A STUDY ON THE SCULPTURES OF SRI KAILASANATHAR TEMPLE AT TARAMANKALAM – SALEM DISTRICT

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Abstract:
Tharamangalam is one of the important towns in Omalur Tauk of Salem District in Tamilnadu. It is historically an important town and renowned for the beautiful Kailasanathar Temple, which is widely known for the excellent stone carvings on the pillars. This west-facing temple is enclosed by a massive stone wall measuring 306' by 164' built in the 13th Century. The entrance has a five tiered gopiram and paneled doors of Vengai wood, which are studded with metal knobs and the panels contain wood carvings depicting stories from puranas. We have to step down to enter the temple. A pillar of 'Yazhi' is so ingeniously carved that a stone ball (4" diameter) in its mouth can be freely rolled but cannot be rolled out. On the top of the Mahamantapam, there is a rolling chain made of stone and a three layered lotus which is carried by eight parrots. In the center of the lotus, there a rotating stone ring is moving freely on either side. It s an excellent master piece of sculpting not seen anywhere in South India. The sculpture of the voluptuous Rishi Pathini is notable. The carvings of Bikshadana, Parvathi, the Mohini avatar of Mahavishnu, the Pandanchalirruniva are noteworthy. The sculptures of Manmatha and Rathi are placed in such a nanner by which Manmathan is visible for Rathi but Rathi is not visible to Manmathan. The architectural marvel of the temple is the occurrence of sunlight falling on the forehead of Lord Kaiasanathar inside of the Sanctum Sanctorum on three days during the month of February 21st, 22nd and 23d evenings at 5 o' clock. It is a rare feature of the temple architecture unheard of anywhere else. Thus, Lord Kailasanthar temple at Tharamangalam is exceptionally great in terms of sculptural ethics and beauty.
Key Words: Tharamangalam, Insignia,Vannatatukku, Vatamalai & Yali

Tharamangalam:
Tharamangalam is considered as one of the important towns in Omalur Taluk of Salem District in Tamil Nadu. It is historically an important town and renowned for the beautiful Kailasanathar Temple, which is widely known for the excellent stone carvings on the pillars[1]. The name of the town is a corruption of the phrase 'Thaarai Mangalam' meaning a village that was formally granted to Brahmins in a symbolic ritual of 'Thaarai' (pouring water) by the donor into the hands of the donee. In another version of the name legendarily the Goddess Parvathi was given away to Lord Siva in a 'Thaarai' ritual. Lord Vishnu handed over his beloved sister Goddess Parvathi to Lord Siva at the marriage function which was believed to be held many decades before and this incident is named as 'Thaarai Mangalam'[2].

Objectives of the Study:
- ✓ To study the sculptural and architectural excellence of Sri Kailasanathar Temple at Taramangalam
- ✓ To highlight the role of computer and internet for the collection of information regarding the origin of the temple, sculptures, inscriptions, art and architecture
- ✓ To improve the Heritage Tourism
- ✓ To evaluate the Socio-economic impact of Taramangalam

Gatti Mudhalis:
During 11th to 17th century Gatti Mudhali Dynasty was a renowned dynasty of the local rulers of Tharamangalam. The great temple of Tharamangalam was begun by Mummudi Gatti Mudhali, continued by Siyazhi Gatti Mudhali, and the work was completed by Vanangamudi Gatti Mudhali, and this reference is found on a stone inscription dated 1268 A.D. of the Hoyasala King Vira Ramanathan. Gatti Mudhalis had their own signs and symbols as Vannathadukku figure of a green mat) and Vadamalai (unwitting garland of flowers) and the inscription found at the Elevempatti village near Tharamangalam bears testimony to this fact[3].

Rajagopuram:
Lord Kailasanathar's temple of Tharamangalam is a west facing temple, enclosed by a massive stone wall measuring 306 feet in East West and 164 feet in North South. The Rajagopuram is at about 105 feet height and it contains five storeys. The top of the Gopuram consists of 7 Kalasams made of brass. The main doors of the temple is made of a single Vengai wood consisting 60 knobs on each sides[4]. At the front and back of the tower are seen red stones which are used as steps, called "Chandrakal" (Moon stones). Usually temples are constructed on the level ground or at a raised platform, but here one has to go down 9 steps to reach this temple[5]. The tower is attached to two wheels drawn by the horse images and in front of them seen the images of the elephants majestically dragging the chariot. To the left side of the Kodimaram there is a shrine of 'Sri Sahasralingam'. The figure of Shasaralingam is made of a single stone and 1008 lingams are carved in it[6]. A most important feature of this temple is the 'Nandhimandapam'. It consists of the symbols of the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya Kings – Bow, Tiger and Fish respectively[7] and also the insignia of the Gatti Mudhali, Vannathadukku and Vadamalai. There is also a mantapam of Sri Sidhi Vinayaka which is made up of three pieces stones with no cement or mortar work. It shows the talent of the sculptors[8]. The entrance to the inner sanctum is through a portico supported by six sumptuously carved stone pillars. Two of the pillars represent Yazhi (a mythical animal combining features of the lion and the elephant) while the other four pillars represent horses. The scene of tiger hunting by

a prince seated on horse is depicted very realistically and with great sensitivity[9]. A pillar of Yazhi is so ingeniously carved so that a stone ball of 4 inch diameter placed in its mouth can be freely rolled but cannot be rolled out. In the stone platform near the Vinyaka idols a very small hole of 3 inch is carved through which only the blade of a grass can be inserted and taken out[10].

Rishipathini:

Carved images on the wooden doors speak about the art of sculptures. Next to this, inside is seen the image of the Rishipathini of Tharukavanam. She was proud of her celibacy. Lord Siva in order to test the celibacy of the Rihipathini came in the guise of a beggar. When Rishipathini brought food in her hand a crow snatched away the food. The pride of the Rishipathini was subdued. This episode is seen in the form of a carved image. The flowing hair of the Rishipathini, the ornaments she wears and the nails in her fingers are naturally carved and this adds beauty to the image. The folds on the saree of the Rishipathini and her shy face are beautifully displayed on the image[11]. By using internet and computer the unique features of the sculpture can be visualized beautifully.

Pichadanar:

When Lord Shiva destroyed the pride of the Rishipathini, she ordered Shiva to appear as a beggar. The Lord also obliged. The form of the Lord as a beggar is called 'Pichadanar'. The image of the Lord with snake as an ornament, the 'Ganga' on his head, jadamudi, wooden slippers, deer on one hand and begging bowl on the other hand is noteworthy[12]. The image of the sage, panthanchali Munivar is a veritable wonder since the upper part of his body is that of a man and the lower part is that of a snake. Next, the greatness of Viyakirapadhar is seen in his enjoyment of Lord Nataraja's dance after acquiring the legs of a tiger and the power of its eyes[13].

Oorthava Thandavam:

Lord Siva and Kali at a place called 'Thiruvalangadu' danced making the whole cosmos vibrate in order to test who the superior dancer was. In order to bring the dance to an end, Lord Nataraja raised his leg while dancing but Kali was unable to lift her leg in shyness. Finally, Kali accepted her defeat. Lord Shiva possesses eight pairs of hands with each having weapons like soolam, udukkai and mazhu etc. This episode is beautifully carved in the image of Oorthava Thandavam[14].

Siddhar Feeds Sugarcane to Stone Elephant:

Lord Shiva once disguised as a Siddhar in Madurai fed a stone elephant with sugarcane and this episode is wonderfully brought out in the form of sculpture here[15].

The anger of Sakthi:

When Parvathi and Shiva were travelling on Rishaba vahana in order to quench the thirst of the Rishba Lord Shiva poured water from Ganga and Sakthi became angry when she saw Lord Shiva carrying Ganga on his head. This scene is carved on the stone very deftly by depicting the upward movement of the fish and the infuriated face of Sakthi. The sculptor's ability to bring out realistically the emotion of anger on the face of Sakthi, a stone image is unparalleled. If one image of Shakthi shows her anger another image shows her to be calm and happy with a beautiful smile on her face[16].

Lingodbhavar:

While Lord Shiva conceals himself in the Linga, Lord Brahma taking the shape of a swan moves up towards the face and Lord Vishnu in the shape of a varaha (pig) moves down to find the feet of Lord and this scene is carved in the sculpture[17]. When the image of the sculpture comes very closer by the image processing in computer the artistic skill of the sculptors are revealed.

Manmathan and Rathi:

The most significant and beautiful sculptures are that of Manmathan and Rathi. Manmathan in order to destroy the meditation of Lord Shiva sent an arrow made of five kinds of flowers. It was called pushpabaanam (arrow of flowers). Lord Shiva in anger using the fire which emanated from his third eye scorched Manmathan. On Rathi Devi's pleas, Shiva agreed to bring back Manmathan to life on condition that he would be visible only to her. This episode is sculptured in such a way, so that when one tries to have a look at Rathi from the statue of Manmathan, Rathi remains invisible. But when one looks at Manmathan from the statue of Rathi, who is seated on a swan, Manmathan is visible. Manmathan appears beautiful with his mount parrot and his arrow of flowers. Rathi is seen with her mount the swan, her beautiful hair and the tassel of pearls[18].

Vaali and Sugreevar:

In the southern part of the assembly situated in front of Lord Kailasanthars temple the stone slab depicts the fight between Vaali and Sugreeva. On the third slab of the southern part of the assembly is seen Rama's attempt of shooting an arrow at Vaali without his knowledge. The sculpture is wonderfully depicted in such a way that the fight between Vaali and Sugreeva can be seen from Rama's statue whereas Rama cannot be seen from Vaali – Sugreeva's statue[19]. On the roof of the assembly there are eight stone chains and the sculptures of Devas who guard the eight directions namely Indira, Agni, Yama, Niruthi, Varuna, Vayu, Kuberan and Isaanyan. On a stone lotus are seated eight stone parrots. On the centre of the lotus flower, a stone ring keeps rotating. The body of the parrot is seen on one petal and its beak on another petal and its tail on the third petal. One cannot but stand in wonder at this sculptural beauty. On one of the stone slabs on the roof is seen the image of a lion and in its mouth is seen 3 stone balls. In the mouth of two other lion images are seen 2 stone balls one in each mouth. On the centre of the roof of the assembly is seen the scene where Vishnu gives his sister Parvathi in marriage to Lord Shiva with wonderful stage setting at the time of the ceremony[20]. Since Parvathi Devi is given in marriage to Lord Shiva this place is called 'Thramangalam'. If all the above sculptures are digitalised with 3 dimension pictures the uniqueness of the sculptures can be visualize in real. The sun God makes a special visit to this temple on three days in a year. In the month of February 20th, 21st and 22nd (ie. Tamil Month Masi on 9th, 10th and 11th) at about 6 p.m. the rays of the Sun pierce through the horns of Nandhi and fall on the forehead of Lord Kailasnathar in the form of a crescent. This wonderful sight is perceived by worshippers every year[21]. Thus, Lord Kailasanthar

temple at Tharamangalam is exceptionally great in terms of sculptural ethics and beauty. Tharamangalam invites people from all the corners of the world to have a peep into its artistic and sculptural beauty. Thus, computer based image processing has generated a wide assortment of architectural concept of specific designs. Video processing are also very useful for picturing the art, architecture, festivals and the sculptures of the temple in real.

Conclusion:

The role of internet and computers are very important in temple study. The internet archive is to build an Internet Library. Its purposes are offering permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars and the general public to historical collections that exist in digital format. The internet archive also includes texts, audio, moving images and software as well as archived web pages in providing information. The image processing app is the analysis and manipulation of a digitalized image of sculptures in the temples, especially in order to visualize in the form of two dimensional three dimensional etc. There may be a futuristic app, which will contain the sculptures, inscriptions and architecture of the temple in detail. To conclude the computers, mobile apps, internet and digitalization of images helps to those who study the temple as they will be able to access the details. Through the virtual museum better understanding of the sculptures and their relations to the architecture of the temple will be achieved.

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