



## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ARCHITECTURAL SET UP OF SAURIRAJA PERUMAL TEMPLE AT TIRUKKANAPURAM IN TIRUVARUR DISTRICT – A STUDY

**Dr. K. Kannan**

**M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.,**

**Assistant Professor of History, P.G. & Research Department of History, Government Arts College (Autonomous), Kumbakonam.**



### ABSTRACT :

The Indian temples whether Buddhist, Jain or Hindu could be view in two perspectives, viz., horizontal and vertical. By layout, we mean the horizontal alignment of the temple. Architectural aspects are more discernible in the vertical alignment. The present articles analyses the features typical of the Vaisnava temples in their horizontal and vertical orders. The Kaviri delta is an abode of temple art and architecture. The Colas and their successors, the Vijayanagara – Nayaks, have render immoral services to stud the delta region with a host of temples, dedicated the various Hindu divinities particularly Vishnu and Siva. Of all the divyaksetras in region, Tiruvarur and its suburb provide the venue for several temples. This article has ventured to highlight the significance of Vishnu temple at Kannapuram, Tiruvarur district. This temple claim hoary antiquity as immortalized in the hymns of the Alvars. Kannapuram is of great significance because it figures prominently in the hymns of Kulacekarar, Nammalvar, Antal and Tirumankai. All excepting Tirumankai belong to the middle Alvar group and so the temple is famous since at least the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> century. Inscriptional evidences date since the time of Kulottunga III, down to Rajaraja III and date to the time of the later Pandyas. Architectural evidences would establish the fact that the temple was a growing entity down to the Nayak time.

**KEYWORDS :** Sthanaga mode, Sources, Vimanam, Hymns, Inscriptions.

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian temples whether Buddhist, Jain or Hindu could be view in two perspectives, viz., horizontal and vertical.<sup>1</sup> By layout, we mean the horizontal alignment of the temple. Architectural aspects are more discernible in the vertical alignment. The present articles analyses the features typical of the Vaisnava temples in their horizontal and vertical orders.

### TYPES OF HINDU TEMPLES

The Hindu temple is three basic varieties that are applicable to the different parts of the country. They are<sup>2</sup>

Temple type	Region	Shape	Presiding God
Nagara	North India (Region form the Himalayas to the Vindhya)	Square (Catuasya)	Brahma
Vesara	Central India (Region from the Vindhya to the river Krishna)	Circle (Urtta)	Siva
Dravida	South India	Octagonal	Vishnu

(Astaksara)  
(Region to the South of the river Krishna)

Architectural treaties speak of the other types such as Andhra and Kalinga. These two in abroad perspective should fall under Vesara.<sup>3</sup>

The vimanam of the temple conform to the prescriptions of the Silpa Sastras. The Mulavar vimanam accommodates three Devakosthas, housing images.

The Gopura is the usual mode with a solid stone plinth and superstructure of brick and mortar. The small gopura is in two talas and the Raja gopura in six talas.<sup>4</sup> Karnakudus and Kostha panjaras appear on the talas. The towering member of the gopuras is a barrel-shaped sikhara. Mehanasikas appear at the either end the sikhara.

### SAURIRAJA PERUMAL TEMPLE

The temple faces the east. The lord is in Sthanaka mode. Devi is called Kannapuranyaki. The Vimanam is the utpalavadaka variety.

The temple is in two prakaras. The square Garbhagraha is subjoined in the east by the Ardhamandapa, Muhamandapa and Mahamandapa. The Garbhagraha is fitted with three Devakosthas on the northeast corner, small chapels for Palliyarai ( bedroom) and Sauri Perumal are present. The Ardhamandapa is fitted with eighteen pillars. The Mukhamandapa consists of the same number of pillars. On the northeast direction, a chapel for Cakravarthi Tirumakal butts out of the prakara peering into the second prakara. The entrance of the temple is in the south of the Mahamandapa. The eastern section of the Mahamandapa accommodates the chamber of Paksi Raja (Garuda). The second prakana in the south provides separate chapels for Kannapuranyaki and Antal. These two include a Muhamandapa and Mahamandapa a variety of pillars stand in the empty space that links this part of the temple with the main shrine.

On the east of the main temple in the second prakara a pavilion for Garuda and the dvajasthamba stand. A gopura adorns the tirumail in the east. The Rajagopura (appears) nearby in the east on the Rajaporara normally the Titukkulam appears close to the eastern Rajagopura only in case of Ugramurtis in order to do away with the Rudra of the Lord.

The second prakara on the south east accommodates a chamber for Bhibisana with is called an Aivar near by the Matappalli (temple kitchen) lie. The chamber for Alvars and the Vahanamandapa lie on the Southeastern wall part. The Yagasola lies on the northeast. There is a well nearby.

### HISTORICAL SOURCES

The history of the temple is gleaned from a study of literature and epigraphy. Literature is mainly the hymns of the Alvars from Kulacekara to Tirumankai Inscriptural sources date since the time of Rajaraja I. That means for about a century there was no imperial patron for the temples.

### LITERARY SOURCES

Kulacekara alvar is to talk about this ksetra. He has 11 hymns in the Perumal Tirumoli.<sup>5</sup> Vishnu is the master of Kannapuram that is protected by forts. This is the Tamil garland that keeps the Lord in his lap and sings a lullaby. Those who recited the ten hymns of Kulacekara are experts in the ten scriptures and the lords' devotees. Another important contribution of Nammalavar is that has Tamil zed all the Sanskrit vocabularies.<sup>6</sup> Tirumankai Alvar has contributed the maximum number of hymns. Tirumangai Alvar has 100 hymns on Kannapuram.<sup>7</sup> His contributions are Tiruvaymoli Tirumuttam, Tiyuvaciriyam and Periya Tiruvantati. The Tiruvamoli constitute the four thousands of the Nalayiram in about 1000 hymns. A decade in this work is on Kannapuram.<sup>8</sup>

The hymns of Kulacekera Alvar and Nammalvar focus on bhakti orientation. He advocates bhakti as a means to reach the Lords foot. A strong belief in Vishnu never allows a devotee to suffer here in the lord elevates one of the Vaikundha.<sup>9</sup> All the hymns Alvar the residency of the Lord is Kannapuram.

### INSCRIPTIONAL SOURCES

Inscriptional sources bearing on the temple date since the time of Kulottunga I (1070-1126 A.D.). Records dated in A.D. 1082 refer to a gift by Rajaraja deva which means the other name of Kulottunga was Rajaraja. The record registers a land transaction that was meant for an archanabhoga to the shrine the Tirumangai Alvar, noted in another inscription (ARE 1922, No.510).<sup>10</sup>

Another record of Konerimaikontan Kulottunga I, dated in A.D. 1082, registers the gift of land for archanabhoga to the shrine of Tirumongai, set up in the western street by one Narayana-tatar.<sup>11</sup> Other one record of Kulottunga I registers the gift of lamps, silver utensils and land for twilight lamp.<sup>12</sup> Next record of the time of Kulottunga I, dated in A.D. 1106, registers the gifts of money and lands for burning lamps thrice daily in the temple by a chief and minister.<sup>13</sup> Another record of the time of Kulottunga I record the gift of land that lay uncultivated (that means it was reclaimed) for worship and offerings in the Kannapuram temple during the four ayanas of the year and festivals during the Tamil Months of Aippaci (October-November), Cittirai (April-May) and Maci (February-March).<sup>14</sup>

The time of Vikramachola deva (1118-1135 A.D.), dated in A.D. 1128, notes the gift of 20 kalancu of gold for lamp with ghee in the morning and evening worship. The gift also included a lamp stand. The Srivaisnava and those versed in the sacred lore, called kalai-ilakymoliyalar and accepted the gift. The gift was presented in the Tiruninra mandapa. The lord of the temple is called Sauri Perumal.<sup>15</sup> Next record of Vikramachola, dated in A.D. 1128, registers the sale of in cultivated the temple land to a patron under condition that he should cultivate the lands and meet the expenses for certain offerings in the temple in addition to paying due on the land.<sup>16</sup>

The record of Vikramachola deva, dated in A.D. 1128, says Tirukkannapuram was a brahmadeya in the marukalnadu. It reveals the migration of ayagavas.<sup>17</sup> Weavers are to the place to do temple service. They were expected to supply cloth for the sacred banner and other purposes during the cittirai and Appaci festivals. They were required to feed Srivaisnavas in a matha, called Ayogana(va) Salai. The record also reveals for fact that Utkorsta-ayagana(va) or pattanavar were weavers who supply cloth to the god, kings and people.<sup>18</sup>

Another record of Vikramachola Deva Malas notes of a tax-free land at palli, a bahnadeya in Tiruvarurkkurram. It was meant for cultivating red lotus flowers to be supplied to the temple of Tirukkannapuram Alvar.<sup>19</sup> The later name of the Lord of the temple is interesting.

A record of the time of Kulothunga III (AD 1178-1216) dated in A.D. 1189, registered the collection of two Kasu from each individual living in Tirunirracolapuram for maintain a matha called Cucakarkarunakara-virmatam. Its functions was to feed Srivaisnavas on all festive occasion.<sup>20</sup>

A record of Rajaraja III (AD 1216-1250) dated in A.D. 1220, registered a gift of money for the maintenance of a twilight lamp by a lady belonging to Tiruvilimilalai.<sup>21</sup>

Another record of the time of Rajaraja III, dated in AD 1230, registers the lease of lands in the Cavuripperumal – perunteruvu for building slaps and houses to merchants. The merchants had dealings in gold, bell-metal, clothes and so on. The merchants were expected to pay certain taxes to the gods in the temple. The king, issued the order, seated on Nampikaliyan under the canopy of pearls. It was located in the Niravi mandapa on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the Kalyana Utsava in the month of chithirai listening to the hymns of Sathagopa.<sup>22</sup>

Another record of Rajaraja III registers the gifts of 1000 kasu for a lamp by a lady.<sup>23</sup>

Another record of Rajaraja III, dated in A.D. 1236, registers a gift of land for the maintenance of the flower garden. The Lord is called Periya-Nayanar.<sup>24</sup>

Another record Rajaraja -III dated in A.D. 1234 registers the lease of house sites belonging to the temple of Ulakuyyaninrarulin-nayanar to certain individuals. They were expected to cultivate coconut and supply oil to the temple for lamps after the sixth of the saplings being planted.<sup>25</sup>

Another record of Rajaraja -III, dated in A.D. 1266, register of sale of land for 5,300 kasu. The record notes the Jewel of the God, called Virarajendracola-patakkam that was melted and converted into 13 kalancu of gold and paid towards the kasu.<sup>26</sup>

Another record to Rajaraja-III, dated in A.D. 1246, provides for a service called aracu Gandramansandi in the temple of Alvar sauriperumal.<sup>27</sup>

A record of Jatavarman Sundra Pandiya-I (A.D. 1261- 68), dated in A.D. 1260 record the gift of land for a service called Kodamdaraman-Sandi for the image of Ellantalaiyana Perumal.<sup>28</sup>

Another record of the previous Pandya dated in A.D. 1305, notes the God of the temple as Emperuman.<sup>29</sup>

A record of the time a Maravarman Vikrama Pandya dated in A.D. 1304, notes the erection of pavilion, called Mudikondanaru for the sacred bath of the God.<sup>30</sup>

Other records that do not give the name of the donor give the following details.

- i) A gift of land for feeding in a mother and a prakara of the temple called Amparataiyana Vanadirayan.<sup>31</sup>
- ii) Notes the name of the Lord as Baratavar Narayana Perumal.<sup>32</sup>
- iii) Gift of land for worship and repairs to the temple.<sup>33</sup>
- iv) A gift for offering and worship during the vira Pandyan Sandi.<sup>34</sup>

All these records would prove the fact that the temple continued to receive patronage from rulers of the land since the time of Koluthunga-III to the last days of the Pandyas. Records date the patronage to the temple down to A.D. 1305, six years before the despoliation of the Tamil country by the Muslims under Malik Kapur.

## CONCLUSION

The Kaviri delta is an abode of temple art and architecture. The Colas and their successors, the Vijayanagara – Nayaks, have render immoral services to stud the delta region with a host of temples, dedicated the various Hindu divinities particularly Vishnu and Siva. Of all the divyaksetras in region, Tiruvarur and its suburb provide the venue for several temples. This article has ventured to highlight the significance of Vishnu temple at Kannapuram, Tiruvarur district. This temple claim hoary antiquity s immortalized in the hymns of the Alvars.

Kannapuram is of great significance because it figures prominently in the hymns of Kulacekarar, Nammalvar, Antal and Tirumankai. All excepting Tirumankai belong to the middle Alvar group and so the temple is famous since at least the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> century. Inscriptional evidences date since the time of Kulottunga III, down to Rajaraja III and date to the time of the later Pandyas. Architectural evidences would establish the fact that the temple was a growing entity down to the Nayak time.

## END NOTES

1. There is no much difference in the horizontal and vertical setting of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temples. All are of the same type. Only with reference to the sculptures, the distinction between the three could be chalked out, e.g. the Jain temples in Sravanabelagola, Buddhist temples in Kancipuram and any Hindu temple.

2. Mayamata, Chap. 19, p. 322.

3. Stella Karmrisch, The Hindu temple, Vol. I, p. 287.

4. It is closed all through the year and opens only a Vaikuntha-ekadasi day. Those who move through this gateway are supposed to reach the heaven of Vishnu called Vaikuntha.

5. Cempon is another divyaksetra.

6. Cf. Raju Kalidos, *Antiquity of Tillai-Cittirakulam*, South Asian Studies, Oxford, 1987, Vol. 13, pp. 17-24. This article gives an account of the Ramayana from the Nalayiram.
7. It is a reference to the Valapatrasayi form of the lord in which he is reclining on the leaf of the Vata or al leaf. For an illustration see Raju Kalidos, *temple cars of medieval Tamilaham*, p. 34.
8. Kurukur is the birth place and catakopan the christened name of Nammalvar.
9. Raju Kalidos, *Dance of Vishnu the speclacle of Tamil Alvars*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Cambridge, 1999, Vol.3:9:2., pp. 223-50.
10. ARE, 1922, No. 511.
11. Ibid, No. 510.
12. Ibid., No. 521.
13. Ibid., No. 519.
14. Ibid., No. 501.
15. Ibid., No. 509.
16. Ibid., No. 502.
17. Ayogava is the (mixed) caste, pancama born to a vaisya father the ksatriya mother. His profession is weaving. Another ayogava in the appears in the dharmasatras born to a suder father and vaisya mother (profession: artistic works or carpentry) vide, Rajukalidos, *varna sarudara in ancient India*, quarterly, Journal of the Mythic Society, Vol. No. LXXV, pp. 383-87.
18. ARE, 1992, No. 508.
19. Ibid., No 507.
20. Ibid., No. 505.
21. Ibid., No. 520.
22. Ibid., No. 503.
23. Ibid., No. 494.
24. Ibid., No. 514.
25. Ibid., No. 512. This and the previous record give interesting names of the Lord of the temple who is called periya Nayanar. "Lord Great" and Ulakuyyaninrarulina Nayanar, "Lord who blessed the Wolds to sustain".
26. Ibid., No. 522.
27. Ibid., No. 515.
28. Ibid., No. 529. The name Ellantalaiyan Perumal Lord top most of all is interesting cf. No.46.
29. Ibid., No. 527.
30. Ibid., No. 496.
31. Ibid., No. 513.
32. Ibid., No. 497.
33. Ibid., No. 504.
34. Ibid., No. 498.