The Shore Temple – An Aesthetic Architectural Ecstasy

The Twin Temples of Mamallapuram

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ABSTRACT

Each temple of the Pallava period has had distinctions in some aspects. Even, from the early apsidal structure of Kūram to the smallest temple of Piravathanesvara of Kanchipuram those all having some distinction indeed. In this kind, the structural temples of Pallavas were erected in the various locations as, on Hills; lands and seashore. Thus, besides the usual lands’ temples, hill temples of them are familiarly known as Olakanesvarar temple at Mamallapuram and Talagirisvarar Temple at Panamalai near Senji a fort Town. We don’t know the origination of hill temples in India, but the temple at Badami by Early Chalukyas on hill is according to the source was earlier to the Pallava hill Temples. However the temple erected on the top of hills was became common but the temple at sea shore is obviously a conceptual creative thought of Pallavas which evidenced by through their plan execution and the aesthetic value of the location. Thus the paper interprets of their feature that strangely composed at wet shore purposefully.

Keywords - Rajasimha, location, Pañcha Būtas, Naṅthāvilākku, Sāvā Mūvā Pēṟādu, Moon and the Sun.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rulers of the ancient South India, those all had individualities in their activities at their movements. The Pandyas of the Saṅgam period had provided a platform for language to yield enormous literature for the sake of ethnic highness. As same as this kind the ancient and Later Cholas who were the role models to a hygienic administration brought richness in social elevation and cast dynamic dimension on art. The remaining Cheras who were among the one of the traditional trinity to Southern India also been a patron to language, art and culture in high level.

1.1 The Pallavas

Except these three, a new, eventful kingdom has established in the history of Tamil Nadu by the Greater Pallavas. They ruled over seven hundred years. Their country included Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and Cholas land with some few parts of Andhra.

The Nativity of the Pallavas has been still in duel indication as a foreigner or a tribe of own land. However, they dominated history with full-fledged movement in nonstop continuity. Their primary operations at before to the screen were evidently from 3rd to 9th century A.D. with full of independence. The secondary operations took part at behind to the screen between 9th to 13th centuries A.D. during this week period a powerful, aggressive exploration again by Kadavarkon Kopperunjinga, which ensured their presence, should be mentioned here.

Avvai a Saṅgam poetess praises the literacy of Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam. Her phrasing reveals the contribution of its rulers who provide the education to all. Therefore, the rulers were the directors to the project of the socio welfare. In fact the socio welfare could be a possibility, when the people been in peaceful mind. The people in a peaceful mind, is possible due to the sustentation of a well mould culture. A well mould culture is possible by regularized disciplines. The discipline is possible to experience the godliness. The possibility of experiencing godliness, which has, sustains the love between
people. Thus simply, the love is the molecule to the Humanism. Though it is very difficult to maintain and being as an ever target.

1.2. Ecstasy
Love on one thing or a person could be only a shorter, time bound, and by an affection which giving only a temporal pleasure. The love on the whole thing is experiencing the plurality in a singular the same as experiencing the singularity in plural. This is an abstraction of being with mystic pleasure that known as in Tamil Pērinbam, in Sanskrit Paramānandam, in English Bliss or Ecstasy.

The above said bliss is a possibility to a few people who left worldly desires. The remaining people of the mass of the society all have intertwined with desires. The desire should be an eyed with care. If not it took viśvarūpa as a, greed; could chance to one’s win over one’s loss. Due to this, the rulers of the country provide the space with structural forms to experience the eternal bliss to avoid the loss of love.

Temple worship is an evolution-custom by a cultured people from the belief of primitives. This tradition took art for its execution. The Pallavas at their turn handled this with hi-tech and high intellectual level. Their initial works were being a kind of documentation on Dravidian art. Due to that purpose, the monolithic structures took shapes to exist. Though their cave temples inspired the people make them to visit rather than worship. Hence, the need of the structural temples took as a serious project to fulfill the people’s requirements. Why because, the both Jainism and Buddhism were the available options in those periods very frequently.

2. KING RAJASIMHA PALLAVAN
The King Rajasimha alias Narasimhavarman II (A.D. 700-728) whose, major concentration spread on temple erection. In this kind, the shore temple was one of his creations erected strangely at the seashore is a hypothesis of this Research paper. This paper analyzes the temple design and its atmosphere to find out the aesthetic mindset of those periods.

2.1. The Seven Pagodas
Mannuci a European sailor who was visited Mamallapuram during the period of the 17th century and given a name to this historic site as ‘The Seven Pagodas.’ [1], [2] Though, it is an old data but the name still in confusion that what and which are the part to the seven. The later Historians also confused to identify them and some of them believes about the oral tradition of the local people who seen some few pagodas between the sea at some times. [3] If we take all remaining pagodas there to identify the seven, twelve will be the result at the end of the counting. However, the temple of seashore could be a one member to the seven pagodas is right decisions no need to have second thought.

2.2. Anandasayana Murti
The Shore Temple is in asymmetrical alignment in plan, having two temples in front and back. Between these two, one more hall type of a temple without the superstructure of vimāna also dedicated to Anandasayana Murti. This is a relief sculpture in good size. Nothing special in its workmanship, but it is a rare monolithic work of art. And it could be a proto – Anandasayana Murti relief sculpture to a Mahishasura Mardhini cave’s north facing relief panel and a giant relief of Ranganatha at Singavaram Cave -Temple, near Senji a fort town. [4] An individual Research by me which is going on of the asymmetrical plan of this temple that going to be unveil the long stood riddle. And the campus of the shore temple possessing executions with the respect to chronology has to be focused. It’s an architectural editing composed with great logical - fact.

The Pallavas were undoubtedly a founder of the Renaissance to medieval period of Dravidian art. Their art influenced almost maximum parts of the Asia. Their innovative great start attained the high evolution by itself and later by the others. Birudas from their inscription had given a bold declaration of their designation. All they excelled in fine art and literature. Nothing could find the exaggeration in that word Chithrakārapuli (Tiger among the artists) proudly announced by them. It is a fine saying. In addition, also it is a great historic declaration being with beyond the values.

More than two hundred birudas of the king Rajashima, engraved at the Kāṅchi Kailasanatha temple is a rare documentation in history, which telling the highness of an individual person. All his glory came out of his great achievements. It was a real evaluation, nothing found over praising on a man, certainly whose blood enriched with
innovative heredity. Due to this classical creativeness, his all works were getting an ever position of primness.

2.3. Location
The selection of the location for the temple erection by the King Rajasimha is a scientific approach with deliberation. Also the perspective of his inner science, which has had stimulated him to do his doings with distinction. Therefore, the divine eligibility introduced him to find a different location to shape his thoughts. Among these, the Shore Temple is a highlight that very strangely located at the edge of tides. Many views have casted on this Temple, as it was in prior little far from sea shore later the sea came closer. According to the literary sources there is no major change in sea’s proportion which means the boundary line in Tamil Nadu costal that majorly affected in Sangam era when the Pumbukār a capital of Sangam Cholas was submerged. Thus the origination of the shore side art works of Mamallapuram that probably initiated and too fully done by the Pallavas is undoubted one. Besides, as per the oral tradition by localities as said before, that some other structures also was once been there but now went under the sea. This is again popularised when the Tsunami hit the shore of Mamallapuram at 2004 where the undergone structures came to vision to somebody while the sea recedes.

2.4. The Study of Underwater Archaeology
Prior to the Tsunami of 2004, in 2002, a team of underwater archaeologists from National Institute of Ocean of Goa dived to find the submerged structures of Mamallapuram. Where they found stone masonry, remains of walls, and a square rock cut remains, scattered rectangular and square stone blocks. A special of these is a big platform with steps leading to it is a noteworthy. According to the study of the team that those all being a scattered elements of a then existed temple campus. Their research done in five various place in a stretch of 500 to 700 meters distance from the Shore Temple at the depth of 5 – 8 meters. The interesting one of these findings is a lion sculpture that ensures their belonging probably of Pallava. [5] From this data we came to accept their perspective, as a one more temple was been there existed. Though their statements which not accounting in detail of the remains’ positions which means as they stood in position or lying irregularly.

2.5. A New Hypothesis
In my point of view if some of them suppose being in lying state, that raise a fresh hypothesis as they were the elements of the existing Shore Temple which all brought to as this scattered situation under the water because of a high assault of the early disaster of nature. The remains of a platform with steps mentioned earlier that giving knowledge here to relate with the missing part of the Shore Temple at its various main portions such as maṇṭapa entrances. The dressed stone blocks too chancing to think on the missing stones of the same Shore Temple’s prakara walls and Mandapas. Also should verify about their study that where the place they exactly done. If it could be exactly quit straight opposite of the Shore Temple at sea, indeed there is chance to be the remains which are the missed parts of the same as we mentioned earlier. There is another temple foundation seen towards the south of the Shore Temple. This too in good size and no super structures even walls are there. Except the foundation all parts were missed. In my point of view, the most of the remains could be gone to water by waves, the important thing is the gone remains exactly could obviously scattered there quit opposite to the same temple. Why because the nature of the Waves’ movements always front and back in straight ward, exactly 90° inclined to the ground level never diagonal or irregular movement found at them. Waves are the mightiest than manmade mechanism to displace the weighty things. This we recently seen in our own eyes through the televisions when the Tsunami hit on Japan. The weighty things never goes here and there if sunk, due to their weight, can possible movements between them just up to one foot nearly. If we put faith on the so told increasing of sea level that chanced to swallow the few more of Pallava pagodas will raise a major question. Thus, if as so, then where are the missed parts of the exiting Shore temple and the other shore temples of Mamallapuram? Of mentioning as of the other Shore Temples which includes of a one more foundation came out after 2004 Tsunami hit at Sāluvankuppam near the familiar Tiger cave.

Now coming to our matter that constructing a structural temple at the waves could be a bold decision, if the sea been in its original position as seemed as hundred years before. While that time the waves joyfully played with the temple embracing with its surf. [6], [7] Could be this atmosphere as same when
at the time of construction. [8] As above said, the temple consisting two vimanas the big one is facing east, and the small to the west. According to the temple tradition, nearly eighty-five percent temples are facing eastward. Custom of this basis, the frontal big one is the prime temple facing east for worships and too to welcome the foreigners by sea. The rear one is for usual rituals and proceedings. So for that, the couple of Maṇḍapars and Prakāras have been erected for the above said purpose. In fact, the prakāras designed with the panels of relief sculptures, to serve its visitors and functioned as a gallery especially to the foreigners and traders. This could be an inspiration to its onlookers to have a sense of the inner science, whoever they may be. Hence, the prakāras could be a nirandhara type means roofless open prakara, in its original plan to see theirs’ all displaying with open light. [9]

2.6. The Perpetual Lamp
The non – electricity period of those yesterdays, have given a natural knowledge to use the natural lights and manual lamps. The temples have also had a Traditional Lamping system at evening and nights. This light has known as Naṇṭhavilakku in Tamil a perpetual lamp in English. This has been maintained with great care by the support of donations from Royal members and some other wealthy people. The enormous donations on Naṇṭhavilakku were being one of the major content to the South Indian inscriptions indeed. In general, sheep were used to donate to the temple in need of ghee for lamping. As well as the gold was given too. In this kind, the old inscriptions that denote about the donations on perpetual lamp, that the Kings gave the unending ninetybig sheep, to maintain Lamping at the temples without failures. In further, the King scheduled this divine duty to be continued up to the lives of moon and the sun.[10]

From those inscriptions, we can analyze the reality of an existence by giving many sheep to have multiple with their newborn. It’s an amazing and an unending process. Since, no need to worry about the shortage of ghee. That was why the sheep mentioned in the inscriptions beautifully in Tamil as Sāvā, mūvā, pēṟādu, and means never ending big sheep. The donor who demands strictly, the system of non – stop Lamping could ever exist up to the lives of the Moon and the Sun. However, they know about the forthcoming obstacles and changes in the future. Even though, they want to sustain this custom as long as possible.

2.5. The Perpetual Lamps of Nature
As the same kind as said above, the King Rajasimha wants to Lamping to his God, yet the lives of both the moon and sun not only by the perpetual lamps, but too with the lights of the same moon and sun. Due to the real reason, he had chosen the location at the margin of the wavy sea. Regard to this, does not want any frontal portions or natural raisings in front of the temple. It is a great direction on natural lights, by simply leaving free space to enter entirely up to the garbagriha. This could be a very rare and novel treatment of the whole world of architecture handling such elements of time and space. The word ‘time’ here handled for lights of various times.

2.7. The Chanting Waves
The vast sea before to the temple is associated with its aesthetic feature, which never hide anything due to its naturally undergone third dimension, thus visible only with two-dimensional flatness. Thus nothing there hidden. So the lights reached the destination which determined firmly by the King Rajasimha. Again one more valid point was there of frontal free design that is no muka or maha mantapas were built, left the space for the whole vision of the temple from the sea sailors’ perspective. Further, he uses, the non – stop rhythmical chorus of the sea - sound can realize the movement of the universe. We have evidence that he was a great instrumentalist [11] since eligible to sense the chorus of the waves as a powerful chanting. Of the realizations move us to think over, overall and its totality. While entering into that totality, our visible vision could be abstracted which a vision felt in detail on art just before to this abstraction when we lost our dimension, our being, our designation, our name, and every this and that’s. Thus at in final, we came to nothing. This was his aim to introduce the zero-ness to the worshippers by setting a place for it. We have to consider on this because the people now visiting there as a tourists. No worship purpose. Now the temple became as a rare art. At its original period it was been with high spirit the peoples came to worship purely.

3. CONCLUSION
The portion of the conclusion has nothing to define again, that all were previously analyzed. Though giving some essential
basic facts that could deepen the wonderful execution of the Shore Temple by its geological worthiness. Indeed, this paper evidencing the untold aesthetic-hidden and given acceptable or unavoidable truths.

Moreover, the transition period of those times was busy with new hard medium to the structure. Although, according to their perspective on divinity they were more religious and enlightened through highly disciplines.

In particular, their knowledge on cosmology reveals their handling-distinction upon religious structures. Religion is an understanding of a whole by a human perspective. The evolution of the religion brought its symbol as a temple. Therefore, the temple is a symbolic device, which provides the space to study a self that is on oneness, which prospered as ontology. Realizing oneness means understanding the whole. Understanding the whole could easily eligible by facing the five elements of the universe. The five elements of the universe, such as the water, earth, air, space, and the fire, all these raw and fresh could be associated when at worship, while standing before to the Shore Temple in those days. This could be an equal experience of the inner, and tasting the rawness of the whole while at severe penance. Therefore, the King Rajasimha designed this temple, to experience the mystic pleasure to worshipers. For this concept the King how he chosen the site; for the site how he made the architectural design with some editing attempts because of the pre existing work; to this design how he elevated the two vimanas in two vary height of the whole campus; to the campus how he sectioned with needful structures; the structures how set with lighting entry; the light how plays between the spaces in and around of the campus; the campus how set with backdrops of nature; thus the backdrop of east with two shades of the sea and sky that both bifurcated with a smoky or blurred horizontal line. In the west the same two shades but with irregular horizontal line between the sky and landscape etc. are the valuable aesthetic features of the Shore Temple.

So far, an attempt made on this hypothesis entitled to this topic, which brought rare interpretations and profited by aesthetic approach. On this subtle degree, I tried my best, on the creativity and technology to bring the evidential facts through a scientific perspective.

Furthermore, this paper conceptualised on temple’s location that purposefully chosen. Due to the location-worth, the King came out from the usual traditional temple plan and handled with a new dimension.

Hence, constructing a temple on the wet shore with visiting waves is not a merely an idea. May be it conceived some time earlier at him while experiencing the mystic pleasure at the same seashore. Thus, the bearers of this pleasure where the raw- fives (Pañcha Būtas) together available at a time and where the particular spot the shore temple was built. According to ‘Manasara’ and ‘Mayamata’ which are the Silpa and Vastu sastras speaks elaborately on site selections.

This is evidently sourced by this paper with an untold view could be the first of its kind. In this manner, the frontal – free scheme has been maintained by the next rulers too. Particularly, the immediate successor of the genius Cholas who they did not touch anything on that. Even though, they renovated maximum temples in the Pallava region with useful additions. However, among them, the excepted Shore Temple and Kanchei Kailasanatha temples were being as their reference. Hence, they kept them with their originals. Instead of the extensions they made donations why because, they understood the virtuous magnificence of the temple’s glorious sustainable amalgamation which been as a devise to link the essence of macrocosm to microcosm.

Undoubtedly, the Cholas had a clear mind on the temple’s architectural plan that reversely annexed in westward, due to the frontal must free – plan. We can also understand this from three altars, which all were oriented before to the entrance in triangular composition. The frontal two altars, standing for both front and back temples of Lord Shiva, and remaining back goes to the central temple of Lord Vishnu.

Another proof of the temple which, having touch with the friendly waves, [12] which clearly eye witnessed by the disfigured figures. We can see the two types of disfiguration at there. One is by salty wind, which lessening the sharpness averagely of the temple. The other one is that the erosive concave and hole like deeps by the long duraive waves. When the waves embrace the facade of the temple, then the surf goes to the inner. Due to this wetted feature with watery atmosphere, regard to this, an early evidence by the Cholas from their inscription, which, given a proper name to the recumbent Vishnu as Jala Sayanamūrti, [13] means a Mūrti took an adobe on water.
This is again ensured by the later rulers of Vijayanagara period, who they constructed a temple, opposite to the giant bass relief of ‘Arjuna penance’, and named the lord as śhala sayana mūrti due to the location is the land. Śhala sayana Murti means a Murti took abode in structural Temple erected in land. From this, we come to a clear knowledge on that, that they had mind on the previous ‘Jalasayanamūrti’, which situated on the water visiting - location.

A closely erected wall of prakāra has also evidenced the situation of the past. The prakāra wall called as a stone-screen by the doyens also a valid data to this. Some water-outing holes here and there in the temples ensuring the water entry. Therefore, the compressed density of the shore temple’s main structure designed and executed with higher thoughts. This temple purposed as the study centre as before said, to study on oneness by losing oneself through merging to the whole. To this, the faculties undoubtedly were the Pañchabūtas.

Instead of placing faculties, providing a study centre of their rawest place was a tactical achievement by the Pallava King. As given as before, the frontal free design of the Shore Temple provided a free space to its worshippers. The freestanding worship before of the temple, with embracing waves can be sensed in two kinds thus one at embracing and other at reversing. [14] While at this movement the bliss could be experienced. The density of the bliss, could be depends on the time’s uniqueness such as sunrise, sunset, and in the moons.

This Study does not treat the location of the Shore Temple as a normal one. Also not being as a suddenly took decision to erect such a temple at there. Indian art always seems to be a soul operated efforts. Many scholars mentioned on this. Nothing can find the dominative elements of mind as seen in sometime western art, if found but might be very lesser could be in very later period. [15] Hence, Indian art seems to be designs of soul that took shapes when being in oneness of the creator or a patron that executed in the art of Painting, sculpture and in Architecture. Architecture itself is a massive sculpture. Since, its unexposed spaces too being a work of art. The negative spaces of the Architecture is having a direct reasons sometimes with subtle. The only structure, but, like a two dimensional one is the so called dwajasthamba which short and thin in shape seen in front of the temple with considerable distance. This too a monolithic which can be seen from the photos provided below. Therefore; this paper is a tribute to King Rajasimha who provides space for us to do the research to put forth the glory behind their attempt. Shore temple’s frontal in different times Picture details:
Fig-3: Sea level at – 1900

Fig-4: The front portion as of now - 2014


2. Picture of no: 2 used from a book of Seven Pagodas by W.J. Coombs.

3. Picture of no: 3 is used from a book of Pallava Architecture, III part by A.H. Longhurst,

4. Photograph taken by the author in 2014.

REFERENCES


[2] Pagoda- (n) - a sacred building, typically having a many tiered tower.


[4] Senji, formerly known as Gingee. The village Singavaram has the prime period cave temple of Pallava that later converted as a temple complex. Its Ananda Sayana Murti of garbagriha is a monolithic relief sculpture, probably could be the early big one of South India may too, be in the whole India.


[6] J.W. Coombes, (1999), The Seven Pagodas, Asian Educational Services, Madras, Page 49’s opposite page Plate. (Plate numbers are not mentioned)


[8] Now, the sea went back and left the space before to the temple after 2004 Tsunami. The same space was been as space of sea with waves when my first visit in 1992 while I enjoyed with standing and playing in knee level depth of sea. The waves also played with the temple façade and its surf went to wet the inner campus very usually.

[9] Even we can feel there the floors of outer prakaras have been treated as with original sands than laid usual stone slabs.


[12] Putting the word friendly before to the waves, treated here as an adjective, to realize its value to the temple’s concept. However, the same the waves disfigured its figures, which reveals a moral balance to its act as milk shall sour when using more.


[14] While at worship the reversing wave at our feet is a unique experience which the erosive can be felt.