

### The Temple Complex :

Rajarajesvaram may justly be called *Devalaya-chakravarti*\*—an Emperor among temples; among other reasons, it stands on the highest point in the entire neighbourhood of Tanjavur, the capital and citadel of the Chola empire and dominates the sky-line for miles. Both in its simplicity and in its grandeur, it has very few compeers.

The temple complex covers an overall area of the size of a rectangle of 240.79 ms east to west and 121.92 ms north to south. It consists of the *srivimana*, the *ardhamandapa*, the *mahamandapa*, the *mukhamandapa* and a *Nandi-mandapa* in front. There is a vast courtyard with a circumscribing *tiruch-churru-maligai* (a columned, raised, covered verandah), measuring 152.40 ms in length and 77.20 ms in breadth. Outside this wall, there are two further walls of enclosure, the outer being a defensive one with bastions and gun-holes. In the courtyard (or *prakara*), there are shrines for Amman and Subrahmanyar, which are the major ones, and a number of other smaller ones. A later *mandapa* in the north-eastern corner of the courtyard and two *gopurams* in the eastern perimeter walls complete the complex.

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\* The temple of Mahadeva at Ittagi, a small town in the Raichur Doab 22 miles (35 kms) east of the railway station of Gadag on the South Central Railway, is a later Chalukyan temple built by Mahadeva, the Dandanayaka of Vikramaditya VI; he was a native of Ittagi. The temple came into existence in A.D. 1112. Close to it he also built a Vishnu temple called that of Narayana, so named after his father.

The construction of these two temples is recorded in a Kanarese inscription found on a slab planted in the verandah of the Vishnu temple. One of the verses of this inscription describes the Mahadevesvara temple as the *Devalaya Chakravarti*, the Emperor among temples.

This Siva temple facing east consists of a shrine housing a Linga with an ante-chamber (a partly enclosed and partly open hall) in front. It measures 120 feet (36.58 ms) by 60 feet (18.29 ms) and has four storeys over the sanctum. The fourth storey is damaged and its finial is missing.

H. Cousens describes the temple thus : "This is one of the most complete and highly finished of existing Chalukyan temples — probably the finest temple in the Kanarese districts after Halebid." This later Chalukyan temple (Vesara order ?) may be said to mark the transition from the Later Chalukyan to the Hoysala type of temples.

The Siva temple at Ittagi is a century later than the Rajarajesvaram at Tanjavur built by Rajaraja I, but the fine expression *Devalaya Chakravarti* coined by the Kanarese poet can be applied with greater justification (though anachronistically) to the Rajarajesvaram.

See Henry Cousens : *Chalukyan Architecture of the Kanarese Districts* : Text pp. 100-2, Plates CI to CVII).