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IMPRESSIVENESS OF BRONZE IDOLS IN THIRUVATHIGAI VEERATTANESHWARAR TEMPLE

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Abstract

Tamil Nadu is a spiritual land and many of the monuments of spiritual importance in Tamil Nadu are also of historical importance. Thus, the temple located in Cuddalore district is an important temple that exhibits the artistic symbols of the Pallavas as it highlights the history of the Pallavas period. This temple is almost 1600 years old and built during the Pallavas period, this temple transcends various dimensions and is a great historical example the historical antiquities through the study of the religious beliefs that exist many good understandings can be shed on the history of art.

Key Words: Thiruvadhigai, Bronze, Pallavas, Iconography.

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Introduction

The study of images of deities falls within a branch of art History, called 'iconography', consists of symbolism Images based on some symbols and mythology associated with them. And more often, when May have underlying myth and deity meaning Over the centuries, a place may have had its specific use Its local or immediate social, political or Geographical environment.¹ Every place and historical epoch developed its own unique visual culture through regional iconography variances. The intricate sculpture and adornment that decorate the temple are an integral aspect of its design. The Pallavas were one of the ancient South Indian dynasties that were active in the Andhra region from the second onwards and moved south to settle in Tamil Nadu.² Their history is better documented from the sixth to the eighth century, when they left many inscriptions in stone and several monuments. In that way, Tiruvathigai temple in Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu is a very good monument that shows the art signs of the Pallavas period.³ It is a monument that highlights the history of the Pallavas and the sculptural techniques that can be there are worth noting. Through it, the temple is the current evidence for us to understand the state of religion and its various dimensions in such a time. Thiruvathigai Veerataneswarar Temple was built during the reign of Pallava King Parameswaran. (670-695 AD.) During the coming of *Nriduphangan, Nirupathungan* (869-882) many maintenances were done here. The temple has a special black stone carving of many idols built in brick. The sculptures that can be found here are also very important. This research seeks to explain the state of religion prevailing in the Tiruvathigai temple during that period by revealing the bronze idols.⁴

Prominent Bronze Sculpture of Pallavas

Pallava bronze sculptures revered a variety of Shiva's forms in a temple complex and were ardent Shaivites. Early Pallava copper sculptures were quite miniature in size. The Shaivite iconography was created by the Pallavas, who also worshipped Lord Vishnu. They used their incredible wealth, acquired via their many conquests, to construct sturdy stone temples and magnificent bronze statues. Metal

sculpture during the Pallava era closely resembled current stone sculpture in its fundamentals. The majority of the bronze sculptures were under one foot tall, and the figures were posed and moulded naturally. These bronze sculptures had faces that were a little bit higher and wider, with a flat nose and double chin. These sculptures' front torsos were nearly flat, and the emblems were typically either held naturally in the hand or positioned just above it. These bronze sculptures often have a cylindrical "kirita" (headdress), a "hara" (necklace), and a limited number—no more than one or two. Since the ceremonies were so simple at the time, there is no sign of the metal representations from the early Pallava period. The bronze only sometimes began to occur after the 8th century. The Pallavas' bronze sculptures depict rounded, chubby faces with unique features, a fleshy nose, almond-shaped eyes, realistic eyebrows, and soft lips that are slightly smiled.⁵

Prominent Bronze Sculptures of Pallavas

Few of the bronze sculptures of Pallavas include the Vishnu as Srinivasa from Peruntottam in the Mayavaram region of Thanjavur district. This bronze sculpture of Vishnu is said to be the earliest of the bronzes of the Pallava period. The recent study of Vishnu forms discloses him with four hands, the upper left carrying a conch (sankha) and the right carrying the 'chakra' (discus) while the lower right in the 'abhaya' (protection) form and left resting on the hip. He is represented with two spouses; one being Sridevi (Goddess of prosperity), identified as Goddess Lakshmi, and the other is Bhudevi (Earth Goddess). Both these goddesses are shown standing on the right and left sides of Vishnu, each having a pair of arms, while one carries the flower, the other hangs freely. The Devis are shown wearing the prominent elbow ornaments of like the simple conch and striped lower garment. The discus of Srinivasa, the girdle of Srinivasa, the 'padmas' (lotuses) of the deities with naturalistically rendered petals and the characteristic modelling of Srinivasa with a majestic torso with somewhat proportionate legs as well as the slender and beautiful rendering of the Devis identify these sculptures belonging to the Pallava period.⁶

These sculptures' intricate features perfectly capture the distinctive aesthetic of the time. The majority of the Pallava bronze sculptures, with the exception of the Maithreya, are Vishnu representations and are found in the Mayavaram area. However, the latter has many similarities with the former. During the Pallava era, South India's first stone and mortar temples were built, building upon previous brick and timber pioneers of their sort. Chola temples of a later era were influenced by Pallava temple sculptures, which subsequently evolved into free-standing structural shrines.

Bronze idols in Thiruvathigai temple

After the seventeenth century A.D., the known history of bronze images in south India demonstrates that they were unquestionably in decline. The Verattaneswarar temple at Thiruvthigai, which is home to some noteworthy bronzes, is discussed and described in detail in the pages that follow. Because of their style, they are out of date. As a result, some of the temple's bronze sculptures date to the 12th century AD, while others date to the 19th and 20th centuries AD.⁷

Somaskanda

This Bronze sculpture is a group of Sivas, his spouse Uma, and their son Skanda symbolizing the perfect family. MurakuntaChakravati, who reigned over Tiruvarur in Tamil Nadu, secured Somaskanda images from Indra, Lord of the devas. The name Somaskanda can be divided as So which means Siva, Ma means Uma and Skanda means Muruga. The earliest stone representation of Smaskanda is seen on the third tier of Dhamarajaratha and the practice of carving the statue of Somaskanda in the sanctum was prevalent even before the period of RajasimhaPallava. During the later Pallava kings like Nrpatungavarman and Aparajitavarman, the temples increased in large numbers, a great example being the Kailasanatha temple, where there are as many as twenty-four statues of him.⁸

This murti can be rarely seen outside Tamil Nadu. The intrinsic meaning is that those who find truth through godly knowledge will enjoy unending immanent bliss. The Virattānēsvvarar temple at Kilur has a Somaskanda bronze

which is housed in between the Periyana Ganapati and Varadaraja Perumal shrines. It is modeled with kandigai, graivēyaka, sāvadi, makarakundala, patrakundala, skandamālās, keyūras, yajñōpavita, udharabandha, kinkini and kaṭisutra. The idol of Siva is majestically seated in sukasana with his right leg hanging down on the patrapitha and his left leg folded placed on the padmapitha. On the left side of Siva, Uma is seated in mahārājalitāsana pose with her right leg folded and the left leg hanging down. She is shown with two hands in abhaya hasta and kataka hasta. Uma wears a highly decorated karandamakuta, makarakundaalas, adorn her ears, graiveyaka, sacred thread, śkandamalas and keyūras. The little śkanda is juvenile in the nritiyasana posture between his father and mother. The drapery is beautified with fine lines and with a magnificentkatibandha.⁹

Nataraja

The Nataraja form of Lord Siva is known to be the first of twenty-five forms of Siva and is addressed as Adalvallaṅ, KutthaPeruman, Ambalavanan, Sabapati, Natesa, Niruthan, and by ever so many other names. The Sangam literature mentions Nataraja, but it is silent about Ananda Nataraja. During the reign of ParantakaChola I (907-955 A.D.), Nataraja was considered to be the family deity, or Kuladevata, of the Cholas. In the Verattanesvarar temple at Thiruvathigai, an idol of Nataraja made of bronze is found in the Ananda-tandava-dancing form.¹⁰ It is installed in a subordinate shrine, facing south, and appears with four hands on the circular Padma pedestal, which rests on the bhadrasana. Siva's arms, legs, and torso represent the universe's continuous action of creation and destruction. His leg position is in bhujangatrasita mode, and his head is turned to the right side and twisted to have a look at the dance of the Lord. His locks of matted hair are arranged as a feathery crown, decorated by peacock feathers in a single line with a crescent, flowers of Dhaturas and Arkas, and serpents and Hatisirishaka. His face is squarish, with lovely eyes, a lovely nose, lips, and a superbly depicted chin in a calm expression. He is wreathed by a snake-like garland about his neck, and a piece of upper cloth is flowing gracefully on the left side. His armlets are decorated by foliage designs, thin elbow bands, and triple bangles. His fingers and toes

are coiled by rings, and a long and thin scarf tied around the waist is fluttering with its two ends in a realistic manner and is attached to the tiruvci. Hiranyaksha gladly accepted the child as his own and then conquered all the gods and tormented them. He kidnapped Mother Earth and took her to Patala (the Netherworld).¹¹

Subrahmanya (19th–20th century A.D.)

Subrahmanya's bronze idol is seen in the Virattanesvarar temple at Thiruvathigai. His two consorts, Valli and Devasena, are standing on their respective padmapithas, on which the lotus is realistic. Subrahmanya appears with one face and four hands in the Bamapadaasthanaka pose. He is wearing a Kiritamakuta with a graceful look, Makarakundalas adorn both his earlobes, Kandigai and Savadi adorn his chest, Vajnopavita's multistranded hair wraps around his left shoulder, and he is wearing an udarabhandha with a central decorative motif. He is embellished with Skandamalas, Keyuras, and Valayas, and is held by a katisutra with a Simhamuka clasp. Siraschakra is found behind the head.¹²

Devasena and Valli

Devasena and Valli are two armed women who are represented by two arms and two hands. Devasena is wearing makarakundalas and is bedecked with Skandamalas, Keyuras, Valayas and Padasaras. Valli is holding beus in her left hand and the right hand hanging down. Her neck is adorned with tali and broad necklaces. She wears skandamala, keyuras, sudagam, padasara, and straschakra. Her ornaments and drapery are decorated in a higher degree than those of Devasena. The Katisutra with a makara clasp holds her garment in place while a belt is loosely tied on the katibhandha. A long string of pearls is suspended from her waist in a series of loops.¹³

Vinayaka (12th century A.D.)

The metal image of Vinayaka stands on the usual well Mosso med 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 karandamakuta His ears are well done in winnow shape and decorated with flowers.¹⁴

Thani Amman (12th century A.D.)

Thani Amman an icon of a goddess who is idolized independently in the tribhanga pose. She is depicted as a beautiful woman standing on a lotus pedestal above a rectangular pedestal with two normal hands. Karandamakuta is represented at the top, with flowers and filled above the forehead. Curly jadas are throw on the both the shoulders. Her body is depicted with rounded breasts, narrow waist and heavy hip. 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 and her left leg is with a slight flexion at the knee.¹⁵

Gajalakshmi

The earliest stone representation of Gajalakshmi is found in Thiruvathigai temple (mahendra I) at mahabalipuram. She is seated on a full-blown lotus and has four arms with the lotus in her upper two hands. Patrakundalas in the ears, tall, kandigai, sarappalli, savadi around the neck, keyura, bangles and the yagnopavitha are neatly carved in this statue. The elephant on the right side pours water on her by a pot hold on its trunk, but in the elephant on the left is coiling a lady around the pot in its lifted trunk. The elephants on the sides too of the mouths of the makaras on the two sides touches the karantamakuta of lakshmi. Silparatna states that the elephants of alert sides should each carry a pot on its trunk to pour water on Lakshmi.¹⁶

Nalver (12th century A.D.)

This sculpture is a group of four bronzes representing Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Manikkavasakar. These four were chief among those who contributed to the TamilBaktiLiterature and are called *nalvarin* Tamil tradition. The iconographical features of the images may be some are as follows: all uniformly stand on padmapitha and are armed. Sundarar is decorated like a groom and carries bells of symbols on both hands. Sambandar has a long flowing Lower garment, and all wear few ornaments excepting Sundarar, who wears Patrakundala and a rudrakhamala that is fitted to the shaven head.¹⁷

Vinayagar

This Ganesha statue, which stands on the Padma Peetha, is around 1.5 feet high.

Ganesha has four hands and an elephant face. Two cutaways were present in the top bouts to make it simpler to reach the higher frets. The underside has an ivory-coloured appearance. The skull is adorned, and the bottom portion brushes against a cloud. On the left shoulder is Purinul. Bands, shoes, and ankle bracelets are worn as decorations on Ganapati's mani. The sculpture was created in the fourteenth century.¹⁸

Chantikeshvarar

This statue of Sundeswarar is positioned in the shape of a triangle atop a Padma Peetha. The two-armed, one-and-a-half-foot-tall chcheputhirumeni from the 14th century is on exhibit. The seal is visible on the hands. He covers his head with a turban. On his right shoulder, he is holding the axe. shines in everyday attire.¹⁹

Palliyarai Aman

The 14th century is said to have been placed on a pedestal by the goddess Chepputhirumeni. There are two hands on the goddess, who appears as Sakasana. The left side is shaped like the Butparsa seal, and the right side resembles the Simmakarna seal. The face appears lovely and joyful. It stands around a foot tall and has a few small decorations.²⁰

Conclusion

In Indian cultural approach to the historical analysis Artistic knowledge is a sign of a significant exchange in the dimensional development of man. On that basis, man-built temples and turned them into places of spiritual worship and carved many artistically interesting sculptures in them. As a result, man had acquired many unique architectural scientific knowledges. Similarly, India has many ancient cultural landmarks in which many temple cultural forms contribute significantly to Tamil Nadu. Accordingly, many of the sculptures in the Tiruvathigai temple in Cuddalore district are also such cultural symbols. Built during the Pallavas period, this temple has survived many eras and has an indelible place in history. Several techniques of Tiruvathigai sculpture also gain noticeable importance. It reveals its unique beauty in idols that can explain many

teachings. These bronze idols are not only of spiritual importance but also have many historical significances and have deep philosophies on the basis of traditional mythology and many interpretations related to it are different between many historians and many spiritualists. Many of the idols of this temple which may be in Tiruvathigai temple have been pointed out to give a clear understanding of it and explain the philosophy away from its appearance.

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