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# **KINESTHETICS OF THE MORPHOLOGICAL EVOLUTION OF TEMPLE FORM A CASE OF PANCHALINGA NAGESHVARA TEMPLE, BEGUR**

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**Abstract:** Continuity and linkages with its Kinesthetic is an important characteristic of traditional historic Hindu temples in India. The changing socio-political scenarios have played a major role in the development of various temple forms. This can be specially notable in the historic Hindu temples of South India. This intangible cultural heritage has majorly impacted the spatial configuration and massing of the temples.

This paper showcases the 8th century 'Panchalinga Nageshvara Temple' located in Begur, a small town within the Bangalore Urban district. The temple is unique as it comprises five separate shrines of five lingas.

The temple is historically layered and multifaceted. The temple acquired significance with the discovery of a hero stone dated c.890 that describes a "Bengaluru" war. This is the earliest evidence of the existence of a place called "Bengaluru". This contradicts the more popular legend that the city of Bengaluru was founded in 1537 by Kempe Gowda I and indicates the existence of the city from several centuries before the date. The temple is one of the few surviving architectural expressions of the later phase of Western Ganga dynasty, which ruled the region initially as a sovereign power (350–550), and later as feudatories of the Chalukyas of Badami, followed by the Rashtrakutas till the tenth century. The temple became a part of the Chola Empire in the 10th century and has been extended with over layering of the Chola architecture during this period. Further addition and alterations have been implemented on the temple form during the Vijayanagara period.

*The Panchalinga Nageshvara Temple* is a classic example of the interweaving of several historical layers, which is very evident in the architectural features and elements of the temple.

This paper intends to give an understanding of the morphology of the temple in terms of its configuration, the socio political and cultural influences and its impacts on the built form over a period of time. The paper covers the influence of the several architectural styles manifests on the Panchalinga Nageshvara temple. The melange of various architectural influences has contributed to the distinct form of the temple.

**Keywords:** Amalgamation, Historical Overlaying, Multifaceted, Spatial Configuration.

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*A Hindu temple* is a symmetry-driven structure, with many variations, on a square grid of Padas, depicting perfect geometric shapes such as circles and squares. The architectural principles of Hindu temples in India are described in *Shilpa Sastra* and *Vaastu Sastras*.

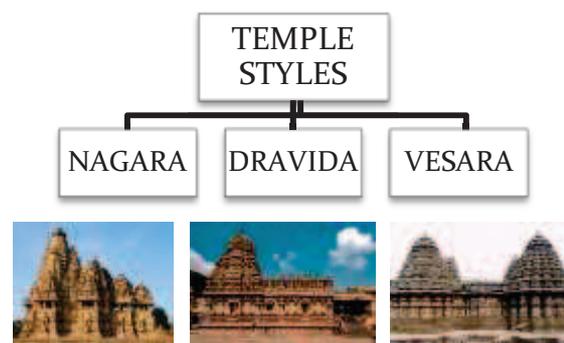


Fig 1: [www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com)[Retrieved on 11-09-2018]



Fig 2: Source: Author

#### Timeline:

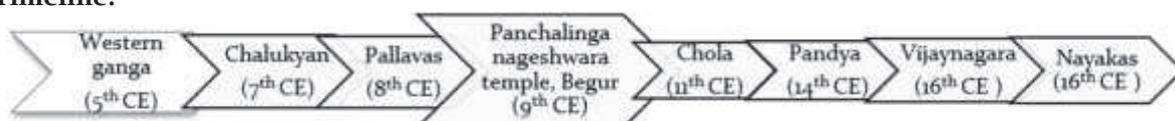


Fig. 3: Source: Author

The *history* of the southern part of India covers a span of over four thousand years during which the region saw the rise and fall of a number of dynasties and empires. The period of known history of the region begins with the Iron age (1200 BCE to 24 BCE) period until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Dynasties of Satavahana, Chola, Chera, Chalukya, Pallava, Rashtrakuta, Kakatiya and Hoysala were at their peak during various periods of history. These Dynasties constantly fought amongst each other and against external forces when Muslim armies invaded south India. Vijayanagara Empire rose in response to the Muslim intervention and covered the most of south India and acted as a bulwark against Mughal expansion into the south.[1]

**Background:** The typical quality of early Indian architecture lies in the expression of spiritual contents through its temple architecture. [2]

A large variety of Hindu temples was constructed throughout India with distinction in scale, techniques of building and particularly the deities that were worshipped, which were the result of the differences in political, cultural and prosperity between the towns and villages. The character of Hindu temples reflected local architecture styles and the material and skills to which they related.

**Evolution Of Architectural Styles:** The distinctive architectural styles of Hindu temples have so developed due to broad geographical, climatic, cultural, racial, historical and linguistic differences between the northern plains and the southern peninsula of India. Broadly based on geography, Hindu temples have been classified into three different orders; the Nagara or 'northern' style, the Dravidian or 'southern' style, and the Vesara or hybrid style which is seen in the Deccan between the other two.

**Elements of Hindu Temple:** In the words of Stella Kramrisch,[3] “The temple is the concrete shape (mūrti) of the Essence; as such it is the residence and vesture of God. The masonry is the sheath (kośa) and body.

The temple is the monument of manifestation[4] . It was the latter half of the 7th century that the Hindu temple structures of India began to acquire a definite form[5]

1. ‘Sikhara’ meaning the tower or the spire.
2. ‘Garbhagriha’ meaning the womb chamber. It is nucleus and the innermost chamber of the temple where the image or idol of the deity is placed.
3. ‘Pradakshina patha’ meaning the ambulatory passageway for circumambulation.
4. ‘Mandapa’ , is the pillared hall in front of the garbhagriha , for the assembly of the devotees..
5. ‘Antarala’ meaning the vestibule or the intermediate chamber. It unites the main sanctuary and the pillared hall of the temple.
6. ‘Ardhamandapa’ meaning the front porch or the main entrance of the temple leading to the mandapa . Some other essential elements found in the Hindu temples are
7. ‘Gopurams’ meaning the monumental and ornate tower at the entrance of the temple complex, specially found in south India.
8. ‘Pitha’ , the plinth or the platform of the temple.

#### Kinesthetics of Temple Architecture:

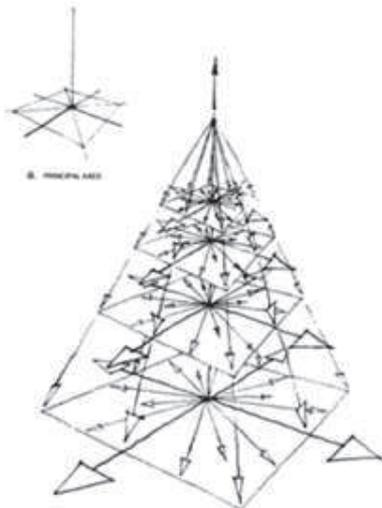


Fig 4: Principal directions of movement.

**Source:** Hardy



Fig 5: Generalised pattern of evolution in south

Indian temples. **Source:** Hardy

Hardy[6] explains that Indian temple vimana conveys movement. The centrifugal movement starts at the tip of the finial and moves down and radiates all around from the vertical axis, but mainly in four cardinal directions.

Then again there are several layers of sacredness which can be perceived as one moves from the periphery of the temple towards the central part of the garbhagriha. According to Hardy the movements are expressed in the following 8 ways

1. *Projection:* Throwing forward of an embedded form suggesting emergence.
2. *Staggering:* Closely serrated edges create a sense of vibration, as if with inner energy.
3. *Splitting:* The form between a split pair seems to emerge from the void.
4. *Progressive Multiplication:* Creates sense of expansion
5. *Expanding Repetition:* The elements keep getting bigger creating sense of enhancement.

6. *Pictorial representation*: Enhances the dynamism of the wall.
7. *Gyration*: Stellate forms and circular pillars can give the sensation of spin.
8. *Breaking of boundaries*: Sense of expansion and enhancement.

Other than this Historic temples also give a sense of continuity. Different components are added on to the existing structure with passage of time and different dynasties. The temple keeps evolving and changing and one can identify various elements from different periods in one temple. This whole process creates another kind of kinesthetics through time.

**Location:** *The Panchalinga Nageshvara Temple* is located in Begur, a small town within the Bangalore Urban district.



Fig 6: Source: Author

**Introduction:** *The Panchalinga Nageshvara Temple* is unique as it has five shrines of five lingas (Nageshvara, Nageshvara, Choleshvara, Kali kamateshvara, Karneshvara). The temple has several historical layers. From inscriptions, it is known that Begur was once called Veppur, and Kelele (in Western Ganga King Durvinita's Mollahalli grant inscription of 580-625 C.E.). Two shrines within the temple complex, the Nageshvara and Nageshvarasvami were commissioned during the rule of Western Ganga Dynasty Kings Nitimarga I (also called Ereganga Neetimarga, r. 843-870) and Ereyappa Nitimarga II (also called Ereganga Neetimarga II, r. 907-921). The remaining shrines are considered a later day legacy of the rule of the Chola Dynasty over the region. [6]

The temple acquired significance with the discovery of a herostone dated c.890 that describes a "Bengaluru" war. This was discovered in this temple complex by the epigraphist R. Narasimhachar. This is the earliest evidence of the existence of a place called Bengaluru. This contradicts the more popular legend that the city of Bengaluru was founded in 1537 by Kempe Gowda I and indicates to the existence of the city from several centuries before that date. This fact in itself makes the study of the temple relevant.

The temple is one of the few surviving examples of the later phase of Western Ganga architecture. The Western Gangas ruled the region initially as a sovereign power (350-550), and later as feudatories of the Chalukyas of Badami, followed by the Rashtrakutas till the tenth century. The Western Ganga style of architecture was influenced by the Pallava and Badami Chalukya architectural features, in addition to indigenous Jain features.

A most notable finding is a viragal (herostone) originally obtained from the premises of Nageshvara Temple at Begur. The earliest reference to the name "Bengaluru" was found in a rock edict extolling the virtues of a warrior. In this inscription "Bengaluru" is referred to as a place in which a battle was fought

in 890 CE. It states that the place was part of the Ganga Kingdom until 1004 and was known as "Bengaval-uru", the "City of Guards" in Halegannada (Old Kannada).

The temple shows historical layering in both the temple form as well in the many viragals(herostones) found here. There are inscriptions in old Kannada on the many herostones found in the temple. On the other hand there are inscriptions in Old Tamil on the plinth stone of the temple. The temple also have the influence of Chalukya-Rashtrakuta tradition as seen in what appears to be Ganga Yamuna figures flanking the garbagriha of the Nagareshvara Temple which is rarely seen in Southern Karnataka. The temple also has several interesting sculptures as well as ceiling panels. The carvings are similar to Pallava ones in physique and simple ornamentation. The temple is multifaceted with different variations in the shikhara forms, the variety of pillars that have been used, the stone grills and sculptural details.

The Nagareshvara temple has a simple square sanctum (garbhagriha), a vestibule (antarala) that connects the sanctum to a "great closed hall" (maha-mantapa or navaragna) which leads to an open hall (agra-mantapa). The white granite pillars are simple in design; with a square base (pitha), plain lower part and fluted octagonal in the centre. Many parts of the temple, including the open and closed halls appear to have been subjected to renovation in later periods. The sanctum has a linga, the universal symbol of the god Shiva.



- 1 - NAGARESHVARA
- 2 - NAGESHVARA SHRINE
- 3 - CHOLESHVARA SHRINE
- 4- KALI KAMATESHVARA SHRINE
- 5- KARUNESHVARA SHRINE
- 6- PARVATHI DEVI SHRINE

Fig 7: Source: <https://rgyan.com/en/temples/pancha-linga-nageshwara-temple>



Image 1: Source: Author  
Karuneshvara shrine



Image 2: Source: Author  
Nageshwara shrine



Image 3: Source: Author  
Nageshwara shrine



Image 4: Source: Author  
Choleshwara shrine



Image 5: Source: Author  
Kali kamateshwara shrine



Image 6: Source: Author  
Parvathi devi shrine

*The Nageshvara temple*, also a Western Ganga construction, faces east, has a square plan for the sanctum, a vestibule, an open hall, a detached hall called mukha-mantapa whose ceiling is supported by eight pillars. An image of Nandi is placed in the mukha-mantap making it serve the purpose of a Nandi-mantapa (Nandi hall).

*The Karneshvara temple*, also a Western Ganga construction, faces east, has a square plan for the sanctum and is a low structure with an open hall.

*The Choleshvara Temple and Nageshvarasvami temple*, is a Chola period construction and is built in similar style as the Nageshvarasvami Temple also facing east such that they both look like twin structures. But there are several differences in the detailing and the treatment of the shikhara form.

*The Parvati temple* facing the north side is also a later Chola period construction. This temple also has a simple square sanctum (garbhagriha) and a vestibule (antarala) which is connected to the pillared hall of the temple. It is located to the North east coner of the temple complex.

*The Kamateshvara temple* again faces the east side and is a later addition on the South east corner of the temple. This temple also has a simple square sanctum (garbhagriha), a vestibule (antarala) that connects the sanctum to a "closed hall" (maha-mantapa or navaragna) which leads to a portico from the Vijayanagara period.

I K Sharma[7] states that the Panchalinga Nageshvara Temple at Begur has five square garba-grihas, antarala and mahamandapas. The temple has several features which distinguish the Ganga temples. The Padabandha which is a moulded basement type with Padma mouldings is seen in this temple. Hamsa Valabhi which is a characteristic feature of Ganga temples can also be seen here. Here certain distinct developments can be seen over the Pallava –Chalukyan types. The treatment of the outer walls is with simple brahmakanta pilasters. The bhitti is left plain with sham niches which is a distinct feature of Ganga temples. Pilastered frame with carved creeper or dalapadma sakhas are seen in Begur. The temple also has typical Chalukyan Uttaranga door frames with pratiharis at the base. The Mandapa halls also show several interesting orders of the pillars. The Chola carved double pot pillars can be seen here. The jalavatayana (latticed window) is a characteristic feature found in Begur. The temple has sumptuously carved ceiling details. The seated Siva Parvati in the central panel with Dikpalas around closely resemble Pallava depictions. Large lotus medallions are also found on the ceilings of mukhar and gudha mandapas. The unbeaten skills of ganga artisans is manifested in these carvings on granite which set a standard to the succeeding Hoysalas, who virtually multiplied the scheme and embellished the maha mandapa ceiling into panelled navaranga. The superstructure is generally confined to flat roofs. The rectangular halls have been divided into central naves and side aisles by pillared rows with the sanctum relegated to the farther ends, a pattern inspired by the rock cut Chaityas of Western India. This Western Ganga Temple forms a critical link in the evolution of South Indian temple architecture. It has several features from Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Pallavas, Cholas and from the later Vijayanagara empire.



**Image 7:** Source: Author



**Image 8:** Source: Author

Image[2] portrays the two garbhagrihas in the temple from different time periods. The vimana on the right extreme is from the earlier Western Ganga period with a distinct circular shikhara while the other

vimana from the later Chola period has a shikhara with a square base. Even though both the vimanas look similar there are many differences in the aedicule's, moulding and the cornice treatment when studied closely.

There is also notable difference in the sculptural and ornamental quality in both structures. One needs to observe the temple closely to notice these characteristics. In spite of the varying characteristics from different time periods they give a sense of unity and wholeness.

The Panchalinga Nageshvara Temple is a classic example of a historic Hindu Temple that demonstrates the different types of kinesthetic in its morphology. The temple has transformed from its original Western Ganga architectural form imbibing characteristics from Chalukya, Pallava, Chola, Rashtrakutas and Vijayanagara Period. The history of the temple can be observed in its morphology and both are intrinsically linked to each other.

**Conclusion:** South Indian temple architecture has a long and varied history dating from antiquity up to the colonial rule. This legacy has left behind numerous temples across South India having a variety of architectural styles. The temple architecture of South India showcases the diversity of Indian culture in its artistic expressions.

The temple form can be broken down into components of those of early temples and then again they form a complex whole. Historic Temples have multiple entities and configurations, expanding web of relationships between the parts and at the same time they come together to create an elusive totality and wholeness. The Panchalinga Temple at Begur demonstrates the various types of kinesthetics involved in the temple form. Indian temples portray and are living embodiments of the ideas of movement, change and evolution which are also the intrinsic aspects of life itself.

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