



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Architecture and Economic Impact of Temples: A Study in Telangana

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ABSTRACT

Temples are one of the most important aspects of Indian history. They are not only a place of worship but also a storehouse of our culture and tradition. The architecture of the temples is also very unique and it has been said that they are wonders of the world. Temples are considered sacred spaces where the divine is believed to manifest, and devotees visit these places to experience the presence and blessings of the deity. The present study is focus on Temples in Thorrur town which was situated in the district of Mahabubabad of Telangana State. Thorrur town has historical importance which was ruled by Kakatiya kings. There are different temples in Thorrur town which are located in the Thorrur area villages surrounded. The temples provide employment opportunities and marketing facilities. Temples are the places of exchanging agricultural and industrial produce and services providers especially health and education. The religious culture is being carry forwarded by temples. Temples in the villages are the center points get together the people to discuss about the social, political, economic situations in the villages.

Keywords: Temples, Architecture, Economic impact, Agriculture, Market

Introduction

Temples are one of the most important aspects of Indian history. They are not only a place of worship but also a storehouse of our culture and tradition. The architecture of the temples is also very unique and it has been said that they are wonders of the world. Temples are considered sacred spaces where the divine is believed to manifest, and devotees visit these places to experience the presence and blessings of the deity. The customs and etiquette for visiting temples varies across India. Devotees in major temples may bring in symbolic offerings for puja. The region's major cultural events celebrated are "Kakatiya Festival" and Deccan festival along with religions festivals Bonalu, Bathukamma, Dasara, Ugadi, Sankranti, Milad un Nabi and Ramzan. Telangana state has long been a meeting place for diverse languages and cultures. The temple is a place of peace, happiness, and inspiration. Because the temple is the house of the Lord and the place where his most sacred ordinances are performed, God has established a standard that his children must meet before entering. People have put aside any constraints of money and time to erect inspiring structures built on faith, science and mystery. For most of us, the science of temples built on thousands of years of research and development has been lost and the understanding has been lost. By understanding the science of Indian temples, we can experience the intelligence, power and miracles that these structures were made from and for (Prathamesh Gurme & Prof. Uday Patil, 2017). Temples of India play a crucial role in the economy and job creation by attracting devotees and tourists, stimulating local businesses in hospitality, transportation, and retail sectors. Each State in the country has its own distinct traditions, and each of these States has a rich history with numerous temples that serve as cultural centres (Pankaj J. Jayswal, 2013). A vital contributor to the prosperity of the Indian economy, India's temples are more than places of worship: They are intimately woven into the nation's rich cultural tapestry (Jatin S. Bhatia, 2024). Temples served as spiritual centres as well as important economic entities. The temples accumulated the wealth through donations, endowments and offerings from devotees.

The present study is focus on Temples in Thorrur town which was situated in the district of Mahabubabad of Telangana State. Thorrur town has historical importance which was ruled by Kakatiya kings. There are different temples in Thorrur town which are located in the Thorrur area villages surrounded. They have historical and cultural importance from decades. The villages Matedu, Ammapuram, Haripirala have renowned for the historical temples which are very famous for history, culture & tradition.

Objectives: The present study aims to know the historical and cultural back ground of the Thorrur mandal with specific objectives of the following.

- To know the temple history of villages near by Thorrur Town.
- To understand the different type of architecture of temples of Thorrur Town.
- To assess the economic impact of temples of Thorrur Town.

Review Literature

Many works have been done on the architecture of temples in India especially on the south style. And the works on economic impact of temples also have been carried out. The following are some of the works for review literature.

Unlike slender masonry towers, the vulnerable part of the gopuram could be at the upper levels, which is attributable to higher mode effects, and reduction in cross section and axial stresses. Finite element and limit analysis approaches were adopted for the assessment of the mandapam. Potential collapse mechanisms were identified, and the governing collapse lateral load, calculated based on limit theory, was compared with the seismic demand as a safety check. Simple relations, as a means of rapid preliminary seismic assessment, are proposed for the mandapam (Jetson A. Ronald *et al.*).

The Early Chalukyas, who ruled from their capital at Badami (known as Vatapi in ancient times) in the 6th to 8th centuries AD, are credited with some of the earliest experiments in temple form – the whole region is dotted with examples that have earned the epithet “laboratory of Indian temple forms” for these sites in the Malaprabha Valley. However, these temples are not the earliest monuments in this region (Dr. Srikumar M. Menon, 2015).

According to Prathamesh Gurme & Prof. Uday Patil (2017), the very essence of a Hindu temple is believed to have developed from the ideology that all things are one and everything is associated. The four essential and significant principles which are also aims of human life according to Indian philosophy are the quests for artha - wealth and prosperity; kama - sex and pleasure; dharma - moral life and virtues; and moksha – self-knowledge and realisation. The mathematically structured spaces, intricate artworks, decorated and carved pillars and statues of Hindu temples illustrate and revere such philosophies.

The temple and its associated economy will play a significant role in the Indian economy, creating millions of jobs in a variety of sectors. A significant part of this must be strengthened through systematic management. It would be a wise approach to include Temple, its management, and its economy in higher education curricula. Youths can direct their efforts and resources towards expanding and developing the temple economy and related tourism sectors (Pankaj J. Jayswal, 2023).

There are approximately 3.02 lakh crores in the temple economy, which contributes 2.32% to the GDP and supports millions of jobs. As part of the government’s plans to attract FDI worth more than \$100 billion, the article highlights the prospect of creating 100 million jobs in the tourism industry. Moreover, the article highlights the vision for leveraging temples and Yatras (pilgrimage to holy places, sacred mountains, sacred rivers, or any sacred places) to promote tourism and boost economic growth (Pankaj J. Jayswal, 2023).

Special places were selected for the construction of temples, and festivals related to it were also organized from time to time. According to the plan, festivals, get-togethers and fairs etc. were also organized. If we look at the economic aspect of these events, we will find that trade and agriculture were the main means of income of the people since ancient times. Through which a person used to earn his livelihood. He used to buy and sell his goods through barter or money (Dilip Kumar, 2024).

Need of the Study: Many researches have been conducted on Indian temple architecture and economic impact of temples. These works revealed the architecture styles across India. The economic impact also have been studied on various temples of India. After thorough review literature, the research gap is found that there was no study on the temples of Thorrur area. So that the present study is intended to know the economic impact and architecture of temples at Thorrur area.

Research Methodology: The present study carried out using the following research methodology. The required data collection and data analysis made accordingly. The convenience sample collection is made under field survey, interaction with public etc. And the narration method of analysis is used basing on the evidences, opinion of public and the details available in old books.

Data Collection: The present study is based on primary as well as secondary data. The primary data is collected by visiting the temples located in different villages of Thorrur area. And the history of temples and nature of architecture is known by studying the ancient inscriptions installed and old records available in temples. The old people of the village were met and interacted to gather the information about temples and their history.

The following temples were visited under the field study.

1. Shivalayam located at Matedu village. It has historical back ground it is ruled by kakathiya kings. In the shiva temple there is an inscription.
2. Venugopalswamy Temple at Matedu.
3. Sri Seetha Ramachandra swamy Temple at Ammapuram,
4. Kotilingala Temple at Haripirala
5. Patimeeda Temple at Thorrur

And, the secondary data is taken from various journals, books, published and unpublished articles, newspapers, periodicals, websites etc.

This study is limited to only the area of Thorrur Town of Telangana State. The results are not applicable to any other areas.

Part -1

This section of the paper deals with the details of temples of study area and their historical significance.

1. Temples at Matedu: Matedu is a small village. It is a historical place and it was ruled by Kakatiya kings in the medieval period. The Kakatiya dynasty kings gave importance to the agriculture. They dig very big pond for the agricultural activities in the south side of the Matedu village. They built very beautiful temple in the middle of the village. There are different deities in the temple like Lord Shiva and Venugopalswamy. There is an inscription at Shivalayam. The villagers are very active to celebrate different occasions at these temples in every year from ancient time. They celebrate some festivals very enthusiastically especially Maha Siva Ratri, Sriramanavami every year with great grandeur.

2. Temple at Ammapuram: Ammapuram is a small village located in the mandal of Thorrur in Mahabubabad Dist. There is a famous temple of Sri Seetharama Chandra swamy temple. This temple is dedicated to Seetharama Chandra swamy. According to Stalapurana, Lord Rama visited Ammapuram village in search of Goddess Sita after abduction by Ravana. Even now there are deemed signs of Rama's footprints on top of the hill in Ammapuram.

3. Kotilingala Temple in Haripirala: Kotilingala temple is located at Haripirala village in the mandal of Thorrur Mahabubad Dist., Telangana. According to the stalapurana, Haripirala village was ruled by Kakatiya kings. Kakatiya kings gave high priority to temples building in every village under their kingdom. During the archaeological excavations in Haripirala, a few hundreds of shivalingas found. The villages traditionally celebrate the mahashivarathri with great passion every year.

4. Patimeeda Temple in Thorrur: There is a famous temple called Patimeeda temple is located in Thorrur mandal of Mahabubabad District, Telangana State. This temple has special significance that unlike all other temples, there is no single deity here in this temple. There are multiple deities in this temple. It is a home of all gods. If we visited this temple we can see all the gods at once. People here humorously called this temple as mini Surendrapuri. (Surendrapuri is a place near to Yadagirigutta, Telangana where there are miniatures all the famous temples of India).

TEMPLES AT MATEDU



Fig. (1). Nandi at Shivalayam



Fig. (2). Garbhagudi (Mulavirat)



Fig. (3). Inscription at Shivalayam



Fig. (4). Venugopalswamy Temple avarana

Part-II

Architecture is very important for the understanding the temples as it reflect the lifestyle of the people. The structure, style, pictures, encryption of various sign on the temples etc. depicts the socio-cultural and economic aspects of the society. There is obvious economic impact of temples on the economy in all aspects. This part deals with the architecture and economic impact of temples in Thorrur town.

Architecture of the Temples:

There are seven special features of South Indian temples in Dravidian Style architecture (Sneha Krishnan, 2023) as follows.

1. The temple is circumscribed within a compound wall.
2. The sanctum sanctorum is the most sacred part of the temple and is located in the center, it is called the Garbagriha. Garbagriha literally means womb chamber. The garbhagriha is the location of the murti (statue or icon) of the temple's primary deity.
3. The Vimana is the tower that rises above the sanctum sanctorum. It is typically pyramidal in shape and is decorated with intricate carvings. They have special importance in Temple architecture as it's equal to the face of the god.
4. A large, ornate tower, called Gopuram serves as the entrance to the temple compound through the surrounding walls.
5. Many pillars with carvings are found in the Dravidian architecture of temples.
6. The temple complex typically has a large open courtyard. This is used for festivals and other religious activities. The open courtyard is a symbol of the cosmic order. It is a place where people can come together to worship and celebrate.
7. It is common to find a tank, a pond, or any form of water reserve in the temple's complex.

The Kakatiya Kings adopted the both styles of the North Indian Nagara style as well as Dravidian style of temple architecture. Mini shrines were on the exterior of a temple with extended base and eaves topped by towered pediments. Star shaped high plinths for temples and Lathe turned pillars were used. Pillars consisted of three sections, square, octagonal and circular parts. Eaves were running all around the circumference of the temple and not just the ardha-mandapa. There are different Monolithic elephants at the entrance of the temples. The Subjects of the temple exterior sculptures were ranging from dancing postures, sages, various deities, floral motifs, rows of elephants. Sculptures in the temple interior included mythological stories and trick sculptures, especially that of a row of dances showing a set of legs lesser than the number of dancers can be found in most Kakatiya temple. They followed safety measures like Earthquake resistant "Sandbox technology" for foundation of temple. It basically consisted of at least 3 meter deep foundation pit filled with sand mixture with addition of powder mixture of granite, jaggery, terminalia chebula (hirada fruit) to make it further strong. In event of an earthquake, the earthquake vibrations were absorbed by this sandbox cushion and lost their strength.

Kakatiya kings used locally available granite and sandstone for the main structure, black granites especially for pillars, jambs, lintel beams, motifs and carvings. Temple vimanas were however constructed from lightweight bricks. Some bricks are said to be float in water. While the sculptures were done on granite stones, decorative brackets were carved out of black basalt stone.

Economic Impact of the Temples: The temples have the significant impact on economic life of the people in all the ages. In India, from ancient to modern dynasties built many temples across the nation. Mouryas, Satavahanas, Chandelas, Chalukyas, Chola, Pandya, Kakatiyas, Vijayanagaras etc, dynasties have the special pages in the temple history of India. The temples in Thorrur area were built in the time of Kakatiyas and later Kakatiyas in the medieval period.

The temples are mainly holy places where various deities are offered 'poojas' throughout the year and celebrate the occasions in a large manner in the name of 'jataras' in at least once in year. Thus temples are the places where mass gathering take place. This public gathering creates the scope for business and economic activities.

In olden days, generally markets were formed near or surrounding temples in the villages. The producers especially farmers used to bring their produce to the temple area where market was. The public or consumers would fulfil two wishes i.e. worshipping the god and purchasing the goods at market. Consequently, weekly markets were emerged at the places of temples. In Thorrur also people opined the same and still weekly markets are being run at temple areas and many shops also are there only. As result temples became employment opportunity centres. In the construction of temples many architects, masons, labour involved thus the temples provided employment opportunities to then economy. Presently, also the 'poojarulu' (priests) and other workers have been engaging in temples for daily management and by establishing shops as entrepreneurs or workers in those nearby temples. The consumers visit the temples as well as shops nearby and purchase the goods needed for 'pooja' and domestic needs. So that the business activities increase by the public floating to the temples. Especially at 'jatara' times, the business activities reach new heights in that area.

In ancient days, many kings donated the lands to temple for daily management. Those lands titles are still in the name of deities. Those fertile lands are cultivated by tenants and the produce would be shared. Thus the temples have been centres of economic activities. The temples at Thorrur area also have some lands their own and given to tenants.

Especially, at 'jatara' times, many traders and producers bring their goods to jatara and sell at profitable prices. The public come to 'jatara' to worship the god and purchase needed goods. A large scale business would be taken place at 'jatara' times. Many small scale and cottage industries depend on the jatara to sell their produce. Clothes, toys, cosmetics, bangles, home appliances, sweets and namkeens, house decorative items etc. are demanded goods at the time of jatara. Some entertainment activities like exhibition, giant wheel, amusement activities would be arranged which makes the money to owners. Temples acted as places for entertainment where many artists played dramas (Natakas), Storytelling of purana kathalu (Bhagavathulu) etc. in the occasions.

Many temples have been acted as schools. Especially the pre-primary and primary education services have been available at temple. Some priests and teachers used to teach the village children. But now the situation has been changed to formal schools. The priests of village temples rendered services as physicians also for rural people in the days for whose institutional hospital services not available. Usually priests suggest 'Ayurvedic' (Plant extract) medicines and kitchen (spices) remedies for some curable diseases like cold, fever, allergy, headache, body pains etc.

And, the temples are the places to gather and conduct meetings of village people and discuss the socio, economic, cultural, political and religious issues related to the village.

Conclusion:

Temples are the holy places for the people. Those are not only meant for worship the god but also have specific economic impact on the life of people. The architecture reveals the lifestyle of public. The temples provide employment opportunities and marketing facilities. The three sectors of economy viz. Agriculture, Industry and Service sectors have the impact of economic activities by the temples. Temples are the places of exchanging agricultural and industrial produce and services providers especially health and education. The religious culture is being carry forwarded by temples. Temples in the villages are the centre points get together the people to discuss about the social, political, economic situations in the villages.

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