



HERITAGE AND IMPORTANCE OF LEGENDARY TEMPLES IN KANCHIPURAM

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Abstract:

Kanchipuram is a temple city, now a day in Kanchipuram population goes on increasing due to employment and peace of living. Kanchipuram is the best of the holiest cities in India, now days its cultural and historic importance goes on decreasing. The temples in the city today have a change from its original character due to construction of compounds for our present situation. Present generation culture is slowly changing and the major historic evidences have been disappearing. This research is to identify the important monuments of this city, present temple list, importance of famous temples.

Key Words: Kanchipuram, Temple, Linga & Historical

Introduction:

Kanchipuram was called "kanchiyur" in the Sangam period, using the Tamil word "ur" rather than the Sanscrit "pura", both of which mean "town". Sometimes during the early medieval period, it was also named "Kacci", Both terms "kanchi" and "kacci" as a name for the town, and they both probably evoke a woman's belt or girdle. The "Kanchipurana", a Sanscrit text about the town's legends, contains a verse explaining that the city corresponds to the navel of the Goddess, which is under her girdle (kanchi). It is also gives an etymology closer to Tamil, in which "ka" would mean "Kamalatton", the Tamil name of Brahman, and Kanchi would be short for "kancita", meaning "worshipped by Brahman". The Kanchipurana even quotes Siva says that he is "Ka", the Supreme Being, and that he gave Kanchi its name because of the worship he received in this town. Kancheepuram is the historical and ancient city. Kanchipuram majorly rolled by Pallavas, Temples in Kanchipuram having architectural beauty. The city also known as silk city. It is a great historical and religious importance city greatly visited by foreign tourists. Kancheepuram is located in south west direction at a distance of 76km from Chennai. Kanchipuram has a holy river Vegavathi, and a tributary of the river Pallar.

History of Kanchipuram:

Kanchi's history before the sixth century A.D finding inscriptions on the walls of the most ancient temples. The legend says that Ashoka, the Mauryan emperor, would have been the first king, establishing it as the Buddhist center that it certainly was. It is most probable that it later became part of the Chola kingdom, and after the destruction of Korkai, which was then the oldest Chola capital, it might have been the capital of that kingdom for a while.

Pallavas had a hard time keeping hold of the Tondaimandalam, from the fifth to the eighth century, they became brilliant rulers, patrons of new arts, a dynasty who would forever leave their mark on Indian history. The first Pallavas were mostly Jains and Buddhists, but in the beginning of the seventh century, Mahendravarman who was Jain, was converted to Sivaism by the great saint Appar, who himself had been the head of a Jain monastery before reconverting to Sivaism. In 1052, it was conquered by the Eastern Chalukyas and 1070 Kulottunga Chola was crowned in Kanchi, He left numerous inscriptions on the walls of the Ekambara Natar. The thirteenth century, the Cholas power crumbled under the conquests of the Pandya dynasty. Krishna Devaraya (1509-1529) was the first Vijayanagar king to be interested in Kanchi. From the fourteenth century the kings of the Vijayanagar empire fought the Muslims successfully and restored Hindu worship and customs. Two kings of this dynasty were crowned in Kanchi, Pedda Venkata II (1630-1670) and Shriranga III (1642- 1670). Then ruled by British rulers (1645AD to 1947AD). People come from all over the country to visit its famous monasteries, especially that of Shankaracharya which was founded by Shankara (acharya means master) the great philosopher-saint of the eighth century and which is where his spiritual descendants still live.

Kancheepuram Temple:

Kancheepuram covers an area of 36.14Sq.Km and has an elevation of about 83 m (275 ft.) above sea level. Fig.1 shows the Kanchipuram city and various areas in Kanchipuram. It can broadly be classified into four zones, namely Shiva Kanchi, Vishnu Kanchi, Buddha Kanchi and Jaina Kanchi based on the evolution of Kancheepuram through history. However, in today's context this division might be irrelevant due to the absence of tangible evidence in Buddha Kanchi and Jaina Kanchi, similarly though Shiva Kanchi refers to Ekambareswarar and the numerous Shiva temples in the area, the Kamatchi Amman temple takes precedence here. Vishnu Kanchi refers to Sri Varadharaja Perumal temple and the numerous Vishnu temples in the area. The above mentioned temples are historically important other than this various temples are present in kanchipuram. Table.1 shows the no of temples in various areas of Kanchipuram. Fig. 2 shows the deviation of temple presence in different areas of Kanchipuram. The temple tank having religious activities theppam and

float festival, for the offering of prayers to one's ancestors and meditation on the banks of the tank. Temple tank having natural springs and wells this can be used in dry condition. In the olden days all other sources of water were dried up also temple tank having water. Table.2 shows the list of Oldest Temples and Kulams in Kanchipuram.

Table 1: No of Temples in Various areas of Kanchipuram

S.No	Name of the Area in Kanchipuram	No. of Temples
1.	Oli Muhammed Pattai	1
2.	Pillayarpallayam	16
3.	Gem Nagar	2
4.	Thandavararya Nagar	4
5.	Thiruvalluvar Nagar	5
6.	Thenambakkam	1
7.	Chozhan Nagar	1
8.	Thirukalimedu	2
9.	Shanmuga Nagar	1
10.	Konerikuppam	1
11.	Periya	18
12.	Ennaikaran	7
13.	Nethaji Nagar	1

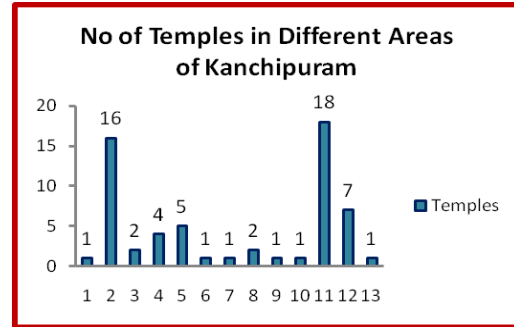


Figure 1: Temples in different areas

Table 2: List of Oldest Temple Kanchipuram

S.No	List of Temples		
1	Onagadeeswarar	24	Iravatheeswarar
2	Ekambaranathar	25	Piravatheeswarar
3	Kumarakottam murugan	26	Kailasanathar
4	Ulagalandhar Perumal	27	Jurahareswarar
5	Adhi kamatchiamman	28	Mutheeswarar
6	Chitragupthar	29	Vaikunda perumal
7	Kamatchiamman	30	Madangeeswarar
8	Kachabeswarar koil	31	Thavalageswarar
9	Thirumetraleeswarar	32	Pachaivannar
10	Soleeswarar	33	Pavalavannar
11	Veeramakaliamman	34	Pandava perumal
12	Ananda rutheeswarar	35	Mandukaneeswarar
13	Karukinil amarnthaval	36	Vaneeswarar
14	Sitheeswarar	37	Mutheeswarar
15	Kayarogineeswarar	38	Anjaneyar
16	Valatheeswaran	39	Yadhodakari
17	Nagareeswarar	40.	Manigandeeswarar
18	Panamudeeswarar	41	Puniyakoteeswarar
19	Azhagiya singa perumal	42	Sathyananda
20	Desigar	43	Varadharaja perumal
21	Vilakkoli perumal	44	Vadakku kailasanathar
22	Vazhakarutheeswaran	45	Laxmi narasima perumal
23	Astabujam		

Importance of Legendary Temples in Kanchipuram:

Kanchipuram finds its place within this complex of temples which form the visible framework of Tamil Saivism. It is the city of the linga representing the earth element. It was, and still is to a certain extent, an important landmark in the north-south axis of these pilgrimages (from Tirupati or Kalahasti to Chidambaram and the Tanjore region). Though so many temples are available, The following temples that are declared as monuments as per Director of Archaeology of Tamil Nadu are Kamatchi Amman Temple, Ekambareswarar

Temple, Kumara Kottam, Kailasanathar temple, Varadaraja Perumal Temple, Katchapeswar Temple. Fig.3 shows the location of the important temples in Kanchipuram.



Figure 3: Location of the important temples in Kanchipuram.

Kamakshi Amman Temple:



Figure 4: Kamakshi Amman Temple



Figure 5: Devi Kamakshi



Figure 6: Sri Chakra

Figure 4 Kamakshi Amman temple carpet area is about 5 acres. The four walls representing the four Vedas. The main shrines name is Fig.5 Devi Kamakshi and her sanctum is called Gayatri Mandapam and it has 24 pillars in. This Mandapam representing the 24 letters of Gayatri Mantra. The idol is in sitting posture with four arms carrying Pasam (rope), Ankusam (lance), flower arrow and sugarcane bow. The Fig.6 Sri Chakra in the Kamakshi temple was erected by Acharya Sankara having 43 Trikonas-triangles. This is made of eight herbals called Astagandham. The base is by Koorma (tortoise) design. There are three steps above the base and built with 16 Lotus petals, 8 petals of Lotus still above. Another Kamakshi devi's idol is in penance posture is placed near the left side of the Main shrine. She is called Tapasu Kamakshi if one comes circumfluence from the main deity can find a Vishnu sanctum Named Kalava Perumal (it is a one of the divya desam Alwar prayed and did Mangaalasasanam) Sowndarya Lakshmi, Sowbhagya Ganapathi, Aruba Lakshimi, Santhana Lakshmi Pillar Ardhanareeswarer, Varahi Devi.

Ekambareswarar Temple:

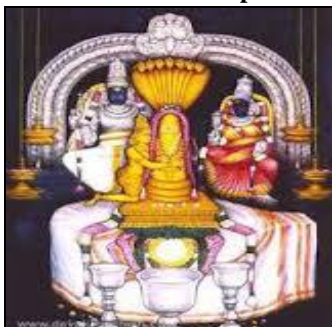


Figure 7: Prithvi Lingam



Figure 8: Mango tree



Figure 9: Rudraksha Pandal-tent,

The carpet area of the temple is 21,43,200 sqft and is built south facing. Parvati worshipped Shiva in the form of a Fig.7 Prithivi Lingam (or a Lingam improvised out of sand), under a mango tree. The Fig.8 is a Mango tree in the temple dating back to 3,500 years. The divine tree with its four branches representing the four Vedas and fruits in four flavors – sweet, citrus, spicy and bitter. Procession deity Lord Ekambareswara is in a separate shrine of glass under the Fig.9 Rudraksha Pandal-tent, the roof with 5008 Rudrakshas. The temple has five theerthams. On the Ratha Sapthami day in the month of Thai (January-February) rays of the Sun fall on the Lord. Of the Panchabhoodha stalls, the temple belongs to the Earth-Prithvi. The Spatika Linga prayer blesses the devotee with a beautiful personality, removing evil thoughts from the mind. Also the Sahasralinga worshipped by Lord Sri Rama got a cleansed Brahmamahati dosha and the Ashtothra (108) Lingas are also in the temple.

Kumara Kottam Temple:



Figure 10: Lord Muruga



Figure 11: Muruga statue with a snake in his head

The early 20th century saint Pamban Swamikal, did not know the location of the Kumarakottam Temple, was guided to this temple by Fig.10 Lord Muruga Himself who assumed the form of a small boy. Every Tuesday, Krittikai is very auspicious to pray in this temple. The two most major festivals celebrated in this temple are Skanda Shashti immediately after Deepavali in October/November and Vaisaka Festival in April/May every year. Arunagirinathar, who authored the 'Tiruppugazh' in praise of Lord Muruga, has composed the Tiruppugazh song in this temple. Special feature in the temple clears the ragu kethu thosam by seeing the Fig.11 Muruga statue with a snake in his head.

Kailasanathar Temple:



Figure 12: Kailasanathar Temple



Figure 13: Sculpture of 58 Subshrines



Figure 14: Pillar with Multi-Directional Lions

Figure 12 Kailasanathar temple was built between 685 A.D. to 705 A.D. The Pallava ruler, Rajasimha started and completed by his son Mahendra Varma Pallava. The Fig.13 fifty eight small shrines are built into the niches of the compound wall that encloses the main shrine. Main features of this temple are the 16 sided Shiva lingam made up of black granite at the main shrine. Thousands of people visit the temple at the time of Mahashivratri. The outstanding feature of sculptures is the profusion of depiction of the Fig.14 erect lions projecting out in several directions. There are two sculptures of Shiva here, which are holding the Veena in the hand. There is a lot of difference between the Veena found in the said sculpture and the present day Veena. In the back of the linga statue one passage is provided for that we can enter in left side and leaving in right side, but the height of the passage is small its look like a cave during Mahashivratri if any one pass through the passage it is very special and they left their all pavams and dhoshams.

Varadaraja Perumal Temple:



Figure 15: Chakkarathazwar



Figure 16: Garuda Seva



Figure 17: silver and gold lizards

The 24 steps in the temple represent the number of letters of Gayatri Mahamantra. The ancient Athi Varadar idol is 40 feet long brought out once in 40 years for darshan. Fig.15 Chakkarathazwar memorial is on the eastern side of the temple pond. Huge in size, He has 16 hands holding conch and discus. Fig.16 Garuda Seva, which is a grand utsavam (festival) done in Vaikasi month is said to be the most and special Festival here. Interestingly found only in the Varadar temple at Kanchi Fig.17 silver and gold lizards on the ceiling of a small chamber in this temple. With mystical diagrams of the sun and moon near it, this lizard is supposed to wash out all the accumulated doshams if we get to touch it. Touching these lizards on the ceiling nullifies the negative effects that we might have accumulated in our living, consciously or unknowingly.

Kachabeswarar Temple:



Figure 18: Sixteen Pillar Hall



Figure 19: Kachabeswarar



Figure 20: Chitha Theertham

The temple occupies an area of around 2 acres (0.81 ha). The Reason Behind the Name is Kachabam means Tortoise Kachabeswarar means the Easwara who graced a tortoise. The temple has a flat gateway tower and all the shrines of the temple are enclosed in concentric rectangular granite walls. There is a Fig.18 sixteen pillar hall in front the gateway that dates back to the 16th century. The central shrine houses the image of Fig.19 Kachabeswarar in the form of a lingam. The specialty is those who have thought and Darshan of Kachabesar are relieved of their sorrows and sufferings and they attain eternal salvation. Itta Fig.20 Chitha Theertham – Speciality a dip in this tank on Sunday gives child to the childless and wife to those longing for a wife. It cures the sick making them strong to live long. It grants knowledge, and awards wealth to the poor people. The unemployed are obtainable employed as per the words of Madhava Sivagnana Munivar on the tank.

Kanchipuram Tourism:

The golden city of Kanchipuram has various temples of religious and cultural importance spread all over the city. Kanchi also attracts a lot of tourists from all the world who are attracted in Hinduism or just want to have the wonder of South Indian architecture and majesty It is particularly known for being the seat for bearing culture and philosophy. With such a relationship being done with this city, it only makes sense that this purpose has become such an influential center in these avant-good times. Table.3 shows the no of visitors to the major temples in Kanchipuram.

Table 3: No of Visitors to the Major Temples in Kanchipuram

S.No	Year	Domestic	Foreign
1	2005	9,62,839	53,411
2	2006	12,11,945	63,273
3	2007	14,86,774	79,162
4	2008	17,58,970	1,10,156
5	2009	21,59,498	1,30,930
6	2010	34,81,974	1,83,862

7	2011	41,97,567	2,44,258
8	2012	60,83,243	2,59,104
9	2013	86,78,005	2,94,737
10	2014	1,45,64,678	3,36,552

Conclusion:

The important gift of the temple is to encourage creative art, architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, culture and religious activities. Hence temples are the backdrop of all the social and religious activities of the human beings. Understand the maintain systems, expansion pattern and record the same which acts as a reference for growth and development of the heritage cities. Kanchipuram is sanctified by Divinity, nourished by nature and inspired by Spiritualism. The three divine dispensations – mokshapurei, Prithivishethram and sakthi Temples are the symbolic reconstruction of the universe. The graceful blessings of God and the lives of human beings are connected together always in which time is conceived as a crystal system. Art is the reflection of the life of the people and also the storehouse of their noblest thoughts. The conclusion of the study is a variety of age temples in Kanchipuram were recognized. The major significance of the main temple was explained.

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