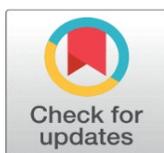


"CULTURAL HERITAGE AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF PARTHIVAPURAM SREE PARTHASARATHI TEMPLE IN KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT"

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ABSTRACT

In the Kanyakumari district, the Parthivapuram Sree Parthasarathi Temple is a representation of the rich religious and cultural legacy of South India. The temple, which was constructed under the Travancore kings' control, is a striking example of Dravidian architectural genius and the region's surviving spiritual culture. The temple, which is devoted to Lord Krishna, serves as a centre for community involvement and cultural preservation in addition to being a place of worship. This essay explores the temple's artistic and architectural value, historical beginnings, and function in maintaining customary festivals and rituals. It draws attention to the temple's role as a hub for classical dance and music, as well as its role in preserving old texts and promoting intercultural understanding. The socioeconomic effects of the temple are also examined, with a focus on how tourism and religious gatherings affect local livelihoods. The temple faces difficulties in this age of modernisation, including declining support and dangers to its customs. This essay emphasises how crucial it is to protect the Parthivapuram Temple as a living historical monument that represents the fusion of community, art, and spirituality. The temple is a symbol of cultural identity and solidarity in the Kanyakumari area because to its long-standing customs and ceremonies.

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i2.2024.3812](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i2.2024.3812)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Keywords: Parthivapuram Temple, Kanyakumari, Cultural Heritage, Dravidian Architecture, Festivals, Community Integration



1. INTRODUCTION

In South India, temples serve as more than just houses of worship; they are hubs of culture that connect religion, art, and communal life. One of the most notable examples of devotion and tradition is the Parthivapuram Sree Parthasarathi Temple in the Kanyakumari district. This temple, which is devoted to Lord Krishna, embodies the area's long-standing spiritual culture. It was founded during the Travancore dynasty, demonstrating the mutually beneficial interaction between governing bodies and places of worship.

With an emphasis on the temple's architectural heritage, religious rites, historical relevance, and wider cultural influence, the study seeks to examine the temple's complex function. By doing this, it aims to demonstrate how the temple has developed into a symbol of Kanyakumari's rich cultural past.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ARCHITECTURAL GRANDEUR

2.1. FOUNDATION AND PATRONAGE

During the Travancore kings' rule, when art and religion were encouraged, the Parthivapuram Sree Parthasarathi Temple was built. According to historical accounts, the temple was constructed as a memorial to Lord Krishna, who is also referred to as Parthasarathi, the Mahabharata character who rides Arjuna's chariot. The establishment of the temple is a testament to the monarchs' dedication to social peace and spiritual advancement.

2.2. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The temple's architecture, which includes elaborately carved vimanas (temple towers), mandapams (pillared halls), and gopurams (tower entrances), is a magnificent example of the Dravidian style. A magnificent image of Lord Krishna made of black granite is kept in the sanctum sanctorum. Hindu mythological events are shown in the sculptures that adorn the temple complex, demonstrating the extraordinary talent of the artists.

2.3. INSCRIPTIONS AND ARTISTIC LEGACY

Important details about the temple's past, including contributions from rulers and followers, may be gleaned from stone inscriptions discovered on its grounds. As visual texts for devotees, the murals on the walls, which were painted with natural dyes, tell stories from the Mahabharata and other Puranic stories.

3. RITUALS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

3.1. DAILY WORSHIP

Beginning with the early morning abhishekam (the deity's bath) and concluding with the night arati (the waving of lights), the temple has a rigorous ceremonial routine. Invoking heavenly benefits and preserving the temple's holiness are the goals of these highly symbolic rites.

3.2. FESTIVALS

Devotees swarm to festivals like Vishu and Krishna Jayanti (Janmashtami). The temple becomes a hive of activity during these festivities, which include ornate processions, music, and dancing. The yearly Car Festival, which features the deity being paraded in a chariot, is a prime example of devotion and community involvement.

3.3. PILGRIMAGE AND BHAKTI

For pilgrims looking for spiritual comfort, the temple is an important stop. Here, devotional singing and meditation sessions are used to convey the Bhakti movement, which stresses individual devotion to the divine.

4. THE TEMPLE AS A CENTER OF CULTURAL PRESERVATION

4.1. MUSIC AND DANCE

The preservation of ancient art forms has been greatly aided by the Parthivapuram Sree Parthasarathi Temple. The temple's festivals are not complete without concerts that showcase the fusion of art and religion, including Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam performances.

4.2. EDUCATION AND MANUSCRIPTS

Temples in South India have always been educational hubs, and Parthivapuram was no exception. The temple promoted the spread of knowledge by housing writings on astrology, medicine, and philosophy.

4.3. COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

People from different social backgrounds come together for the temple's festivals and everyday events, which fosters togetherness. During ceremonies, the prasada (sanctified offering) is distributed as a sign of equality and group commitment.

5. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

5.1. ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Temple tourism greatly strengthens the local economy by giving craftspeople, merchants, and hotel staff a means of subsistence. Festivals held at the temple draw tourists from all across the state, which boosts the local economy.

5.2. SOCIAL COHESION

Beyond caste and class boundaries, the temple has acted as a bridge to promote societal harmony. Its inclusive policies are a prime example of Hindu philosophy's egalitarian spirit.

5.3. MODERN CHALLENGES

The temple faces difficulties including dwindling sponsorship and the danger of modernisation, despite its historical and cultural significance. Its legacy is being preserved through awareness campaigns and restoration programs.

6. CONCLUSION

Beyond being a place of worship, the Parthivapuram Sree Parthasarathi Temple is a living heritage that continues to influence Kanyakumari district's religious and cultural character. Its importance as a lighthouse of legacy is highlighted by its historical significance, architectural beauty, and lively traditions. Maintaining these institutions is essential to maintaining Tamil Nadu's cultural fabric at a time of rapid change.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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