
MINIATURE SCULPTURES AT TIRUPATHI VENKATESWARA TEMPLE

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Abstract

Arts are said to be sixty four in number; "Aya kalaikal Arupattunangu is an of quoted saying. The most prominent of them are painting, sculpture, dance, music and poetry. Primitive man danced in ecstasy as an emotional outburst at times of peril and pleasure. Music came to occupy an integral part of dance later. The world kalai in Tamil and kala in Sanskrit are the equivalents of the English word, Art. In sangam poetry, Kalai connoted deer as well as its horns. It is also used to mean wide knowledge paranta arrivu. In the Cilapadhikaram, kalai is used to mean body in the word kalaiyilan he without a body. Kallvi-education is derived from kal meaning read. Karpu-chastity, kalai-art are also derived from kal. Kala in sanskrit it derived from kal, which means spreading. Whatever be the original of kalai in Tamil and kala is sanskrit, art may be taken to mean all that is beautiful, serene and elevating.

Keywords: sculpture, Music, Sanskrit, kalai, art, Architecture

Sculpture is one among the fine arts. This sculpture has its rules laid down in the sastras. The sastras are the science of sculptures and Architecture. There are many sastras mentions the rule for the creations of the images are called silpa sastras though they have mentioned the Architecture. The images or the Silpa is the form of object. The images of Divine Beigns, human, animals and natural things have to be made as sculptures. Sculptures have been classified into major classifications, as bass-reliefs sculptures which is scooped out of rock, stone, wood or any other materials. One portion of the images is visible while the other portion is attached with the material where it is carved generally called bass-relief sculptures or relics. The kind of sculptures on the basis of erection is called rounded-sculptures. In this form of sculptures, all the portions are noticed, or visible.

Apart from these classifications, there are also:-

1. Stone Sculptures
2. Metal Sculptures
3. Wooden Sculptures
4. Stucco Sculptures
5. Terracotta's
6. Ivory carvings and
7. Sand Sculptures etc., on the basis of material.

Hindu temples in Thirupathi are the treasure-house of sculptures. There are many forms of a single deity is noticed in the same temple. The Śiva temple has various aspects of Lord Śiva while the Vaishnavaites temples have the idols of Vishnu and his ten incarnations. Apart from the presiding deities there are innumerable idols of minor deities, Alvars, Nayanmars and the Donors, The King and royal patrons.

Tirumala temple like several others of its kind in south India is a veritable treasure house of varied types of sculptures. They are found in different parts of the temple. The dividing line between sculptures of south Indian temples is not clear cut, for the sculpture itself is dominated by images of gods and goddesses. However, broadly speaking icons can be classified as enshrined images for which puja and offerings are made every day. We can classify them into two broad groups viz., the Dhruva Berams or fixed images, and Bhoga or Utsava murtis that are used in connection with the ceremonies, generally speaking, all the Dhruva Berams are made in stone while the Bhogamurtis are made of metal. But there is good number of exceptions to rule.¹

As far as sculptures are concerned they are found embedded in the walls of the various mandapas and that too mostly in their pillars. In other words sculpture is non-enshrined figure found in the mandapas, gopura davaras, vimanan, etc., of the temple. They like the architectural features of the temple the spectrum of the sculptures of Tirumala temple present a very representative cross-section of the Vijayanagar contribution to the development of the art in the country.² Under the Vijayanagar patronage increased importance was given to more and more facilities for public worship not only in Tirumala, but in a number of other places like Kanchi etc., Several ancillary structures like Kalyana mandapa, vasanta mandapa, Neerali mandapa, came to be built as a central place for congregation for pilgrims and devotees to celebrate the festivals of the gods.³

In many of the temples Kalyana Mandapas are found generally in the agenda or the north eastern corner of the outer court of the temple. In building these Mandapas with their massive pillars, through the architectural frame work remained more or less the same, the sculptor had a wide range of original motives in which he could exercise his genius and his art. The embellishments on the adhistana moldings, pillars became markedly rich during Vijayanagar times and the artistic excellence of these intricately worked colonnades attained their high watermark. The pillars are tall and Monolithic and

all the space is sculptured with hunter's yalis etc. The composite columns themselves with cubes alternating with cylinders present a pleasant appearance to the eye. The fine versatile step entrance and some marvelous works in stone add color to this.

The various kinds of sculptures in the temple can be classed as those representing (i) Natural scenery (ii) Floral designs (iii) Animals and birds (iv) Human figures (v) Portraits of kings and other personalities (vi) Gods and Goddess. All these are found in plenty in the Kalyana Mandapam and other places of the Tirumala Temple.⁴

Sculptures of the Entrance Mandapam Putaki Vadha

In the Mandapa near the entrance Gopura there is a sculpture of the killing of the Rakshasi Putaki by the Lord Krishna as a child. The Rakshasi is said to have lovingly invited the lord with a smile in her face and offered to feed him whom the milk from her breast, thereby trying to kill him. The lord just like a child went near her and suckled the life out of her. The sculpture shows the Rakshasi with her hair done in artificial lumps, which stick out like a bunch of carrots or bunch out is very stilted and almost makes the figure look ghoulish.⁵

Gopi -Vastrapaharana Scene

At the entrance Gopura Mandapa is a sculpture of the Gopi Vastrapaharana scene. This famous incident in the Bhagavata Purana. The Lord is said to have gathered the dress of the Gopis while they were having their bath and is said to have teased them for some time. In the sculpture two of the Gopis are shown with folded hands praying to the lord to return their saris. This is a typical type of the representation of one of the famous lilac of lord Krishna.⁶

The Adimurthi of Lord Vishnu

At the entrance mandapa is also found an interesting sculpture of Vishnu as Adimurthi. He is shown as standing of Adishesha. The body of the Sash is shown coiled, in three circles and the five hoods are shown in the form of a Prabhavali Surrounding the lord. The right hand of the Lord is in abhaya hasta and the left is in the kati haste posture. The back two arms hold sankha and chankra. Normally in icons of Adimurthi, Vishnu are shown with the right leg hanging and left one folded and resting upon the seat. One hand normally rests upon the seat and the other on the left knee. In some ancient sculptures Brahma, Siva is also shown. This figure probably in consonance with the iconography of Lord Venkatesvara is shown in a standing posture with the hands in the abhaya and kati hasta postures.⁷This is a general view of the one of the pillars of this Mandapa showing the yali designed with the riding on a hoarse and the typical Vijayanagar cornice and corbel with typical sculptures on pilasters in it.

Bronze of Krishnadevaraya and his Queens

This is a bronze statue of the famous Vijayanagar Emperor Krishina Deva Raya (1509-1529) with his two consort's china Deviand, Tirumala Devistanding in an Anjali pose before the lord. The simanta or the middle parting line has a central gem set ornament. They wear ratankundals in the ear and beautiful keyuras and costly rings.⁸

Bronze of Venkata

This bronze of the Vijayanagar emperor Venkata who was ruling at Chandragiri. He wears a typical long cap and a short antariya. He is also shown as wearing a tulles mala on the neck and anklets on both the legs.

Bronze of Raja Todarmal, his Queen and his Mother

The group of bronzes actually forms part of the Pratima Mandapa. He was a general of the Nawab of carnatic Sadatualla khan who ruled at the beginning of the 18th century A.D. His mother was Mata Mohan Dey and his queen was called Pida Bibi.

Erotic Sculptures

These are erotic scenes shown in the Pratima Mandapa such scenes are not unknown in temples. The Satraps lay down that kama is one of the purusharthas of this life and the Vishnudharmottara which is a standard agamid text, specifically states that such erotic scenes should not be depicted in house-holds, but should be exhibited only in temples or in public places like king's darbars, courts etc.,Vikara hetan sati vikriyante yesham, na chetansi tha yeva dhiraha' ie .⁹

Mastysavatara

This is found in one of the pillars and shows lord Vishnu in the Matsyavatara. The sculpture is found in the second square of a pillar. The bottom portion of the lord with four hands the front two hands being in the Varada and Abhaya postures and the back two holding shankha and Chakra.

Vishnu as Varaha

This is an excellent picture of Vishnu as Bhuvanaraha. The Kamakudu and the salai at the feet of the lord are typical. The goddess is represented as seated in the left lap of the lord who has a face like the varaha. The right and of the lord is in varaha posture and the left two hands holds the Shankha and Chakra. The face of the lord is trued towards the Devi as prescribed in the Vaikhanasa agama. Some of the snakes are shown as being trampled by the lord to indicate that he rescued the Goddess from the Nagaloka. The lord here wears Kirita makuta. This is a excellent and rare piece of sculpture of Bhuvanaraha.¹⁰

Kalyana Mandapa Sculptures

This is a sculpture of Yoga narasimha sitting with the two feet crossed in an Utkatika posture. A pattika or a piece of cloth is keeping his legs in position. The Lord's front two hands are hanging down gracefully over his knees. His left two hands hold the shankha and Chakra. He has a Kirita Makuta and a stylized mane. He is shown as wearing several garments.¹¹

Pavitrotsava Mandapa Narsimha

This shows Narasimha in the rajaliasana posture with the back two hands holding shankha and chakra. The lord is shown as being fully clad and is draped and ornamented as if for a fight.

Lakshminarayana

This shows the lord seated with his right leg hanging down and with Laxmi seated in his left lap and the back two hands holding the Shankha and Chakra. This is a sculpture of Vishnu in a seated posture with Shankha and Chakra in the left two hands and the gada in the right left hand. Such a posture is rather rare in Tirumala temple.¹²

Miscellaneous Sculptures

Alvar this is a seated saint probably Nammalvar with his right hand held in the usual mudra found in the back corridor. **Hamsa** this is a beautiful sculpture of Hamsa done in the best Vijayanagara style. This is a relief sculpture found in the back corridor.

Vaikuntadwara Pillar

This is a pillar shown in the Vaikuntadwara and done in the late Vijayanagara style in black granite. The design and other details are typical.¹³ The village assembly had the right of bestowing the common as gift to temples, math and private individuals.

A lot of South Indian Inscription is giving information pertaining to endowment and donation made to the temples for worship and for conducting festivals by the merchants. These substantiate their belief and faith in temple activities. Their main duty was either to receive or support the donation given to the temples. The merchant guild also participated in the temple affairs of all sorts. Temples are not only the centers of spiritual values of the Hindus but also centers of socio-economic activities. They are the symbol of Hindu culture and civilization unlike historical temples which were created and endowed by temple of Thiripathi 'received active participation of the temple. Temple has its own symbolism. It has a psychological and spiritual existence. It is the nature of sacred bringing man into contact with the divine. These rituals have been developing a sense of toleration and bring about a peaceful co-existence among the Hindus at the local level. People belong to different castes and communities co-operate one another when they conduct festivals in this temple.

Religion has been a major source of inspiration for social service at all times. The temples have been from time immemorial the centers round which social and cultural life was organized and also the centers for education and learning. A typological description of the various categories of sacred performances that are usually performed in a place of Hindu pilgrimage has been described here. The sacred performances are intended to mean institutional religious performances. In many parts of the world traditional performances have given way under the impact of change in religious centers.

Notes and References

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