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*IJMASRI, Vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 78- 80, Oct. -2023*  
<https://doi.org/10.53633/ijmasri>

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
ADVANCED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION  
(IJMASRI)**

**ISSN: 2582-9130**

**IBI IMPACT FACTOR 1.5**

**DOI: 10.53633/IJMASRI**

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**FEMALE IMAGES IN THIRUVELVIKUDI AMMAN TEMPLE -A STUDY  
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**Abstract**

The temple architecture from the Indian subcontinent follows a certain protocol, and the sculptural program of the temples is in conjunction with the prescribed norms. This paper focuses on the temple architecture of Amman temple at Thiruvetikudi, specifically at the profusion of female images in the form of Parimala Sugantha Nayki that adorns the Amman Temple. The images discussed in the Amman Temple of Thiruvetikudi was constructed during 10th Century A.D, and it is the primary source of contemporary information on the subject. Thiruvetikudi Amman Temple and Female Sculptures.

**Keywords:** Maritime Trade, Kallu palli, Mosque, argah, awabs

**Introduction**

A study of history of architecture shows that the meaning of architecture and its relation to human experiences have been expressed in number of ways in the past. Every style of building construction reflects a clearly distinctive basic principle that represents a particular culture and its contemporary era. In India the temples are found everywhere varying from small villages to the metropolitan cities.

Temple the very name given to our religious built established its vital importance in the cultural history of India. India is famous for temples. Having been free from foreign invasions the country south of the Vindhayas was able to preserve a large number of temples. Particularly Tamilnadu is famous for temples.

Both saivism and vaisnavism flourished in the soil of South India. Kings and queens who ruled over different parts of South India had been patrons of art and architecture. Tiruvetikudi temple is an old one probably built during the rule of the Chola kings. There are many inscriptions, right from the time of the Chola king Uttama Chola. Besides these inscriptions there are so many beautiful sculptures and Icons, and architectural designs.

The inscriptions which are available in the Tiruvetikudi temple and in the other places in its neighbourhood reveal the vicissitude of the political history of Tiruvetikudi and its region. Female Images in Thiruvetikudi Temple of Parimala Sugantha Nayaki (Amman Temple) are large in number. This

78

shrine of the goddess finds a place in the north eastern part of prakaram of Lord Manavalesvarar. The Sannidhi is facing south. It has a Sanctum, an Arthamandapam, Mahamandapa and a Mukamandapa. The Sanctum is square shaped. The goddess is in a standing pose in the middle of the sanctum and is worshipped now.

The Goddess has four arms and is standing on a lotus pedestal. The upper right hand is carved with a garland. The upper left hand keeps a lotus flower. The lower right hand is in abaya hasta showering grace. The lower left hand is in Varadahastra pose. Jatamakutam is seen on the Head. Maharakundalas are seen in the ears, the Mangalasutra is found around the neck along with a studded sarapalli. The anklets are in the feet. All these lend a charming grace to the deity. The sanctum is square shaped. In its front are beautiful decorated half pillars with eight bands each. These resemble the sanctorum of the main structure. The entrance is simple without any images.

### **The Arthamandapa**

This hall is square shaped and is without any supporting pillars. The entrance to this hall is seen with pillars and half pillars. In the corners of the pillars are decorated with the blossomed petals of the lotus. The Nagabandams are constructed after the model followed by the middle cholas. Adjoining the walls the half pillars on both sides there are found with two koshta niches. Here the half pillars are circular in shape. In this portion on the pattigai of the half pillars beautiful fish festoons have been cut. The festoons are simple without artistic touches. The sides of the two koshta niches have big half pillars touching the roof.

The external wall of the arthamandapa is similar to that of the Goddess. Towards the west and east of the external wall of the arthamandapam, two koshta niches are seen. These niches were not intended to house any image and hence they look like a pot. The edges of the kapokam are simple. Vala vari which is above it is with excellent artistic workmanship. The arthamandapam has been constructed with granite from the Upanam till the Vallamattam Judging from its structure and workmanship it is assigned to a date in the latter half of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

### **The Mahamandapam**

This hall is in front of the Arthamandapam close to the shrine of the Goddess and is rectangular in shape. This hall is supported by two rows of pillars two. The pillars are cylindrical from their feet till their Palagai unlike other pillars which have different portions. The Pothigaigal of these pillars are found with intricate workmanship. In the north eastern part of this mandapam there is a retiring room (Palliyarai) which should have been added later. The adhithanam of the external wall are more developed than those of the sanctum and arthamandapam. The external walls of the mahamandapam have twelve pillars in three rows of four pillars in each row in the east west direction. These pillars are square shaped and are with divisions like feet, Idaikattu and so on. The external wall of this hall like the one in the main shrine is without any koshtas and is simple. The entrance bears pillars and half pillars. A flight of four steps is seen for reaching the hall.

### **The Mukamandapam**

This is in front of the Mahamandapam and is supported by four big pillars. These are square shaped from the patham to the palagaimattam. The pothigai above them are two heaved and three heaved. The three heaved one and their parts are well developed.

### **The Vimanam of the Amman Shrine**

The Vimanam of this temple consists of six parts like adhithanam, bhitti, prastharam, greevam, sikharam and stupi. The adhithanam differs from that of the main deity, considering upto the pothigai level. The prastharam of this temple has three beautiful divisions like Ezhuthugam, Kapotham and Vimanam. Lotus petals are seen in the Ezhuthuga paguthi. Thus the external wall of the sanctum is built of granite from the Upanam till prastharam. The Vimanam of the temple has one storey with Karnakudu, Salai and Panjaram are one above the other alternately. The intervening space is filled with beautiful images of intricate workmanship. In the four corners of the Salai have in the storey and in the front, different images of the Goddess have been formed of brick and mortar (Stucco) Between the first storey and the Upagreevam

figures of beautiful damsels made of brick and mortar stand as if they are supporting the vimanam. The greeva part of the Vimanam is circular.

In the four koshta niches of the greeva the seated images of the Goddess with four arms as if bestowing face are seen. In the intervening agara part, images of the guardian deities of the different directions in brick and mortar are seen. The sikharam is circular and belongs to the Versara type. Over the sikhara are a big lotus and a metallic stupi. The Vimanam is 30 feet in height from the Upanam till the stupi.

### **Conclusion**

The foregoing paper reveals that the Manavalesvara temple situated at Tiruvelvikudi is one of the most important historical and religious centres of South India. Apart from the name Thiruvelvikudi it is also called as Thiruvilakudi. The Manavalesvarar temple at Thiruvelvikudi is one of the most important existing shrines of the early cholas. The above mentioned facts indicates that the temple is not only famous for architecture but also for sculpture especially, female images.

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