

RELIGION AND CULTURE VALUES OF SRIVAİKUNDAM

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Abstract

The temple at Srivaikundam is called Srivaikundanathan Perumal Temple. The other name for the temple is Kallapiran Temple. Srivaikundam is located in the town of Thoothukudi District in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu. The Srivaikundam Temple is part of the Nava Tirupathi Temples. The Nava Tirupathi Temples are a part of these 108 Divya Desam Temples. It is a belief that a devotee who visits the 106 Divya Desam temples fervently will be escorted by lord Vishnu himself to the other two in the celestial world. Thiruvengada Mudaiyan Mandapam in the Srivaikundam Temple, houses rare life size sculptures commissioned during the 16th century. These sculptures were constructed during Nayakkar's period. This Mandapam is rich with Sculptures of Yallis, Warriors, and folk sculptures. The aim of this paper is to describe only the folk Sculpture in Srivaikundanathan Perumal Temple.

Introduction

Srivaikuntam is located on the northern bank of river Thambiraparani and is thirty seven kilometers away from Tirunelveli. Srikallarpiran Temple occupies the fifty third position among 108 sacred places dedicated to lord Vishnu.¹ Srivaikuntam is a neatly laid out village nucleating around Srikallarpiran Temple. In later years, many portions on its north west, including the areas around the Vishnu temple and of Kailasam were added to make it the present Srivaikuntam. The original settlement probably was confined to the three streets around the Srikallarpiran Temple, besides a few more clusters of houses on the northern and eastern outskirts of the village. All major temples are immediately surrounded by streets invariably occupied by the Brahmins. While the Saiva Brahmins live in the immediate neighbourhood of Kailasapathy and Sivakami temple, srivaishnava settlements are to be found around the Srikallarpiran temple.

Tamils have practiced idolatry since ancient times. This is the main reason for the development of sculpture in Tamil Nadu. Sculptors in Silapathikaram are known as Manitalas. Our forefathers created beautiful sculptures on temple pillars, Vimanas, temple towers and walls according to their own ideas. Sculptures can be divided into full figure sculptures, relief sculptures. Movable sculptures are called Salam and non-movable sculptures are called Asalam . The temple taken up for study is the Vaikundanathar Temple, which is considered one of the 108 Divya Desams, heavily praised in the Naalayira Divya Prabhantham and also were blessed by the Alvars. It is also one of the 108 Divya Desam Temples which is. This temple is located on the banks of river Tamiraparani flowing in Srivaikundam town of Thoothukudi district. In the sculptures of this temple Nayaka period sculptures are seen more. Nayak sculpture style has been beautified using some new techniques.

Sthalapuranam

The Vaikuntanathar Temple is very closely associated with the Matsya Avatara of Maha Vishnu. Lord Brahma, who is the custodian of the Vedas, loses it to an Asura named

Somakasura, who in turn takes the Vedas with him & hides deep beneath the ocean. Bhrama, who is the creator, was rendered helpless without the Vedas. So he does severe penance on the banks of holy Thamirabarani river seeking Maha Vishnu's help to retrieve the Vedas from Somakasura, which Vishnu does an Matsya Avatara. This is the Sthalapurana of the Temple.

Folk Sculptures

When the Vijayanagara and Nayakar kings established a foothold in Tamil Nadu, their folk arts were also introduced here. Those arts were influenced by the people of Tamil Nadu. These influenced arts were found in the temple sculptures of Tamil Nadu. Apart from these, the images of Vedan, Nomad, Nomadic Woman, Kuravan, Kuratthi, Dancing Mangai etc, who are involved in the daily life of the people, are present as sculptures in the temples.

“Our sculptures were not only seems for an attractive, but they are describing meaningfulness and feelings”.....Mayilai Seeni Venkatasamy.

A Sculpture of Thorn Removing in the Foot of a Kuravan

This Kuravan sculpture is seen below in the front row of the Thiruvekatamudayan Mandapam. The sculpture shows Kurava and his concubine removal of nipping at his feet. His hunted food, deer hangs on his shoulder and iguana, hare, etc hangs on his waist. The sculpture is realistically posed as his hound stares at something, and another skunk with a bow and arrow is nearby. The right hand of this Vaden sculpture is broken above the wrist. This Vaden, who is seen with a curled mustache and a cock, carries a bird-catching net over his right shoulder, a pouch for the bird on his left shoulder, and a dove in his hand. An iguana is seen on his shoulder and the son of Vaden is seen walking fast in the foreground. The statue is six feet tall and is found in the Thiruvekatamudayan Mandapathoon. The sculpture is seen holding a horn-like blowing instrument in the left hand and a sword in the right hand, with a twisted moustache, with salangai on its feet, and it shows removing the sword from its cover on seeing a dragon under its feet.

Royal Princess and Vedan

This sculpture is found on the upper wall of the temple's glass hall. The image shows the Vedda chieftain carrying Arasilangumari on his shoulders and the soldiers on horseback trying to stop him and rescue the princess. The statue is depicted as fighting the Vedan soldiers with the weight of the princess and the princess covering her face with her saree.

Gandharve

A high relief sculpture of a Gandharva playing percussion just adjacent to the Agora Veerabhadra carving, we saw a tweets back. Gandharvas are celestial beings who are also extremely skilled musicians.

Nammalvar and his two Great Followers

This sculpture is found at the bottom of the row of mandapathunas in front of the Thiruvekatamudayan shrine. The image shows Nammalvar singing the Divya Prabandham

sitting under a never-sleeping tamarind tree, Madhurakaviyalvar writing it on a pad while standing, and the nathamunis playing rhythms while standing according to the song.

Kurathi's Family

This sculpture shows depicting the life of a kurathi. It also shows two kurathis in the same attire, one kurathi holding a woven basket in his right hand and another kurathi in her left hand, a bowl of food is held in the palms of the hands, a child on the shoulder takes food and eats, two children are seen walking between the two korathis, and a child is sleeping under the chest. In this sculpture, the sculptor shows the family life of Kurathi. The appearance of the Kurathis is depicted with large garlands of beads and bracelets on the arms.

Animal Sculptures

The variety of carvings of animals, particularly monkeys, is one of this temple's most intriguing aspects. Here is an example of one of these carvings, which shows a monkey inspecting a snake and what appears to be a big cat chasing a bird. This place is full of carvings like that. Another monkey is snarling and advancing. The wonderful thing about temples is that the sthapatis accurately and vividly captured every facet of life, even animal behavior, and documented it in stone. How very inventive those people were

Religious Significance of Temples

Srivaikuntanathan Perumal Temple (Kallapiran Temple)

One of the 108 Divya Desams and a key part of the Nava Tirupati, this temple is associated with the Surya (Sun) Navagraha and has a 110-foot rajagopuram. It follows the Tenkalai tradition of worship.

Kailasanathaswamy Temple

Another significant, historic temple in the town, often associated with local history and folklore.

Deities

Lord Vishnu is worshipped here as Vaikuntanathar or Kallapiran, with his consort Lakshmi as Vaikuntavalli.

Significance

The temple is praised in the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* by the Alvar saints and is a major center for the Bhakti movement.

Cultural and Architectural Values

Architecture

The temples feature impressive Dravidian style, with the Srivaikuntam temple known for its 16th -century sculptures of yallis, elephants, and warriors in the Thiruvengadamudayan hall.

Festivals

The ten-day annual Brahmotsavam in the Tamil month of Chittirai (April-May) and the Nammalvar birth celebrations with Garuda Sevai are major cultural events.

Traditions

Women participate in rituals at the Kailasanathar temple, such as using turmeric water for *abishkek* to the deity, believed to bring marital harmony and children.

Historical Legacy

The temple once served as a fort during the conflicts between the East India Company and Veera Pandiya Kattabomman.

Cultural Etiquette and Lifestyle

Dress Code

Modest attire is required, with men advised to wear dhotis/pants and shirts, and women to wear sarees or churidhar, avoiding lungis and jeans.

Atmosphere

The town maintains a traditional, religious atmosphere, with local cuisine and, close proximity to other Navatirupati temples in the Thoothukudi district.

Conclusion

During the reign of the Vijayanagara and Nayakar kings, they sculpted the lifestyles of the people, animals and historical events they saw in the outer halls of the temple. The sculptural composition of the sculptures arranged in this way is shown to be alive and full of stories. At the conclusion of this study titled 'Sculptures that tell stories in the folk sculptures at Shi Vaikundam Vaikundanathar temple, most of the sculptures are in the form of wall reliefs. The sculptural composition of the sculptures is shown to be lively and dynamic. Kurovar and Vader sculptures as their lives unfold before our eyes shown as a living sculpture by the sculptor's chisel.

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