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## THE ART OF SCULPTURE DURING THE PERIOD OF VIRARAJENDRA CHOLA IN KONGU NADU

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### ABSTRACT: -

**D**uring the reign of the king Virarajendra of Thiripuvana Chakravarthi one among the Kongu Chola Kings, the growth of architecture and sculpture attained great heights step by step. This king not only built the great Saiva and Vaishnava temples but also installed many



sculptures. Next he also constructed shrines in the main temples. To prove this there are many inscriptions on stones. Since he ruled for a long time it is believed that he might have built many huge temples and they would have been ruined in the impending years. During the reign of this king the Sri Karunakara

Venkataramana Perumal is seated as the Moolavar in the main Garbhagriha. Though it is first Vaishnava temple in Karuvallur, the inscriptions bear that it is Virarajendra Vinnagaram. This temple thrives on the donations given by the devotees. Yet it has a link with the twenty fifth year reign of Virarajendra.

**KEYWORDS:** Thiripuvana Chakravarthi, Sri Karunakara Venkataramana Perumal, Sridevi and Bhudevi, Ramanuja, Kothandarama and Kaliganarthana, Garudazhvar Sri Gangathiswara, Kamalambigai Temple...

### INTRODUCTION :

Sri Venkataramana Perumal seated with Sridevi and Bhudevi is nearly eight feet tall and his body is made of Navapashana. Though the figure is an ancient one it is seated in Samabhanga with two upper hands bearing the Sangu and Chakra and the lower left hand is being folded and the right hand bears the abaya mudra. He has the beautiful long makuta on his head, ornaments dress upto the knee and the features of artistic elegance. In the hands of Sridevi and Bhudevi padmas have been carved and on the head is the wonderful Hritamakuta. These two sculptures in the sitting posture wear the kandikai, the Aaram and many more ornaments. Lord Venkataramana wears the makarakundala in his ears. It is an ancient artistic work. In the Mandapa the metal icon of Lord Venkataramana Perumal is seated with Sridevi and Bhudevi. This is nearly one and half feet in height and has been wrought following the traditions of the ancient art of sculpturing. Beside this is the ancient Anjaneyar figure, which belongs to the days of Vijayanagara and Nayaks.

### METHODOLOGY

Both comparative and descriptive method is used here. In the Ardhamandapa Maha Vishnu is seen in the seated posture. Near him are the figure of Ramanuja, Kothandarama and Kaliganarthana. In the Mahamandapa there are the sculptures of Dvarabhalagas named Jayan and Vijayan. These sculptures are nearly five feet in

height and wrought in the best traditional artifacts pointing to the Moolavar. These sculptures have beautiful long mukuda, in their hands the conch, the wheel and the gadhayutha and in their cars the kundalas. These are all of the ancient days. The donors sculpture representing the periods of Vijayanagar and Nayaks are sculptured on the four sides of the pillars. These sculptures are well exhibited in the features adopted in the art. The sculptures of male and female figures are engraved on the anjali mudra with very simple dress. Among these the noteworthy sculpture is the figure of Sri Venugopala with flute in his hands. He has the conch and the wheel in his two upper hands. He seated under the five headed snake. It is also understood through this that the cows are attracted towards the music from the flute. Besides it can be also known that the music from the flute of the God can allure many human souls to his side. Near this sculpture there is a donor sculpture. Vijayanagar and Nayaks were indispensable in building the temple Mandapas cannot be opposed.

In the Vahana mandapa the Garudazhvar's figure is in the anjali mudra, facing the moolavar. This is nearly three feet in height and is seen with all the decorations about it. Apart from this in the four pillared mandapa, of the temple there are beautiful miniature sculptures. Among them the donors and the vyala figures are of great importance. The sculptures have engraved beautifully and sculptures in the dweepasthampa, which is next to the entrance is very minute work. On the four sides of the pillars, Garuda figure has carved with great dexterity. In the north and south parts of the dweepasthampa the conch and wheel are sculptures. To the south, this pillar has been decorated by the figure of Anjaneya. The sculptures found here have a link with the traditions of the agamas. It is known that during the Vijayanagar and Nayaks reign its impact has been great. Though Sri Venkaramana Perumal Temple's Vimana belongs to very ancient days, it has been renovated in course of time. Many of them are relief sculpture, and they are a holy feast to devotees. There are many Hanuman sculptures in the Anjalimudra and in the sitting posture on the four corner parts of the vimana. In the floor to the southern side of the kosta, Mahavishnu seated Lakshmi in the suhasana posture is the rarest of its kind. Though it is relief in structure the features have been brought out in an exquisite way. To the south side of the Grivakosta Yoganarasimha with the conch and the wheel bears both the Abaya and Varada Mudra.

To the east Venkaramana Perumal is seen along with Sridevi and Bhudevi in par with the Moolavar in the standing posture, with the weapons due to him both the sides of him the devies with the Padma are seen in the Thribhanga posture. Similarly in the west and north sides there are many relief sculptures. To the western side of the first floor Vaikundanatha is seated in the Grivakostha. One can see the Varaha avatar of Maha Vishnu. Besides there are the conch and the wheel the Kathayudha, Abayamudra, Beautiful mukuta, Kndikai, the Aaram and other ornaments and lower dresses. On the two sides of this avatar, like the Macha avatar, the Kurma avatar and the Kalki avatar been carved in a simple manner. This has also been done as a holy task by the Nayaks.

Since it is a Vainava temple, the different avatars of Maha Vishnu decorates the vimana. To the northern side of the first tala the scene of Venugopala with Bama is a wonderful creation of the sculpture of these days. In the Grivakostha the same figures have been carved. Likewise in the vimana the Dasavathara sculptures, Garuda, Anjaneya, and Narasimha figures are found. In a few toranas also Narasimha figures are carved. The sculptures of this temple found in line the traditional art of the Kongu Cholas reveals its development to the heights.

Virarajendra Iswaramudaiyar Temple or Karuvallur – Sri Gangathiswara, Kamalambigai Temple

One can see Sri Gangathiswara popularly known as Virarajendra Iswaramudaiyar in the inscriptions seated under the five headed snake. Gangathiswara seated as the prime deity is in the form of the Linga, bestowing blessings to the devotees. Though he has been considered as one of the three murthies all the living organisms are bound unto him. All that takes birth have to die. All that has been created have to be destroyed. Lord Siva is the abode of fate that denotes death and destruction. Siva contributes to the creation and protection of beings. According to the researchers brahma and Vishnu are embodied in Siva. From the days of yore Siva has been worshipped in the Linga form. Worshipping him in the human form pertains to his Avatar. Linga denotes the symbol. It is praised by all. Siva protects the whole universe and Linga is for him. Hence Sivalinga is Siva Himself. In Harappa and Mohenjadarro many Lingas have been excarved. These concepts have been accepted by kongu people during the reign of the Kongu Cholas and hence innumerable Siva temples have been constructed. Especially during the reign of Virarajendra Chola Rajakesari's reign the worship of Siva has been at a peak. Since in his days temples were built, they were named after the king. Next to the God Dwara

Vinayaka is seated in the main sanctum in the Ardhamandapa, is seen. In the Mahamandapa, the relief sculpture of Dwarabhalagas is really amazing. Beside this the Nandhi sculpture seated as the Vahana belongs to the earliest days. The devakosta sculptures of this temple are indeed very ancient in nature. They have all been installed with the background of the agamas.

### The Figure of Dakshinmurthi

To the side of the Devakostha is the figure of Lord Dakshinamurthi which reminds one of the ages of the Kongu Cholas. In their days these things were prevalent like the chin mudra, palm leaves, the aksamala with the snake and the fire. He is seated in the Virasana posture and has the Jatabara and also the Yajnapavita across his chest. This sculpture is three feet tall but bears the traditional decoration on it. In the Devakostha also the figure of the Lord can be seen. Similar types of sculpture can be seen in the temples like Annur, Perumanallur, Abishekapuram and Pazhankarai. In the silpasatras Dakshinamurthi has been described in various ways. He is seated as the teacher for the teacher i.e., Guru. Since he is seated the south and bestowing advice to the Rishies, he is known by this name. He has three eyes, four hands and is seated in the Virasana posture. One of the leg suppresses the anava in the form of muyalaga. There is no better Guru than him. He has all the traits of a Guru in him. Rishies are always found surrounding him to get the spiritual knowledge. One can find the god with the aforesaid features in Gangathiswara koen as Virarajendra Iswaramudaiyar Temple. The silasatras were abided during the Kongu Chola region is very well understood from her. At the present time the god's figures can be found in all the Saivite temples.

To set the sculpture for Lingobhava to the western side of the devakostha in Siva temples was prevalent in the days of the early Cholas. This tradition was also in vogue among the Kongu Cholas. One can see to the western side of the vimana of Karuvallur-Virarajendra Iswaramudaiyar temple an ancient Dakshinamurthi sculpture with all the glories of the traditional art. The figure of Lingobhava which is nearly two feet tall is wrought with the features of the Puranas. It is to be understood that in this temple Brahma and Vishnu to be relieved of their pride appeared as pillars of fire. Here Brahma and Vishnu are found worshipping near Siva. Lord Siva has been considered as the chief. This concept was willingly accepted during the reign of the Kongu Cholas. Hence he figured as the kostamurthi. Near the Lord Siva, Brahma is seen in the mould of a swan, Mahavishnu as a Varaha and the Thalambu flower sculpture are also seen. But the scene where in the Lord appears from the pillar is indeed commendable. The Lord coming out in this manner manifests the different stages of the art in progress. To the western side in the first tala Mahavishnu is seen with conch and wheel and with the decorative makuta in the suhasana posture. One can see the same sculpture with the sacred thread across his chest and the ornament aram round his neck with the other ornaments.

### The Durga Sculpture

In the ardhamandapa Devakosta of Sri Virarajendra Iswaramudaiyar Temple Annai Durga is seen facing towards the north. This is due to the impact of the art of the cholas. She is seated here as Siva Durga. It is an ancient sculpture and height is nearly two feet. She has in her upper two hands the padmas and in the lower right hand the abayamudra, while the left hand is in the folded posture. In the texts and the agamas, Annai has been given different forms and spoken differently, she has been considered in different forms of Sakthi and is worshipped with reverence. The Devibagavatha, a text which speaks about the norms related to Devi. She has been regarded as the mother of all living organisms. If one worships the Devi with sincers, piety and respect she will definitely bestow blessings on the real devotees. The deity's strength, her depth of knowledge, thoughts and plans cannot be comprehended by our frail mind. She is the one who suppresses the pride of mahisasura; The Pride in man is also abolished by her. Her strength permeates the whole world and is brought under control. Durga is an embodiment of beauty and bravery. The worship of Durga during the Kongu Cholas reign is explicit in the different sculptures that have been carved for worship. Sakthi's another form ParvathiDevi is seen seated in the Vimana talas. In the Vimana talakosta the Ardhanariswara sculpture can be seen.

This sculpture was significant from the Pallavas rule to the Imperial Cholas, Pandyas and finally the Kongu Cholas reign. The days of the Virarajendra Thiripuvana Chakravarthi is well seen in the flourish of Saiva

temples. It is believed, that for the worldly activities this figure is indispensable. Likewise for the built of the living things this sculpture stands as the main force. She has in her energetic portions the varada and the padma while in the Siva portions the pasa and the abaya. These are her main ayuthas. She has an eye on her forehead, two types of ear rings, dresses and the ornaments which are very great and noteworthy. The organs and their movements of the male and female have been well wrought by the sculptor with good care and excellence. It makes us to wonder at the influence of silpasastra traditions.

There are many Purana background for this sculpture but the one to be told is stated below. The sage Pirungi was an ardent Siva devotee. He used to worship Siva only and not Parvathi which according to him was the piety shown to Siva, raged by this act Sarasvathi Devi trans fused in to the body of the Siva in to an half and appeared as Sivaparvathi and Ardhanariswara. Still the sage Pirungi transformed himself into a beetle, pierced in to the middle of Sivaparvathi's body, worshipped the part of Siva and came out successfully. Ultimately on the basis of protecting the living beings he understood the natural state of things and worshipped the Ardhanariswara. "Since Siva and Sakthi are not two entities but only one has been understood in the earlier days. This concept was represented in the temple sculptures also. The social background at different stages is also reflected in this sculpture. During the rule of the Kongu Cholas also this type of worship was in practice. In the second tala of the thritala vimana, Lord Siva's Vahana namely the Nandhi has been finely designed. He has been called as Nandhikesa. To denote of Siva with three eyes (mukkan), in the hands he has the deer and the weapon mazhu as ayuthas. The anjali mudra and the face of Nandhikesa are in the shape of Rishaba, while the other elements are in the figure of human form.

The Puranas describe him in a variety of ways. It is said that he appeared from the right side of Vishnu body. He was like Siva and for the Sivanatha the sage he was born with the blessing of Siva is another version about him. It is also said that Nandhi means the leader of the Sivaganas. If one goes to combine the natural temperament of all the living things, the product would be the Nandhi. Nandhi plays a pivotal role in the worship of Siva and hence nowadays in all the Saiva temples the nandhi appears. Where ever there are Saiva temples Brahma is installed in the northern side of the vimana that is in the devokosta, inclusive of Grivakosta,. This kind of worship was in its growth during the Kongu Cholas days. Brahma was the beginning universe is the creation of Brahma. Hence to remember, Brahma and his creation the word 'Brahmandam' has been used.

The Puranas say that Brahma was created in the Nabikkamala of Mahavishnu. Brahma's occupation was creation and he had a good mate namely Saraswathi. Brahma is the leader of the four Vedas, that means Saraswathi. From Brahma the fine arts like literature, music and dance sprung of the world. It also denotes the four Vedas, the four period of time and the four Varnashramas. He has the beard on his face and the eyes are passive as in meditation. In the four hands he has the aksamala which means the jabamala, kurcha, which was the basic for all the arts was in a state of growth in worship, not only during the reign of Cholas, but also during the rule of the Kongu Cholas. In the place by name Kodumudi in Kongu Nadu, there is separate sannathi and worship is on for the deity. In Karuvallur- Virarajendra Iswaramudaiyar Temple he is worshipped as the Devakostha and Griva Kostha deity. The Vahana of Brahma namely the hamsa, that we should be intellectual and prudent and know to discriminate the right from the wrong.

Lord Gangathiswara seated as the moolavar in the east tala is seated in Suhasana posture with the deer and mazhu in the hands. In this sannathi there is another ancient Chandikeswara sculpture. During the days of Konerinmaikondan Thiripuvana Chakravarthi Virarajendra, there were many sannathies for Chandikeswara. In the Chola country especially in the medieval period that is in the region of Rajendra Chola I this sculpture gained its fame. Continuously its renown increased and it was in its zenith stage. It has in its right hand the parasu and the left hand on the thigh. This sculpture is nearly three feet height and Kongunadu has not witnessed such a beautiful sculpture elsewhere. Among the other sub sannathies, the significant one is the figure of Muruga. This figure is sculptured in the present days, but along with the figure is the vimana, and is seated in the griva portions with six faces as Swami Dhandayuthapani.

### **The Sculpture of Annai Kamalambigai**

Ambal Kamalambigai seated as the Moolavar in the sub shrine is with a new grace wearing the



Jatamakuta, and the aparanas like Kandagai and a Aram. The figure with the four hands has been carved with the beautiful thriuvacchi. She has in her upper two hands the padmas and in the lower two hands the abaya and varada mudra. She bestows her blessings on her devotees and is in the thribanga form. From the field research it is understood that the Annai's figure belongs to the olden days. It is indeed a religious feast to the eyes to see the relief sculptures in the sannathi vimana wherein Annai Kamalambigai is seated. To the southern side of the first tala Annai appears as Meenakshi. As Parvathi, she is seen in the grivakostha with the deer and the weapon in the suhasana posture. She is in the standing posture with the padma in the right hand and in the left hand the dolamudra. In the koshta that are to the east Annai is seated as the moolavar. The art historians will find, that in the figure of the Annai there are the suitable features and the artistic expression with symmetry and beauty. The literatures speak of Annai in different versions. In the Hindu religion Parvathi comes as consort and Sakthi of Siva in comparison with other beautiful spirits is blessing with plenty of grace.

Since she was born in the Himalayas for Daksha, she was known by various names like Dakshayani, Giriha, and Hemavathy, other than these she is also called Sarvani, Pudrani and Marudani. In the puranas she is Aparna and Uma. It is said that for Indra she was an intellectual inspiration i.e., Gnanaudaya. The philosophical significances of the cosmos i.e., omnipotent is spelt out by the Annai. Hence Parvathi worship was from immemorial days. It has been continued and practiced in kongu nadu. During the rule of Rajendra cholas – I a separate sannathi for Annai was assigned. This has spread far and wide in the kongu country. Hence in many temples Annai in different dimensions is called Surambar Ponguzhali, Perianayaki, Kamalambigai, Muyangu Poonmulai Valli and Ambigai. To the western side of the Vimana of Karuvallur temple Annai appears in different stages. Likewise Varahi sculpture is a wonderful art. On the Grivakostha, Mahalakshmi is seated in the suhasana posture showing the conch, the wheel and the abaya varada mudra. There is a plenty of ornaments and decorations. The sculpture formed in the devakostha of this sannathi belongs to the present time. In the north Brahmi sculpture has been installed with no changes in the traditional art. Durgai in the ardha mandapa devakostha possesses the ayudhas of Vishnu and is seated as Vishnu Durgai. Generally in posture, while the next in the vimanatala are in the sitting posture.

### The Vinayaga sculpture

Lord Vinayaga is seated in the sub shrine on the campus of Arulmigu Gangathiswara temple. The sculpture which is an olden one bears the pasa, ankusa, motaka and the writing nail. The features of the transfusion of man into divine beings have been perfected. The background of the agamas is present. As is referred in the silpasa sastras, Ganesa has been always called Vignesa. If one goes to perform any type of poojas, Ganapathi worship is done at the start. His peculiar shape and curious birth has been understood from the dyas of yore. The worship of Ganapathi has a link with the days of the Vedas.

In the appearance of Siva consists the philosophy of the cosmos, which is the shape of Ganapathi. It is also said Lord Krishna came as Ganapathi. He has an eye in the forehead. He has these things like lotus, pomegranate, kamndala, pasu, musical instrument, broken ivory, sugarcane, paddy grains, arrow, bow, jabamala and book. His ears are big and are sharp. The omkara form is the trunk of the God as Brahma. He appears in a grand manner. In his pot – belly the universe is set inside. He wears different coloured ornaments and dresses. His shape is in seventy- one types. In the days of the kongu Cholas especially in the reign of Virarajendra Thiripuvana Chakravarthi, Vinayaga worship was widely practiced. In the praharas of the temples Ganapathi Sannathi has been constructed. In all the Saiva temples the ancient Ganapathi sculpture can be seen. At present next to the Ganapathi sculpture to its left side are the figures of the five elements i.e., Panchabhutas which actually reflect the Saiva practice in kongu nadu. In many of the Saiva temples in kongu nadu such types of sculptures are found. To the east prakara of the temple there is a separate sannathi for the Navagrahas and sculptures have been carved. Here ancient features are found abundantly. Besides this Sanibhagavan statue is found with his vahana. Moreover there are many ancient sculptures. Among them the sculptures like Surya and Chandra are very ancient one. These two sculptures are put up in separate sannathies facing the moolava in the sitting posture at the east prakara. There are nearly three feet tall with padma in their hands and makuta on their heads. They are also adorned with ornaments. In the north prakara of this temple the figure of Dhandayuthapani is really

amazing. There are no relief sculptures on the pillars. Such types of special sculptures are found in Gangathiswara temple. The sculpture in the main sanctum and the sub sannathies are very ancient in nature. Among them Annai Kamalambigai sculpture is very significant.

**Vijayamangalam –Chitromezhi Vinnagaram Arulmigu Sridevi Bhudevi Sametha Karivarada Perumal Temple Sculpture**

This temple known as Chitromezhi Vinnagaram is specialized in the art of sculpturing. Here Lord Kariamanika Perumal as the Moolavar in the name of Karivaratharaja Perumal is along with Sridevi and Bhudevi in all the beauty of a God. The deity appears in the samabanga, wears the suitable makuta, the mahara kundalas in the ears, the bangles and the ornament on the shoulders. Decoration is splendid. Along with the Saivism, the Vainavism has also developed is the best testimony found here Specially Virarajendra Cholas has encouraged Saivism and Vainavism, and has constructed many temples. Since the moolava sculpture belongs to the ancient days of Lord Kariamanika Perumal sculpture which is nearly four feet tall and along with the two Deities who have the padmas. These sculptures are also very ancient. They are more than thousand years, and one cannot see such types of pillars elsewhere. It also exhibits the intrinsic craftsmanship of the art during the kongu chola days. Like the moolavars, the utsavas are also well decorated. The sculptures and artists were excellent in chiseling and carving the angalakshanas of the deities which is manifested aesthetically. Arulmigu Kariamanicka Perumal Temple has significant Dwarabhalagas sculpture. The Naga sculptures in small and big forms are carved and are worshipped. In the Vaishnava Temples Naga i.e., snake sculptures are worshipped as Dwarabhalagas.

### **The Figure of Anjaneya**

Another sculpture which is the figure of Anjaneya is very old and it faces towards the east. In Vaishnava Temple he plays an important role. In Southern India Anjaneya worship is very famous. His sculptures are found in the Vaishnava temples in separate sannathies and pillars, as relief sculptures, while in the Vimana portion as stucco forms. Anjaneya in the Ramayana is an example of good knowledge piety and tenderness. As his intellectual sharpness he is also very strong. He is a paragon of intelligence, bravery, sensibleness and deep piety. He is very respectful in the midst of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana. At certain time he is seen at the foot of Rama, with great piety in the sitting posture. In the temple assigned for him he stands as a majestic soldier. He has the Sanjeevi Mountain lifted in his right hand and he has gathayutha in his left hand. Hanuman with all these aspect is seen as relief sculptures in many Vaishnava temples in Kongu nadu both in mandapas and pillars. Seated in his sannathies, he has in his ears the ornaments like kundalas, kandigai, the sacred thread, the lower dress, bangles and the utharabandas. He is seated with all the decorations in his sub- shrines.

### **The Alwars Sculptures**

There is a beautiful mahamandapa in Sri Chitrameli Vinnagara at Vijayamangalam. Here there are many Alwar's Sculptures that are very ancient. Among them the Thirumangai Alwars sculpture is in the sitting posture facing to the south. This sculpture is nearly two feet in height. The different features of the body are symmetrically wrought with a sense of divine intelligence. It is bliss that is permanent. The shape of bliss is embodied in maha Vishnu. To the left of this sculpture, there is another sculpture facing towards the south in the sitting posture. This figure is known as Visvaksena. It is in the virasana posture with the conch and the wheel including abayamudra. It has its right hand on the thigh and bears the makuta with all the fine artistic features of sculpturing. During the field research it was understood that, among the four alwars who were the precursors for the growth of Vainavism, Nammazhlwar's sculpture belongs to the olden days. From this sculpture it can be found the sculpture having the jatabhara simple dress decoration and selfless appearance. It is nearly two feet tall. The figure of Ramanuja who was instrumental for the growth of Vainavism in later days is also in the sitting posture. One can see the simplicity in appearance and the genuine piety. To reach the divine feet of Mahavishnu the ways of the alwars have to be followed is what is manifested in these sculptures.

### **The Sculptures of Mukha Mandapa**

This mandapa is on the basis of the Vijayanagar Nayaks. The pillars that are nearly ten in number have

the relief sculptures on them. These sculptures are less than a feet in height and bears the Saiva and Vainava Puranas. Besides, these sculptures decorate all the sides of the pillar. There are many sculptures that manifest Saivism and the Puranas related to it. Among them the figure of Kannappanayanar who was noted for his piety towards Siva has been engraved. Though the Vijayanagara Nayaks were ardent lovers of Vainavism, they were not reluctant to engrave the Saiva sculptures. Next to the relief sculptures, Hanuman sculpture is very noteworthy. The beautiful ladies with slender waists have also been carved which are nearly two feet tall. The sculptures of this sort with dexterity. The floral decorations have been skillfully carved on the pillars. In par with these elegant lady dancers have also been sculptures. Bliss is permanent while happiness is transient. To emphasize this philosophy there some erotic sculptures in potures on the pillars. Another relief sculpture which is one of the best to be mentioned here is Goddess Saraswathi. She is with Veena and has the decorative mukuta. She is with the rosary and the book which are example for spirituality. Hence she has these things as ayuthas. In certain places Annai in sitting posture have the Veena, akshamala, the book, yajnopavita, lotus, trident, conch and wheel. She appears with five faces. Her vahana is the swan. It is said that she is the embodiment of the creative capability and the intelligence of brahma. Hence in the days of Vijayanagar and Nayaks such types of sculptures were given priority. At present on the side of the pillars the vyala sculptures and the birds like the parrots are engraved. During the Pallava period the donor's sculptures were introduced. These experienced much growth during the Vijayanagar and Nayak days. But the foremost things to be appreciated is the engraving of Lord Siva in different forms of Linga, with garlands. This shows the religious unity that prevailed then.

There are engravings of the dasavatara scenes of Mahavishnu on the sides of the outside pillars of this mandapa. The best of its kind is the sculpture of Mahavishnu as Narasimha in the sitting posture with the conch and the wheel and also the abaya varada mudra. The avatar of this kind of Vishnu earned many significance in society. The Lord protects the souls in many ways and endows his blessings. The secret of the divine stage avatar is when the human beings are protected from the huge and small sufferings. Mahavishnu takes 'avatar' at the time when in the world peace and justice get tarnished. This he does, since protection is his duty. Prakhatha is a very staunch devotee of Vishnu. His father Hiranyakasipu ill-treated him because of anava, and the world knows. Vishnu who is omnipresent took the terrific 'Narasimha avatar' for Prakhatha and suppressed the anava of his father. In the animal kingdom the lion is great. Among the crown of creation is the birth of man. The amalgamation of these two is the Narasimha avatar, which is the peak of creation.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of Vaishnavism during the reign of the Kongu Cholas was obvious. At this time such sculptures were famous. Narasimha was carved as sculpture on the pillars and the toranas of the devakosthas. In the vimanakostha they are found as stucco forms. On the pillars of this mandapa there is another relief sculpture. By playing melodious music with flute Venugopal was able to entice not only the human beings but also the beasts. He resides in the heart of the people due to his spirituality and culture. Lord Krishna possesses the purna avatar which is the embodiment aspect of all the avatars of Lord Vishnu. There are many stories about Krishna and his brave deeds. For a Hindu there is no one to be called the besat soldier, wise man, the artificer and teacher than Krishna. He is the perfect and first God. He is the leader for all gods. This sculpture attained its growth during the reign of the Vijayanagar and Nayaks. On the other side of the pillar in the mandapa Garuda sculpture has been engraved in the Anjalimudra. This reminds one as the Vahana of mahavishnu. Sri Rama is seen with bow and arrow. The avatar of Mahavishnu has been allowed to grow of different places of the Vedas. Ramavatar is related to the classic 'The Ramayana'. 'Raman Namam' is the Mantra of each and everyone. Near the above said sculpture, the form of ridhi is being engraved in the ekapada posture. Annai Devi is seated here as Meenakshi. The Vamana avatar on the pillar of the mandapa is yet another relief sculpture. The sacred thread with simple ornaments go along with the thought which is one of the features of the art. On the brahmakanta portions of the pillars small-sized relief sculptures are carved. Among them are the bhutaganas, the vyalas and the hamsas. The pillars that bear the relief sculptures are rich in novel with beautiful kodikkaruku designs. They are full of animation and the craftsmanship belongs to the Vijayanagar and nayaks days. At the



entrance of the gopura there is the Gajalakshmi sculpture.

On the four sides of the Dweepasthamba which is a craft of the later days. Garuda, Sri Rama, Hanuman and Vishnu appear in relief sculptures. There is an abundance of decorations. All the sculptures are more than two feet in height. Likewise the separate sculptures. Kosta sculptures, pillared sculptures and dweebasthamba sculptures can be mentioned.

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