



SCULPTURAL BACKGROUND OF TAMIL COUNTRY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KONGU NADU

K. Manivannan

Assistant Professor, Dept. Of Indian Culture & Tourism,
Govt Arts College(A), Kumbakonam.



ABSTRACT:

Sculptures are carved in sand, stone, metal and Ivory. They are carved after seeing something and grasping it in mind. Sculpturing of this sort in course of time began to grow in accordance to the mental caliber and the weapons that they procured. This is a statement by Somasundaram. During the Sangam age the art of sculpturing was in a developed stage. The researchers say that at the entrance of the palace 'Korravai' i.e., Sakthi's sculpture has been carved and our ancient historical place Kaveripoompatinam the figure of a tiger was carved. In memory of soldiers who won in the battle field, a monument was constructed by their relatives and the king. That is what is stated in 'Tholkappiyam' as 'Virakkal' or 'Nadukal'. It is also understood that a stone was brought, made clean by water and then the soldiers name and figure along with his caliant acts were carved. Apart from this the installing of the 'Nadukal' for the deceased king was also in practice. The aim of the research paper is to carryout the details of the individual sculptures of Kongunadu.

KEY WORDS: - Kaveripoompattinam, Cheran Senkuttuvan, Kannahi, Olagadam Subramanya, Kannadiputhur Dakshinamurthy, Periakottai Chandikeswara and Komaralingam Narasimha...

INTRODUCTION

In Tamil literature there are allusions to this in plenty. Cheran Senguttuvan constructed a temple for the bereaved chaste lady Kannaki, who lost her husband. Those days in comparison to the "Masathikkal" installed for the ladies who threw themselves on the burning pyre of their husbands, likewise many memorable structures were planted. Sculpture and statues were wrought by stone, sand and wood. Those who did sculpture with sand were known as "Manneettalas. Besides literatures like "Paripadal" speaks about the dolls carved from wood. These wooden dolls might have been ruined in the long run. From the researchers, it is also understood, that in those days the burnt tiles and sculptures were found in places like Korkkai, Arikamedu and Uraiyur. In relation to this many evidences can be found in the Sangam age.

METHODOLOGY

Both descriptive and analytical methods are used. It is said that in the art of sculpturing the Pallavas were the predecessors in the trend of the Dravidians. This is because of the exquisite art being given by the Pallavas to Tamil Nadu. The interest shown by them in architecture and sculpture is a proof, that their love for sculptureing are great. It is only during the period of Parameshwaravarma I and Rajasimha the sculpture were brought in to the sanctum. It is not only the caves and monolithic rathas carved from the massive stone of the Pallavas are the symbols of their architecture, but also the architectural sculpture. In the significant sculptures of the Pallavas there are many salient features. The sculptures of these days had an elongated body, broad breasted and thin lip. They bear the 'Makuta' that are conical in shape or lenthly in manner.

The Age of the Pallavas:

The holy string yagnopavita goes to string the upper part of the right hand. The sculptures are adorned with fewer amounts of ornaments. This is due to the hardened rocks. The crowns and the head dresses are carved without any ornaments in a simple manner. The figures are also made with softness about it. The ladies are carved in their childhood fashion. The looks of the sculptures are filled with mercy and they resemble the sculptures of Amaravathi. But unlike Amaravathi sculptures they are regularized. The Pallava sculptures have naturally simplicity about them. Their dress at the hip are broadened on either side. The ear ornaments especially the 'Kundalas' are thick in nature. The keyuras are without any kind of craftsmanship.

In the goddesses sculpture in accordance to their genital organs the cloth is tied across their breasts. This cannot be seen elsewhere. The best example is among the wives of Vishnu. There is the cloth across the breast for Sridevi but this is not found in Bhudevi. The historians say, that this is to identify between the goddesses and also to see Sridevi high from Bhudevi. Among the few significant things that can be said of the sculptures of the cloth tied across the breasts of the deities or the ordinary women are seen in a slanting position towards their men in a humble manner.

The Age of the Cholas

It is said that after the Pallavas, among the Cholas first in the line of kings namely Vijayalaya Chola-I desecrated the Nisumba Sudhanidevi in Thanjavur. Today she is known as Vadapathrakali. None can see the elegance of the sculpture elsewhere. Here goddess Sakthi has majestic face with the 'Jvala Makuta', the 'Ayudhas' in the manner ready to destroy the family of the Asuras. This sculpture is the first of the kind in the days of the early Cholas. The two sculptures that have been taken from the campus of the structural temple like Narttamalai Vijayalaya Choliswara in these days are kept in the government museum, Pudukottai. Among one is the figure of Vaishnavi. The other is the figure of Vinathara Dakshinamurthi. Devi seated in the 'Virasana' posture bears the Sangu and Chakra in her hands with the Abayamudra. The Annai has a tall Kritamakuta. The broad Keyura in her hands and the pleated dress makes one to remember the Cholas. Vinathara Dakshinamurthi with the mriga in both the hands is seen with Kadisutra in his waist in the midst. This is also an important feature of the art of the Cholas. In the Pullamangai Brahmapuriswara temple near Thanjavur, the sculptures found have a story-telling about them. They are so dexterously carved and the temple is an important one of the early Cholas. They also resemble the painting of the Ajanta Ellora and the collection of sculptures at large in Pattadakal put together in a miniature. This is indeed a rare craftsmanship. The sculpture resemble, those found in Gangaikonda Cholapuram by Rajendra Chola I and the Periakoil in Thanjavur by Rajaraja the great. The figures here are a bit heavy in nature. The ones among them are Nataraja, Kalasamhara and Gangadara. The figure of Vishnu, Brahma and Chandesanugrahamurthy bear a multisense of meaning. It is like forgiving the fault done by Chandesa who assaulted his father who went to do milk abisheka for the Lord Siva and the praises showered on Rajendra Chola I who went to ganga and won the battle. Sivaperuman sculpture has been carved very tall in stature. Among the sculpture carved in the days of Rajendra II, the Murthi Arthanari, Gajasamhraramurthi sculpture are distinctive in Darasuram Iravathiswara temple. The Mohini sculpture in this place has been given a polish and is made of stone.

The best among these is the sculpture wherein Siva, in the form of "Bikshatana" goes into the Dharukavana and the rishi's ladies sculptures there reveals the stages of the art in its development. The beautiful ladies are being elegantly chiseled in the Kambahareswara temple by Kulotunga II in Thirupuvanam. These stand prior to the Vijayanagara and Nayaks, sculpture that are used for the ornamentation. Hence the sculptures of the Cholas period are unique in their presentation.

The Age of the Pandyas

The cave temples sculptures of the Pandyas are very ancient. Among the cave temple sculptures of today the Yoganarasimha is being sculptures majestically in the Narasimha cave near Madurai. Outside this cave temple is stationed the figure of Devi of olden days in the small sanctum. Besides this Subramanya with his consort Devayani are seated in close quarters as couple. Their appearance is more majestic than the royal family. But their faces exhibit a pleasing and merciful nature. In Thirumalai near Sivaganga Sivaperuman and Parvathi are seen in their matrimonial grandness. In the sanctum of Subramaniya Temple at Thiruparankundram are seen the sculptures of Somaskanda and Vishnu in the form of relief sculptures.

The sculptures of the Pandya were also equally well carved like that of the sculptures of the Pallavas. The best example is the sculpture of Lord Siva and Parvathi in the Sukasana posture with Murugan in their midst. Among the sculptures of the Pandyas the relief sculpture of the Ganapathi is in Pillaiyarpatti. It is with two hands and without the Yagnopavita across his chest. Among the cave sculptures of Thirupparankundram the dancing posture of Lord Siva is really commendable. One can see this sculpture on the outside wall niche of the sanctum of Siva. This sculpture with the flag of Nandhi gives the impression to the researchers, that it has the artistic flavor of north India. Here Siva in the dancing posture is accompanied by another man, who plays the matthala, the musical instrument. Another artist plays the flute. As audience Parvathi along with Vishnu and Brahma are seated. Parvathi Devi is inclined to the Nandhi and bears the Padma in her hands. Another hand is on the "Bhuthaganans" which is near her. The Sivaganas are in their jubilant mood. The development of the art of sculpturing in these days can be seen. Extending of the Kundrakudi and Thirukolakkudi caves, the development of the art during the reign of the Pandyas can be visualized in the 'Bhutaganas' that have been carved on either side of them, which is in the sanctum of Thirumalaipuram. These elegant sculptures and their activities are being naturalized. A few of them are engaged in playing the flute and the Matthala and a few also teach others. Their involvement in the music can also be seen. Two Bhutaganas are found in their happy mood, on the top as well as on either side. The figures in these sculptures and their dresses not only reveal the artistic traits of the Pandyas, but also the influence of the Pallavas, the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas. There are also many Jaina relief sculptures.

The Age of Vijayanagar and Nayaks

The sculptures of both Vijayanagar and Nayaks days and their development can be seen different stages. In these days tall sculptures have been carved on the pillars of the mandapa. Besides on the either side of the pillar also, small sculptures have been engraved. Many sculptures explain the ancient stories and the myths of the Puranas. The Vyala and horse sculptures are very famous nowadays. The figures of the donars and emperors are very significant. The socio-habitual actions and their traditions also seen. The sculpture like hunting the nomads and the folk dance like Kolattam and snakecharmer's dance are also manifested. Some of the collections of sculptures are very natural. A few animals and birds can also be seen. A high level relief sculptures are also seen on the walls like the monkey, the snake charmer, lizard and chameleon. In the mandapa the sculpture like Rathi and Manmadan are engraved on the pillars consecutively as in the opposite pillars in the days of the nayaks. There is simplicity and beauty in the sculptures of the Pallavas. But in the sculptures of both the Pandyas and the Cholas, the apt bodily features and the exhibition of the art are exclusive of these sculptures. The sculptures of Vijayanagar and Nayaks are not like the figures of the Pallavas, the Cholas and the early Pandyas, in their delicate ornaments, revealing of the tender movements of the body and their facial expressions. It is also said that the measurements of these sculptures are not as stated in the Sastras. In the sculptures of the Nayak days there is rigidity of the body, the nature of not revealing the emotions, the sharp nose and plenty of ornaments. In a very ordinary manner the makutas of gods and Goddesses are engraved in a slightly bent manner. This does not mean that the sculptures of these days are devoid of beauty. After this the development of the sculpture of the Zamins and others can be seen. To understand the different stages of the growth of the Kongu Cholas sculptures, the researcher can understand only through the Pandyas also.

The Individual Sculptures of Thiripuvana Chakravarthi Virarajendra Chola's Period, in these days many temples were built pertaining to the Saiva, Vaishnava Saktha, Kaumara, Soura and Ganapathya. Among them inclusive of the Moolava many individual sculptures were installed during the reign of the king. These sculpture exhibits the growth of the art of these days.

Ulakadam –Subramaniya Sculpture

During the twenty fourth year of the reign of Konerinmaikondan Virarajendra Chola on the campus of Ulakadam Ulakeswara Temple, Subramaniya was installed. Here Lord Subramaniya has been mentioned in the stone carvings as Kundramarinda Pillaiar. Here Subramaniya with Valli and Devayani is seen in full decoration with all the ornaments. The six faces and the twelve hands and his vel and peacock are really very attractive. In the literature and Sastras on sculpture he has been mentioned. He is red in colour, gives happiness for the Devas, very beautiful and has the divine powers. The abode of all divine play, wears many red coloured ornaments shines in his Rathana Malas. He has in his hands the Lotus, Abayamudra, Sakthi and Seval, wears red coloured sandal dress, beards the shining Makuta wears the Shenbaga flower garland, holds the Vajrayutha, Varadamudra in the left hand in the waist and ears the decorative dress. Hence subramaniya the Guru can be worshipped. Accordingly in Ulakadam Ulakeswara temple, Subramaniya with all these artistic fineness and the Devies are seen in the sitting posture. Hence the reign of Virarajendra Thiripuvana donated by many and also lands is very well known.

Dakshinamurthi Sculpture- Kannadiputhur

Lord Kailasanathar Temple is located in Udumalai Taluk of Tirupur District. Virarajendra Chola in his thirteenth year of reign i.e., 1220 AD, installed Dakshinamurthi to the south side of the Kosta of this temple. He also provided many donations. The donations were given by Virarajendra Anuthiraya Pallavaraya. The sculpture which is nearly three feet tall is in the Virasana posture it is an ancient sculpture, there are not much of decorative aspects. At present this sculpture seated in the Mahamandapa to the left of the Moolava facing towards the south. According to the features of the agamic background, this sculpture has certain restrictions. The Kashyapa Silpa Sastras says that, the right leg should be allowed to come down. The left leg should be in the Utkutikasana. The left hand should be worn the Hiruthaya Mala and Rudharaksha Mala.

Apart from this it should have three eyes and should be clad in white colthes. It should have the sacred thread the Kundala in the left ear and the makhara kundala in the right ear. Lord Dakshinamurthi wears the hide of the tiger and does not possess any mental tiredness. To his right side are Narata Jamathakani, Vashishta, Prichu and to the left Bharathvaja, Sanaha and Ahastiya. Besides he has been worshipped by Devas and is seated under the banyan tree. In Kongu Chola days this tradition was followed.

Chandikeswara Sculpture – Periakottai –Palani

In Palani Taluk at Periakottai, a Village during the reign of Virarajendra Chola Deva in Choliswara Udaiyar Temple the deity Chandikeswara was installed and a Santhiya Lamp was lighted. The Chandikeswara sculpture reveals the artistic traditions of Kongu Chola. In the Viracholanallur, a person by name Avinashipulian installed this sculpture. However this sculpture is carved according to the norms and conditions of the agamas and Silpa texts. It has in its right hand the Parasu and in the Sugasana posture with the left hand on the thigh and the beautiful Makuta on the head. It is a very decorative sculpture and is nearly two feet tall, facing the Moolava. It is by his ardent love for Siva, that he become great like Virabathrar, his appearance is terrific. He is seen with the Parasu and at certain times have the bow and arrow the Trisula and all the ammunitions. In Siva temple he is seated to the north of the main sanctum in the sub shrine, facing the main deity called Kailasanatha. In the Silpa texts related sculpturing he is seen with two hands and wears jatamakuta or kesapanda. He is either black or red in colour and has an attractive appearance. He is known as Samabanga or Samapadasthanamurthi. If he is the Asanamurthi he uses the

left leg as the place to sleep and the right leg will be the Kunjitha. When he does not have the ayutha in his hand he will perform Anjalibanda and well put on the Pushpamala. He is seen besides Parameswara in a nervous and pious state. The sculpture of this kind can be found in places like Anjur, Perumanallur, Koduvai, Vijayamangalam, Pazahangkarai, Karuvallur, Avinashi and Thirumuruganpoondi.

Narasimha Sculpture –Komaralingam (Udumalai)

In the days of the Virarajendra Thripuvana Chakaravathi many Vaishnava Temple were built. From the study it is understood that in the Karivaratharaja Perumal Temple at Komaralingam on the twenty fifth year of the reign of the king he built such sannathi and installed Lord Narasimha. There are also evidences of this in the inscriptions. On the temple campus, to the north he has modeled the Sannathi and has given many donations. He is in the seated posture bearing the conch and wheel and the Abaya mudra and is three feet tall. This is how Chandikeswara has been installed in Saivism. Likewise in Vaishnavism Narasimha has been installed. The Sastras of the sculpture is differently followed. In the Siloa texts related to the sculptures he is seen with an angry lions face, the color of Narasimha is like that of the milk or the Mullai flower. He has in his four hands, the four Ayuthas like the conch, wheel Kasyutha and Padma which is made of different faces of diamonds. Similarly the Kadipanda should be decorated with different variety of faces. This Kadipanda is the ornament around the waist. There should be the Senthura, Pushpamala on the breast and holy string across the chest. In the front hands there should be bangles made of shining diamonds. The Padasara should be worn around the lower part of the leg and should have rings made of diamonds in the fingers. He is seen seated in the Simhasana with all riches. This kind of sculptures can also be seen in the days of the Kongu Cholas.

Subramaniya Sculpture –Kadathur Kongavidangeswara temple

On the campus of Kadathur Arulmigu Kongavidangeswara Temple, for Subramaniya a beautiful sannathi was constructed and the figure was raised by Virarajendra Cholas period. It is stated that Virarajendra Irukolan Jeyankonda Chola gave another donation by land for Subramaniya. This was inscribed as inscription in the seventeenth year of the king's reign Subramaniya sculpture is nearly three feet tall, with the due ayuthas and ornaments including Makuta and them Kundalas, the figure has been adorned. At present this sculpture is in the ruined state.

Lord Nataraja Sculpture – Kolumam

In Kolumam Sangiramanallur Choliswara temple Lord Nataraja being put up in the sannathi and the metal sculpture has been installed due to the invasion of the Hoysalas it has ruined. Hence on forty –fifth year of the rule Virarajendra Thripuvana Chakaravathi consecrated a new Nataraja icon in the metal form. From the inscriptions it can be understood that many donations were being given for Lord Nataraja. Among the figures in copper found in the Kongu region Sangramanallur Nataraja has been praised in Chola dynasty with Thanjavur as its capital. Similar copper figure can be found galore in the imperial chola dynasty. One can see in Konerirajapuram Umamaheswara temple which is near Kumbakonam, a very big sized Nataraja figure in copper of these days. The authorities for the art of dancing gestures have been originated from Lord Siva. Among the dancing postures the posture of Siva has been widely appreciated. In the hands of Nataraja, one can see the udukkai, abaya and fire and the fourth hand points to the left hand that has been lifted. His left leg has squeezed to death the demon by name Abasmarapurusha. Sivathandavam means putting together all the activities like creating, Protecting and destroying. The birth place of sound is Sivas udukkai. From this sound other organisms are born. The fire abolishes sorrow and arrogance i.e., Anava. By clinging to the heels of Nataraja one will get a clear intelligence. Hence Nataraja figure is famous in Kongunadu. This figure is an example of the art of those days. The agamas have been well followed. Thus the art of sculpturing in the days of Virarajendra can be said. Among them the individual sculptures like the Moolavar, the sculptures in the sub shrines and the metal sculptures exhibit the growth of art in these days.

In the days of Virarajendra Chola many sculptures have been carved. Among them the Saiva sculptures are in comparison with Vaishnava sculptures among the imperial Cholas. Rajendra Chola of Thanjavur for the first time constructed a temple and installed Annai. Likewise the Kongu king Virarajendra Chola on the Thirumuruganpoondi Temple of Kongunadu constructed a shrine for Ambal and installed the sculpture. In the growth of sculpturing, these attempts have been considered great. Siva as Moolavar but in the shape of the Linga is seated in the Karbhagraha. The Vahana found here belongs to the king who ruled the place. Similarly in the Vaishnava Temple Mahavishnu along with Sridevi and Bhudevi is seen in modern days. In places like Abishekapuram, Karuvallur and Thirumuruganpoondi Temples the Devakosthas of these days are seen. The sculptures of Dakshinamurthi, Lingodbava, Brahma and Durgai remind us of the King Virarajendra of Kongu Chola.

CONCLUSION:

There are many ancient sculptures along with sub-shrines in Karuvallur Siva Temple. They manifest the aesthetic features of the art. There are many Vinayaga sculptures that represent the Kongu Chola days. Among them the Vinayaga sculpture at Pazhankarai is more significant and an ancient one. The Devakostha sculpture of the Subthamathars can be seen in the Thirumuruganpoondi Ambal shrine. Sculptures of this type can not be found in the places of Kongunadu. There are many Vaishnava sculptures in Karuvallur Virarajendra Vinnahara. The sculpture like Alvars Mahalakshmi, Hanuman and Dwarabalagas found in the Mahamandapa are very old. In the days of Konerinmaikondan Virarajendra many sub-shrines sculpture figures were installed. Among them the sculptures of Surya and Chandra are very ancient. The same sculptures have been carved on the pillars in the circular shape and crescent shape. The ancient Kalabairava sculpture is found in Pazhankarai. Here the figure has been engraved on a stone which is a stage of development of the art.

In his time he was famous for not only building temples, but also has engraved sculptures and has installed divine figures in the sannathies. He has installed the Subramania figure in Ulakadam Ulakeswara Temple. In Periakottai Chandikeswara Temple, sculptures are of great reputation. Likewise in Kariyamanika Perumal Temple in Komaralingam Narasimha has been installed. The Nataraja metal sculpture which is found in Kolumam Choliswara Temple is indeed a rare piece of it. Hence the days Virarajendra Chola is noted for the upheaval for producing divine figures in metal also.

The Garbhagraha Devakostha sculptures and the Ardhamandapa Devakostha sculptures found here belong to the days of Virarajendra Thripuvana Chakravarthi. All the sculptures are decorated in a simple manner at a height of nearly two feet and are in the sitting posture. The old Subthamathrikas sculptures evidence of today's art. But Chandikeswari sculpture with the Parasu in her right hand prove that it belongs to the Virarajendra's days. The other sculptures like Chamundi, Goumari, Brahmi, and Varahi thought in a ruined state are the sculptures that remind us of the Kongu Cholas reign. In the Vimana of this temple the different avatars of Annai Devi can be seen. These stucco sculpture belong to the same days.

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