

The Inner Gopura

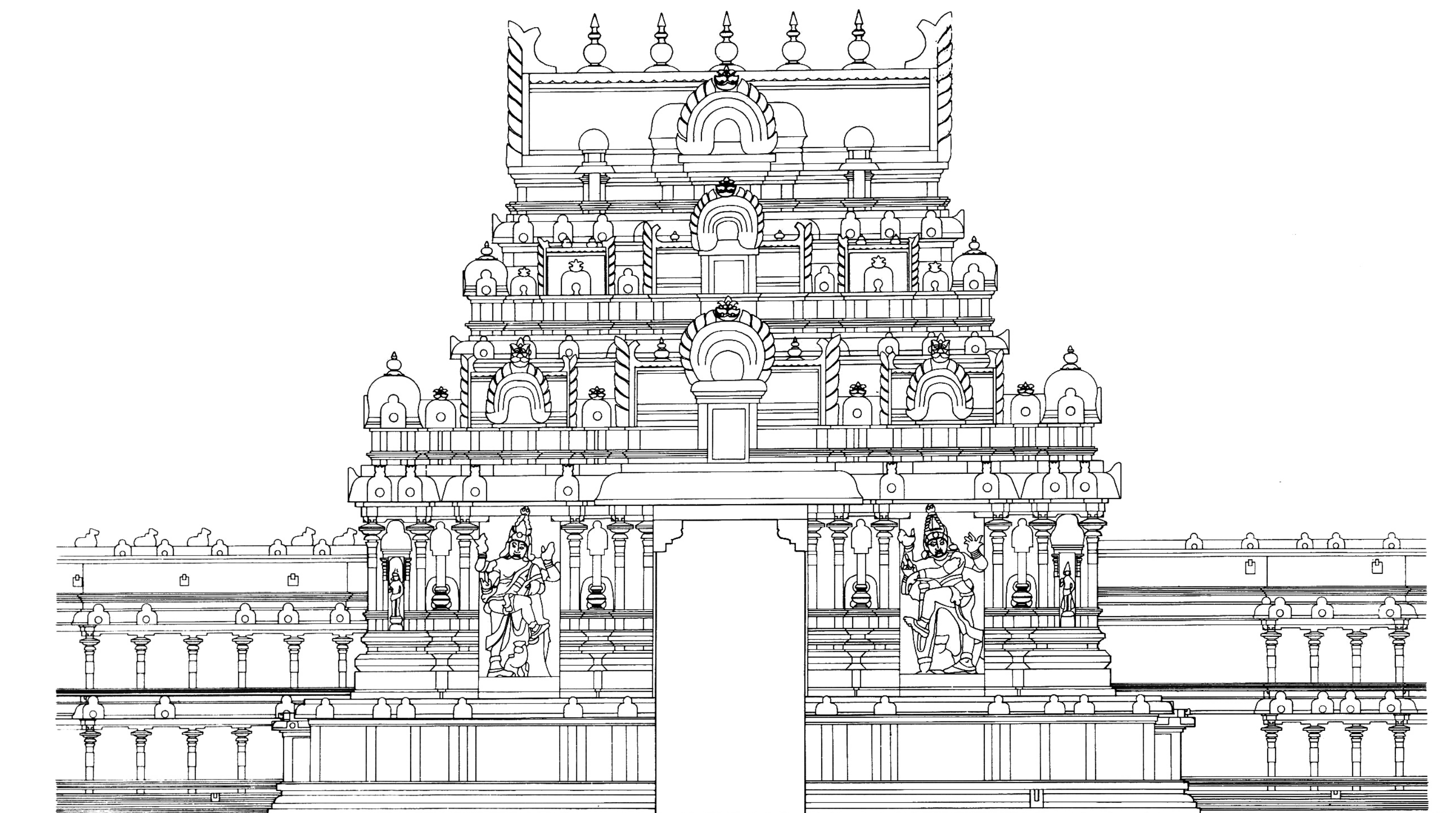
Two gateways are present, in alignment with the main east-west axis of the temple. These two gateways represent an architectural innovation for their period, as did the main shrine. Because the width of the enclosure is related to the height of the central tower, the scale of the entire temple is expressed by its gateways.

The construction of this Gopura was also commissioned by Rājārāja and he named it 'Rājārājan Vasal' Rājārājan gateway, after his name.

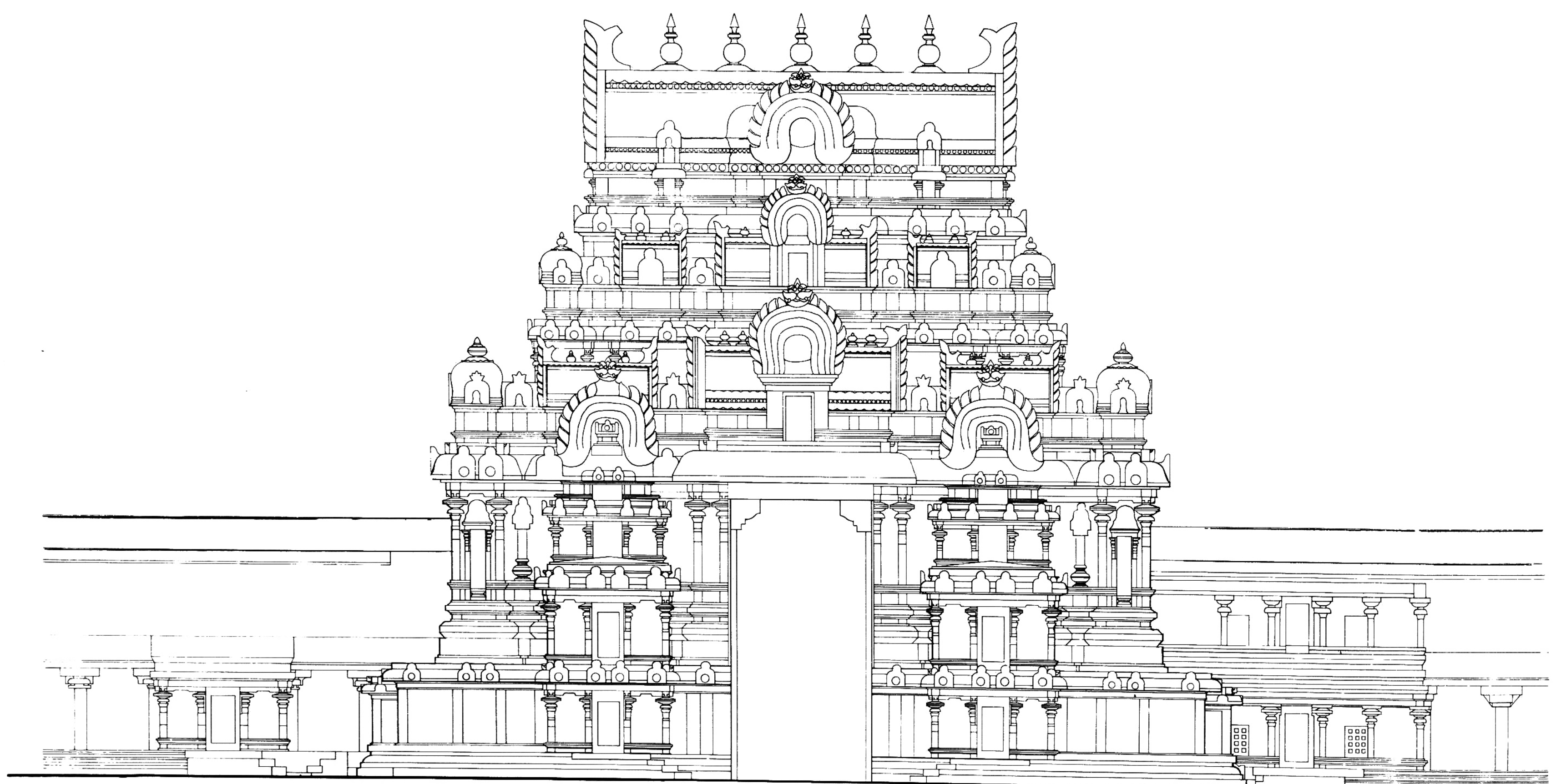
The eastern face of the gateway is dominated by two magnificent monolithic door-keepers, 16 feet in height, located at the centre of each solid mass on either side of the entrance. They are classic by themselves carved with consummate skill and placed in position at appropriate heights. Hindu temples are always guarded by such figures called Dvārapālas. They represent Nandi and Mahākāla the two principle gatekeepers of Śiva temple. On the base, on this side of the gateway are divided pilasters in which are depicted Śiva's manestations. However, these panels are incomplete.

On the other face of the gateway, towards the courtyard, are two sub-shrines. On both sides of the entrance of the inner gopura, the walls carry writings in Tamil characters with a sprinkle of grantha letters. These inscriptions record the grants made by Rājārāja Cōla, his sister and his Guru for conducting the annual festivals and daily services in this temple. There is a faded inscription on the left side wall, which tells us that Rājārāja covered the superstructure of the main tower with gold.

The tower-storey is constructed with granite blocks, except for their central section above the entrance passage, which was repaired in brick masonry during the Nāyaka period. The stucco figures in the upper part of the Gopura were also added during the 17th century by the Nāyakas.



- east elevation



- west elevation



Enclosure Gopuras - from west



East face of the inner gopura

