

Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி (Dharma Neri)

65



Sri Sankar Publications

Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka.
கேஷத்திர (வயல்) விநாயக ஆலயம், ஸ்ரீ முன்னேஸ்வரம், சிலாபம், ஸ்ரீ லங்கா.

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May

2013

மே (சித்திரை/வைகாசி)

Editorial

'Path to Darma' the monthly magazine, published by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is presenting the 65th issue this month. The main intention of this magazine is to converse the perceptions linked to Hinduism and its ceremonial rituals, customs and dharma, to the anxious readers.

The elucidation and investigation from the readers are appreciated.

B.Sivaramakrishna Sarma,
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A short account of the various Mandapas (halls) at the temples

The temple

The temple is a representation of the macrocosm (the universe) as well as the microcosm (the inner space). A small Hindu temple consists of an inner sanctum, the *mulasthanam/garbha graha* (womb-chamber), in which the main idol(deity) is installed, often called circumambulation, a congregation hall, with an antechamber and porch. The *garbhagraha* is crowned by a tower-like *shikara* known as *vimana/stupi*. By the end of the first millennium two main categories of temples prevailed namely, Nagara (the northern style) and Dravida (the southern type) of temples. They are noticeable by the general shape and elaborate decoration of their *shikhara* (vimana) and the types of mandapas (halls).

- Nagara style: The tower/*shikhara* is beehive/curvilinear shaped.
- Dravida style: The tower/*shikhara* consists of progressively smaller storeys of pavilions.

The earliest Nagar temples are in Karnataka (e.g. Galaganath at Pattadakal) and some very early Dravida-style temples (e.g. Teli-ka-Mandir at Gwalior) are actually in North India. A complex style termed Vesara was once common in Karnataka which combined the two styles.

This may be seen in the classic Hindu temples of India and Southeast Asia, such as Angkor Wat, Brihadisvara, Khajuraho, Mukteshvara, and Prambanan.

The *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini, the great grammarian of the 5th century BC speaks of images that were used in Hindu temple (prasadas) worship. The ordinary images were called *pratikriti* and the images for worship were called *archa*. Patanjali, the 2nd century BC author of the *Mahabhashya* commentary on the *Ashtadhyayi*, gives details on this subject.

The *Shatapatha Brahmana* of Vedic period tells of an image in the shape of Purusha which was placed within the altar. The Vedic scripts illustrate the plan of the temple. This plan is divided into 64 or 81 smaller squares, where each of these represents a specific divinity.

Early temples in Historical chronological order;

- Gupta period temples at Sanchi, Tigawa, Eran, Bhumra, Nachna
- Deogarh 500-525
- Bhitargaon Brick temple 6th cent
- Mahabodhi Temple
- Lakshman Brick Temple, Sirpur 600-625

- Mahabalipuram 650-675
- Rajiv Lochan, Rajim, 600
- Parsurameswar Temple, Bhubaneshwar 600-650
- Aihole Meguti Temple 634, Lad Khan and Durga Temples 7th cent.
- Alampur Garuda-brahma 696-734, Svarga brahma 681-696, Visva-Brahma 700
- Badami Malegutti, Bhutanath
- Ellora, Kailas 750-775, cave 32, 800-825
- Pattadakal Virupaksh, Mallikarjuna, 745
- Temples at Mahua, Amril, Naresar, Batesar: 8th century
- Osian Surya 700-725, Harihar 775-800
- Gwalior Teli Ka Mandir 725-750
- Vaital Deula, Bhubaneshwar, 750-800
- Madhakheda MP 825

In design/plan of a temple, several parts of Temple architecture are considered, most common amongst these are:

The Dravidian style of temples are generally made from granite or different kinds of stone. The gopurams of the temples are large towers above the entrances; a vimana/stupi, is the tower on top of the sanctum/garbagruha and large pillared mandapas (halls) and corridors are seen. The gopurams were in the past always the tallest structures in town.

The most sacred place is the pitha (altar), or pedestal, of the Deity. The pitha is in the sanctum sanctorum (inner sanctum) called the garbha-griha (womb house). This is where the altar of the main deity of the temple is located. The garbha-griha (sanctum sanctorum) of the temple is usually semi-dark without any sculptures, where only the main deity is installed. This part of the temple must be constructed first and before construction of other structures.

The *sri-kovils* are considered the abode of God in Kerala. As per the ground-plan the *sri-kovils* distinctly fall under five broad categories based on the shape. Out of the above five types of *sri-kovils* square, rectangular and circular types of *sreekovils* are more common.

- i. Square (sama-chathura) type
- ii. Rectangular (deerkha- chathura) type
- iii. Circular (vrthha or vatta) type
- iv. Elliptical (anda- vrthha) type
- v. Apsidal (gaja-prshta or hasthi-prshta) type

1. Square (sama-chathura) type of Sri-kovils

The most significant square *Srikovils* are Sri Anantha Padmanabhaswamy temple, Ananthapura (near Kumbla) and Sri Mallikarjuna temple at Kasaragod of **Kasaragod district**. Sri Rajarajeswara temple at Taliparambu, Sri Subramanya Temple at Peralasseri and Sri Suryanarayana temple at Kathirur of **Kannur district**; Sri Thali (Siva) temple at Kozhikode of **Kozhikode district**; Sri Dakshinamoorthi temple at Edappal of **Malappuram district**; Sri Lakshmi-Narayana temple at Panniyur, Kai-Thali temple at Pattambi, Sri Thali temple at Ongallur and Sri Vishnu temple at Thirumittacode (near Pattambi) of **Palakkad district**; Sri Rama temple at Katavallur, Sri Maatathilappan temple at Peruvanam (near Cherpu), Sri Siva temple at Thiruvanchikkulam and Sri Krishna temple at Thirukulasekharapuram (near Kodungallur) of **Thrissur district** ; Sri Siva temple at Kantiyoor (near Mavelikkara) of **Alappuzha district** ; Sri Rameswara temple at Kollam in **Kollam district** and Sri Bhagavathi temple at Thonnal (near Pallipuram) , Sri Mahadeva temple at Kazhakkuttam, Sri Brahma

temple at Mithranandapuram (near West Fort, Thiruvananthapuram) and Sri Krishna temple (within Sri Padmanabhaswamy complex) of **Thiruvananthapuram district**.

ii. Rectangular (deerkha- chathura) type of Sri-kovils

The famous hill shrine of Ayyappa at Sabarimala, the Thirumandhamkunnu Bhagavathi temple at Angatippuram of **Malappuram district**, the famous Bhadrakaali temple at Maataayi of **Kannur district** and Chamundi temple (Thozhuvancode) at **Thiruvananthapuram district**.

iii. Circular (vrthha or vatta) type of Sri-kovils

The prominent Circular temple at Sri Narayana temple at Ramanthali of **Kannur district**; Sri Subramanya temple at Kotuvally of **Kozhikode district**; Sri Bhagavathi (Kunnathu ambalam) at Manjeri, Sri Thali (Siva) temple at Angatippuram and Sri Siva temple at Pulpatta of **Malappuram district**; Sri Krishna temple at Netherimangalam (Pattambi). Sri Siva shrine in the Sankaranarayana temple at Thiruvengappura Sri Siva temple at Perumkurissi, Sri Sankaranarayana (Rantumoorthi) temple of Thrikkangodu (near Ottappalam) and Sri Siva temple at Thirunellai (near Palakkad) of **Palakkad district**; Sri Thiruvembilappan (Siva) temple at Venganellur (near Chelakkara), Sri Siva temple at Avittatthur, Irattayappan Siva temple at Peruvanam, Sri Vadakkunaathan temple at Thrissur, Sri Rama temple at Thriprayar and Sri Koodalmaanikyam (Bharatha) temple at Irinjalakutta of **Thrissur district**, Sri Lakshmana-Perumal temple at Thirumoozhikkulam, Sri Vaamana temple at Thrikkakkara, Sri Perumthirikkovil (Siva) temples at Paazhur and Udayamperoor and Sri Mahadeva temple at Thrikkariyur (near Kothamanglam) of **Ernakulam district**; Sri Mahadeva temple at Ettumanoor, Sri Vishnu temple Thrikkannapuram , Sri Siva temple at Vazhappalli and Sri Mahavishnu (Narasimhamoorthi) temple at Thrikkodithanam at **Kottayam district**; **Sri Mahavishnu temple at Thiruvandoor of Alappuzha district**; Sri Siva temple at Kaviyur (near Thiruvalla), Sri Vallabha (Maha Vishnu) temple at Thiruvalla and Sri Parthhaasarathy temple at Aranmula of **pathanamthitta district**; Sri Bhagavathi temple at Chittumala (East Kallada), Sri Thrikoteswaram Mahadeva temple at Punalur and Chennamattu Mahadeva temple at Chathannur of **Kollam district**; Sri Janardanaswamy temple at Varkala, Subramanya temple at Manambur, Sri Sankaranarayana temple at Navaikkulam, Sri Vishnu (Krishna) temple at Pirappancode, Sri Siva temple at Neeramankara, Sri Siva shrine Sri Parasurama temple at Thiruvallam, Sri Siva temple at Valia Udyeswaram, Sri Mahadeva temple at Valiasaala and Sri Subramanya temple at Vellanad of **Thiruvananthapuram district**.

iv. Elliptical (anda-vrthha) type of Sri-kovils

The Elliptical or *anda-vrthha* temples are very rare. The prominent Elliptical or *anda-vrthha* temple are, the Srikovil is Sri Mahadeva temple, Vaikom The remnants of the basement of *Koothambalam* at the Sri Madadeva temple, Chengannur also reveal that it was elliptical in shape.

v. Apsidal (anda-vrthha) type of Sri-kovils

The most significant Apsidal temples are the Sri Sadasiva temple at Mangalpati (near Kumbla), Srimad Anantheswara- Vinayaka temple, Madhur, and Sri Mahalingeswaram temple at Adura of Kasargod district; Sri Subramanya temple at Payyannur of **Kannur district**; Sri Siva temple at Thiruvannur of **Kozhikode district**; Sri Kalasamharamoorthi (Siva) temple at Thriprangod, Sri Siva temple at Thrikkandiyur and Sri Ayyappa shrine in the Kaarikkadu temple at Manjeri of **Malappuram district** and Ayyappan kaavu at Panjali and Sri Thali(Siva) temple at Nettumpura(near Vadakkancherry) of **Thrissure district**

Mandapa

The mandapa (sacred hall) with reference to the Hindu temple is a porch-like construction through the ornate-gateway (gopuram) which approaches to the temple. Mandapa is a term to refer to pillared outdoor hall or pavilion for public rituals. Very primitive temples have one or two

mandapas while the later developed large temples have many mandapas. The Maha mandapa (prayer hall) is commonly built in front of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple (garbhagriha/moolasthanam). The mandapas are made use for various religious rituals and social ceremonies in temples. Mandapa/mantapa or mandapam) is a term to refer to pillared outdoor hall or pavilion for public rituals in a Hindu temple.

Mandapa refers to any roofed, open or enclosed pavilion (hall) resting on pillars, standing independently or connected to the sanctum of the temple. Mandapas are one or more entrance porches or halls that lead to the inner sanctum. When a temple has more than one mandapa, they are given different names.

The inner sanctum is surrounded by subsidiary shrines, mandapas (halls), and pillared corridors. An account of mandapa is described in texts like Ramacharitamana and in other Sanskrit scripts. If a temple is constructed with more than one mandapa, each one is allocated for a different purpose and given a nomenclature to be a sign of its function. For example, a mandapa dedicated to divine marriage is referred to as a *kalyana mandapa* (often the hall is pillared and the pillars adorned with intricate carvings) snapana mandapa dedicated to divine bathing (abisheka) of idols, yaga mandapa dedicated to divine homa (sacred fire rituals) etc.

In temple at Srirangam the famous Thousand pillared mandapam is very unique. The main mandapas (halls) are Sheshraya, thousand pillared and Garuda. Architecturally, the "hall of thousand pillars" is the finest part of the temple. The Sheshraya mandapa measures 30m x 30 m and is supported on elevated monolithic pillars of six metre height, which have T-blocks to support the ceiling beams of 3.5 m x 30 cm x 30 cm dimensions. Some of the pillars are comprehensively carved showing horse-mounted warriors and other miniature figures. The thousand-pillared mandapa has a centrally located chariot, made of charnockite.

Halls

1. Aayiram Kaal Mandapam (Sheshraya mandapa) - a distinctly thousand pillared hall close to the vimana of the Koil which forms a distinct part of the site plan of classical Dravidian architecture
2. Abhisravana Mandapam - Special poojas related with temple festivals are performed here. Devotees use this Mandapam for meditation and prayer.
3. Abisheka mandapa - Where the holy bathing rituals of the deity is performed
4. Adhi-mandapa A pavilion built over and above another, a double-storeyed pavilion. (Pavilions are generally single-storeyed)
5. Adhyayana mandapa where the priests chant holy hymns daily
6. Agama mandapa where explanation of Agama are delivered
7. Alankara mandapa where the processional deity is dressed before being taken on procession.
8. Ardha Mandapam (Antarala) - is a small antichamber or hallway between the garbhagriha/ and the maha mandapa. Intermediary space between the temple exterior and the garba griha (sanctum sanctorum) or the other mandapas of the temple.
9. Asthana-mandapa- assembly hall where the processional deity holds
10. Chathur ashta shodasa-sthambha mandapa-special poojas are performed on special occasions
11. Chathush shasti sthambha mandapa-special religious rituals are performed on special occasions
12. Dhana mandapa is a hall where treasury are stored.
13. Dheeksha mandapa where religious ritual of Dheeksh is performed
14. Dhvaja-stambha mandapa is a hall in the temple yard outside the main entrance of the inner sanctum where the flagpost and a platform for food-offerings (bali-pitha) are seen.

15. Dwaja Stambha-Mandapa -The flag-staff and a dais for food-offerings (bali-pitha) are seen
16. Garbagraha/garbha graha Mandapam- the sanctum sanctorum of the temple (moolasthanam).
17. Gopurathvarasala mandapa -special religious ceremonies are performed on special occasions
18. Jalakreeda mandapa - All ceremonial baths of the deities are held here
19. Kalyana Mandapam — Hall dedicated to ritual marriage of the Lord with Goddess
20. Kalyana-mandapa –Special hall where devine marriage is held during the brahmotsava
21. Maha Mandapam - (Maha=big) When there are several mandapas in the temple, it is the biggest and the tallest. It is used for conducting religious discourses. Sometimes, the maha mandapa is also built along a transversal axis with a transept (bumped-out portions along this transversal axis
22. Mukha mandapa - is a rectangular, pillared hall, or an ante-chamber,(either closed or open) or porch at the front main entrance in front of the sanctum where the devotees stand and view and worship the main deity of the temple
23. Namaskara Mandapa-, where Veda Parayanams and other daily recitals of Devi Mahatmyam and Shyamala Dandakam are recited by devotees.
24. Nandi Mandapam (or Nandi mandir) - In the Shiva temples, pavilion with a statue of the sacred bull Nandi, looking at the statue or the lingam of Shiva.
25. Nityarchana mandapa is a hall where the daily worship of the small (moveable) representative of the main deity is done.
26. Nritya mandapais a -hall for dance recitals
27. Nruththa Mandapam- Where Lord of Dancing Siva in the form of Natraja is worshiped
28. Unjal mandapam (swing corridor) and placed on the swing
29. Open Mandapa –Devotees assemble here for special poojas special occasions
30. Ottakkal Mandapam - is a striking feature with single stone platform situated in front of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. The Abhishekams to main idol are performed here.
31. Paka-sala (Madapalli) mandapa is hall used as temple kitchen.
32. Pradhakshina mandapa - mandapa where devotees go around the temple in a clockwise direction
33. Puja mandapa - poojas are performed on normal days
34. Purana mandapa –ia a mandapa where recital and commentary of puranas are delivered
35. Pushpa mandapa- is a mandapa for storing flowers and to construct garlands in the temple
36. Ramanuja-kuta mandapa in a Vaishnava temple and Siva-kuta mandapa in a Siva temple) are the halls used as dining hall.
37. Ranga-mandapa- A large hall with intricately carved pillars used for large audience pavilion.
38. Ratharohana mandapa- is a mandapa for annual car festival puja ceremony in the temple
39. Sahasrastambha mandapa (Sheshraya mandapa)- Extraordinary hall with thousand pillars
40. Sathastambha mandapa - Unique hall with one hundred pillars
41. Snapana mandapa –special snapanabisheka holy bathings to the idols are performed here
42. Swarna mandapa- is a hall for special ritual during the festival.
43. Udhyana mandapa –special hall in the nandavana of the temple.
44. Ugrana(Kalanchiya) mandapa is a hall to store all items.
45. Upachara mandapa- is a hall for special upachara ceremony held during the festival.
46. Utsava manadapa- is a hall used on festive occasions.
47. Vadhya mandapa- is a hall where different musical instruments of the temple are kept
48. Vahana Mandapa is a hall where the vehicles or vahanas for the festival are kept.
49. Vasantha-mandapa-hall in the middle of the temple tank used for festivals,
50. Veena mandapa - is a hall where different varieties of veena musical instruments are kept
51. Yaga mandapa is a hall for special annual religious sacrifices in the temple.
52. Yajna-Mandapa is a hall for occasional religious sacrifices in the temple.

The significant Mandapas at Meenakshi temple, Madurai

The kilikoonda Mandapam ("parrot cage corridor") The passageway adjacent the sanctum of Meenakshi is called *kilikoonda Mandapam*. The space was once used to keep green parrots that were trained to utter the name of Meenakshi. There are two large cages full of squawking green parrots.

The Kambatadi Mandapam ("Hall of temple tree") with its seated Nandi (sacred bull) has various manifestations of Shiva carved and also contains the famous "Marriage of Meenakshi" sculpture. A golden flagstaff with 32 sections symbolizes the human backbone and is surrounded by various gods are seen here.

The Meenakshi Nayakkar Mandapam ("Hall of 100 pillars") has two rows of pillars carved with images of *yali* (mythological beast with body of lion and head of an elephant).

The Puthu Mandapam contains large number of fine sculptures. It is situated opposite to the east *gopuram*.

The Ashta Shakthi Mandapam ("Hall of eight goddess") is the first hall in the entrance of Meenakshi shrine tower near to East Tower. The statues of eight (*Ashta Shakthi*) goddesses are seen here. The *gopurams* (towers) can be viewed from this hall. Other sculptures and paintings depict the *Tiruvilayadal* (holy games of Siva).

Pancha Pandava Mandapam (Hall of Pandavas) The sculptures of heroes of the famous epic Mahabharata, the *Pancha pandavas* can be seen in this mandapa

The Viravasantharaya Mandapam is a large hall with huge corridors.

The Kalyana mandapam To the south of this Viravasantharaya Mandapam is the *kalyana mandapam*, to the south of the pillared hall, is where the marriage of Shiva and Parvati is celebrated every year during the *Chithirai* Festival in mid-April.

The Uunjal mandapam (swing corridor) The golden images of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar are carried into the *Uunjal mandapam* (swing corridor) and placed on the swing every Friday at 5.30 p.m.

The Mudali Pillai Mandapam or Iruttu Mandapam (Dark hall) is a spacious and long hall built by Muthu Pillai. On the pillars of the halls, there are fine sculptures depicting the story of Siva taking the form of Bikshadananar to teach the sages a lesson.

The Mangayarkarasi mandapam is situated opposite to the marriage halls and bears the name of saintly queen, Mangayarkarasi who contributed to Saivism and Tamil language.

The Servaikarar Mandapam is found to the south of *Mangayarkarasi mandapam* which was built by in 1795.

The Nagara mandapam (Hall of beating drums) is situated opposite to Sundareswarar shrine.

The Kolu Mandapam is situated in the second corridor of the Meenakshi shrine at the western side. This mandapa is used for displaying dolls (*kolu*) during the Navarathri festival celebrated during September–October.

The "Aayiram Kaal Mandapam" or Thousand Pillar Hall contains 985 carved pillars.

At the entrance of the hall the statue of Ariyanatha Mudaliar seated on a horse-back is present, which flanks one side of the entrance to the temple. Each pillar in the hall is a carved monument of the Dravidian sculpture. The more prominent among the carved figures are those of Rati (wife of Kama), Karthikeya, Ganesha, Siva as a wandering mendicant Manmatha, , Arjuna, Mohini, the Lady with a flute are nonetheless amazing and endless number of *yalis* (mythical figures of lions). The Musical Pillars are near the northern tower, and there are five musical pillars each consisting of 22 smaller pillars - carved out of a single stone - that produce musical notes when tapped. The 'chakram' (wheel of time) engraved on the ceiling denoting the 60 Tamil years is truly mesmerizing. There is a unique exhibition of rare artifacts and idols in this hall.

The significant Mandapas at Annamalaiyar Temple

The Deepa Darshana Mandapam is a sixteen pillared hall of light, in the third precinct.

The Kalyana Mandapam, the marriage hall, is in the south-west of the precinct, and is built in Vijayanagara style. A stone trident is present in the outer shrine of the temple in open air, and has protective railings like a sacred tree.

The Vasantha Mandapam, meaning the Hall of spring, is the third precinct, and contains the temple office and Kalahateeswarar shrine.

The Ayirankal Mandapa (one thousand-pillared hall) is seen within the doorway of the first tower and the fifth precinct. The pillars of the mandapam are carved with images of *yali*, a mythological beast with body of lion and head of an elephant.

The Kalayana Linga Sundara Eswara Mandapam is a unique hall in this temple.

The Arunagirinathar Mandapam is located to the right of the Kalayana Linga Sundara Eswara Mandapam.

The significant Mandapas at Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Ottakkal Mandapam (single stone platform)

The Ottakkal Mandapam in the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple is an outstanding feature. The Mandapam is situated in front of the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Sree Padmanabhaswamy. This structure is built with a single slab of granite which is two and a half feet thick and twenty feet square. The Abhishekams (holy bath to the idos) to Sree Padmanabhaswamy are performed in this Mandapam. The granite pillars of this mandapa are covered with gold.

Abhisravana Mandapam

This hall is constructed in front of the Ottakkal Mandapam. Special pooja rituals connected with temple festivals are carried out here. Devotees perform meditation and prayers in this Mandapam.

Kulasekhara Mandapam

This mandapam is as well known as Aayiramkaal Mandapam (one thousand pillared hall) and Saptaswara Mandapam. It is sustained by 28 balustrades of pillars. It is a splendid and incredible architectural work on granite. The pillars on the four corners can produce musical notes when tapped. The pillars are adorned with exquisitely carved figures in half and full relief.

The Dwaja-stambha mandapam (Golden flag-staff)

This large mandapam has an eighty feet high pole near the eastern corridor was installed by Anizham Tirunal. A teak wood of this dimension was carried from the nearby forest to the Temple. As per Sastras the wood should not touch the ground while in transport. The teak pole was then covered completely with gold foils. The apex of the flag pole has a figure of Garuda Swamy, in kneeling posture.