

SCULPTURES OF CONSTRUCTED MANDAPAS AT THIRUPPARANKUNDRAM

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ABSTRACT – This paper “Sculptures of Constructed Mandapas at Thirupparankundram Temple” reveals the history of the Thirupparankundram temple, the cave temple campus and the surrounding mandapas and their construction and the sculptures which designate the mandapas. All these sculptures are based on the Puranas and the Epics. These sculptures reflect the artistic intelligence of the people, their religious faiths and assumptions, social development, cultural development and social integration. While analyzing the temples of Tamilnadu in the perspective of research, they can be categorized as, Pallava period, Chola period, Pandya period, Vijayanagar Nayakka period and Madurai Nayakka period. The Thirupparankundram Arulmigu Subramanyar Temple has the pride of belonging to the hierarchy starting from the Pandya period till the Madurai Nayakka period, and its antiquity is quite famous. The campus of the temple has been constructed during the Vijayanagar Nayakka Kings. The sculptures belonging to this temple remain examples of the architecture and sculpture of the Nayakka kings. Moreover, they act as representations of the then contemporary religious, cultural and civilizational development. They stand as embodiments of Tamil culture.

Keywords: Thirupparankundram Sculpture, Vijayanagar Nayakka, Mandapas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous sculptures can be seen in various Mandapas like Kambathadi Mandapa, Thiruvaatchi Mandapa or Kalyana Mandapa, Aasthaana Mandapa and Muhamandapa, which are seen before the Thirupparankundram Cave Temple. Among these, Kambathadi mandapa is a region related with the sanctum. Projection sculptures are seen in the square-shaped region of the pillars of the Thiruvaatchi Mandapa. Full-sized as well as projection sculptures are seen in the pillars of the Aasthaana Mandapa and Muhamandapa. On analyzing the sculptures in the pillars of Thirupparankundram on the basis of the mandapas, the following sculptures are seen in the Thiruvaatchi Mandapa or the Kalyana Mandapa.

1. Sculptures of Lord Vishnu

- (i). Lord Narasimha destroying Iraniyan.
- (ii). Lord Venugopal.

2. Sculptures of Lord Siva

- (i). Lord who fed milk to Piglets
- (ii). Aalavai Annal,
- (iii). Pichaadanar,
- (iv). Oorthuva Thaandavar,
- (v). Kangaalar,
- (vi). Bairavar,
- (vii). Yegapaadha Moorthy.

3. Sculptures of Lord Murugan

- (i). Murugan-Valli-Deivanai

- (ii). Wedding of Deivanai

4. Sculptures of Goddess

- (i). Varaahi
- (ii). Thadaathagai Piraatti
- (iii). Kali

5. Puranic Sculptures

- (i). Vyakrapaathar
- (ii). Pathanjali

These are the major sculptures in this Mandapa. The following are the sculptures classified in the Aasthaana Mandapa.

1. Inner- Row Sculptures
2. Outer-Row Sculptures.

1. Sculptures in Inner Row

These sculptures are the best examples of the sculptural art of the Nayakka Kings. These are seen in the pillars in the Mandapa. They are, Devotees with folded hands in the form of worship.

2. Sculptures in Outer Row

1. Narthana Ganapathy,
2. Durga,
3. Sivan,
4. Parvathi,
5. Vishnu,
6. Mahalakshmi,
7. Wedding of Murugan-Deivanai,
8. Rani Mangammal,
9. Government Officials,

These are sculptures seen on both sides of the pillars before the Aasthaana Mandapa.

1. Subramanyar Waging war,
2. Demon,
3. Natarajar,
4. Sivakami Ammai,
5. Kaala Bairavar,
6. Raman breathing the Bow,
7. Karuppanasamy,
8. Vinayagar

are mentionworth among them. The above mentioned sculptures can be divided as below according to the research, instead of analyzing on the basis of the Mandapas.

1. Divine Sculptures
2. Puranic and Epic Sculptures.
3. Naattar Vazhakkatriyal Sculptures,
4. Other Sculptures.

The sculptures are analysed on the basis of the structure, nature, expression, gesture, dress and ornaments.

2. DIVINE SCULPTURES

In India, Divine Images are noted since the Indus Valley Civilization. But, none depict religious values.¹ The brave acts of the Gods and myths should have been originated during the Puranic period. The Divine Images might have their origin based on any of the religious principles. Mostly, the form of one sculpture would

lead to the other's origin or it would lead to the formation of something new. In the Saiva temples, the sculptures would mostly be formed based on Lord Siva, his holy plays and his various aspects, and in the Vainava temples, the sculptures would mostly relate with the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. But, in Thirupparankundram Cave Temple, all the five images of the Gods Sivan, Vishnu, Murugan, Durgai and Ganapathy can be seen in the construction pillars. This temple constructed based on the regulations of 'Panjayathalam', act as a bridge connecting the five divisions of Hindu religion-Saivam, Vainavam, Saaktham, Ganapathiyam and Kowmaram.

3. NARTHANA GANAPATHY

In the Aasthana Mandapa of Thirupparankundram Temple, NARTHANA Ganapathy sculpture can be seen next to that of Lordess Durga. Ganapathy, the Lord of Ganas,² is depicted as dancing happily. The sculpture is designed such that the Lord lifts up the right leg in dancing posture and the left leg is placed upon the land. Here, the image of Ganapathy is alone, and the images of neither Vallabai nor Sidhi and Budhi,³ the symbols of intellect, can be seen. Instead, the Lord is in dancing position. The Vedic regulation is that the Nirutha Ganapathy or Nrty Ganapathy must possess up to four to eight hands.⁴ In Thirupparankundram, the Ganapathy can be seen with four hands – the two upper hands possess axe and rope in the right and left hand respectively, the two lower hands show Kataka Mudra in the left hand. Upon the head, Karanda Makuta with three Karanda and pattam in the forehead are seen. The physique is decorated with dress and ornaments with minute artistic nuances.

4. LORD SIVA

The names Sivan and Sivam are common dialects. Generally the names like Sankaran, Viswanathan, Mahadevan, Rudran, Sokkanathan, Bairavan and Eswaran are the religiously acclaimed names. The common forms of Lord Siva is that Jadamakutam and a crescent moon in it, three-eyed face, Makara kundala in right ear, Kadippu in left ear, beads in hands, deer, axe, bow-arrow, spear and armour, trident and skull -topped staff with the two front hands showing Abhaya and Varadha Mudras.⁵

The sculptures of Lord Siva, Parvathi, Vishnu and Mahalakshmi in the Thirupparankundram Temple, chosen for research, are seen in a natural form. This gives a beautiful scene as if they have come to attend the wedding of Lord Muruga. Thus, Lord Siva is seen with four hands- the two upper hands holding deer and axe and in the two lower hands, the right hand shows the Abhaya Mudra and the left hand shows the Kataka Mudra and the image is seen with a peaceful attitude.

5. YEGAPADHA MOORTHY

The myth reveals that the three prime Lords-Brahma, Vishnu and Sivan perform the three chief duties such as Production, Protection and Destruction. But, according to the Saiva cult, Lord Siva is the chief God. He performs the five functions such as Production, Protection, Destruction, Hiding and Blessing. Every soul is struck within three evil forces such as Pride, Jealousy and Illusion. To free the souls from the evil forces, Lord Siva performs these five functions. Lord Siva is an individual source. He is the head of other Gods. The form of Yegapadha Moorthy signifies that not only this world, but the ultimate universe is under the feet of Lord Siva.⁶

This sculpture can be seen in the Thiruvaatchi Mandapa of the Thirupparankundram Temple, chosen for research. This image is seen with a single foot, and the region above the hip has three

dimensions with the image of Lord Brahma on the right side, the image of Lord Siva in the center and that of Lord Vishnu to the left. To signify that Lord Siva is the Prime God, the other two Gods Brahma and Vishnu are in worshipping posture and Lord Siva is seen showing the Abhaya and Varatha Mudras.

6. PICHAADANAR

The sculpture of Pichaadanar is seen in the Thiruvaatchi Mandapa. The various forms and holy acts of Lord Siva explores the generosity and the mercy He has upon his devotees. By acquiring the role of a beggar in disguise, He tries to possess all the creatures within him, and this form is said to be Pichaadana Moorthy. There are two opinions prevailing about this form. The first is that, there arose a dispute between Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu about who is the supreme power among the three prime Gods. In this race, Lord Brahma is filled with pride. To destroy the pride of Brahma, Lord Siva pinched off one of the five heads of Brahma and hence, Lord Siva acquired 'Brahma kathi Dosham'. The head of Brahma caught hold of Siva's hand and became a vessel for begging. As a result, Lord Siva has been a beggar for 12 years. This is the myth according to 'Koormapuranam'.⁷

The second notion about Pichaadanar is that the Lord disguised himself as Pichaadanar to provide redemption to the saints. All the saints of Thaarugavanam underwent a penance along with their family. They forgot the mercy of Lord Siva, they forgot the mortal worldly life without religious spirit and they indulged in the penance only with a thinking that their duty would provide them benefits. To bless the saints who forgot the pravirdhi markkam, lord Siva assumed the form of Pichaadanar.⁸

The saints were proud that they could acquire all the powers through 'Yagna' and so Lord Siva wanted to teach them a valuable lesson. So, he made Lord Vishnu to incarnate as Mohini. All the saints became intoxicated in the beauty of Mohini. Meanwhile, Lord Siva disguised as Pichaadanar and begged in the streets, nude. The wives of the saints got intoxicated in the beauty of the Lord and they remained still even without knowing they are being undressed and following him.

They realized that they all are following Mohini and their wives are following Pichaadanar. They wanted to Punish Pichaadanar and so they performed 'Abhisara Velvi'. They sent the lion, tiger, elephant, snake and the demon 'Muyalagan', which arose from the yagna, to attack Pichaadanar.⁹ But, the Lord used the snakes as his ornaments and the skins of the other animals as his dress, and by placing the demon Muyalagan under his feet, the Lord symbolizes the state of emptiness by destroying the pride. Thus, Pichaadanar is the form where Lord Siva attempts to teach a lesson to the saints of Thaarugavanam and to destroy their pride. Thus the celestials follow him¹⁰ whereas, the wives of the saints are also undressed and follow the Lord, who is in disguise as Pichaadanar.

7. GAJASAMHARA MOORTHY

The sculpture of Gajasamhara Moorthy can be seen in the Aasthana Mandapa of Thirupparankundram Temple. A demon named 'Gajaasuran' has obtained a boon from Lord Brahma not to be destroyed by anybody. The Lord accepted his request and offered him a boon that nobody can destroy him except Lord Siva. Due to his pride and ego, Gajasuran tortured all the celestials, and as a result, they all went in refuge of Lord Siva. The demon, who came to kill the celestials, stood before Lord Siva. The Lord, who is very much enraged, peeled off his skin and destroyed the demon. The sculpture of Gajasamhara Moorthy in Thirupparankundram

Temple has four hands and in the posture of destroying the demon. Similar sculpture can be seen in the Madurai Pudu mandapa also.

8. NATARAJAR

The dancing form of Lord Siva is known as Natarajar,¹¹ Natesvara,¹² Aadalvalla,¹³ Natana Sabapati¹⁴ and king of dance and Music,¹⁵ by his devotees. Lord Siva is the chief cosmic dancer of the Universe and the world is his stage. There is a common belief prevailing among the people that only because of his dance, the world functions and the continuous process of production is possible only by his dance.

The commonly noticed form of the Lord, in most of the Indian temples and that particularly in all the temples of Tamilnadu, is that of Natarajar, who is the signifier of the divine activities like creation, Maintenance, destruction, concealment and favour or grace, which is together termed as 'Panchakritiam'. Versatile dynamic features of dance are shown through the image of Nataraja. The five above mentioned occupations of the Lord can be seen in different styles of dance such as 'Aanandha Thaandavam, Oorthuva Thandavam, Lalitha, Lasya and Kadheesma'.¹⁶

The tradition of the structure of Lord Nataraja is that the left leg is placed upon the earth and the right leg is lifted as if in the dancing position. But the Velli Ambalam Nataraja of Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple is quite different. Here, the Lord lifts the left leg in the dancing posture and the right leg is placed upon the earth. Similar image of Lord Natarajar can be seen in the Thirupparankundram Temple Mandapa. Here, the Lord is seen with four hands in 'Aanandha Thaandavam'. In this, the common posture of the Lord is not depicted, instead, the right leg is placed on the floor and the left leg is in dancing posture. While the Lord changed his dancing posture, he had the musical instrument in his right hand, holding fire in his left hand and the two lower hands show Abhaya Mudra and Dhandahastham and the lower hands are in clapping position. To the right side of the Oorthuva Thandavar, there is an image of Gananadhar. Beneath, Nandhi can be seen playing a musical instrument. All the devotees worship the Lord.

9. LORD MAHAVISHNU

The sculpture of Lord Vishnu can be seen with four hands, in the Aasthana Mandapa of Thirupparankundram Temple, opposite to the image of Lord Siva. The two upper hands possess chakra and sankha and the two lower hands can be seen with one hand showing Varadha Mudra and the other hand is placed upon the floor. The head has karanta Makuda and the ears wear huge ear-rings and the physique is designed with usual ornaments.

10. ULAGALANDHA PERUMAL

Bali, the grandson of Prahaladhan has been the head of all demons. He wanted to become the leader of the celestials and so he performed hundred Aswathamega Yagna. Hence, fear spreaded among the celestials. So Lord Vishnu incarnated himself as a dwarf, 'Vaamanan' and begged for three feet of land to Bali. Knowing that the person is none other than Lord Vishnu Himself, and some serious danger would be caused, Bali's mentor saint Sukrachariyar prevented him to offer the grant requested by the Lord to offer three feet of land. Suddenly, the Lord transformed as Thirivikraman. He placed one leg on the earth, the second leg on the sky and when enquired where to keep the third step, Bali offered his head. The Lord placed His foot upon Bali's head and immersed Bali into the ground and thus, Bali became the head of the underworld. The sculpture of Thirivikraman can be seen in the Thiruvaatchi mandapa of Thirupparankundram Temple.

11. LORD MURUGAN SEATED UPON PEACOCK

The sculptor has designed the image of Lord Murugan, as if flying from the celestial world towards the mortal world, seated upon the Peacock. This image can be seen in the Thiruvaatchi Mandapa of Thirupparankundram Temple. The head of Lord Murugan contains Karanda Makuta with three Karanda and the forehead bears a bead studded with gems. The ears wear Makara Kundala and the neck wears Kandamalai, Muthumalai (Bead of pearls) and Iraiaveyahaaram. The two upper hands hold a peacock and spear in the left and the right hands respectively. The right hand is in a raised position holding the spear upside down. Lord Murugan is placed upon the peacock, seated in 'Uthukudigasanam', with his right leg folded and the left leg hanging below. Similar sculpture can be seen in the pathway Mandapa of Palani Hill Temple and the Thousand-Pillared Mandapa at Madurai.

12. SCULPTURES OF DUVARAPALAKAR

The Duvarapalakar can be seen as Door keeper in all temples, as 'Duvarapalakar' in the temples of male Gods and 'Duvarapalakar' in the temples of Female Gods respectively. They can be seen in the entrances of the temples as well as the sanctums each on one side. In each temple, their dress, weapons and ornaments would differ according to the main Lords and in standing posture. In Tamilnadu, the images of the Door Keepers could be seen in the temples ranging from that of the Pallavas till the contemporary cave temples. Amongst them, the Male guards are the most ancient. The tradition of the Female guards have been organized in the latter years. These guards act as bridges connecting people and Gods. In many sculptures, they are seen with two hands and in some sculptures, there are four hands.

There are two Duvarapalakars in the entrance of the Aasthana Mandapa of the Thirupparankundram Temple, chosen for research. The Duvarapalakar on the right side is seen in the standing position with four hands. The two upper hands hold trident and a rope and in the two lower hands the left hand hold 'Dhandam' and the right hand shows Vismaya mudra. The Duvarapalakar on the left side is also in standing position with four hands. The two upper hands hold trident and a rope. In the two lower hands the left hand show 'Dharjini Mudra' and the right hand is upon the weapon 'Gadhayudham' in Gajagastham position.

13. CONCLUSION

Most of the images are related to the main Lord in the sanctum. Among the sculptures related to Saiva cult, most of them are from 'Thiruvilayadarpuranam'. It is noted that the sculpture of Lord Natarajar also has a special significance dancing in a different position with the left leg lifted up. The other important sculptures are Thadathagai Piratti in front of Sundareswarar, Oorthuva Thaandavar and Kali, Lord Murugan waging war and the demon standing opposite to him. In the temples of Madurai, the full-size sculptures of Queen Mangammal could be observed. In general, the sculptures in the mandapas of Thirupparankundram are a collection of the best sculptures in the temples of Madurai.

A special mention must be made of the sculpture of Raman breaking the bow, as analyzed in the fifth chapter titled 'Idhikas, Puranic and other sculptures of Thirupparankundram'. It is also made clear that there are no images related to the scenes of 'Mahabharatham'. The scene from 'Thiruvilayadarpuranam', such as the Lord made the tiger to feed the deelings is remarkable. Further, differences are clarified between the image of Venugopalar

and Madhanagopalar and it is proved that the sculpture in this temple is none other than Venugopalar.

Among the Naattar Vazhakatriyal sculptures, mention worth are the snake-charmer and the monkey trainer. Moreover, it is also found that as there are many divine sculptures, the Naattar Vazhakatriyal sculptures might be less in number. Another important sculpture is that of Queen Mangammal with her troop.

The sexual sculptures are observed only in the temples constructed during the Vijayanagar Nayakka Kings. The proper reason is not known. Yet, this may be a replica of the sculptures at Gajuraho. As the sexual sculptures would induce the sensory organs and kindle the sensual pleasures of mankind, these sculptures act as an instruction to induce the feelings of the childless couple. The sculptures in the Thirupparankundram temple detailly explains the rulers of India as well as portray the Tamil culture, social status and behavioural patterns and thus, serve an important role as a tool for depicting the tradition of the people.

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