



Evolution Of Dravidian Temple Architecture In South India

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Abstract

South Indian temple architecture, also called Dravidian Style, architecture invariably employed for Hindu temples in modern Tamil Nadu from the 7th to the 18th century, characterized by its pyramidal, or kuṭina-type, tower. Variant forms are found in Karnataka (formerly Mysore) and Andhra Pradesh states. The South Indian temple consists essentially of a square-chambered sanctuary topped by a superstructure, tower, or spire and an attached pillared porch or hall (maṇḍapa, or maṇṭapam), enclosed by a peristyle of cells within a rectangular court. The external walls of the temple are segmented by pilasters and carry niches housing sculpture. The superstructure or tower above the sanctuary is of the kuṭina type and consists of an arrangement of gradually receding stories in a pyramidal shape. Each story is delineated by a parapet of miniature shrines, square at the corners and rectangular with barrel-vault roofs at the centre. The tower is topped by a dome-shaped cupola and a crowning pot and finial. The origin and evolution of temple architecture has been covered in and around seven regional kingdoms. The present study deal with temple structure and evolution of structural changes from the beginning. The origin of temple structure has not framed in given period, it's a huge prehistorical continuity. If we start from cave temple its involve cultural, social and religious beliefs reflects.

Keywords: South India, Dravidian, Temple, Structural.

Introduction

The origins of the Dravidian style can be observed in the Gupta period. The earliest extant examples of the developed style are the 7th-century rock-cut shrines at Mahabalipuram and a developed structural temple, the Shore Temple (c. 700), at the same site. The South Indian style is most fully realized in the splendid Bṛhadisvara temple at Thanjavur, built about 1003–10 by Rajaraja the Great, and the great temple at Gangaikondaḥapuram, built about 1025 by his son Rajendra Cola. Subsequently, the style became increasingly elaborate—the complex of temple buildings enclosed by the court became larger, and a number of successive enclosures, each with its own gateway (Gopura, **Plate - 1**), were

added. By the Vijayanagar period (1336–1565) the gopuras had increased in size so that they dominated the much smaller temples inside the enclosures.

Dravidian or Southern style of architecture is Sharply distinguished from the Northern by the fact that its tower or spire is straight-fined and pyramidal in form divided into stories by horizontal bands, and sure mounted by either a barrel-roof or a dome derived directly from the ancient wooden architecture. The central shrine originally stood alone. but in later times it Was enclosed in an immense walled court, usually including numerous subsidiary temples, tanks, and sculptured halls or cloisters, The quadrangle is entered by lofty gateways (gopuram), which in later temples overtop the central shrine; and so Spoil the effect Of the architectural composition. But the great temple of Tanjore, its smaller replica Gangaikondapuram. and some of the earliertemples at Conjeeveram (Kanchi) are designed on correct principles, with the central mass dominating the composition. Sometimes there are several quadrangles, one within the other.

The history of the style begins in the seventh century with the Dharmaraja Ratha, the earliest of the rock-cut rathas at Marnallapurarn, thirty-five miles south of Madras, commonly known as the Seven Pagodas, which were excavated in the reigns of the Pallava kings of the South during the seventh century gives an Illustration or the Ganesa Ratha (c. A.D. 680), with a ridge roof. Some or the others are crowned by domes.

The next stage in the development of the style is marked by the structural temples at Conjeeveram (Kanchi, the Pallava Capital (Plate - 8), Which became known only a few years ago, and have been described in detail by Mr. A. Rea. Six temples of the Pallava period exist in or close to the town. Inscriptions prove that the two principal edifices. the Kailasanatha and the Vaikunrha Perumal, were erected by the sons of King Rajasimha, great-grandson of Narasimha-varman (A 3). The Muktesvara temple of about the same date, say A.D. 700 to A.D. 750, with a domical roof, is a typical example **(Plate-2)**. Further development was affected under the patronage of the powerful Chota kings. Rajaraja and his son Rajendra (985 to 1035). the builders respectively of the Great Temple at Tanjore and its fellow at Gangaikondapuram in the Trichinopoly District.

At this period the shrine was designed on huge proportions. towering above the Subsidiary gateways and pavilions. The gigantic South-Indian temples, with vast quadrangular enclosures and lofty gopuramsovertopping the Central shrine. extend in date from the Sixteenth century to the present day. Fergusson speaks of 'up- wards or thirty great Dravidian temples, or groups or temples, any one of which must have cost as much to build as an English cathedral —some a great deal more'. Several such edifices, at Ramesvaram. Tinnevely, Madura, and other places, are described. The buildings at Madura are of special interest because they can be dated closely, having been erected by Tirumal Naik, a local chieftain, who reigned from 1623 to 1659, gives a general view ofthe Madura temple a typical example.

The corridors or cloisters connected with such temples are of wonderfully large dimensions — those of Ramesvaram, for instance, aggregating nearly feet in length — and are filled with weird, fantastic sculpture. Perhaps the most marvellous of all Dravidian temples is the well-known rock-cut Kailasa temple at Ellora, excavated from a hill-side by a Rashtrakuta king in the eighth century. In style the Kailasa is a development of the Pallava shrines, but its sculpture is finer than anything produced in the South. At Badami and Pattadakal in the Bijapur District are other shrines of the same type; these are all structural.

The immense ruins of the City of Vijayanagar (**Plate-3**) dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, surrounding Hampi village in the Bellary District, Madras, present numerous examples of a special local variety of Dravidian architecture. The royal palaces and apartments here show signs of Islamic influence (**Plate - 4**). The temples are purely southern Indian in style with high gateways and many-pillared pavilions. The style intermediate in both locality and character between the Northern and Southern styles is that which received from Fergusson the inappropriate name of Chalukyan. It is true that the Chalukya Clan supplied one of the leading royal families of the South from the middle of the sixth to the middle of the eighth century and again from A.D. 973 to the Muhammadan conquest, but the typical examples of the style are the work of Hoysala, not Chalukya kings; and, if a dynastic designation be given, the style should be named Hoysala rather than Chalukya.

Territorial designations are, however, preferable to dynastic, and if it be practicable to modify Fergusson's established nomenclature, the style may be better described either as that of the Deccan or that of Mysore, in which province the finest specimens occur, at Halebid, the ancient capital, Belur, and many other localities less known to fame.

This style, whatever name be bestowed upon it, is characterized by a richly carved base or plinth, supporting the temple, which is polygonal, star-shaped in plan, and roofed by a low pyramidal tower, surmounted by a vase-like ornament. The temple of Vishnu in the village of Nuggehalli, in the Tiplur Taluk Mysore, as shown in **Plate -5** from an unpublished photograph, gives a good notion of this extraordinarily ornate style. The stellate plan appears clearly in the view of the Somnathpur temple (Plate 120A). The Belur temple is known to have been erected in A.D. 1117 by a Hoysala king named Bettiga, converted from Jainism to faith in Vishnu. The more magnificent temples at Halebid, the Hoysaleswara and Kedareshwara, are somewhat later in date, and necessarily must have been under construction for many years. Not long ago the disintegrating action of the roots of a banyan tree unfortunately reduced the Kedareshwara to a heap of ruins showing a small portion of the sculptures on the Hoysaleswara temple, will give the reader a faint notion of one of the most marvelous exhibitions of human labour to be found even in the 'patient East'.

The architectural frame Work, it will be observed, is used mainly as a background for the display of an infinity of superb decoration, which leaves no space uncovered and gives the eye no rest.

The Hoysalesvara and several other buildings of its class are twin temples Consisting of two distinct shrines Set side by side and joined together. The beautiful building at Somnathpur (**Plate - 6**) is a triple temple. A special feature of interest in these Mysore temples is the record of the names of the Kanarese artists. who executed individual statues. At Belur there are twelve such signatures, and at the Hoysalesvara fourteen, all different. Eight signatures on the Somnathpur temple have been noted, among them that Of Mallitamma, who executed forty Images

Certain temples near the Tungabhadra river situated in the western part of the Bellary District, Madras, Wedged in between Mysore territory on the south and the Nizam's Dominions on the north, form the subject of an excellent monograph by Mr. Rea. entitled Chulukyan Architecture. The title is so far justified that the buildings were erected to the order of Chalukya kings in the twelfth century, But the style is a modification of the Dravidian or Southern, not of the Deccan or Mysore style called Chalukyan by Mr. Fergusson. The plans are rectangular, nor star-shaped, and the towers are distinctly Dravidian in design. The buildings, as Mr. Rea correctly observes, 'exhibit a preponderance of Dravidian forms. They might best be described as an embodiment of Chalukyan details engrafted on a Dravidian building.' Although the statues, individually regarded. are not of high merit, and present much of the grotesqueness of commonplace Hindu sculpture, the ornament, considered as a whole, is superb. It is Impossible, we are assured. to describe the exquisite finish of the greenstone or hornblende pillars, or to exaggerate the marvellous intricacy and artistic finish of the decoration in even the minutest details.

The ornament is generally completely undercut, and is sometimes attached to the solid masonry by the most slender of stalks, producing the effect of an incrustation of foliage on the wall. Both the intricate geometrical patterns of the ceilings and the foliated work covering every other part of the building exhibit the greatest possible exuberance of varied forms boldly designed and executed with consummate mastery or technical details, no chased work in gold or silver could possibly be finer and the patterns to this day are copied by goldsmiths, who take casts and moulds from them, although unable to reproduce the sharpness and finish of the originals. Opinions may differ as to the propriety of employing such jewellers work as architectural decoration, but concerning the beauty of the result and the high standard of executive skill no two opinions are possible. The annexed plan of a ceiling in the Suryanarayanawami temple at Magala (**Plate - 7**) may Suffice to give some notion of the exquisite carving characteristic of the Bellary variety of the Dravidian style, as favoured by Chalukya Kings.

The evolution of south Indian architecture style had been made different stages. The major dynasties in south India had great patterns for beautiful styles and features, in every stage some of the other feature had been added to enhance massive growth of structural changes. At the end of the discussion it concludes that the south India temples structure has great diversity in terms of adaptation of neighbouring idea.



Plate – 1; Gopuram



Plate – 2 ; Muktheswara Temple



Plate – 3; Sculptured relief from Vijayanagara A & B

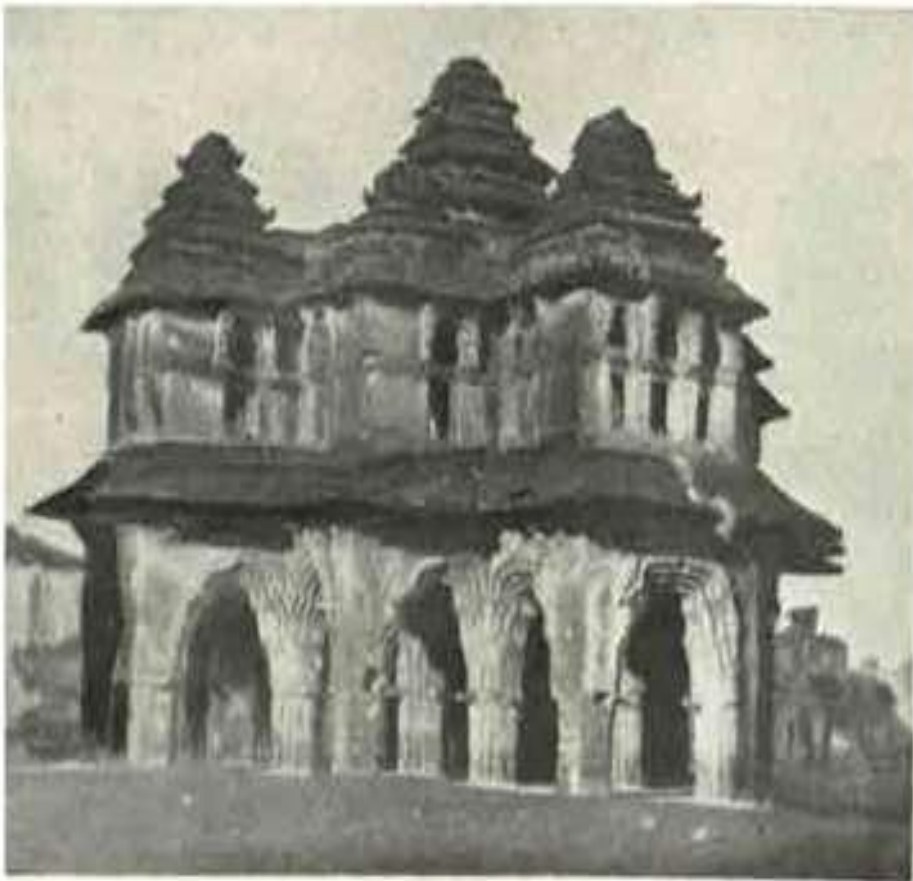


Plate – 4; The royal palaces and apartments here show
signs Of Islamic influence



Plate – 5; The temple of Vishnu in the village of Nugehalli in the Tiplur Taluk Mysore



Plate – 6; The beautiful building at Somnathpur is a triple temple



Plate – 7 ; The annexed plan of a ceiling in the Survanaraswami temple at Magala

EVOLUTION OF PALLAVAN ORDER

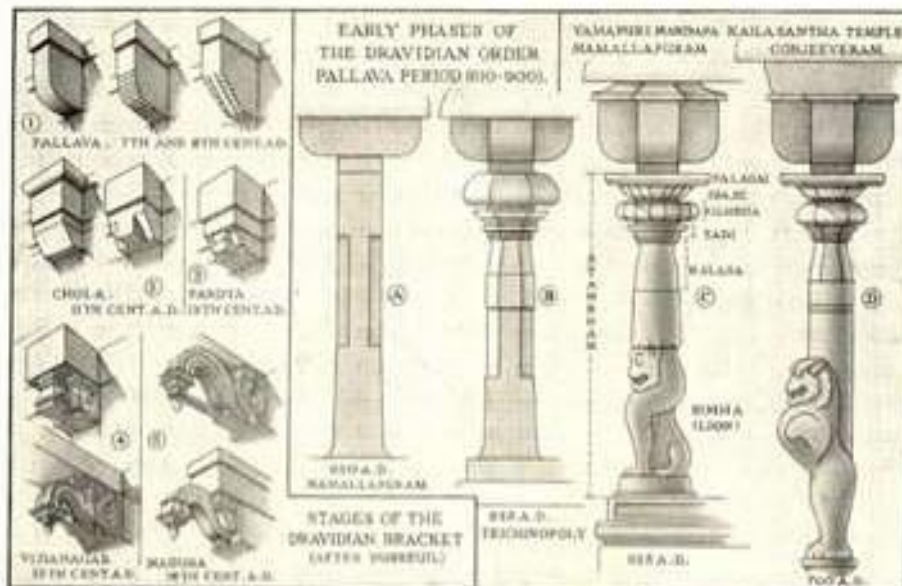


Plate – 8; Pallava Capital

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