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Abstract

Akilandeswari is pronounced as 'Akilam - Aanda - Eswari' Akilam - Universe, Aanda - Ruler, Eswari - Goddess is an aspect of the goddess Parvati, Shiva's consort. King Virapandya, in the year 946 C.E constructed a temple for Lord Siva, so says Tenkarai Puranam and the inscriptions. This temple lasted for 100 years and, in due course, falls into decay. In the 11th century, Parakrama Pandian constructed a temple in the same place. This took 17 years for the completion.

Keywords: Akilandeswari, King Virapandya, Tenkarai, Mulanatha Swami Temple

Mythology

The people of this village, during the puranic period, surrendered themselves at the feet of lord Mulanatha. They failed to perform yajnas. So, devas didn't have their share. Their leader Indra got wild and ordered the god of air to dispose of the dark clouds hovering over the village. People suffered to the maximum owing to water scarcity. Crop failure and famine-affected them. They prayed to Lord Mulanatha. God saved them from distress. This angered Indra and Vayu. So, they made a lot of trouble. Lord Mulanatha taught them a lesson through his army of Sivaganam. Such stories are prevalent in Bilvarany Kshetra Mahathmiyam to glorify Lord Mulanatha.

Akilandeswari Amman - Incarnation of Parvati

Akilandeswari is pronounced as 'Akilam - Aanda - Eswari' Akilam - Universe, Aanda - Ruler, Eswari - Goddess is an aspect of the goddess Parvati, Shiva's consort. Legend has it that Akilandeswari was such a fierce, angry goddess her worshippers were afraid to enter the temple, so they prayed to her from outside. Fierce aspects of the goddess are called ugra (fierce, ferocious) devatas (angels). Fierce angels are intolerant of mistakes and breaches of conduct when being prayed to. They want their devotees to be freshly bathed and pronounce their invocations correctly. Their offerings must be fresh, their temple clean, and they respond more positively to the pure of heart. People who come to an ugra devata with a long list of requests might just piss her off. A kinder, gentler aspect of the goddess will ignore you when you pray to her, and the milk is spoiled. Bring sour milk to an ugra devata, and you invoke her wrath. Expecting more of you, the fierce angels put their devotees on the fast path to spiritual attainment.

History of the Temple

The inscription found in Arulmigu Akilandeswari sametha Mulanatha swami temple clearly shows us the dominance of Pandyas, Cholas, and Nayaks of the 11th century and afterward in this region. The renowned Bronze plate of Velvikkudi belongs to this region. These describe the infrastructure of the temple.

King Virapandya, in the year 946 C.E constructed a temple for Lord Siva, so says Thenkarai Puranam and the inscriptions. This temple lasted for 100 years and, in due course, falls into decay. In the 11th century, parakrama pandian constructed a temple in the same place. This took 17 years for completion. The temple includes inscriptions concerning the construction and sacrifices made by the rulers. Lord Mulanatha temple had its full form in 1090 C.E.

King Parakrama Pandya, Srivallabha Pandian, Kulasekara Pandian, and later Naicker ruler had donated abundantly.

The inscription of Tirumalai Naicker in 1629 C.E and Chokkanatha Naicker in 1673 C.E are still found in this temple, which narrates their contribution to the temple. There is a separate temple to Goddess Akilandeswari. A huge compound wall is erected around the temple of Arulmigu Akilandeswari sametha Mulanatha Swamy.

Holy Tree

The holy tree of the temple of Arulmigu Akilandeswari same the Mulanatha, is a wood apple tree (Bilva tree). People assume that the leaves of the wood apple tree subside the head of the body. So they perform archana with these leaves to cool Lord Shiva. The leaves have a medicinal effect too.

Holy Water Tank

The holy tank (divine water source) in this temple of Arulmigu Akilandeswari sametha Mulanatha is called as **Swarnapjini**. This is in front of the **Dwajasthambha** (Kodi Maram) of Goddess Akilandeswari. The water has a medicinal effect, says Thenkarai Puranam. To illustrate this, an instance is referred to. King Vira Pandian, who was suffering from leprosy, had this bath in this holy water source for 48 days and got cured by the grace of Lord Mulanatha. People of this century to believe that the water in this holy tank has a medicinal effect.

Stone Inscriptions

The stone inscriptions are in abundance at Arulmigu Akilandeswari sametha Mulanatha temple. Many inscriptions in Tamil, we can see an inscription of mixed Tamil and Sanskrit belonging to Sadayavarman Sri Vallabha. This refers to a

prayer song. One inscription of Rajaraja-I refers to land donation, and another of Naicker period refers to many contributions to the temple. Some of the inscriptions were in Grantha letters. Many inscriptions were in ancient Tamil letters. There are 85 inscriptions in Arulmigu Mulanatha temple, out of which 31 inscriptions were deciphered.

The following ruler's inscriptions are historically renowned

1. Rajaraja-I
2. Veerarajendra's son Chozhapandian.
3. Maravarma Parakrama Pandya.
4. Sadayavarman Srivallabha.
5. Sadayavarman Kulasekara Pandya 1162 to 1175.
6. Sadayavarman Kulasekara Pandya-1180 to 1218.
7. Sadayavarman Kulasekara Pandya-1236.
8. Maravarman Vikrama Pandya 1218 to 1232.

Inscriptions found on the outer side of Prakarams.

The inscriptions show that Pandya kings had the utmost interest and involvement in the maintenance of the temple. Further, we can infer their rule, taxation, political, and social systems. The inscriptions available in the 7th century begin with the letter **Sir**, in the 8th century **Swasthisree Rakshu**, Subashree and then the name of the king, his period, and the message. In the 10th, 11th, 12th centuries, the king's honorary and bravery eulogies were inscribed. Those who inscribe on stones or Bronze were called as Asarians, Silpacharian or Thchachariars.

Art and Architecture

The term architecture means the structure pattern and design of a house, palace, factory, office, mafia, temple, church, mosque, etc. temple architecture deals about the construction of a temple, and it is named religious architecture, palace and their mandapas and its architecture are called as secular architecture. That is the first and foremost architecture. Likewise, he constructed a small structure to protect his worshiping element (God) from the sun and rain. That structure was very simple in the beginning and then decorated them with various mandapas and groups¹. These decorations are divided into two categories

1 L. Manivannan, *Pandiyanaattu Vainavakkoilkalin Kalaiyum Kattatakkalaiyum*, Madurai, 1999, p.41

(i.e) one northern architecture and second one south Indian (Dravidian)² architecture. These decorative forms were named variously in the medieval period.

These decorations are divided into two categories (i.e.) one northern architecture and second one south Indian (Dravidian) architecture. These decorative forms were named variously in the medieval period.

Every period or every dynasty has its own rules, the architectural aspects varied, changed, and developed. It was greatly changed during the Vijayanagara Nayaka period. Because the temples of their period were very big and large in construction and area³.

Every ruler extended their sway and changed the previous temples, styles, and religious structures in their territories.

The term architecture means the whole structure of any temple here, the Vimana of the temples alone is taken for our detailed study. This chapter discusses the structure of Sanctum, Sanctorum, Upapita, Adhistana, Pranala (outlet of water) Pillars and Pilasters, Devakosta, Kumbha Panchara, Koshta Panchara, Windows, Eluthakam, Kapota, Kudus, Yazı freeze, Dalas, Grivas, Sikharas, Kalasa.

Tamil art and architecture are the reflections of her thought and civilization. They are closely associated with the inner life and vision of the Tamils as such they form a vital part of its culture⁴

Temples were the life force of Hindu architecture. They were usually magnificent places in Hindu structures and occupied a prominent place in Hindu society⁵. Temples are considered to be hallowed ground. They are the centers from which divine blessings issue to the deserving. These sacred shrines, by the splendor of their massive structure and the fine sculptures to be found therein, prompt the worshippers to lead a life of purity and devotion. Many of the great temples of southern India are of the genuine ancient Hindu style of architecture⁶.

2 G. Jouveau Dubreuil, *Dravidian Architecture*, Madras, 1917,p.

3 Field visit to Arulmigu Akilandeswari Amman Temple, Madurai on 15 February 2016

4 K. Nambi Arooran, *Glimpses of Tamil Culture Based on Periyapuram*, Madurai, 1977, p.17.

5 R. Nagaswamy. *The Art of Tamilnadu*, 1972, p.1

6 P.V.Jagadeesa Ayyar, *South Indian Shrines*, New Delhi, 1993. p.10.

In the Dravidian temples, the main shrine is situated in the center. Most of them exhibit, however, more recent extensions and modern construction, while the deity in the sanctum is invariably allowed to remain as in the days of old.

The earliest form of a temple consisted of three parts viz., the garbhagriha or sanctum, for the image, which is enclosed in a square building, its plan consists of a small square or rectangular cell or chamber. The innermost apartments of the central shrine with two mandapas, one in front of the other, the middle portion called the ardhmandapa, is a passage leading from the more spacious outer mukhamandapa into a central shrine. While the worship was being conducted in the central shrine, the devotees gathered together in these two mandapas⁷.

Besides these two mandapas in Front of the central shrine, there are other and more spacious ones, with a dais in one end for the god to be placed on and decorated during Festival occasions. On either side of the front entrance of ardhmandapa are to be found two colossal figures of dwarapalas.

The architectural history of the Tamil country starts only with the beginning of the seventh-century C.E, the monuments built before that period having perished. In early Tamil literature, we hear of such structures as koyil, madam, nagaram, palli, pali, etc., which are references to temples or religious edifices. Presumably, they were built of impermanent materials that have succumbed to the ravages of time⁸.

The existence of temples in south India during the “Sangam Age” is borne out by the literature. These early temples must have been built of perishable materials like wood and thatch “Sudu-man ongiya nedunilai kottam “The tall temple built of burnt bricks⁹.

Nakkeerar, in his Tirumurugatrupadai has mentioned several places that are suitable for worshipping God, such as forests, rivers, islands, in revers, banks of rivers, places under trees, at the centers of villages and halls. The temple that

7 Ibid, p.15.

8 T.V. Mahalingam, Tamil Art of Architecture paper presented at the second international conference seminar of Tamil studies. Jan 1968. p. 40.

9 S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Early Chola Art*, Madurai, 1966, p.4.

was formed under trees became temples made of wood bamboos were placed in the form of the tent to enable devotees to find them out. They may be considered of the present garbagrihas of temples (Sanctums). There was a change in the 5th-century B.C.E consequent on bricks being for construction temples since then, several kinds of temples have come into existence¹⁰.

And the two side entrances have ornamental doors likewise. Close by the inner door of the shrine stand also similar figures of dwarapalas. An ornamental base surrounds all these buildings. Fine rectangular perforated stone windows of various designs are often seen on the sides of both the antechambers. In front of the sanctum is located the bull in the case of shiva temple and the Garuda in the shrines of Vishnu with platform or bali-peetha and the dwajastambha or the Flagstaff. The principal features of temples are the following:-

The *garbhagriha*, or the cell containing the sacred deity, with a vimana or tower over it. Mandapas, pillared halls in front of it. Gopuras or the entrance towers, opening through the walls enclosing the vimanas on all sides generally, but with special reference to the east. The verandah, or the tirumalapatti, attached to the inside walls of the pradakshina. Tirthas (tank and wells) held sacred for bathing. Subsidiary shrines dedicated to various other minor gods, each in its appropriate place¹¹.

The temple had not merely to be different from the residence of ordinary men but also had to dominate its surroundings. The upward thrust of the sanctum tower was symbolic of its spiritual eminence. The Hindu must follow along, and mysterious path to reach the sanctuary, courtyards, halls and gateways follow one another, producing a complicated and often entirely asymmetrical plan¹².

Silpa Sastra

The body of knowledge devoted exclusively to sculpture and temple building is known as Silpasashtra. It covers sculpture iconography and temple building. The other equally important branch is Chitra Sastra 10 S. Viraswami Pathar, *Temple, and its Significance*, Tiruchi, 1974, p.339.

11 P.V. Jagadeesa Ayyar, Op.cit., pp.13-14.

12 Herman Leichl, *History of the world's Art*, London, 1952, p.95.

dealing with painting. Thus, Vasthu(Building), silpa dealing with the painting. Thus, and Chitra (painting), these three constitute the main limbs of the body of vasthu Sastra.

The sources of Silpa Sastra or Vasthu Sastra are 1) Sutra works 2) Puranas 3) Agamas 4) Tantras 5) Jyothisha work 6) Prathishta class of work and 7) the Silpa works. Many texts are dealing with the construction of temples Vaikanasa Agamas in respect of the Vaishnava temples and Karana and Maguda Agamas regarding Shiva temples.

Four Kinds of Silpis

1. Sthapathi (Chief artist and expert in architecture)
2. Sutra Grahi (expert in measurement with thread)
3. Varthagi (expert in painting)
4. Dhakshakan (expert in woodwork) 17

Vasthu Sastra

The body of knowledge that consists of guidelines on the subject of selecting the location of the site, planning the structure of residential houses, places, temples, villages and cities in keeping with certain principles is called

Vastu Shastra, the science of revealed the knowledge of this science. Later 18 maharishis (great sages) developed the literature on the subject some of these sages were Brighu, Atri, Vasistha, Maya, Shikra, Brahaspathi, and Vishvakarma¹³.

There are five main points which are of primary interest in Vasthu sastra

Determination of the orientation through Sanku. The plan The proportion and the measurements of the building. The formula of the six canons (Ayathi Nivnaya) and Prospect and the aspect of the building¹⁹.

The vasthu has four main divisions; Griha vasthu (deals with Fitness of land for various types of constructions) Silpa Vasthu (deals with the nature and fitness of various materials and dimensions of sculpture), Jalavasthu (deals with the location of underground water, depth, pressure, taste quality, etc.) and Grabha Vasthu (deals with different minerals). It is an elaborate science that has guided the construction of the magnificent temple all over India²⁰.

13 P.V. Jagadeesa Ayyar, Op.cit, p.20

Foundation of Temple

The first ceremony to be performed before the commencement of the temple construction is known as Ishtaga Nyasam of Asthiwaram. A pit is dug to a depth of about 7 feet. If a man stands on the bottom of the pit and raises his hands, they should touch the ground level. It is dug deeper up to the water level or the layer of hard stone if the bottom to a height of 8 inches and over it hard stones are placed to a height of a cubit (about a foot) Three fourth of the pit is then filled up with mud.

Bricks are laid to form the first layer. This ceremony is called Adhegeshtaga Vidhi. The first brick is located and made to remain firm just at the place on which the main pillar to which the right door is to be fattened. Bricks are placed closely, and at the same level, the pit is then filled up only on this, the foundation is laid. Bricks are laid similarly at five or none places. They are called Marma sthanas (vital centers)²¹

South Indian architecture developed in Dravidadesha, This architecture has several distinctive features. Karuvarai, The sanctum sanctorum Karuvaraivayil the threshold of the sanctum¹⁴.

The temple's sanctum sanctorum or garbhagriha, meaning womb-cell. It is a dark, small square cell, where the main deity, invariably carved in stone, is installed on the roof of this cell, rises the sikhara or tower, also called the vimana. Which the sanctum together with its superstructure from the upapitha to the stupid¹⁵.

Here the vimana, standing on a square base, is a high pyramidal tower obtained by superimposing diminishing storeys, Haras [rows of miniature shrines] composed of Kutas and Salas around each of these storeys form the most characteristic feature of the south Indian vimana. On the comprehension of this fact depends the understanding of these sometimes seemingly bewildering structures¹⁶.

The tower or vimana on the shrine is almost to its very top ornamented with plaster figures. This base is likewise ornamented with dancing figures, rows

14 B. Suresh Pillai, *Study of Temple Art*, Thanjavur, 1976, p.34.

15 S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, Op.cit, p.264.
16 Edith Tomory, *A History of Fine Arts and India and West Asia*, Madras, 1995, p.124.

of elephants, and other works of art. The gopura or entrance leading to the court inside is considerably lower in elevation than the eastern or entrance one¹⁷.

The sanctum tower can have only one kalasam. For the deity in the sanctum is the most important. The outer towers or gopuram or vayils may have more, and the number of the Kalasams represents the number of the deities enshrined in the temple.

The kalasam components are normally five. They are Pitam; The Plinth in the form of an open lotus; Pitakaluthu The neck, also called Kandam; Kudam the vessel; Varumbu the brim; and pu the flower, also called mottu.²⁶

The doorway of sanctum, which always faces eastward, opens into another rectangular chamber, which is called the antarala or vestibule. The vestibule is the intermediate chamber between the sanctum and a pillared hall called mandapa.

The threshold of the sanctum demanded extra care from the masons; even slight errors were tolerated in placing the sanctum deity, the sacrificial alter, the bull and flagstaff, but not in installing the vayil. Despite decorations and sculptures in other parts of the temple, the vayil frame must not bear any embellishment. The original conception behind seems to be certain astronomical measurements, which allowed the sunlight on the sanctum deity called moolavar on the days of the equinoxes. This was eventually forgotten and replaced by religious inhibitions which said that the error or inclination into the sanctum was a look into the void, [akasanilai] and out of the sanctum, a look into the underworld [badalanilai]¹⁸.

Sri Akilandeswari Amman Temple

An inscription is found in the north prakara of the temple about 13th century C.E. This inscription describes the construction of the Amman temple, and an order was given by **Narasinga Devan** for some donation to this temple. Though this inscription is in a damaged condition, the name of the king and who carved this inscription was not found.

According to this inscription, we can consider that this temple was built just before **13th-century C.E** But the art and the architecture of the temple

17 P.V. Jagadeesa Ayyar, Op.cit, p.13.

18 B. Suresh Pillai, Op.cit, p.33

resembles 14th century C.E. So we can consider that the temple was completely built during the second half of the later Pandyas. Then it was renewed by the Nayaks of Madurai¹⁹.

The Structure of the Amman Temple

The Amman temple is situated on the northern side of the temple complex. That is to the left side of the Shiva **Mulanathar temple**. It is located facing east direction. Now, this temple is called as the **Akilandeswari Amman temple**. This temple consists of the Garbhagriha, Ardhamandapa, Mahamandapa, Muhamandapa, and Thiruchuttru Nadai Maligai.

Garbhagraha

The Garbhagriha is Square in shape. The Outer part **velichuttru** is in 5 meters. The **Upnam, Jakathi, Kumutham, Kandam, Patti**, and the **Vedi** of the Adhistana are very simple. The Kumutham is in Virutha kumutham²⁰.

Devakostas

There are three Devakostas at the **velichuttru** of the **garbhagriha**. They are situated in the South, West, and Northern direction, respectively. In the southern Devakosta, the goddess **Ichhasakthi**, in the western Devakosta, the goddess **Kriyasakthi**, in the Northern Devakosta, the goddess **Ganasakthi** are installed later. The status of these goddesses are resembles holding a flower in the right hand, and the left hand is hanged down in a standing posture²¹.

On either side of the Devakostas of the Garbhagriha there are upon that **the Maharathoranas** are. Also there is some sculpture. On the southern Maharathorana Kamadenu giving milk to Lord Shiva on the western Maharathorana an elephant performing poojas to Linga, on the northern maharathorana women offering her prayers to linga are depicted²².

Arthamandapa

The Arthamandapa at this Amman temple is

simply without any pillars. The outer length and breadth is 3 meter. There are two Devakostas at this mandapa on the south and north, respectively. There is no deity placed at these Devakostas on both sides of the Devakostas. The half pillars are depicted upon that **the flower Thoranas** are there. The Dwarapalakies are placed on both sides of the gate of the Arthamandapa²³.

Mahamandapa

The **Mahamandapa** is located next to the **Arthamandapa**. There are 16 pillars at this mandapas. At the bottom, middle, and the top, the pillars are in square in shape. At the idle of the pillars, various sculptures of the Sivaganam are depicted. Apart from that, the **Lord Vinayaga, Lord Krishna, Musicians, Kamadenu, Lord Uma Maheswari** were also portrayed in the sculpture. These pillars belonged to 14th-century C.E²⁴.

Thiruchuttru Nadai Maligai

The Thiruchuttru wall was built around the Garbhagriha and the Arthamantapa of the Amman temple. At the inner side of this wall, the Thiruchuttru Nadai Maligai is found. There are four pillars at the south of the Thiruchuttru Nadai Maligai from east to west. Four pillars are there in the north and the west, respectively. There are 12 pillars. Some of them belonged to the Pandya, and the rest of them has belonged to the Nayaks. In the southwest, Lord Vinayaka and the North West lord, Muruga are placed at the **Thiruchuttru Nadai Maligai**²⁵.

Muhamandapa

There is a **Muhamandapa** at the **Amman** temple. It consists of the four pillars. It was built during the 18th C.E. In front of this Mandapa, the Nandi Mandapa, the flagstaff **Kodimaram** and the sacred pond are located²⁶.

Akhilandeswari

The image of Amman at the Garbhagriha represents in standing posture with the two hands.

19 Ibid, p. 77

20 Idem.

21 Ibid, pp.77-78.

22 Ibid, pp. 78

23 Ibid, pp. 80

24 Ibid, p.80-81.

25 Ibid, p.81

26 Ibid,

At the right hand, the Amman has a flower. The left hand is hanged down in Lolahastam. The depiction of Amman here resembles the Amman statue of the other temples of the Pandya country²⁷.

Sculptures found in Akilandeswari Amman Temple

Indian sculpture is one of the important modes of visual communication of religious ideas. The images of gods and goddesses are the representations of philosophical, mythological, and symbolical aspects of various sportive, incarnation, and attributes of different sects, sometimes claiming superiority of the one over the other. As the cosmos is an idealized one of the sculptures which adorn various parts of the temple, are also conceived and made in an idealized style²⁸.

Several canonical works regulate the day-to-day life of the Hindus and their factions²⁹.

These are called **dharmasastra**, **grhyasutras**, and so on. Religious canons, called **agamas**, deal with the nature of God, the origin of the universe, the cosmic installation, rules for making images of gods and goddesses.

The **puranas**, at large talk of the heroic deeds of the gods at times, deal with temples and image-making. They recount the several names **namavali**, such as sahasranama and astottaram of the gods and goddesses. The **Devimahatmyam** and **Devibhagavatam** (5th C.C.E.) deals with the Devi, following the Sanskritic **Puranas** and **Itihasas**, regional works in the vernaculars came out. **Kamparamayanam**, **Kanthapuramam**, and so on. The **Cilapatikaram** deals with the glories of Devi and Krishna. Some regional myths are told in the works such as ‘Periyapuramam’ and **Tiruvilaiyatarpuramam** (12 C.C.E.) Glories of the gods such as Skanda and Visnu (Ragu) were told in Kalidasa’s **Kumarasambava** and **Raguvamsa**, Tamil Sangam works such as **Tirumurukarrupatai** and **Paripatal** deal with Murukan. Thus Hinduism became popular with its two great wings, i.e., **Saivism and Vaishnavism** which possesses all the

27 Idem
28 G. Sethuraman, *Ramesvaram Temple*, Madurai, 1998, p.141.

29 K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cholas*, Madras, 1975. p.646.

unique features of a great religion.

Saivism emerged into a powerful religion in Tamilnadu since medieval times. The rich and varied iconographic forms of Shiva, accommodated in the Pallava and early Pandya temples of the 7th-9th century C.E, bear the impact of the bhakti movement. Although the Sculptural forms vividly portray the puranic themes around Shiva, their style of depiction reflects various other aspects also.

The three Sakthis Sculptures

In Akilandeswari Amman Temple there are three Sakthis’ sculptures found in Devakostas. We all have three Sakthis (energies) in us. They are

1. **Ichcha Sakthi** (the energy of will)
2. **Kriya Sakthi** (the energy of action) and
3. **Jnaana Sakthi** (the energy of knowledge).

We have disturbances or ups and downs in our lives because of imbalances in these three energies.

Explanation of Three Sakthi’s

The Jnaana Sakthi in us brings Ichcha Sakthi, the will or desire in us. When there is Kriya Sakthi and Ichcha Sakthi, they lead you towards Jnaana Sakthi, the energy of knowledge. We have curiosity. We do not know what exists inside the moon. We want to know what exists on the planet Jupiter. What is there in this creation? Most of our desires are those about which we know almost nothing about. So we take a telescope and go to a planetarium and begin your research. All research depends upon Ichcha Sakthi and Kriya Sakthi. To acquire Jnaana Sakthis or the energy of knowledge, research takes place.

In the same way, wherever there is jnaana Sakthi, Ichcha Sakthi and Kriya Sakthi follow.

1. **Jnaana Sakthi** or the energy of knowledge is symbolized as **Saraswathi**,
2. **Ichcha Sakthi** and the energy of desire as **Parvathi**
3. **Sakthi** as Goddess **Lakshmi**.

Story explains the three Sakthis related to our life

Brahma is the creator. What does the creator need? He needs knowledge. So Jnaana Sakthi or Saraswathi is the consort of Brahma. Vishnu is the protector of all. What does the protector need? He needs Lakshmi, isn’t it? If you need to run an

establishment, if you need to run your house, you need money. Money is Lakshmi. You need Lakshmi for sustenance. Ichcha Sakthi is Parvati, who symbolizes change. You need to have a desire in life to change, to obtain liberation. For that Shiva principle to be auspicious, desire should be created in you. That Ichcha Sakthi is Parvathi, also known as Eswari.

Therefore, the whole world runs because of the presence of these three Sakthi's. Whichever energy is more in a place or a person, that energy gets exhibited. When there is the right knowledge, then the right desire arises in us. When there are the right knowledge and the right desire in us, then the right action follows naturally. In that case, all activities that happen through us will lead to completion. Completion inactivity will lead to the completion of knowledge.

Jalas

In Akilandeswari temple, windows or the Jalas are found. The temple windows or lattice works are known as Jali, Jalaka, Jala, and Vatayana (Vat=air and Ayana = passage, path) in Sanskrit and Kalathar in Tamil. Generally, the Jalas are found on the outer wall of the garbhagriha and maha mandapa.

Ganapati

Ganapati, the god of obstacles and supreme godhead among Hindu believers today, is chief among the Shiva Ganas having different names such as Vignesvara, Ganesa, Vinayaka, and Pillaiyar. In puranic accounts, he is treated as the son of Siva and Parvati³⁰. And his iconographical forms are seen in seated, standing, and dancing postures³¹.

30 T.A. Gopinatha Rao, Op.cit., I, Pt., I, pp.35-45.

31 Ibid

His worship traces its origin back to a very early period.

Ganesa cult became popular in the Tamil country during the seventh century C.E. Ganapati images of Pallava, Chola, and slightly later periods are distinguished mostly by the length of the trunk running down vertically on the paunch and finally curving to touch the sweets in the left palm³².

Ganas, from Akilandeswari Amman Temple

Ganesa, the elephant-headed son of Shiva and the leader of Ganas, the capering imps of Shiva, is the remover of obstacles. His grace is the prerequisite for success in all undertakings. Therefore he is one of the most popular and widely worshipped of deities. His cult spread to several countries in East Asia. A large number of Ganesa images are in existence both in India and in East Asia, and several of them, both in the stone and metal, are remarkable creations³³.

The artistic portrayal in the temple is heralding the characteristic features of the Pandyas art. Cholas' contributions are also found in this temple. The Nayak rulers constructed multi pillared mandapas for its expansion.

Conclusion

This research paper seeks to explain the art and architecture of Sri Akilandeswari Amman temple at Tenkarai Madurai District. Arulmigu Akilandeswari sametha Mulanatha swami temple clearly shows us the dominance of Pandyas, Cholas, and Nayaks of the 11th century and afterward in this region. This paper is a maiden attempt to bring out this temple history.

32 C. Sivaramamurthi, Op.cit., p. 30

33 K. Bharatha Iyer, *Indian Art*, Bombay, 1958, p. 36.

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