen feet and with seven feet on height eight feet and on this terrace Vimana situates.

Karuvarai is covered with wall on north, south and west. On eastern side of the wall, the front double half door on each. In almost in all siva temples the Mulavar Siva in Karuvarai installed in the form of Lingam (phallus) like in Madurai Sundareswarar, Thiruvanamalai and in Attur. Tiruvatchi is kept behind the linga idol. Linga idol is kept lonely with five head Nagaraja with his heads hoods using it as umbrella appears above the head of lord.

Inner Karuvarai entrance is decorated with Deepas. Different sorts of Vimanas or doomed central shrines are mentioned in the agamasand tantras. Some of the square, circle and oval size vimana, vimana of Srikayanirmaleswarar is of square variety. It is known as Kutavimana.

In the griva sitting pose Kayanirmaleswarar sculpture sitting yoga pose of hermit, another hermit worship the lord and two **suthai**

sculptures of sitting pose of bull (Nandhi) are decorated each corner.

In the western side of Karuvarai bitti, six plasters and plain deva hosta are engraved siva, parvathi marriage scene and Vishnu suthai sculptures are decorated on the kapotha. In the prastharam suthai sculptures of murugan, valli and Deivanai are depicted. Sitting pose of Vishnu, two nandhiS. Sitting pose man blow the conch, sitting pose womAn holding snake in her hand are decorated on the griva.

ARTHAMANDAPA

Arthamandapa is located in front of Karuvarai in rectangular in shape. The Arthamandapa is considered as the shoulder of the deity of shrine. The flat roof (20x23) of the Artha mandapa which remains part and parcel of the cell arises to a height of about eight feet from its interior ground level. It is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall the entrance door is fixed. There are stone pillars in two rows (four pillars) in artha mandapa and a height of pillar eight feet and one feet width.

MAHA MANDAPA

Maha Mandapa situates before Artha mandapa with walls. This mandapa is supported by eight pillars. It is of '32' feet length 32 feet width. Two feet height bronze natarajar statue and one feet height Sivakami amman statue are enshrined. Kalabairavar and Surya statues are kept respectively in the north east and south east corner of Maha mandapa. In the middle of maha mandapa three feet height sitting pose Nandhi statue is situated. Next to Nandhi small palipida is erected.

MUKA MANDAPA

Muka mandapa is situated before the Maha mandapa. It is of fourteen feet length and fourteen feet width. In the south western side and north west, of this mandapa granite statue of valampuri vinayagar and lord Muruga are situated. Five and half feet door is situated in between the two statues. Four bricks pillars of ten feet height bearing this mandapa. Suthai sculptures of Vinayaga on the mouse back Muruga, Valli, and Deivanai sitting on the peacock back Siva on the bull back. Akilandeswari on the swan back are fixed on the terrace of Muka mandapa. In the middle of muka mandapa 2 feet height and 3 feet width sitting pose nandhi erected on the three and half feet pida.

AKILANDESWARI SHRINE

Thayar Akilandeswari shrine situated in the north east corner of first pirakaram. In this the deity is in standing pose. Thayar statue is of five and half feet in standing posture, lifting right hand blessing devotees and left hand placed down ward. The vimana is square shaped upto storey, griva and tower are in global model. It has two storeys. The golden kalasa is placed on the top of the tower. The length of Thayar shrine is '20' feet and width '12' feet and height '10' feet above this terrace the vimana situated in it stands to a height of ten feet.

Sandikeswarar, Navagriha and Someswarar shrine situated in between the Karuvarai of Kayanirmaleswarar and Artha Mandapa of Akilandeswari.

RAJA GOPURA

Newly constructed Raja Gopuram situated in the middle of east compound wall. It is of 26 feet length 36 feet width and 70 feet height. It has five storey and five kalasas. Meenakshi Sundareswarar marriage scene, Amutha Kadeswarar, five pairs of Duwara palakas, Markandaya sculpture. Eman samkara sculptures and puranic themes sculpture are decorated the Raja gopuram. Fourty lakhs rupees spent for the construction of Raja Gopuram by Annamalaimantram of Attur. Marriage mandapa is situated in the north eastern corner of the temple.

THEPPAKULAM

The huge temple tank situates on the north of temple at a distance of 200 feet is considered to be sacred one. Out side this tank at west a mandapam of 20 feet length and of 20 feet with width placed on one feet height platform. This mandapam has 10 pillars

five pillars on each side before entry to the tank *urchavar* is placed in this mandapam.

TEMPLE CAR

The car is located at north Car street. This car relates to twentieth century polygonal shape. Its height is '20' feet in total 306 images of Lord Siva Nandhi, Agoravira Pathira, Ganesha, Duwarapalakas are carved by the carpenters while making the car.

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