



PRESERVATION OF MOUNUMENTS (TEMPLES): A PHILOSOPHICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

R. Mahalakshmi¹ and Dr. V. Raju²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar , Department of History , Annamalai University , Annamalainagar.

²Assistant Professor , Department of History , Annamalai University , Annamalainagar.

ABSTRACT

The temples commonly known as Mandir in Hindi and derived from the Sanskrit word Mandira, are identified by several names in different parts of India as koil or kovil in Tamil, devasthanam in Kanada and devalaya, in Telugu 99 etc. In general, the structure of the temple can either be isolated structure or a part of complex. The temple is the place where the culture and philosophies of the humanity is portrayed beautifully. The character of Hindu temples reflected local architecture styles and the material and skills to which they related. The main forms and styles of the Hindu temple were established during 600-800 AD. The cell or shrine, the garbhagriha (usually square in plan), housed the image and was approached through a calumniated porch or mandapa. The shrine was roofed with a pyramidal spire or vertically attenuated dome like structure known as sikhara. The temple was raised on a massive plinth and was often surrounded by subsidiary shrines and by an enclosing wall pierced by one or more gigantic gateway towers or gopurams. It is the outline and detailing of the sikhara and other roof-forms which determine the character of monumental Hindu architecture and give a formal as opposed to historical basis for it classification.

KEYWORDS: culture, gateway towers, Hindu temples, philosophy, sikhara.

INTRODUCTION

Tamilnadu is considered to be one of the sacred sates in India because it has numerous temples and holy lands. One of the famous ancient Tamil proverbs present that a land without a temple is considered to be the graveyard and also it suggests the people to not live in a land which does not have a temple. It is mentioned as "kovillillaoorilkudiyirukkavendam". One of the famous ancient Tamil poets Appar strengthens the above statement by telling "thirukkovillillaathathiruviloorum" (a land should not be treated as a land that does not have a temple and also he suggests the people may not live in a land that does not have a temple¹). The humankind is a historical species by naturally. The temples have been playing an important role in the human history and it represents the evolution of the humanity. The temples provide the details of the human history to the historians, archeologist and the researchers. The temples are made by consist of fortress, restaurants, social organization, political power, economic institution, and art gallery. The holy places like temples still stand majestic in Tamilnadu. The majority of the ancient poets sang about the significance of the temples in their poems in Tamil literature. The Vedas and Upanidas present the philosophical and moral values to the people. Further, it moulds the lives of the humanity. The foreigners have been continuously visiting the temples of India to get the blessings of the Indian Gods and Goddesses. The people of India too often engage in the holy trips to get the blessings of the Gods and Goddesses. The majority of the people often visit the temple to get the peace mind. Some people



visits the temples of the Siddhars (saints) to get the blessings.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The culture of India is beautifully presented in the monuments and architecture of the temples. It represents the cultural values of the Indian people. The temples were constructed based on the human body structure. The structure of the human body is applied from the head to foot. The temple is worthless without the Gods in the temple like the body is waste without the soul in the body. God is the ultimate and superior of the world. The world is nothing without the God. The people believe that the God and Goddesses have been living the places called 'Develoga' and 'Sivaloga'. The temple is considered to be the holy place and the people never allowed inside of the temple with foot wears. The people who violate the Gods are punished seriously in India. It is the place where the people get the chance to connect themselves with the Gods. The people present the offerings to the Gods and Goddesses to get the blessings.

The researchers and the archeologists propose that the most of the temples have been closely connected with the cremation ground or the graveyard. The great Chola King called Rajadiya had built a temple for the Mahadev Shiva at his father's burial ground during 9th century A.D., The record that was found at Soolapuram in North Arcot District proves the incident not only that but also a famous Shiva's temple in Thiruvankadu and Sirkali had been built at the burial ground. Shiva's statue decorated with the skull garland and smeared ashes. The people called the God Shiva who is blessing the people at the burial ground as NaaloorMayaanam, KadavoorMayaanam, KachiMayaanam and etc., The Dravidian people pray the legends who had been doing the good deeds to the people not only that but also they propose them as their Gods and Goddesses. They worship them with all respect for example the lord Maduraiveeran has been worshipped as a God because he had saved the people from the evil sources.

The majority of the Tamil people believe that the supreme is nothing but who stand with the Good people and destroy the evils. They do not like to follow the Aryan culture and their way worshipping the Gods. The Dravidian people had been neglected at the Aryan temples for many centuries because the Aryans presented the Dravidians as the untouchables but the history proves that the Dravidian culture raised a long ago before the entry of the Aryans. The Dravidians had been worshipped their elders by the name of Gods. There all kinds of people allowed entering inside of the temple and they could touch their Gods and offer their poojas freely.

The most of the temples had been built for the Mahadev Shiva in India. The God Shiva is considered to be the first God and supreme in India. The people believe that the lord Shiva existed in the form of dance. The temples built at the various parts of India to represent the dance of the lord Shiva. Those are as follows: Chidambaram (Ponnambalam), Thiruppathur (ChirSabhai), Thiruvaalangaadu (RathinaSabhai), Madhurai (Velliyabalam), Thirukkuttralam (Chitra Sabhai), and Thirunelveli (ThamiraSabhai).

The majority of the temples in India had been built to resemble the human body. Those are presented into three forms as standing form, sitting form and laying form. An ancient Tamil poet Thirumoolar presented it as:

***Ullamperungoilonudambuaalayam
vallalpiraanaarkuvaikoburavàasal
thellaththelindhaarkujeevansivalingam
kallappulanainthumkaalaa manivilakke.²***

Further he argues that the spirit of the people can be developed higher and higher by continuously visiting the temples and worshipping the Gods and Goddesses. The people can be transformed into peaceful by continuously visiting the temples because the temples had been built in such a way to give peace to the people who are too much struggled and suffered by the society. Each and every part of the temple has its own significant.

***Thuyavimaanamthoolamathuaakumaal
Aayasadhaasivamaakunarsookkumam
Maayapalibeedampathiralingamaam
Aayaaranilaiaaindhukolvaarkatke³***

(Stupi and gopura are thoolalinga, sivalinga is sukshumalinga and pali pita is patthiralinga, the feet of human body is gopuram; leg is aasthana mandapa; neck artha mandapa; head sanctum; left ear Dakshinamoorthy; right ear Chandikeswar; eye-brow linga and the top of the head vimana.)

The descriptive method has been followed in this article. This method used to describe the art and architecture of the temples. Further, it lays the ground to describe about the culture of the ancient people through the art and monuments of the temples. It presents the customs, traditions and sometimes divinities of the people in India in early days. A descriptive study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment. It provides information about what it is. Also, it involves observation and surveys. It demonstrates the thing as it exists.

This article carries the objectives like Why we have to preserve the temples? because the temples represent the aesthetic as well as the spiritual lives of our ancient people. The researchers have been proved that the temples are the most powerful philosophical values providing places. It is built to make the human mind to be relaxed when they enter into the temples. There are the numerous hidden reasons there to preserve the temples. Those are as follows: cultural significance, economical, sociological, psychological, philosophical, and etc., The present article has been discussing only two major aspects of the temples. Those are presented below as:

- Philosophical significance
- cultural basis

Philosophy presents the reality of the world in a good manner. This article further discuss that what are the realities hidden behind the temples. In Tamil language, a + layam = 'alayam', which means atman + union, that is, the Atma is united with the God. Alayam is also called Koil. Ko = God and il = abode. Therefore, 'Koil' means the abode of God. The entire temple is constituted of gopuram, dwajasthambam, prakara, palipita, nandhi, mandapa, sikara and kalasa. These are all constructed on the basis of Agamas. The Gopura of the temple is considered to be the sthulalinga. It is believed that the worship of this gopura is equal to worshipping the God inside the temple. There is a famous saying that 'gopura darsanam kodipunniam' (worship of gopuram purifies the souls for crore times).

Palipita is the place where the devotees sacrifice their belongings to the Gods and Goddesses. It is located at the most of the temples in India. It is a small stone seat that is installed directly in front of the icon. Pali or sacrifice all our desires. *Dwajasthamba* is a flag-pole. It makes the people to believe that the God is supreme in the world. It is believed that the yogies are controlling their breath at the centre of Suzhumunai. The Yoga is the best way to reach the God. The people who want to practice the Yoga has to leave the worldly affairs and have to meditate towards the God by doing this the human automatically gets the power of concentration that is needed in this 21st century. The Laks and Laks people are suffering by the stress that was given by their superiors. The Yoga has the power to heal them. A human gets six kinds of powers by doing yoga (mooladhara, swathistana, manipuraha, anahatha, vishukthi and akjna). Actually, it is compared to the back-bone, through which one can attain the powers.

Nandhi is considered to be the vehicle of Lord Shiva. The advice is given to the devotees of the lord Shiva that before going to pray Shiva a man has to Worship Nandhi because it carries to wishes of the people directly to the ears of the lord Shiva. So, the people often propose their wishing to the ear of the Nandhi. The temples generally have five prakaras. They are annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya and anandhamaya. These five describes the three kinds of bodies like sthula, sukshma and karanasarira. One who round three times of the temple he passed the three bodies, and round five times crossed the five mayas.

Mandapais the place where the philosophy of *nivirutti*, *pratishtai*, *vittiyai*, *santhi* and *santhiyathitham* provided. The temple which was constructed with majestic style has four and five mandapas and the temples that are constructed in Small have only one mandapa. *Sikara* represents a mountain and is frequently designated as the mythical *meru*, *Mandara* or *Kailasa*. It is the abode of Lord Siva and Muruga.

The temple is the most dominant place that presents the culture of our ancient people. The culture of the ancient people had been beautifully portrayed in the form of the sculptures at the temples. In Tamil, the word 'culture' is called 'kalai +aachaaram'. Kalai means arts which include music, dance, sculpture, architecture, etc. The word Culture cannot be defined by one word because it is a large complexity multi-dimensional activity word. E.B.Tylor says, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, custom and any other habits acquired by man as a member of society"¹² Music, dance, sculpture and architecture present our culture through temples.

Musicis a philosophical concept that is more dynamic and rests on the aspect of 'nadha' or sound. The Music is everywhere and no place in this universe can be found without the sound. Since, it is an artistically movement of matter and produces inevitably sound. (Siva — Udukkai, Buddha — four elements and Big Bang Theory). The concept of the Music is presented in the instrument of *murasuin Purananuru* as, 'Ay Antiran'. It stated that:

***Antiranvaruvumennaondodi
Porpurusarasam karanga***¹³

From this, it may be summarized that the Tamils give much important to the *murasu* and it is displaced in the temples but it also displayed in the celestial temple of the other world. Today also we can find an electric *murasu* in some temples.

The devotees of Muruga are holding *muzhavu* during the festive occasion, the melodious *muzhavu* held a prominent place.

***Noorukamazhveeyumkoorumisaimushavamum
Maniyumkayirummayilum kudaariyum.***¹⁴

From this, it may be drawn that this melodious instrument was pleasing to deities too. Thudi one of the instruments was played by the pious people on important occasions when offerings were made to deities.

***Valithurandhusilaikkumvankatkadunthudi
Pulithunjuneduvaraikkudignaiyo dirattum.***¹⁵

It is believed that the dance is the powerful way to attain the blessing of the lord Shiva. It is the rhythmic expression of moods and sentiments. It is also the perfectly harmonized bodily movements and gestures or facial expressions of the body. The music is the soul of the dance performances. The music has the power to destroy the best dance performance. So, the music and the dance travel on the same track. The dancers may be generally classified into *vethiyal* and *pothuviyal*. *Vethiyal* refers to the dances performed before gods (for example, *Natiyanjali* in *Chidambaram* temple), whereas, *pothuviyal* deals with the dances performed for all the other people. In *Paripadal*, Thirumal is addressed as "idavalakudavalakoval kaavala"¹⁶. There is a saying that the Thirumal left *Devaloga* and participated in the dance competition in the forest region. Here may be seen the future development of Krishna's *rasaleela*. *Pavaikkoothu* refers to the dance of Lakshmi, when she assumed the form of *Kollippavai* fascinated the Asuras and made them fall down insensible¹⁷. In *Kuravaikkoothu*, the lady companion requests the lady — loves to perform this dance in order to get the blessing of mountain deity Lord Muruga for the ensuing marriage.

***Theriyizhaaineeyuninkezhumpunara
Varaiyuraitheivamuvapavuvandhu
Kuravaithazheeyaamaadakkuravaiyum
Kndunilajpaadik kaan.¹⁸***

Nataraja is the leader of the dancers. A temple for Nataraja is majestically built in Chidambaram and it is believed that the lord Nataraja had performed his dance at the holy hall of Chidambaram. The dance movements of the lord Shiva are the symbolization of all movements of world and it helps to release the humanity from maya or illusion. Generally, the dance of the lord Shiva is presented into two major categories. Those are as follows: Anandhathandava and Rudhrathandava. He performed three dances namely, Kodukotti, Pantarankam and Kapalam.

Kodukotti is the dance of Koduvitaiyon (Lord of fire bull) on the destruction of Tripuram. It is presented as

***Kodukottiyaadukaarkoduyar akalkuri¹⁹
Kottikoduvidaiyonaaditratharkurup
Pottiyanaanka menal²⁰***

Kapalam is the dance of Siva with the skull of Brahma in His hand.

Thalaiyangikonduneekaapaala maadungaal²¹

Sculptures are the soul of Indian culture. It represents the culture and philosophical values to the world and also to the next generations. A man may have an aesthetic sense to understand the sculptures in the temples. Sculpture is an aesthetic representation of mental visual imaginary of an artist, is naturally enlightening and entertaining to the different societies seeking mental peace and reconciliation.²² It is presented that the Natukal is the origin of the sculpture. Sometimes the memorial pillar set up over the grave of the brave soldiers who lost their lives in the battle field. The Natukal was richly decorated with peacock feathers and 'pandhal' and worshipped by people every occasion. This custom of worship paved the way for the worship of divine images. From the reference to Natukal we may easily understand that it was made of stone suitable to be installed in the open air. Images made by the artists had a religious significance. Image making is, therefore an artistic attempt at bringing down within the vision of ordinary mortals some aspects of the divine form, its beauty and grace. As there are references to gods and temples in Tamil country during the ancient period, there should have been images or idols for worship.

In the Sangam literature, there are references to 'Kanthu' or pillar placed for common worship in public halls. This is no doubt something like the present linga worship. God Thirumal is described as sleeping on a serpent bed much like an elephant near a hill. Here it should be noted that the image of Thirumal should have been made and installed in that form so as to enable the devotees to worship the god. The description of Lord Muruga with His six faces and twelve hands in Thirumurugaatruppadai is the splendid illustration for the beautiful images of Murugan conceived and made by the ancient peoples. In Kalithogai, there comes an attractive image of Gajalakshmi. She is seated on the lotus flower with two elephants on either side pouring water with flowers.

***Varinudhalezhilvezhampooneermelsoritharap
Purinekizhthaamaraimalaranganveereithith
Thirunayanthirunthannathengamazh viralverpa²³***

Architecture began its history, when the necessity of residence was felt by the people. As the desire for decorating the houses becomes irresistible in man, he develops the technique of architecture which thus

becomes the enduring witness of his cultural history from his early days. In ancient days the term 'nakar' was used in different meanings — a temple, a palace and a big house. 'Kadavutkadinakar' was used to denote the temples of god only.

**Kadavutkadinakarthurumivanai
Valangoleeivaavenach sendroi²⁴**

In Purananooru, there comes a reference to the temple of three eyed deity as 'mukkatselvarnakarvalanj seyarke'²⁵

In ancient works there are references to temples of deities such as Thirumal, Kali, Siva and Muruga in the construction of temples, people felt that the beauty was the sacred thing on earth, and it should be necessity in the temple than the houses. Therefore, the temples are the place to reserve the culture and philosophical values of the people.

CONCLUSION

The temple (devālaya) is the house for the God or Goddess. The Vāstu texts present the temple plan as homological to a human body. The human body serves as the plan for all creation as in the Purusa-sūkta. The temple structure is homologous to the standing purusa as the śilpa-pañjara. At a lower level, a similar measure informs the proportions of the sculpted form, that may be standing or seated, and also of painted figures. This body at its deepest level is a body of knowledge. The structure of music is also to be conceived as such a body; hence one can speak of the sangīta-purusa, where there exist precise relationships between ascending and descending notes. Indian temples are the places where a human soul finds peace. The people of India strongly believe that the ancient people live in the form of statue for that only they worshipped the legends. The temple has been functioning as the tool to present the culture of a group of people. The Aryan priests have been ruling most of the temples in India. The Dravians had not been allowed inside the temple until the late 20th century. The Dravian people who violated the rules were seriously punished. The monuments in the temple carry the story of the different cultures. The great Tamil ancient poets had sung the greatness of the temple in their poems. The lord Shiva is the supreme God in India. The plenty of temples built for the lord Shiva in India. Kashi is the holiest place India. The devotees of God Shiva often visit Kashi, Thiruvannamalai, Chidambaram and etc to get the blessings of the lord Shiva. The Dravidian people have been worshipping their own men who had done the great things in their lives. The lives of the Gods and Goddesses teach the moral and philosophical values to the people. The statues in the temple also present that the evil men have been destroyed in the hands of God and Goddesses.

END NOTES

1. Appar, *Devaram, Thaniththiruthandagam* 6: 1.
2. Thirumoolar, *Thirumanthiram*, song 1823.
3. *Ibid.*, 1718.
4. S.R. Ramachandra Rao, (1992) *AgamaKosha*, p. 46.
5. A.R. Mohapatra, (1990), *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 100.
6. *Ibid.*, 107.
7. Appar, *Devaram, Thirumurai*, 6: 31-3.
8. SivajnanaSiddhiar, *Supakkam*. Song 271.
9. Manikkavasagar, *Thiruvachagam*. Song 47.
10. Sundarar, *Thiruvachagam*. Song 9.
11. Manikkavasagar, *Thiruvachagam, Thiruchathagam*. Song 8.
12. Tylor. E.B., *Primitive Culture*. p. 1.
13. Puram. 241: 2-4.
14. Paripadal. 8: 99-100.
15. Puram. 170: 6-7.

16. Paripadal. 3: 83.
17. Tamil Lexicon. Vol. V, p. 2636.
18. Kaliththokai. 39: 28-29.
19. *Ibid.*, 1:5-7.
20. Silappathikaram, AranketraKathai. Song 89.
21. Kaliththokai. 1: 12-13.
22. S. Vaithilingam, (1971), *Fine Arts and Crafts*. p. 232.
23. Kaliththokai. 44: 5-7.
24. *Ibid.*, 84: 6-7.
25. *Puram*. 6: 18.



R. Mahalakshmi

Ph.D. Research Scholar , Department of History , Annamalai University , Annamalainagar.