

Terracotta Sculptures of Tamilnadu

Dr P Sirianjeevi

Asst. Professor, Dept. Of History

Sri GVG Visalakshi College for Women, Udumalpet



Aim

Our realization of the popular conception of gods and spirits, their role and relation to man, maybe better understood through a reflection.

Abstract

We see our own image in a glass or pool water and also see ourselves in other people, things and image. It is possible as well, for us to see ourselves in the images and meanings behind the village gods or grama-devatas of the Tamil people. The Tamil villagers many reflection are the same. Like all of us, may be more or less, accept or reject objectivity towards the world. The village's circumstances generally have made him less interested in objectivity. Therefore, to the villager the reflection in the water is his spirit which hunts his person either as a threatening demon. To him, other things and creatures are also reflected spirits, and, if important enough, he may assume they are gods.

The accumulation of ancestral spirits in good and evil form increases the complexity of village life, and it is not easy for a person to a know where they will be lurking, Everything the villager sees, feels, dreams, invents or imagines can be substantiated by the demon world. This world of Tamil demons is the water tank, the village boundaries the tree grove, the house, the animals, the granary; they are in the jungle and the wild animals. They are there at births, marriages and deaths. They are in the sunlight, the moonlight and the total darkness. There is always a shrine where they can be propitiated or celebrated. And this place is a link between heaven and earth. At the outskirts of the village in a tree grove and near the water tank, sometimes covering an acre or two, this place is filled with terracotta- sometimes stone and wood-horses, bulls, elephasture of nets, dogs, heroes, and gods which are related to the village deities or grama-devatas.

This purpose of this research is to give due importance to the Folk Sculpture's in Tamilnadu.

Madurai Viran

The hero of Madurai is a pivotal village god in understanding the reflective interchange of the Tamil village tradition and the Tamil centers of Hindu power and religion. He is modeled in terracotta at Tanjore oa a rambunctious steed, his sword raised in a gesture of conquest

Structurally supported by another divine demon who is possibly Munnadian. The warrior demon is worshipped by the villagers and his form is also commemorated in the great temples. As one story goes, he was the son the king of, of Banaras and was born under an unlucky star, so his father ordered his execution. Instead, he was abandoned in the forest. Later, in the realm of King pomainayakanhe fell in love with the pricess and fled with her to Madurai. After conquering Pomainayakan he reigned as King of Madurai

This story lends some support to the idea that his wife was Minakshi daughter of the king of Madurai. She was born with three breasts and adopted as the son of the king and assumed sovereignty. And conquered all neighbors and gods except Shiva. When she confronted him she lost her third breast and married him. It is conceivable that Madurai Viran is another form of Shiva, especially by the villagers, and his wife is Meenaksh

He is also known as an attendant of the fishermen's goddess whose name is Minakshi [fish-eyed]. He is also found as an attendant to many other Tamil village goddesses. The pre-eminence of the goddess in Tamil religious attitudes is expressed in the nature of his attributes

Bhairava

At the side of the Aiyanar shrine five miles east of Tindivanam a terracotta Siva in terrible and fearful form sits with his dogs who are an incarnation of shiva.Brahma and Vishnudisputed. Bhairava





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having struck Vishnu and forehead. He cut off one of Brahma's five heads and made it drink the blood of Vishnu and the dogs lapped up the blood on the ground.

In another legend he is virabhadra who severs the head of Dakshana, and is worshipped in connection with goat sacrifices. Also, locally, he becomes the somewhat disreputable demon, Madurai Viran, who attends the local goddess and to whom animal sacrifices are offered in place of goddess. Animals are not offered to Aiyandar and he is near him to provide a place for blood sacrifices

Fisherman's Aiyandar

The coastal fishermen also consider a protector of their village. The good eye motif on the elephant haunches and the breast of Aiyandar frighten evil demons by the reflection.

Seven Virgins

Also called sister and mother they are accompanied by two male attendants, placed on a stucco base and elevated above the water at Viragunar on the bank of the vaigai river, ten kilometers east of Madurai. They are thought to have indigenous origins and are referred to as sapta kannigais and kannimars. Akasa kannigais and kannimars As tutelary deities of the water tank, they are placed at the breach, When quarrelsome they stamp their feet and cause it to breach- which may be the moment of birth-but, at the same time protect the tank. Marriage vows are given to them, and married couples pray to them for a female child. Their names and numbers vary. Powers over disease, rain and the household are some of their reflections. The Pariahs frequently sacrifice buffalos, goats and fowls to them.

Generally, women protect their persons as a source of life and energy to prevent violation by evil beings and spirits. Insured purity for their future marriage and children and guarantees their progeny to be free from such things as disease, violence, deformity and evil possession. To maintain this women are compelled to get their way. Women in groups or processions- seven is a very powerful, auspicious and popular number- protect each other from molestation and violence.

The demonic spirits of these heavenly virgins may possess the Dravidian villager thereby influencing the perpetuation of the family or clan of the village. If the evil or dark side of these virgins is provoked or someone comes upon them while they are in procession around the village, dire effects may result and the safety of their lives may be jeopardized. Ultimately, the whole village may be possessed by the virgins evil side and the effects may be felt by future generation. As seven Mothers they have much the same characteristics. Having children and maintaining the family makes their concern directed to the purity of both themselves and their families.

Serpent shrine

The naga shrine with white terracotta Ganesh is at sanjavdi east of Salem. A Naga or serpent is the village genie who guards treasures and is thought to be a person of wealth, who dies without enjoying it. He is also without children to which to pass it on. Barren women may believe they have killed a serpent in a former life and perform a ceremony called Naga pratishtha to have children and to avoid ultimately becoming a Naga. At the shrine, as Lord of the Ganas-that may be interpreted as Asuras-include Nagas; as Lord of Categories which includes accounting for the soul of men; and as a god to make all undertakings go well, his image and Brahmanic attributes are auspiciously included to embellish local cults. The small clay temple is likely for the goddess of the site and is created with Ganesh by the emanation of Prajapati Lord of Progeny the potter.

Mari Amman

She is a Tamil Dravidian goddess whose image is made by potter at Tanjore. She is worshipped as the main deity of the shrine away from the seven sisters. Her power is much more vindictive and inexorable and she may choose to inflict disease. She is dreaded and must be propitiated by animal sacrifice to keep things right in the village. Sheep blood and rice are spread in the four corners of her shrine, and the Pujari walks on coals in front of her image. There are many other names of goddesses whose concerns overlap or are more specialized. Any that happens in the village is watched over by a goddess.





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Kudaraais

The terracotta horse is the most numerous and widely used motif found at the rural shrine in Tamil Nadu and all over India. The horse is closely related to the chieftains or kings, who were lords of the villages within their domain. On the equestrian mounts they protected their territory and attacked other areas by performing heroic exploits and conquering all foes. Their great strength, power, virility and prowess make them gods to the villagers. To die in battle is a supreme sacrifice worthy of deification. However, their equestrian battle mount is also worthy of sacred attention. The day horses offered by the village donors are. in one sense. a version of this sacrifice. They see the clay horse as a heavenly reflection of the demon warrior's protective powers for the welfare and procreation of the village. These caparisoned steeds are modeled with harnesses of bells., mirrors,faces of Kirtimukha and Makaras to accentuate reflect Kunna –Kannadi and terrorize in order to drive away evil spirits and to confuse the enemy.

They are mounted by the generals of Aiyandar, the Commander of the demon hosts. who comes out of heaven to protect the village from the evil demons.

Horses are also offered to the goddess of a shrine or sometimes to male deities. Most of the Shrines with horses are very close to the water tank on the out-skirts of the village, which is a vital resource that requires watching as it is also a source of fertility.

Sometimes the goddess rides a horse but more often they are for the male deity or spirits attending her. Generally the horses are offering of a villager to acquire and type of good luck. In a shrine two kilometers north of Arantangi are some of the tallest larger than life horses [15 ft] which exaggerates their heavenly origins. Sirunathur in the rural environs of Thiruvannamalai,ten kilometers east we see two views of magnificently and beautifully modeled steeds white – washed and painted, with gheru. A head detail from Kumaramangalam whose aging iron reds reflect the autochthonic spirit of the place

Sri Perungaraiyadi Meenda Ayyanar Temple

The famous temple in Pudukkottai District, Tamil Nadu. It is located at Kulamangalam in Alangudi Taluk. The temples history is dated back to 18th century. The exact year in which the temple is constructed is not known. The temple is currently maintained by the Tamil Nadu State Government. Like in many Ayyanar temples, this temple also located in the border of the village as a means of securing and assuring wealth and health for all. The temple is in the bank of Villuni River.

An elephant idol facing opposite the horse idol

As per the researchers, there used to be a big Elephant idol facing opposite to the Horse idol in this Temple. This was considered one of the significance of this Temple, since it is very rare practice to construct an Elephant idol in an Ayyanar (The Horse) Temple that too facing opposite of the Horse idol. It was learned that during one of the heavy monsoon season, the flood in the Villuni River had completely destroyed the Elephant idol thus by leaving only the base of the Elephant idol. This temple takes in Tamil Nadu government.

World biggest horse idol

The Horse Idol is of mammoth 37 feet height with the front legs are in the Air and the others in the ground. The Idol is facing the South side. It's one of the finest creative of the ancient Tamilians. The structure is so unique in its construction and Devotees believe that it is the biggest Horse idol in the world.

Conclusion

Folk sculpture is an art form which is folkloristic in nature. Folk sculpture is a pure Indian art form in all aspects .It has an important role in festivals especially in villages. This art is famous particularly in Tamil Nadu.Folk sculpture has worshipped by non Brahmins.

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