



Art and Architecture of Bhoganandeeshwara Temple at Nandi – An Overview

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Introduction:

Nandi is a famous place located at the foot of the Nandi Hills, which is 8 Km far from Chickballapur and 48 Km from Bangalore. The Nandi Hills a popular summer resort in Karnataka. Nandi is famous for “*Bhoganandeeshwara Temple*”, it is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It has been usual among antiquarians to treat the whole building as a homogeneous one belonging to either the Pallava or the Chola period. The Nandi temple has Structures belonging to various periods commencing from about 800 A.D, among these can be distinguished the contributions of the Banas, the Cholas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagar rulers and the Paleyagars. Sources like Inscriptions, MAR Reports, Literary works have provided valuable information about Bhoganandeeshwara Temple at Nandi.

Bhoganandeeshwara temple is Architecturally one of the most finest representations of Dravidan order datable to circa 9th century A.D, with subsequent addition upto 15th century A.D, measuring of 370' × 250' enclosed in its own Prakara and double Mahadwara. This temple in East-West orientation has two shrines built side by side dedicated to Lord Shiva as Bhoganandeeshwara (North) and Arunachaleswara (South) between the two is a small intervening Shrine, each temple on plan consists of a Garbagruham (Sanctum), Sukanasi (Vestibule) and Navaranga are provided with sculptured Jalandras (Window Screens) both the temples have Individual Nandi Mantapas. The main shrine of Sri Bhoganandiswaraswamy faces east. The shrine contains Garbagriha,

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Sukanasi (Vestibule), Navaranga, Mukhamantapa and Nandi Mantapa, Vimana etc.

Garbagriha (Sanctum):

The Sanctum (Garbagriha) is square in shape, which enshrines the scared Linga. The Garbhagriha doorway has female attendants on the jambs instead of the dvarapalas. The sanctum itself has flat ceiling with a ten-petalled lotus in low relief. The black linga, which stands on a large pitha, is about 16 inches in diameter and is about 5 feet high from the ground. It is finely polished and has an impressive appearance.

Garbagriha Linga: The garbhagriha and the linga are similar to those of the other shrine except that the linga is larger and has a flatter head and the waist small and the pitha has upturned petals at its corners.

The Nandi Pavilions:

Both the Nandi Pavilions are similar in design, though the southern one is not so well finished as the one on the north. The latter is here described. A porch connects the Navaranga doorway with the Nandi shrine whose roof is supported by rounded cylindrical pilasters. On the north, east and south, however, plain, quadrangular doorframes on which are inscribed Tamil inscriptions support the beam. The bull is well proportioned and fine, though not elaborately ornamented. The sculptor had attempted to show the bones in its haunches and the muscles on the shoulders.

Sukanasi (Vestibule):

The vestibule is entered by a small doorway, which is supported by two sixteen-fluted pillars. On a cubical moulding of one of these is a base-relief group showing anthropoid Nandisvara in Yogasana with a band round his knees and a worshipper in front. The jambs inside these pillars are an insertion of the Vijayanagar period. Evidently the vestibule was open in the earlier times.

Navaranga:

The navaranga doorway has instead of the dvarapalas two largish Yakshas guarding it with bands of smaller dancing Yakshas above. On the lintel is seated poorly carved Gajalakshmi. The

Navaranga is a hall of nine Ankanas about 26 Feet Square with four pillars well ornamented in low relief. Each of these pillars has a squarish shaft with a rounded top, the figures used for ornamentation being either Yakshas or musicians or some of the great gods like Indra. The figures on the northeast pillar are particularly interesting, some of the panels illustrating the story of Bali and Vamana and Kamsa vadha

Ceiling Panel Sculptures:

The central ceiling of the Navaranga is flat and contains nine panels with Umamahesvara seated in the center and the Asta Dikpalakas on their vehicles around. These figures have the lithe body, graceful poise and dignified bearing characteristic of Nolamba sculptures.

Mukhamantapa

The Mukhamantapa is borne on a platform, which is about 3 feet high. About 18 pillars have been added on the inside and outside of the round pillars of the Chola period. The former are well worked, the four central ones on the west being typical of the finest Vijayanagar workmanship. On the inner face of each of these stands a smiling lady holding a flower in the right hand, while the left hand hangs loose. Each pillar has a sixteen – sided shaft ornamented with floral and leaf bands and having cubical mouldings bearing numerous meso-relievs of various gods and saints. Among the latter can be seen the figures of many Saiva saints and ganas, varied forms of Narasimha, Virabhadra, Vishnu, Panduranga and Ramanujacharya. Some of these figures are very well carved, though in hard stone and deserve study. The roof of the mukhamantapa is plain and level except in front of the Kalyanamantapa where it is raised by about 2 feet. The inner face of this raised structure is cut up by pilasters into a large number of panels each of which contains a standing figure of some god, saint or attendant. On the west is Devi with Ganesha on the right and Kumara to the left, while on the east Siva dances with dancing Brahma and Vishnu accompanying with instruments.

Vimana:

The principal part of the temple is called the Vimana. Vimana is generally used to designate a ‘Chariot’ or vehicle of the gods, moving car, hence it includes the shrine and spire. The inner side of the sanctum is free from any embellishment. But outer side we can find many

architectural features. The exterior of the sanctum, the Vimana of the Bhoganandeeswara and Arunachaleswara Shrine consists of six parts such as:

1. Adhithana (Basement)
2. Bhithi (Wall)
3. Prasthara (Roof)
4. Griva (Neck)
5. Sirhara (Head)
6. Stupi or Kalasa (Final)

Basement and Outer walls:

The Bhoga Nandi temple is mainly a right-angled structure with a comparatively plain plan. Its basement has four distinct cornices one of which is well ornamented with a row of makara heads interspersed with elephants, lions and dwarfs. Squarish pilasters are almost the only ornamentation for the middle portions of the walls, which also contains four, pierced stone windows, two on the south and two on the north. These are well carved with images and contain in order from the east and running clockwise:

1. Yaksha dwarfs dancing with music – three rows.
2. Creeper scroll with Yakshas in the interspaces.
3. Vishnudurgi standing on Buffalo's head in samabanga with four hands (Abhaya, Prayoga-Chakra, Sankha and Katihasta).
4. Dwarfs dancing with accompanying music-three rows.

The *somasutra* or drain leading the Abhisheka water from the sanctum is also well sculptured and represents the water pouring out of the mouth of a Yaksha.

Eaves and parapet:

Just above the wall pilasters is a row of dwarfs or Yakshas dancing and singing. Above the dwarfs is a row of canopies with sharp 'S' shaped eaves ornamented with horseshoe arches bearing lion faces on top and Yaksha heads in the interspaces. This profuse use of Kirtimukhas is characteristic of this period. The upper part of each canopy is shaped into a tower, one of whose cornices has a row of makara heads. The top of the parapet is formed by a series of sikharas,

variedly shaped the most prominent forms being square or inverted boat-shaped. These towers have also a series of Kirthimukhas bearing varied forms of Siva and other gods. Those on the east particularly are well made, a Tripuranthaka and Tripuradahana group being particularly interesting. Some other deities in this row are Indra, Tandavesvara, Mahishasuramardini, Lakshmi-Narayana, Kumaraswami, Kiratarjunium etc., A waterspout on the south of the Bhoga-Nandi roof has a seated Yakshini.

Tower:

The tower is a finely designed pyramidal granite structure, ornamented with turrets similar to those of the parapet. The well-designed sikhara of stone is surmounted by a stone finial or kalasa and supported by eight soapstone sculptures in the round. Four of these are bulls, which guard at the corners, while the other four are images of Siva standing. Each of these images is a fine sculpture with a well shaped body and a beautiful countenance. The figure on the east reclines at ease on the back of the Nandi-Bull, which stands behind. The one on the west is three-headed having makarakundalas. Its four hands are thus disposed: rosary, chakra, kalasa and Katihasta. It is either Kumara or Venkatesa.

Prakara:

All round this courtyard runs a cloistered prakara borne on pillars of the Dravidian style. Those near the gateways have brackets of ridden yalis rearing on the heads of elephants. In a niche on the north is kept an Umamahesvara group of probably Ganga times. In the eastern part of the courtyard stands a monolithic pillar, about 30 feet high, which has a thin octagonal shaft and nothing else remarkable about it. In the north-east is the Yagasala which appears originally to have been a shrine of Bhairava or some other deity built in the late Vijayanagar days.

There are totally three prakaras in this temple;

- 1. Bhoganandeeswara and Arunachaleswara Shrine Prakara and to north of this there is**
- 2. Vasanta Mantapa and Tulabara Mantapa prakara and to north of this there is**
- 3. Sringi theertha Prakara.**

Vasanta Mantapa:

A doorway in the north wall of the prakara leads to the second courtyard in the west part of which there is the Vasanta Mantapa which is a fine structure of the Vijayanagar period borne on sixteen well carved Dravidian pillars, the outer ones being supported by yali or lion brackets.

Kalyana Mantapa

The finest architectural structure in the whole temple is the Kalyana Mantapa whose carving may be described more as jewellery than as sculpture. It is difficult to believe that all this work has been done in a kind of hardish dark stone, which is much harder than the soapstone used at Belur and elsewhere. Strangely, too, it is in the Dravidian style, similar detailed ornamentation being found only in the Hoysala temples in the Karnataka State, which belong to a different style. The structure is raised on a stone base, which are about 10 feet square and 1½ foot high. The face of the base is also cut up into cornices and base as in Hoysala turrets. The four pillars are of the composite Dravidian kind being composed of a large square core and their well-separated minor shafts on the inside. On the base of each pillar are a number of Yakshas singing and dancing in the midst of men riding lions. On the two inner faces of each pillar is a goddess standing in tribhanga with the right hand holding a lotus and the left hanging loose. Each of them wears a tiara, ear-rings, breast band, bracelets, anklets and rings, several sets of hip bands, the lower cloth or sari, jingles and anklets. Though elaborately worked, their proportions are not so graceful as in the sculptures of the 13th or any earlier century. The outer face of the lower part of each pillar is composed of a floral scroll springing out of a kalasa with a large number of birds pecking at the flowers. In fact, birds form a prominent feature of the sculptural ornamentation. On each face of the upper part of each pillar is an elaborately carved squaroid turret supported by dwarfs and lions. The capital is formed of a series of pendant lotus buds on the inside and deities on the outside, birds again being the chief ornamental design.

Theerthas (Kalyanis):

There are three theerthas in this temple:

1. Shringi theertha: **This is the famous theertha, people take bath in this theerthat at the times of festivals, fairs and Brahamotsavam.**
2. Brahma Theertha: **This pond is present in the right side of Durbaar mantapa. This theertha has no water and it is closed for the public.**
3. Mutyalamma Theertha: **This theertha is out side the Mahadwara and it is present in the center of left side garden of the main entrance. This theertha also has no water**

Mahadwara (Gateway): The mahadwara is a typical structure of the Vijayanagar period with a tall stone doorway, but the brick tower has now disappeared. The structure probably built in the Vijayanagar period. There are no doors; only the second dwara has the wooden doors. In between the inner dwara and Mahadwara to the left is administrative office and to the right is Arya Vysa choultry.

Conclusion:

The paper has brought out the Historical aspects of the temple through the Inscriptions and MAR Reports, the history of the temple is dealt with various periods. Legendary sources also provided details with regard to the History of the temple. The parts of the temples such as Shrines, Mandapas and Prakaras belong to Bana, Nolamba, Chola, Hoysala, Vijayanagar, Paleyegar and Mysore Wodeyar's period. Presently the temple is in the control of Dept. of Archaeology.

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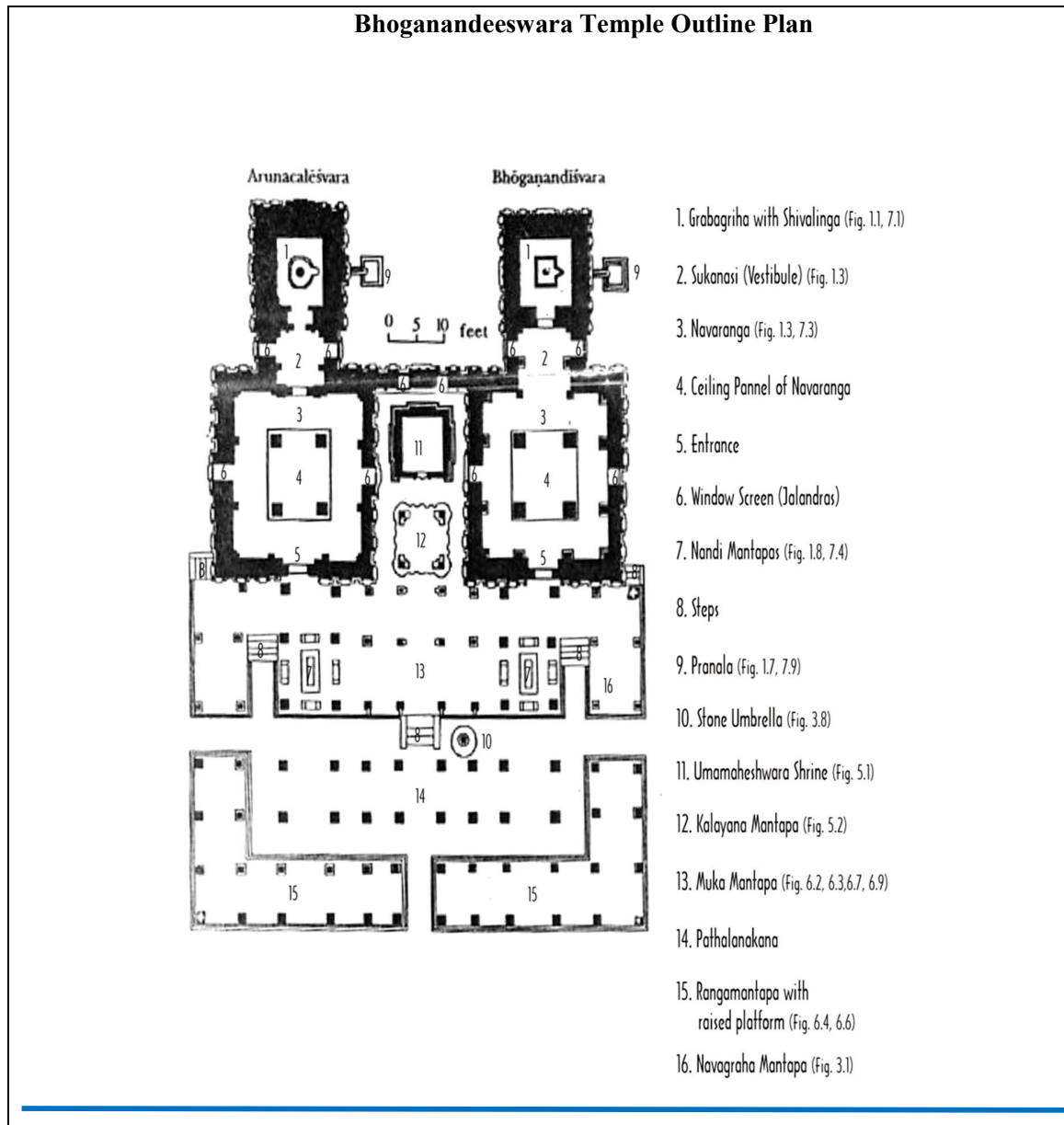


Photo Gallery



Temple Overview



Temple Overview



Kalyani



Nandi



Bhoghanandeeshwara Linga



Carvings at Mantapa