SRI KALABHAIRAVAR SCULPTURE AT -
THIRUVENNAINALLUR

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Introduction

Thiruvennaiallur on the south bank of the Malattar about fourteen miles south-east of Tirukkoyilur, is considered by many as the place where Kambar is stated to have lived. His patron Sadaya Mudali to whom he refers in his works is stated to have lived in a house the site of which is now occupied by a house called the Chatram. Meykanda Devar who translated into Tamil the famous Sanskrit work Sivagnanabodham is also said to have lived here. There is a shrine over his tomb.

There is a Siva temple dedicated to Kripapurisvara here which is connected with the story of Sundarar’s proposed marriage. The aged Brahmin, who opposed it and who was Siva in disguise, is stated to have taken him and the other people who were with him to this temple and disappeared within its shrine. Some inscriptions belonging to the Chola times have been discovered in it. It has been repaired by the Nattukottai Chettiyars. An image of Sundara which was located in a small building in the village was removed to a new shrine erected inside the temple during the course of the repairs. The temple was fortified in the olden days and was captured by the English in 1760.

Constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture, the present structure of the temple is believed to have been built during the Cholas period in the 10th century A.D. The temple has received gracious endowments from the Chola queen Sembiyann Mahadevi. Shiva is worshipped as Kripapureeswarar and his consort Parvathi as Mangalambigai.
The presiding deity is revered in the 7th century Tamil Saiva canonical work, the *Tevaram*, written by Tamil saint poets known as the Nayanmars and classified as *Paadal Petra Sthalam*. A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all its shrines. The temple has a five-tiered Rajagopuram, the gateway tower. The temple is closely associated with Sundarar, the Saivite saint of the 7th century, who started singing his *Tirumurai* starting with “Pitha Piraisudi” verse in this temple.³

It is in this historical temple that Lord Shiva appeared as an old man claiming Sundarar as his attendant (slave) at the time of Sundarar’s marriage ceremony. After a long dispute and a Panchayat on the issue, Lord took Sundarar to his home in Thiruvennainallur and disappeared near the sanctum sanctorum of the temple leaving His footwear-Padukas- at the entrance. The Padukas are still in the temple for the darshan of the devotees. There are three Lingas in the temple, the Vijaya linga worshipped by Arjuna seeking child boon, Sundaralingam worshipped by Devendra and Sankaralingam worshipped by Lord Vishnu.⁴

The Panchayat Mandapa where the case was argued by Lord Shiva and Sundarar is on the north of the right side of the entrance. The main Gopuram is under construction. There is a separate shrine for Goddess Mangalambikai. There are some paintings noticed in the Mughamandapam of the amman temple as well as in the wall of the Shiva temple. Thiruvennainallur was the birth place of Sadayappavallal, the great philanthropist who was instrumental for the writing Ramayana story by Kavichakravarthi Kambar.⁵

There are 109 Inscriptions copied by the Archaeological Survey of India and published in the Annual Report on Epigraphy (ARE) 1902 nos. 309-324 & 1921 nos. 420-512. The earliest Inscription datable to the Chola King Uttamachola (970-985 AD) found on the adishtana of the temple. From this we can infer that this temple was in existence before Uttamachola and reconstructed during his time. After him this temple was patronized by almost all the Chola kings and also by the Sambuvaraya chieftains.⁶
Form of Lord Shiva

Siva (Sanskrit: Siva, Meaning “auspicious one”) is a major Hindu deity, and is the destroyer god or transformer among the Trimurti, the Hindu Trinity of the primary aspects of the divine. In the Shaiva tradition of Hinduism, Shiva is seen as the supreme God. In the Smarta tradition, he is regarded as one of the five primary forms of God. Followers of Hinduism who focus their worship upon Siva are called shaiivites or Shaiva (Sanskrit Saiva). Saivism, along with Vaisnava traditions that focus on Vishnu and Sakta traditions that focus on the goddess Shakti, one of the most influential denominations in Hinduism.

Lord Siva is usually worshipped in the abstract from of Shiva linga. In Images, He is represented as a handsome young man immersed in deep meditation or dancing the Tandava upon Apasmara, the demon of ignorance in his manifestation of Nataraja, the Lord of the dance. It is said that the looks like an eternal youth because of his authority over death, rebirth and immortality. His is also the father of Gonesha and Murugan.

Adisankarar, in his interpretation of the name Shiva, the 27th and 600th name of Vishnu Sahasranama, the thousand name of Vishnu interprets shiva to have multiple meanings “The Pure One, or the one who is not affected by three Gunas of Prakrti (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas)” or the one who purifies everyone by the very utterance of his name. Swami chinmayananda, in his translation of Vishnu Sahasranama, further elaborates on that verse: Siva means the one who is eternally pure or the one who can never have any contamination of the imperfection of Rajas and Tamas.

Shiva’s role as the primary deity of Saivism is reflected in his epithets Mahadeva (Great God, Maha=Great + Deva = God), Maheshvara (“Great Lord,” Maha = “Great + Shvara = Lord”), and Parameshvara (“supreme Lord”). There are at least eight different versions of the Shiva Sahasranama, devotional hymns (stotras) listing many names of Shiva. The version appearing in Book 13 (Anusasanaparvan) of the Mahabharata is considered the kernel of this tradition Shiva also has Dasha-Sahasranamas (10,000 names) that are found in the Mahanyasa. The Shri Rudram
Chamakam, also known as Satarudriya, is a devotional hymn to shiva hailing him by many names.\(^9\)

**Bhairava in Literature**

Siva, one of the Hindu triad, is a popular god worshipped everywhere in avyakta ‘aniconi’ linga from. He is distinguished by his two main aspects viz. aumya or santa ‘mild disposition’ and ugra “fierce disposition”. In his ugra manifestain, he ties to destroy the evil for bringing cosmic amity and maintain the balance of power and in his santa aspect he offers grace to devotees, guides humanity and teaches all arts and crafts. One of the ferocious forms of Siva is Bhairava (terrible) a likely emanation of rudra (or Kalagni). The essential and fundamental from glorified in the vedas wherein Rudra is termed in similar aspects like pacific and malignant. Sarva, ugra, asani in destructive and Bhava, Sambhu, Pasupati, Mahadeva and Isana in begin aspects.\(^10\)

**Nature and forms of Bhairava**

In popular Hinduism, he is considered as Siva’s attendant (kinkara). Kalikapurana (ch. 44) states that Bhairava was one of the five leaders of Siva’s troops, the others being Nandi, Bringi, Mahakala and Vetala.\(^11\)

In Tamil tradition, he is upheld as Kuladeivam family-patron deity and figures prominently among the folk deities of the village people. He is great protector of the tribe, Mahasastra and Sarvavhapalaha.\(^12\) In the Tantric cult, he is worshipped as Svarnakarsana-Bhairava (glittering like gold) using magic formulae. Kapalikas adore this aspect of Siva with utmost devotion and it is stated in Sirutundarpuranam (25:35) that Siva took the form of a Kapalika when he entered saint sirutondar’s house to test his devotion. He is regarded as a servant or Dvarapala of Siva.

He has different titles like Kala Bhairava “one who overcame Time which was in him”, Mahakala “transcending time”\(^13\) Maha Bhairava “greatly dreadful” and brahmasivascheda “one who destroyed the insolence of Brahma by plucking or cutting off one of his heads.” In Tamil Nadu, he is called vatukar, Vatukanathan, Vatukadeva Sans. Batuka “Youthful” Vayiravan and Cattainathan, Pingala Nikantu referes to him
as Kancukan, Karimuktan, Nirvani, Cittan, Kapali, and Vatukan, one of the inscriptions of Chola period mentions him as Ksetrapla Pillaiyar. Lalitasahasranamastotra (V. 150) mentions, the name as martanda Bhairava “effulgent like surya” or possible indicating a syncretistic form of Bhairava and Surya. Lalitasahasranamamavali (v. 231) quotes that Sakti was worshipped by Mahabhairava (Mahabhairava Pujitayanamaha) and in V. Bhairava or Bhairavi. Chandika and it quotes that whoever illtreats the reciters or worshippers of hymns or goddess would be subjected to be blinded by Martanda Bhairava.

**Bhairava Sculptures in Temple Art**

The images of the ghora or ugra form, which are not associated with any particular story narrating the exploits of Siva, can be called Bhairava, Aghora, Raudra-Pasupata, Virabhadra, Virupaksa, and Kankala. Bhairava is sometimes described as Brahmasiraschedakamurti (of Siva) in some of the Puranas and Saiva agamas; these texts try do explain this aspect of Siva as cutting off one of the heads of the polycephalous Brahma, for his alleged sins and iniquities. But there is very little tangible connection between these varying myths and iconic types. The agamic texts enumerate as many as sixty-four Bhairavas divided in eight groups of eight each, the leaders of these groups being. Bhairava Images in South India

Bhairava is the fierce manifestations of Siva associated with annihilation. It is an important deity of south India. He is also considered as the guardian of temples of Lord Siva. After locking the doors of the temple of Lord Siva. The keys are ceremonially to Bhairavas and taken back in most of the Siva temples. His syncretizing worship has penetrated into all the Indian religions. Buddhism, Jainism etc. the iconography of Bhairava is best understood in the eight of the philosophical system of Saivam.

**Salient Features of Bhairava cult in Thiruvennainallur**

Bhairava, represented as a nude youth with a dog, is one of the terrific forms of Siva. Varahapurana describes the origin of Bhairava. Brahma created Rudra as the
protector of the Universe and named him Kapali. Rudra, offended by the name Kapali, cut off the fifth head of Brahma in fury with the nail of his left thumb. However the head stuck to his thumb. When Rudra sought Brahma’s advice on how to get rid of it, Brahma told him to observe the kapalika vrata. Accordingly, Rudra went to Mahendra Parvata. He wore an yajnopavita made of hair, a garland of skulls around his neck, and placed a skull on julamakuta and held a kapala in his hands. He went on a holy pilgrimage to all the sacred places, and in the twelfth year of the pilgrimage, he reached kasi (modern Varanasi) where Brahma’s head (skull) fell from his left hand. Rudra bathed in the holy Ganges and returned to kailasa.\textsuperscript{18}

Kalithogai speaks of Siva’s kapala dance.\textsuperscript{19} In this dance, siva carries the kapala in his hands. It is inferred that Bhairava was in existence during the age of Sangam. Bhairava’s iconographic forms found at Dharmaraja ratha of Mahabalipuram and Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram, confirm the worship of Bhairava during the pallava period.\textsuperscript{20} Under the cholas, Bhairava images were developed in number and stylistic characters.

Agamas recognise the sixty four different forms of Bhairva.\textsuperscript{21} Bhairava sculptures are shown in the Kripapureewar temple at Thiruvennainallur ther in a kala Bhairava sculpture in the left side niche on the entryway of the Rajagopura its belong to 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D and also standing in Samabhanga posture striking terror and are fearsome. They have four hands, each holding damaru and pasa in the back hands. While a sula and a kapala are in the front hands The hairs are adorned as Jvalakesa by a betel leaf shaped nimbus of flames with a cranium and a twisting serpent at its centre.

The hands have opened round eyes, wide nostrils, thick eye-brows, and protruding teeth. These were customary of ancient Sthapatis to introduce them in the representation of terrific themes. They have dangling makarakundalas and heavy patrakundalas attached to the right ear-lobes and the left ear-lobes respectively. They are shown wearing the sacred cord over the left shoulder, necklaces around the neck, udarabandha across the stomach, and padasaras on the feet. The two serpents with their twisted bodies, rest around his waist. The long ornamented skull and bone
garland hangs down up to the knees. Hence it come to be known as in Thiruvennainallur worship of Bhairava is very similar to the worship of divinities. There are Bhairava temples everywhere in Tamilnadu.

Conclusion

From the above mentioned stone one can infer that this temple is considered as one of the treasure houses of the richest specimen of sculptures. Thiruvennainallur. In Saiva temples Kala Bhairava is a important deity whose daily worship is must, many of the sculpture identified as Bhairava could new be identified with Ksetrapala and Kala Bhairava.
Plate No: 1. KALA BHAIRAVAR

Plate No: 2. INNER GOPURA
End Notes

1. B.S. Baliga, South Arcot, Published by Government of Madras, 1962, p. 482.
2. Ibid., p. 482.
3. www.shivatemple.com
4. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 74.
9. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
20. Ibid., p. 154.