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RESEARCH ARTICLE

NARRATIVE RAMAYANA SCULPTURES AT TIRUCHENNAMPOONDI

Dr R Muthuraman

Guest Lecturer, Department of History, Thiru A.Govindasamy Govt. Arts College, Tindivanam -604307

Abstract

India is the land of religion, existed more number which reflected culture and tradition of the country. Being the majority of people attributed the Hindu religion may following the tradition for long years. The culture is more visible in the ancient temples. There some sculptures are carved in the wall and pillar of the temple, which exhibited the mythological and historical significance. On the consequences, Thiruchennampoondi has enormous sculptures, which reveals the mythological messages, especially the narrative of Ramayana, one of the epic from mythological period. Religion and cultural are interlinked in India, which given the authentic information through the temples. Temple is the major source for knowing the heritage and history. Tiruchennampoondi is a small agrarian village located on the Southern bank of rive Kollidam in Tiruchirappalli District near Koviladam, [10°50'04" N, 078°49'59" E], along the Tirukkattuppalli to Kallanai highway. This article has to reveal the importance of Thiruchennampoondi temple at Tiruchirappalli and exhibit the Ramayan sculpture.

Keywords: Land of religion, Mythological and historical significance, Heritage monument

Introduction

India is the land of religion, existed more number which reflected culture and tradition of the country. Being the majority of people attributed the Hindu religion may following the tradition for long years. The culture is more visible in the ancient temples. There some sculptures are carved in the wall and pillar of the temple which exhibited the mythological and historical significance. On the consequences, Thiruchennampoondi has enormous

sculptures which reveals the mythological messages, especially the narrative of Ramayana, one of the epic from mythological period. Religion and cultural are interlinked in India, which given the authentic information through the temples. Temple is the major source for knowing the heritage and history. Tiruchennampoondi is a small agrarian village located on the Southern bank of rive Kollidam in Tiruchirappalli District near Koviladam, [10°50'04" N,

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078°49'59" E], along the Tirukkattuppalli to Kallanai highway. This article has to reveal the importance of Thiruchennampoondi temple at Tiruchirappalli and exhibit the ramayan sculpture.

Historical Background

The Sadaimudinatha temple complex located within the village precincts is an ancient temple of Lord Shiva sung by Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandar in 7th Century CE. The temple is in partial ruins and not in worship today. The complex includes shrines of Shiva and his consort - the latter being a later addition. The shrine of Shiva facing east comprises a Dwitala Nagara Vimana, Artha Mandapa and Maha Mandapa. Superstructures above the first Tola of the Vimana and those above the Adhithana of the Maha Mandapa Adhithana have crumbled. Pillars featuring inscriptions of the Pallava and the Muttaraiya kings are found lying on the ground; however, based on a study of the architectural features and Vimana wall inscriptions, the present temple fabric is attributed to early Chola King Parantaka-I of 10th Century CE., The Vimana and the Mandapas rise over an Adhithana of Kapotabhandu variety. A Vedit complex is located above the basement in the Vimana and the Artha Mandapa. The Galapadas of the Vimana Adhithana and the Vedipadas of the Vedit complex have sculpted with miniatures depicting themes from the Ramayana and the Puranas respectively.

Ramayana in Tamil Nadu

Ramayana traditions in Tamil Nadu can be traced back to early Tamil literatures of the Sangam canto [300 BC - 250AD] such as Agananuru [No. 70] and Purananuru [No. 378]. Late Sangam and post-Sangam Tamil literatures contain increasing references to Ramayana's characters and events. Epigraphic material retrieved from copper plates and inscriptions of the Pallava - Pandiya period [580 - 894 AD] attest the continuing influence of Ramayana in Tamil society [Sivaramamirthi, C. 1983:184]. However, no significant attempt was made to record even the major events of Ramayana as sculptures in temples. For the first time in the art history of Tamil Nadu, Ramayana depictions, as a series of storytelling narrative miniatures, are observed in select early Chola temples

of 10th Century CE. These include the Nageswara temple at Kumbakonam, the Brahmapuriswara temple at Pullamangai, the Sadaimudinatha temple at Thiruchennampoondi and the Samavediswara temple at Tirumangalam. The latter two are located in Tiruchirappalli District.

This article is an attempt to elucidate the salient features of the Ramayana sculptures at Thiruchennampoondi.

Galapada Sculptures

At Thiruchennampoondi, there are 62 Galapada segments available in the Adhithana, out of which 50 are located in the Vimana and the rest are in Mandapa. The Mandapa Galapadas are not sculpted Vimana Galapadas represent a series of them adopted from Ramayana constituting a narrative. The temple structure has suffered damages due to weathering and neglect over time. The Padu sculptures reflect this sustained damage. As many as 15 sculptures have been eroded beyond recognition. The Padas on the Southern side of the Vimana have suffered maximum damage followed by those in West and North.

The Story and its narration

Out of 46 Padas that were originally, sculpt 31 represent the surviving Ramayana/ narrative Thiruchennampoondi. The Ramayana narrative started at South West corner of the Western side of Vimana and proceeds clockwise. The theme portrayed each direction is listed in the table below. It is observed that the narrative does not provide any room for sculpting further events in the story beyond the adventures of Hanuman at Lanka; hence, it is amply clear that the artisans did not plan to portray the war sequences climaxing the final confrontation of Rama with Ravana. Comparing this narrative against the story in the literatures of Valmiki and Kamban, in Vimana West would roughly corresponds events of Bala Kanda, those in the North Ayodhya Kanda and those on the South y Kishkinda and portions of Sundara Kanda. Major portions of Aranya Kanda and the entire a Kanda are not sculpted. It is interesting to that both literatures provide maximum impetus buddha Kanda which have altogether been for representation.

Pada is located in North East corner of the Vimana features in this temple, the first incident of Aranya Kanda [Encounter with Viradha] that located in the South East corner features last incident [Encounter with Kabandha], it is highly probable that the original plan was to sculpture happenings of Aranya Kanda in the 12 Mandapa galapadas; however for some reason, this plan was got executed. A comparison of the Tiruchennampoondi narrative with those at Kumbakonam, Pullamangai and Tirumangalam yields interesting results. Three of them excluding Tirumangalam feature early ventures of Rama in detail. Tiruchennampoondi is the only narrative to portray the events related to succession and the aftermath in great significance in Galapadas. The events happening in the forest are portrayed in detail at Pullamangai whereas they are altogether skipped at Tiruchennampoondi and Tirumangalam. The events at Kishkinda are highlighted at Tiruchennampoondi and Tirumangalam whereas they are not represented at Pullamangai. Adventures of Hanuman are available only at Kumbakonam and Tiruchennampoondi. Events related to war are available only at Kumbakonam and even there the final confrontation is not portrayed. There are some similarities and variations between the narrations at Tiruchennampoondi and Tirumangalam - both of which are located in Tiruchirapalli district. Both narratives skip the events happening in the forest and both narratives provide maximum significance to those themes related to Kishkinda. It is interesting to note that Kumbakonam does not feature Kishkinda events at such significant levels and Pullamangai does not feature these events at all.

Exclusive representations

The Ramayana narrative at Tiruchennampoondi contains certain exclusive events and representations not available in other narratives. These include the King Janaka's Presentation of the bridal princess Seetha to the audience in the Marriage Hall, just before her marriage to Rama. King Dasaratha is enjoying a joyful moment with his queen, during the preparations for the coronation. King Dasaratha's entry into Queen Kaikeyi's private chambers during her intimate consultation with her servant maid Mandara. A male character conveying the news of banishment to Rama. King Dasaratha's melancholy and depression over

Rama's banishment and his queen's consolation. Bharata's consultation with a Sage before meeting Rama. Bharatha's meeting with Rama in the forest; a woman bowing to Rama and requesting him to take the crown. There seems to be a relationship between these exclusive scenes peculiar to Tiruchennampoondi and the social norms and values the artisans wanted to highlight through the Ramayana narrative. This aspect is discussed next. Social Norms and Values The Ramayana narrative at Tiruchennampoondi chooses events, themes, characters and visual representations from the story that help to highlight specific social values that were held in high esteem during Chola times.

Spirit of Brotherhood

This is one of the most significant and enduring themes of this narrative. The narrative uses the relationship between Rama - Lakshmana and Rama - Bharatha to highlight this value. Throughout the narrative, Lakshmana as a faithful and obedient companion always accompanies Rama. In addition, Tiruchennampoondi is the only narrative, which portrays the celebrated meet between Rama and Bharatha in the forest in a very significant location in great detail. No other early Chola narrative features this theme.

Spirit of fatherhood

This theme is projected in several panels throughout the narrative through the moods and emotions of King Dasaratha and King Janaka. Tiruchennampoondi is the only narrative to highlight the dramatic ups and downs of King Dasaratha's feelings before Rama's coronation and after his banishment - in three significant scenes. The first one portrays his joyful disposition, as the preparations for coronation are in progress. To represent this effectively, the artisans have divided a Pada into two halves and represent the coronation in one half and the King's happy conversation with his queen in the other half- thereby connecting the two events.

The second scene portrays his dramatic and unexpected entry into queen Kaikeyi's private chambers during her intimate consultation with Mandara. The height and posture of the King as

compared to the queen and the emotions of Mandara - make this panel a fitting representation of the event. The third scene is a poignant representation of the King in despair and melancholy - as the news of banishment is communicated to Rama. Here again he is in company, of his queen - but his moods are deeply sunken - in striking contrast to the first scene. Also, Tiruchennampoondi is the only narrative that shows the pride and joy of King Janaka as he introduces her daughter, the bridal-princess Seetha to the audience and Viswamitra in the marriage hall - just before her marriage with Rama.

Spirit of friendship

Several Padas at Tiruchennampoondi portray themes related to friendship. The narrative utilizes the friendship of Rama and Guha, Rama and Sugreeva as well as Rama and Hanuman - as channels for highlighting this spirit. Rama's empathy for Sugreeva's situation, the killing of Vali, Sugreeva's coronation a aftermath are all portrayed in detail. Han character is well projected and the very first which he carries Rama-Lakshmana to Kishk exclusive to this narrative. It is interesting to note that the two early narratives (Tiruchennampoondi and Tiruman that provide substantial impetus to the eve Kishkinda- are located in Tiruchirapalli. contains an exclusive panel portraying Rama Sugreeva taking the oath of friendship in front fire.

Conclusions

The study has some conclusion, the narrative Ramayana Padas Tiruchennampoondi illustrate the ingenuity creative genius of Chola artisans in adopt theme from the epic to visual medium. The story of Ramayana was known to common public during 10th Century CE, well be found the period of Kamban [12th Century CE]; per were familiar with the themes and characters it was possible to follow the narration through sequence of miniature sculptures. The artisans innovatively make use of Galapa segments available in

the Adhithana represent a narrative; this phenomenon is peculiar to early Chola period and is not in earlier Pallava or Pandiya temples. While there are many themes that are common across early Chola Ramayana narratives in various temples, Tiruchennampoondi contains exclusive themes and portrayals that provide vital clues to understand of the knowledge and spirit of Ramayana in Chola times. Ramayana and its characters were used as powerful instruments by the artisans and patrons to inculcate various social norms and values

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