

Sculptures and Paintings of the Natham Kailasanathar Temple

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Kailasanathar temple is a well known Shiva temple, located at Natham Kovilpatti, an important one in the Dindigul district. The history of Kailasanathar temple has been traced since Twelfth century A. D. This sacred temple was built by the Pandya king Jadavarman Kulasekara Pandya(1190 – 1216 A. D.). The Nayaks further extended the temple for protecting from the enemies. The Nayak ruler who contributed his share to this temple was Lingamma Nayak(1595 – 1603 A. D.). The famous Kailasanathar temple which stands as beautiful monument on the southern bank of river Thirumanimuthaaru is one among the fourteen places of worship for the Saivites under the Pandyas. This place lies 36 kilometres east of Dindigul and 38 kilometres north of Madurai.

The most important feature of Kailasanathar temple is Swamy sannathi is facing the west. But usually everywhere the Shiva temples will be facing the east. There may two reasons for this type of construction. It is believed that the ruler who constructed this temple suffered from disease or might have suffered under Chevvai Dhosam(Angara Preeti) or he might have not been able to get

married for a long time(Brahmagathi). The Sculptures and Paintings in this temple were the great contributions of the Nayaks.

Sculptures

The sculptures are indeed so bound up with people's religion and mythology of which it forms the mirror. In Indian sculptures the majority of the figures are based on the human body. From the 12th century A. D. onwards, the construction of temples were increased and also, beautified with sculptures either the image of God or the portrait of the human being.

When compared to North India, the South Indian temples contain numerous sculptures. After 16 – 17th centuries A. D., the sculptures were all erected on the pillars of the temple. Such sculptures are found in Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Srirangam, Madurai etc., In Natham Kailasanathar temple also one can see the sculptures such as the images of the Gods and Goddesses and the human portrait.

Linga Sculpture

Lord Shiva is the main deity of the Kailasanathar temple. Shiva is considered as a “Lord of Destroyer”. Linga is one of the aspects of Lord Shiva. It is installed in the Karpagraha. In an ordinary approach, Lingam (Aruvam) forms as it has no limbs like face, hands and legs etc., It forms(uruvam) as its appearance is visible to human eyes.

Sri Shenbagavalli Sculpture

Sri Shenbagavalli, the consort of Kailasanathar is installed in another mandapa of the same Kailasanathar temple complex. The idol of Sri Shenbagavalli is installed in the Karpagraha. Sri Shenbagavalli sculpture is in a tribhanga pose in a standing posture carrying the Lotus flower in her right hand and the left hand is in(lolahastha) hanging down. The sculpture of Shenbagavalli is belongs to 12th century A. D.

Vinayaga Sculpture

Vinayaga has the head of an elephant and a big belly. This statue has four arms, which is common in depictions of Vinayaga. He holds his own broken tusk in his lower-right hand and holds a delicacy, which he samples with his trunk, in his lower-left hand. The motif of Vinayaga turning his trunk sharply to his left to taste a sweet in his lower-left hand is a particularly archaic feature.

Muruga Sculpture

A sculpture of Muruga with his consorts Valli and Deivanai on his side is housed in a separate shrine on the left side entrance of the veli prakara. He rides on the peacock vehicle. He is shown with six faces and twelve hands. Each of them keeps different symbols and weapons. Deivanai is holding a padmam on her right and the left hand is hanging down. Valli is carrying a Nilothpala flower on her left and the right hand is hanging by her side.

Navagraha Sculptures

The Navagraha sculptures are installed in the Muhamandapa of the Kailasanathar temple which belongs to 12th or 13th century A. D.

Navagraha's refers to the Nine planets. The nine grahas are Surian, Santhiran, Sukkiran, Guru, Puthan, Kedhu, Chevvai, Raagu, Sanneeshwaran. These grahas are in a sitting posture.

Dwara Balagars

In the midst of the great mandapas that two other mandapams are called Artha Mandapam and Karpagraham in the two side of gateway to the Artha Mandapam. Dwara balagars otherwise defence children with weapons as defences they protect the main deity of the temple are seen.

Nandi God

In front of the altar a Nandi viewing the deity at height of 5 feet has been constructed. The floor steps have been built to move up to perform poojas to Nandi god.

Other Sculptures

In front of the temple there is a big mandapa namely Sixteen Pillar Mandapa. This mandapa has adorned with beautiful sculptures. The Six Pillar Mandapa was constructed by Maravarman Sundarapandya of Later Pandya empire but the sculptures of this mandapa was belonging to the Nayak period particularly Lingamma Nayak. In the Six Pillar Mandapa one can see the

sculpture of Veerabathra in the left side corner and the Durga sculpture in the right side corner. In the Mugamandapa the sculptures of Navagraha and the Muruga are found in the northern side. The Vinayaga statue is installed in the southern side of the mugamandapa.

The Nataraja sculpture is located in Artha Mandapa. A huge Vinayagar idol located on the right side of the inner pragaram. His Vaahana Rat which is also found on the front side of the Vinayaga sculpture. Southern side of the inner pragara many sculptures are found. They are called as Astama Sakthi.1. Brahmi 2.Maheshwari 3.Kowmari 4. Vaishnavi 5. Varagi 6. Mahendri 7. Saamundi 8. Rowthiri. The bronze idols like Kailasanathar, Shenbagavalli Amman, Vinayaga, Muruga with Valli Deivanai, Durgadevi, Nayanmars are available in this temple.

Paintings

Numerous paintings are available in Natham Kailasanathar temple. They were belonging to the Nayaks period particularly Lingamma Nayak (1995 – 1603A. D.). The paintings were drawn in the ceilings of the Six Pillar Mandapam and also one can see the paintings in the Amman sannathi. Here the central theme is Kandhapuranam. The Paintings were painted in the square shaped space one can see picture of Lingamma Nayak who worn turbon in his head. He had worn a white color lower garment. The reason of paintings of the different temples in the ceilings of the mandapas is viewed by the archaeologist

as the people can worship all the God at the same time which were present in the different temples.

In the Amman sannathi, one can see the story as Kanthapuram in the ceiling of the veliprakra. Here also fresco type of paintings found. Some of the paintings in the Amman sannathi mugamandapa are in a damaged condition because of the fixing of electrical cables, reeper and Tube lights which are fixed in a careless manner crossing the paintings.

The paintings in the ceilings of the Six Pillar Mandapa is the contribution of the Lingamma Nayak which gave additional beauty to this mandapa. The paintings are miniature in nature. The paintings deal from the birth of Lord Skandha Karthikeya, Shiva Parvathi, Aarumugam, Child stage Vinayagar to see there. The another panel deals Lord Muruga and his marriage, peacock and the six child were appeared from the six lotus flowers.

The Natham Kailasanathar temple is not only a repository of stone, bronze, stucco images and paintings, but are a salient testimony to the history and culture of Tamil Nadu

End Notes and References

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