

THARAMANGALAM KAILASANATHAR TEMPLE – A STUDY ON ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT

The Kailasanathar temple in Tharamangalam at the outskirts of Salem town is an architectural marvel with sculptures equivalent to Madurai Meenakshi temple, is dedicated to lord Shiva. Some parts of the temple go back to the 10th century period. The present structure is claimed to belong to the 17th century Gatti Mudali rule. An amazing fact about the construction of this temple is that the sculptures here were based on monolithic stones. Just in front of the entrance to the inner sanctum, we can visualize on the ceiling the inverted open lotus with pairs of elegant chains carved out of stone. That lotus can be rotated with a stick. The stone carving of the 'Yali' (a lion face with a stone ball in the mouth) is the most attractive sculpture in the temple.

KEY WORDS

Hindu myths, Pterocarpus Marsupium, Getti Mudali, gallery of sculptures, Lord Shiva, Vengai wood, Yali, Towers, different patterns, sun rays, performed pujas, Tarukavana region

INTRODUCTION

The ambulatory is full of interesting sculptures depicting the Hindu myths. The main five storey 90 feet high entrance tower is designed as a chariot on wheels, drawn by elephants and horses. The huge entrance doors of this West facing temple are made of Vengai wood (Pterocarpus Marsupium). They are studded with non-rusting iron knobs in

different patterns. It is designed in an idea that when the enemies' elephants come for charge, they get struck by the iron knob and repel the attackers.

GETTI MUDALI

One Getti Mudali was ruling Amarakundhi in Tarukavana region. He came to know that the one of the cows grazing in the place was pouring its milk at a particular place every day. He went to the place and found that the message was true. He was excited to know that Lord Shiva was in the place. He prayed and performed pujas there. Many years later, Vanagamudi the king of Makuda Chudavadi built the temple here, according to local history.

THE WONDER OF THE TEMPLE

The great hall here is a fine gallery of sculptures. Another interesting fact of the temple is that, every year for 3 days from February 21, the sun rays travel through the first pagoda (gopuram) of the temple. From the entrance gate, the rays pass through a small hole and fall on the statue of Lord Shiva, which draws locals to witness this and the tall wooden entrance doors with sharp spikes.

This temple is a hidden architectural wonder. People of Tamil Nadu are not familiar with a beautiful old Hindu temple of Tharamangalam, a small town located about 27 km west of Salem City. Dedicated to God Shiva, this temple known as Kailasanathar temple is not popular as other Shiva temples of this state. Part of the reason is lack of publicity on the part of the Tamil Nadu Tourism department, hence this temple go unnoticed by people visiting Salem and its vicinity This 10th century temple is endowed with amazing stone sculptures, attractive mantaps (halls) with ornate pillars.

It is said that parts of the temple have been around since the 10th century and records point out that the entire temple was completed by the 17th century during the reign of the Gatti Mudhali dynasty. The interesting aspect of stone sculptures of this temple is they are all made out of monolithic stones and the catchy carvings are done with meticulous care and imagination.

On the ceiling just in front of the entrance to the inner sanctum, one can see an inverted open lotus with pairs of beautiful chains carved out of stone. The architectural marvel here is this lotus can be rotated with a stick. The sculptors were not only imaginative, but also would have spent much time on such grand sculptures. Another attraction is an imposing Yali (a mystic animal) with a big stone ball inside its mouth, which can also be rotated. That how this grotesque stone figure with a huge rotating ball inside the mouth was sculpted is a mystery. It shows the technical knowledge and sculptural finesse of talented stone workers of the past era. The temple mantap also has various nicely carved sculptures of deities, men, women and others

THE MAIN TOWER

The main tower of the temple conceived as a chariot drawn by elephants and horses is a tall one 90foot tall. The main deity - God Shiva is enshrined in the sanctum and its access is through a portico supported by six carved stone pillars. There are well- executed sculptures of princes on horseback, apparently on a hunting expedition. On the walls of the temple are embedded Nandi images, yet another common feature in all south Indian Shiva temples. Every year, it is said, in February the sun rays falling through a small hole will bathe the the image of Shiva in the main shrine.

As in many of the Hindu temples there are numerous well-made stone carvings of puranic episodes from the Ramayana. The sculpture depicting the killing of Vali (Vali Vadham) by Sri Rama (hiding behind the tree) gets the attention of the visitors to this temple. From Vali's position, Rama's position is not visible, on the other hand Sri Rama can view Vali's position.

CONCLUSION

This Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, which is an architectural marvel with sculptures equivalent to Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple. It attracts visitors from various parts of our country. Iraivan is Sri Kailasanathar & Iraivi is Sri Sivakami Amman. Kailasanathar Temple, which is right opposite the bus station, has a massive stone wall

around it measuring 306' by 164' that was built in the thirteenth century. The main 5-storey, 90 ft. high entrance tower is designed as a chariot on wheels, drawn by elephants and horses. The huge entrance doors of this west-facing temple are made of Vengai wood (*pterocarpus marsupium*). They are studded with non-rusting iron knobs, each in a different pattern. It is believed that when the enemies' elephants come for charge they get hit by the iron knob and repel the attacker

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