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Pillared sculptures of Palani- Sri Lakshmi Narayana Perumal temple

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Abstract

The Palani town which spreads itself at the foot of the hill the name of the town is said to be after the endearing town 'pazhanee' as expressed by Siva and Parvathi the divine parents to Muruga according to the puranic legends. The spiritual significance of Lord Muruga being ever constant, the popularity of the Hill Temple has been growing perceptively during the last hundred years. Here the famous vaishnava temple has also been built. It is called Shri Lakshmi Narayana Perumal Temple which is situated in the western side of the city and facing towards the east. The style of sculpture of this temple is related to Vijayanagar and Nayak's period. The pillared sculptures of the Mahamandapa is amazing to pertaining to all sects of Hinduism. This paper aims to discuss the significances of pillared sculptures in the Mahamandapa of Sri Lakshmi Narayana Perumal Temple at Palani.

Keywords: Brahmakantha, Vishnukantha, Abhanga, Dwibhanga, Thribhanga, Jatamaguta, Kodikarukku, Pothihai, Sangha, Sakkara, Pasa, Angusa, Mothaha

Introduction

In Sri Lakshmi Narayana Perumal temple's Vahana Mandapa, there are pillars, which bear the salient and artistic traits of the art. Sculptures of gods, donors, devas, divine maidens, the living organism that live under water, the shapes of different flowers, different religions, various weapons, the amalgamation of the bird and the fish, dancing posture, folk deities are found on the pillars in all its beauty. Besides the Vidhana, sculptures are also carved.

Methodology

Here the Descriptive method is inevitable. However both Analytical and Comparative methods are also followed. On the first pillar of the mandapa facing the east in a poised position are the donors sculptures which are nearly two feet in height. There are the dresses to the knee and beautiful ornaments which exhibit its grander, on this pillar the shape of pothigai has been well brought out. The other parts of the pillar are hidden is an elephant sculpture nearly half a feet in height on the bramakantha part, which is a life like depiction.

Pillared Sculptures of Sri Lakshmi Narayana Perumal Temple

On the second pillar in the bramakantha part is a donors sculpture facing towards the moolvar. It is said, that the sculptures refer to the Zamin of the place. It has a different type of makuta in its head, kundalas on its ears and the dress to the heels also bangles on the hands. In the same part on the western side there is the Annai Mahalakshmi sculpture with the lotus flower shown in the nature of relief sculpture.

The hands of the Annai bear conch and the wheel and the abayavaratha mudra. The makuta the ornaments around the neck and it enhances the majesty of the Devi. Showing the relief sculptures the beautiful padma is a remarkable which cannot be seen in any temples of vainava. Though it is a vainava temple, importance is also given to the religion like Saivism, because the relief sculpture of Linga makes one spell bound. A garland is around the Linga and beautiful hand crafts shown on either sides of the sculpture. In the same pillar on the southern side a beautiful cock sculpture has been carved to show the caused nature. Generally it is the tradition of art to show the Ehalinga, but putting the four Lingas together with the upapeeda is a commendable attempt.

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Among the collection of sculptures, the four Linga sculpture has been carved facing towards the north bringing the flower and its imagination is a new attempt of the sculpture. On the pothigai part of the third pillar there are beautiful designs of many flowers. On this same pillar in the western side there are the Hanuman sculpture in different positions. The pothigai which consists of different petals carving the nagapanda and showing the padma the pollen grains is a fit example of the rare piece of art. In the eastern side in the bramakantha part a beautiful yali has been depicted which shows the high imaginative power of the sculptures. In certain pillars portraying kodipen sculptures are traditional bound pertaining to the age of the Nayaks. The kodipen sculpture at a height of nearly two feet is one of minute artistry.

On the fourth pillars the shapes of various padma petals have been shown. In certain places as an imaginary figure like the yali has been depicted in an exaggerated manner. It is commendable to note in the southern side of the pillar, a beautiful sculpture of a horse in action. Besides in the thribanga position with the left hand on the waist and the ayutha in the right hand. This sculpture is nearly two feet tall with Jata and makuta. On its other side there is the donor sculpture in the anjalimudra. This has not been completed and the dexterous work that is seen in the kodikkarukku originates from the head part of the simha. On the fifth pillar there are many peculiar sculptures and the yali in the sitting position belongs to the Nayak's day.

On another part of the pillar the hamsa has been carved. Near this there is the Rishi's sculpture facing the moolavar in the suhasana posture. This sculpture is put up on a beautiful upapeeda. There is another relief sculpture of a swan catching hold of a flower plant and other aspects of the art are the many decorative works and flower designs.

The crescent shape of the moon is carved near the pothigai. Besides in the bramakantha part, as thought naturally a Linga relief sculpture originates from the stone pillar is also shown. The Nayaks are noted in exhibits the beautiful art. Hence in accordance with the tradition, beautiful kodipen sculptures are shown. The sculpture which is two feet tall has been carved so well. The artists who carves the sculptures at different angles. In these days have also carved the Naga sculpture in a circular form. Similar to that of the kodipen sculpture, there is also a Hanuman sculpture.

On the sixth pillar in the bramakantha part one of the ayuthas of Thirumal namely the conch has clasped by Garuda. This sculpture which is nearly two feet tall bears the makuta on its head and special mention should be made to the paathasalangai and the ornaments. Decorating the mandapa and the pillars of the mandapa it is done well by the nayaks. The strange plants in the beautiful flower pots is a nice work indeed and the swan being shown as a relief sculpture by giving much importance to the decoration is found. In the northern side, fast running elephant has also been engraved.

On the body portion of the elephant, decorations are designed. Padmas have also been shown. Near this imaginary flowers with pretty petals have also been depicted. To give encouragement many wonderful sculptures are also found. Among them on one side the body of the swan and on the other the head of the fish with the feathers have been portrayed. Such type of rare sculptures are seen in palani hill temple, giriveethi mandapa and the mandapa of the nayaks. Though there are many sculptures,

there is no match for the Annai Mahalakshmi sculpture. It is put up on a one foot padma peeda, in the padmasana posture facing the moolvar. She has the conch and the wheel in her hands the lower two hands bear the abayavaratha mudra and she is adorned with kundalas in her ears and also bangles.

On this pillar in the southern side Vali Sukrivan sculpture is found. The two sculptures put together and the feathers of art handled here, manifest that it belongs to the day of the Nayaks. It lends one to examine the two sculptures with makuta and friends having the hands on the shoulder of the other. It is a rare kind of art shown in the central of the pillar. Sculptures of the sort can be seen in Arulmigu Ahobilavaratharaja Perumal Temple at Balasamuthiram. On the seventh pillar kodikkarukku art takes place. Here in a natural environ under the shade of a tree, the lingas have been carved on a beautiful peedam. The lingas which are half-a feet tall are carved with garlands around its neck. On the western side of this pillar there is a yali sculpture in the pouncing posture. Though the rishi sculpture cascading flower is engraved it bears the long kundalams in its ears. It has two hands and is squatted on the tiger's skin facing towards the north. Besides this an elephant relief sculpture is shown in a very small size. As a milestone of this art the Chandra sculpture nearly two feet tall is put up on a separate peedam. The Surya sculpture nearly two feet facing towards the east has been shown.

The upper two hands the padmas, while the two lower hands bear the abayavaratamudra in the poised position. A noteworthy factor about it is that the sculpture has been adorned with the lower part of the dress with beautiful designs. At the back of the sculpture are shown in the hanging manner. The kandamala and abundant ornaments around the neck are depicted. Since they are deities the artistic features attributed to it are followed.

There is a novel Lingodhbava which exhibits the growth of Saivism at its pinnacle. On the eight pillar the alangaralinga has been carved and on it, the swan has been engraved. Below the Linga the depiction of the Varahavata cannot be seen in any temple. Here the hamsa sculpture and other decorative are also seen. On another side of the pillar the rishi sculpture and dvarabalaha are found. The dvarabalaha sculptures have been carved as folk based decorations.

Though it is a Vainava temple, the sculptures related to Sakthi are found here. Special mention should be made to the Sivadurga sculpture. The attempt made by Annai to abolish the asuras has been well brought as the asuras being crushed by Annai under her legs. Since it depicts samhara, the head of Annai is with the jvalamakuta. She has the break cloth tied around her breast and bears the dress up to the heels. Annai with four hands have the trident and udukkai. She has the weapons like nagapasa and kulika. She bears the flash in her face since she is about to destroy the asuras. This emphasis the fact that any being going to adore god, should be relieved from anava.

Beside this sculpture, a very prominent engravings bearing Saivism is put up on the god Nataraja which is amazing. The god is decorated with a beautiful makuta. It has the virisadai, kundalams in its ears and ornaments around the neck, the Nataraja in which bears the udukkai, abayamudra and vajchiram. Under the left hand muyalaka is struggling for life. It implies that god only safeguard the living organisms, but also destroys anava. This significant sculpture has been well wrought with the decorative arches, which is an example of the sculptures of Nayak's day. Since

it bears divinity the features applicable to the god shows the love of the Nayaks. For the art while engraving the pillared sculptures the sculptures related to it are also brought out. On the ninth pillar to the western side in the bramakanda part is seen the Rishi sculpture. His jatas flowing and in the padmasana posture is a wonderful sight. Novel kodikarukku decorations are carved on the top of the pillar and in the another side there are new floral decorations with the figures of fruits which show the dexterity of the artist. Though in the days of the Nayaks many relief sculptures were engraved.

On the western side of the pillar Mahavishnu is seen with his usual ayuthas. The whole body is decorated and on either sides garlands have been carved. There is divinity shown on the face and the sculpture bear the abaya varatha mudra and is seated facing towards the east. On the ninth pillar in the western side Surya, Chandra sculptures are shown in big size. Near this, there is also the brahmakantha part the hamsa sculpture has been well decorated. A flower has been divided into three sieges and has been related to it. The kodikkarukku decoration shown here are out of imagination. On another side an imaginary flower has been designed with two layers. In the part the linga sculpture it can be seen on the top. The layered flower is beautifully decorated for exhibition and on another side the Suriya sculpture has been shown. Here showing the figure is rare attempt, the sculptor who had shown various imaginary flowers. In another pillar has shown also beautiful flower plants.

Though there are sculptures pertaining to dasavatara, the Rama sculpture with the bow and the arrow is beyond the words. The bow has been shown tall in par with the Rama sculpture which is in the dhvibanga faces towards the north. This pillar has been decorated by the vali in the pouncing posture and the small flower plants that are shown as relief sculptures. In certain places flower plants are shown with two leaves. The Nayaks who have carved life like sculptures has also engraved, a very small Annai Mahalakshmi relief sculpture with the greatness of piety about it.

Annai seated in the ardha padmasana has been also crowned. In the upper hands it has the conch and the wheel and in the lower hands the abayavaratha mudra. The Annai seated on the padma peeda faces towards the moolavar has been pointed out. Since it is a relief sculpture the side of this pillar has numberless flower plants that are a great feast to the eyes. In the twelfth pillar the wonderness of the god Krishna has been very subtly shown. Coverting the dresses and with it seated on the branch of the tree is really an example for his mischievousness. Under the trees are seen the myth maids. Here each sculpture bears each stage which is a fine example of the art. A few maids adoring Kanna and a few seated near the tree is a piece of naturalism. The Nayaks are the owners in showing.

In another side, the kodikkarukku designs, when reminds one of the Balasamuthiram temple. The sculptors of the Nayak day have carved with artistic taste, but the figure of Vinayaga is really tremendous. In the hands of the deity are the paasa, angusa, writing nail, mothagam and broad ears and trunk which are well wrought. They have carved the donars sculptures facing towards the east. There is a difference in dress, the way of adoring makuta, veerasangli with different ornaments. Near this another donor sculpture is also found. This sculpture which has been considered as the Zamin of those days has been carved by introducing new

features of the art. The donor has a beautiful parrot in his right hand, which is wonderful. This kind of the structure of the sculptures cannot be found in any pillars. There is one more donor sculpture on another side of the same pillar with the knife in his waist. It is put up on a beautiful upapeeda with its left hand on the waist and the right hand pointing to the god. On the side are shown the head ornaments in this sculpture. Near this there is a kodipen sculpture in the bramakantha part, standing on the yali in the thribhanga posture. Ornaments the cloth around the breast with the two hands in the anjali mudra have been shown minutely. The whole of the pillar are embedded on the sculptures with kodikkarukku artistry.

It is a rare attempt of the sculptures to have shown the yali in the standing position with full decoration. Besides the sculptures and artists have also carved many relief sculptures pertaining to the epics. The wife unable to see her husband and she exiled has been well shown in the sculptures. Besides the suffering that Sita underwent is also socially shown on her face. The hair being disheveled and the body being highly fatigued show the real trauma experienced by Sita. Near this there is the friend of Sita in the standing position. Giving a collection of sculptures and showing at the background with its puranic relevance is a novel attempt of the sculptor. Near this there are female donor's sculpture engraved on the pillar. They are adorned with ornaments like mukuta, charapali, kandigai, aram and with the sense of complacency on their for having hada darshan of the god. More number of female donor sculptures are shown on either side of this sculpture. The diety Mahalakshmi sculpture two in number in the sitting posture is a beautiful relief sculpture. The body of the diety is depicted high by adorning it with gritamakuta here. The conch and the wheel and the abayavaratha mudra, besides on this pillar, a different decoration of the pothigai can also be seen. Hence pillared sculptures are well carved by the artists of those days is explicit from these sculptures.

Conclusion

Besides sculptures related to saivism, vaisnavism, saktam kouram and souvram can also be seen. Novel sculptures seen are also to be examined among the pillares. The sculptures of Sita, Annai Mahalakshmi, Suria, Chandra, Kalinganarthana, different kodipen and folkdeities are of much distinctiveness about them. Though it is a holy place for the vaisnavites, Natarajar sculpture in the dancing posture stands unique among the pillared sculptures. Various flowers and plants have been carved with imagination, which reminds one of the relief sculptures of Nayaks days.

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