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VIJAYANAGAR BRONZES OF THE SRI PREIYANAYAHGI AMMAN TEMPLE AT DEVIKAPURAM

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ABSTRACT:

The Periyannayahgi Amman Temple at Devikapuram, a small village in Aarani Taluk of Tiruvannamalai District, Tamil Nadu, had been an urban center during the Later Chola Period. The sculpture of this temple is one of great antiquity. There are 65 inscriptions available the walls of this temple. The earliest inscriptions of Parantaka I and two inscriptions of Rashtrakutas King Krishna III are available here. This Temple had been so compact and corporate from the early times.

KEYWORDS: *Abhanga* – Slight flexion (in the standing pose of a figure); *Kuccabandha*- is shown on is depicted with rounded breasts, narrow waist and heavy hip; *Udarabandam* - round the waist, is shown with a small median loop on the right side and flowing on the left side; *Ankusa* -left hands and his front right hand carry the weapons; *Jadamahuda* – head dress.

INTRODUCTION

Sculpture is the branch of the visual arts that operates in three dimensions. It is one originally used carving (the removal of Material) and Modeling (the addition of Material, as clay), in stone, Metal ceramic, wood and other Materials but, since Modernism, shifts in sculptural process led to an almost complete freedom of Materials and process. A wide variety of Materials may be worked by removal such as

carving, assembled by welding or modeling, or molded, or cast.

The history of Sculpture is as old as the history of mankind. It has appeared in almost every culture of the world. Indian Sculpture is not only valued as an object of worship but also as a work of art. Merely building the temple, carving the images, molding and shaping the idols cannot be done according to our own wishes or desires for which rules are laid down strictly in the *agamas* and *silpasastras* and they should accordingly be followed. Certain “Silpa” texts and “agamas” specifically point out the iconographic details and lay down the data for the measurements and molding of the sculptures.

LOCATION

Sri Periyannayagiyamman is a small village in Aarani Taluk of Tiruvannamalai District in Tamil nadu. It lies at a distance 14 kms

east of Polure, Taluk headquarters. Located on the southern bank of river Seyaru, the village is surrounded by natural caverns archaic hillocks.

VINAYAKA

The metal image of *Vinayaka* (12th century C.E) stands on the usual well blossomed lotus plinth joined with a rectangular plinth. He is seen with four hands having his left leg advanced in the posture called *abhanga* pose. The head gear is the short conical *karanadamakuta*. His ears are well done in winnow shape and decorated with flowers. He has an elephant's face and two small eyes on either side under the expanded brows showering grace. He has a big belly with short hands and legs. His back right, left hands and his front right hand carry the weapons *ankusa*. He trunk curves to the left side and is engaged in touching the *modaka* kept in his

front left hand. The other characteristics are a necklace, around his neck, the looped *skandamala keyura*, bracelets on his hands, a sacred thread swaying on his chest and *udarabandha* found above the navel portion. His ankles are decorated by a pair of the usual *padasaras*. He wears drapery up to his thigh in an interesting manner. The sash is simple, with the tassels emanating from its sides. A beaded cord hangs in a ribbed fashion. The waist band is hidden in the pot belly.

SUBRAHMANYA

Subrahmanya's (12th century C.E.) bronze idol is seen in the Periyannayahgi Amman temple at Devikapuram. On his two sides right and left respectively are placed his two consorts *Valli* and *Devasena*. They are standing on their respective *padmapithas* in which the lotus is realistic. Subrahmanya appears with one face and four hands in *Sampadasthanaka* pose. He is wearing a *Kiritamakuta* with a graceful look. *Makarakundalas* adorn both his ear-lobes. He has in his right hands tanks and *abhaya hasta* and on his left hands *vajra* and *varada hasta* [^] *Kandigai* and *Savadi* adorn his chest. Multi stranded *vajnopavita* goes round on his left shoulder. Just above the navel he is wearing an *udarabandha* with a central decorative motif *Tight tandai*, and loose *Padasara* are resting around his ankle and foot respectively. A hairlock falls on the shoulder. He is embellished with *Skcmdamalas*, *Keyuras*, and *Valayas* which are very simple. His dhoti, tucked around his waist, is held by a *Katisutra* with *Simhamuka* clasp. Another belt hangs loosely a little below. The folds of knot hang loosely by the side of the *katisutra* along with the other tassels and folds of his dress.

The two armed *Devasena* is standing "i-r-in-lrihanga-pose" in her two arms, the right hand holds the lotus and the left hand hanging down. She wears *makarakundalas*. The lower garments are well worked with waist band and side tassels hanging around. She is bedecked with *Skandamalas*, *Keyuras* double lines *Valayas* and *Padasaras*. *Siraschakra* is found behind the head.

DEVASENA

The two armed *Devasena* (12th century C.E.) is in standing posture. In her two arms, the right hand holds the lotus and the left hand hanging down. She wears *makarakundalas*. The lower garment is well-worked with waist band and side tassels hanging around. She is bedecked with *Skandamalas*, *Keyuras* double lines *Valayas* and *Padasaras*.

Valli

Valli (12th century C.E.) is represented with two hands. She is holding a lotus in her left hand and the right hand hanging down. Her neck is adorned with a *tali* and broad necklaces. *Kuccabandha* is depicted with rounded breasts, narrow waist and heavy hip. She is adorned with a wedding budge, thick *kanthis*, heavy *keyuras*, *valayas*, *yajnopavita*, and splendid *padasaras*. Like that of the Amman at Pattisvaram Tenupurisvarar temple, her waist bends towards her right side while her body and head lean on the left and right sides respectively. Her right leg is firmly planted on the lotus pedestal while her left leg is with a slight flexion at the knee.

Nataraja

The image of Siva (11th century C.E.) performing the *Anandatandava* is a remarkable piece of art. The four armed dancing Siva is seen crushing the demon *Muyalavan*, the symbol of ignorance, by His right leg, which is bent at knee and pressing the back of the wriggling demon. The left leg is raised up to the level of the knee of the right leg and crossing the same. The rear right arm is in *damaruhasta* holding a small drum and rear left arm is in *ardachandrahasta* carrying fire in a small pan. The fore right arm bears *abayahasta* while the fore left arm points to the demon below in *gajahasta*, towards right. The movement of the body is from left to right but the eyes veer towards left. The upper part of the body is leaned a little back and also towards right. Above the *patti* on the forehead, the hair on the top of the head is tied and arranged into a broad fan shaped head dress, adorned with cassia leaves which serve as a *fliakuta*. The *skull*, *Ganga*, *crescent* and *snake* are present there. The braided locks of the sides extended by whirl of dance, above either shoulder as four in number. They are held apart by a ribbon

passing middle, beyond which the curled ends project in right wind and left wind on the right and left sides respectively. Likewise there are eight more short locks falling down from the head on the nape. The end of the small scarf lies between the two arms at the left shoulder. A cobra projects between the gap of the right hands and its hood is oriented towards the face of the God. A flat *yagnopavita* runs across the chest. The *udarabandam* round the waist, is shown with a small median loop on the right side and flowing on the left side of the God. The two ends of it are connected to the left side of the *tiruvatchi*, thus providing stability to the stance. He wears short trousers resembling tiger skin as undergarment, tied with hip band. He has ornaments such as *patta*, *savadi*, *hara*, *katakavalai*, *kataka*, *motirams* in all fingers except in the middle one, *virakkalal* in His right leg, *sadangai* and rings in the first and last toes of the feet. The right ear lobe is empty and on the left, hangs a *patrakundala*. Demon Muyalavan, wriggling under the foot of Nataraja, raises his face and looks at a side. His hands are about to hold a snake lying near. The *tiruvatchi* encircling the God is oval in shape, whose ends are inserted on the *pita*. Three pronged flames, totally twenty seven in number, are attached to the edge of the *tiruvatchi*. Only the top most is five-pronged.

It will be of interest to study the significance, philosophical concept and meaning of the motif of Nataraja. It represents the Hindu conception of life and death in eternal dance. It is a master work of religious art, in which science is personified. *Sristi* arises from the drum; *Stiti* proceeds from the hand of aibaya; *Samhara* proceeds from fire; the foot held aloft confers *anugraha*⁵⁰ and the *tiruvatchi* stands for *trobava*. On the whole, Nataraja, one of the *saumya*'s aspects of Siva, is especially associated with the five-fold activities of *pa-hchakrtyas*. The very physical appearance of Nataraja Himself, represents the *Pranava (Ohm)*. The dance of Siva is identified with the *Panchaksara* the syllables *Si - Va - Ya - Na - Ma*, which have a peculiar and special significance in Siva symbolism. In His feet is *Na*, in His navel is *Ma*, in His shoulders is *Si*, in His face is *Va* and in His head is *Ya*.⁵¹ The essential significance of Siva's dance is threefold. First it is the image of His rhythmic play as the source of all movement within the cosmos, which is represented by the arch. Secondly the purpose of His dance is to release the countless souls of men from the snare of illusion and thirdly, the place of the dance Chidambaram, the centre of the Universe, is within the heart.

Sivakami

Parvati, the energy of Siva, is known as Sivakami (11th century C.E.), as the consort of Nataraja. She is found standing in *tribanga* posture, and encircled by an elliptical *tiruvatchi* of twenty-one tongues. Both the right arms are in *katakahasta* and the rear and fore left arms present *lampa* and *abaya hastas* respectively. She has no breast band and the undergarment stretches down to Her ankles. The end of the hip sash hangs on the left thigh. She wears *karandamakuta*, *makara kundalas* and other customary ornaments. The lengthy face, slender body, the delicacy of the pose and shrunken abdomen marked with *trivalli*, are, features suggesting that the icon must belong to the time of Nataraja.

Somaskandamman

The two armed Somaskandamman (12-13th Century C.E.) popularly known as Virasakti is standing in *tribanga* posture. The right and left arms are in *kataka* and *lampa hastas*. She wears usual ornaments great artistic value provided with a delicate physique, long-limbs, slender body, unexaggerated breasts, sunken waist and broad hip which enhance the beauty and charm of the Devi.

Somaskanda

The Somaskanda (12-13th century C.E.) group consists of Siva, Uma and Skanda. The four-armed Siva is seated in *sugasana* posture, with His right leg pendent and the folded left leg resting on the seat. He carries *malu* and *deer* in the rear right and left hands respectively in *kardarimugahasta* and denotes *abaya* and *kataka hastas* in the front right and left hands. The *jatamakuta* with the usual crescent, *Ganga*, *snake* and *skull*, *yagnbpavita*, *virakkalal*, *hip girdle* with *makara* clasp, etc. are the ornaments adorning His figure. The ear lobes and feet are empty. Small hair locks, hang on the back neck. The deer whose rear legs are held by the God, raises up its fore legs, by turning its face towards the face of the

God. The God's face is placid and slightly smiling. Uma (43 cm) who is also known as Priyavidai is seated on the *pita* in *utkudihāsana*. The right leg is on the "pita" and the left leg hanging down. She has two arms, the right hand is in *katakahasta* and the left one rests on *padmapita* and indicates *nitrahasta*. An *yagnbpavita* in single strand, passes between the uncovered breasts and over the left shoulder. The slender waist, is followed by the marks of *trivalli*. The lower garment, fixed with *mehalai* and *urudamam* covers the body from hip to ankles. The ornamentation of the body with small *karandamakuta*, *haras*, *mehalai* and *silambu* is simple and beautiful. The elongated ear lobes are devoid of studs. The figure Skanda (15 cm) is a nice representation in nudity, decked with fine ornaments such as *karandamakuta*, *haras*, *pulippaltali*, *vagumalai*, *kataka*, *channaviram*, *araignan*, etc. His legs are bent in dancing attitude. The right hand, holding a lotus, is raised to the level of the head, while the left is in *lampahasta*.

Nalvar

A group of four bronzes(12th century C.E.) represents Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Manikkavasakar. These four were chief among those who contributed to the Tamil Bakti literature. The works of the first three are collected as *Devaram*. The fourth is the author of Thiruvāṣaḡam and Thirukkōvaiyar. All the iconographical features of the images may be some are as follows.

All uniformly stand on *Padmapitha* and are armed. The dress for all is shaft while Appar's lobed ears are empty. He carries an *akshamala* in the right hand which shows *abhayamudra* in the left hand also earring a *Pasteka*.

Sambandar has a long flowing lower garment, being a bright groom. All wear few ornament excepting Sundarar. Sambandar has the hands holded in *Anjali pandha*. He wears *Patralmndala* and a *rudrakshamala* that is fitted to the shaven head.

Sundarar decorated like a bright groom and carries bells or symbols on both hands. He is decorated with a conical makuda and number of ornaments. Manikkavasakar presents a royal gesture since he was minister to Pandya king. He holds in right hand *Kotakamudra*.

Mariamman

The four armed Mariamman(16th century.C.E.), the village Goddess of rain, sits in *sugasana* posture with her right leg resting on the *pita*, and the left leg hanging down. The rear right and left hands are in *katakahasta* holding *damaruka* and *pasa*, the fore right and left hands *bear sword* and *kapali*. A five hooded snake protects her head.

From the above study, it might be understood that the Sri Periyānāyāhgi amman temple is rich field for a study in Hindu bronze. What we have surveyed in the present study is only those select images that hold reach our equipment.

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