Chapter IV

STONE SCULPTURE

The Vatakkunathan temple complex has icons, sculptures in stone, terra-cotta, bronze and in wood. The wood carvings form a significant part of the art treasure and, therefore, has been dealt with in Chapter VI. Other sculptures are limited in number but there is variety in design, conception and execution.

The forms of the presiding deity may be classified as dhruvabhēra (the movable), kautuka (small idol used for archana and abhishēka), balibhēra (the small idol that offers food to the subordinate entities), snāpanabhēra (constantly in the temple) and utsavabhēra (the medium sized idol which is used for outward processions, festivals and decoration). Nevertheless, only one form is found in Kerala, i.e. the dhruvabhēra or mūlavigraha which is the object of veneration and worship. Those idols are enshrined in the temple and as such no photograph is allowed.

The temple complex is popularly known as Vatakkunāthan the Lord of the north. The presiding deity of the northernmost shrine is Siva. The form, whether aniconical or iconical cannot be seen, for, the whole place is covered with solidified ghee offered to the deity. As early as 10th October, 1925, it was reported that the sacred place was completely covered by large quantities of ghee. It is more than five decades since

2. The same is the case at Suchindram; see Pillai, K.K., op. cit., p.403.
the publication of the report and the idol is further subjected to more doses of offerings from devotees. There is a pitha of granite which could be felt with the help of a broach but nothing more than the pitha can be seen except the solidified dairy product.\footnote{\ref{footnote:1}} I could gather from the oldest old savant that the pitha itself constituted the idol and that there was no linga over it.\footnote{\ref{footnote:2}}

The earliest literary reference to this temple is found in the \textit{Tirukailayā -jñānāula},\footnote{\ref{footnote:3}} a composition in Tamil by Ceraman Perumal who refers to \textit{Kailaya Nath} as Siva, lord of Kailasa.\footnote{\ref{footnote:4}} No reference is made to the form of the idol installed and, therefore, it is impossible to verify the existence or non-existence of the linga.

Chronologically, the next reference is the inscriptive evidence which belongs to the eleventh century.\footnote{\ref{footnote:5}} It speaks of Triccivaperur. The Sanskrit equivalent of Tricciva is Sri Siva. Perur means big village. By the turn of the eleventh century, the presiding deity seems to have been established as Siva. Trissivaperur is one of the 64 big villages chronicled by the traditional lore. The inscription helps fix the date of construction but does not throw light on the form of the image.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{The Nambutiri priest was kind enough to demonstrate it.}
\item \footnote{Pisharoti, K.R.'s observation was similar.}
\item \footnote{\textit{Vide} Chapter I, p.10.}
\item \footnote{Krishna Ayyar, K.V., \textit{History of Kerala} (Coimbatore, 1968), p.112.}
\item \footnote{\textit{Vide} Chapter on Administration.}
\end{itemize}
The temple is also referred to in the *Kokilasandesa* of Uddanda Sastri (1467-1475) A.D. a doyen among the Court scholars of the Zamorin Mana Vikrama. While giving the description of the temple and the deity, the poet says: "There the god has assumed the twin body to see the back and front parts of his consort simultaneously; he was confused at seeing the front part bent due to the heavy breasts and the back without it."¹ This anthropomorphic form of the deity is nothing but the frenzied imagination of the poet, who otherwise does not say anything about the form.

The *Tenkaila nāyodayam* is the next literary source for this temple. The poet Nilakantha Kavi gives the origin of the temple as follows: "Parasurama flung his parasu (axe) reclaimed a land which gave to the Brahmins who approached him for help. He wanted Lord Siva to grace his new reclaimed strip of land and, therefore, he persuaded the Lord to grace the land. The lord with all his pageantry marched towards the land but Nandi, the divine vehicle, stopped at a particular place where the whole train came to a pause. The spot where the Nandi stood along with the gods is the place of the temple. Since vrsabha was the first to see the place, the name of the place is Vrsabhapuri and the lord is known as Vrsabhesvara. Since the Lord himself decided to stay, the Kailasa has come to the south and, therefore, the place is known

as Tenkailäsa (Ten means south in Tamil). The Lord took the form of Jvotirlinga. King Veera Kerala prostrates before It, singing the glory of Tenkailasanäth. We come across a reference to the form as jyotirlinga.¹

There is a view that the temple might be originally a Buddhist stūpa.² The arguments put forth are that there is not linga, instead there is only a pitha. Secondly, in this temple, a devotee cannot observe pradəṣa fast. But these are not sufficient to substantiate the view that the temple was originally a Buddhist shrine. In the absence of any particular structure which proclaims its association with Buddhism, we cannot accept this point of view.

There is another view that the fane of Vatakunathan could be built on the remains of Saint Parasurama.³ It has been brought to light that some of the temples in Tamilnadu and Kerala were built over the samādhis of the most revered saints. For example, the Tirupati Venkatesvara temple is built over the samadhi of Konganan, Srirangam over Catamuni, Palani over Bhogar, Ramesvaram over Patanjali, Matrbbhutesvaram of Tiruvannamala over Ramana Maharshi’s mother and Trivandrum Padmanabhasvami over Kumbha Muni.⁴ A theory has been put forth regarding the origin of the temples as funerary monuments to perpetuate ancestral worship. While interpreting the origin

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4. Menon, K.K., Daksinändiyile kastrangal, (N.B.S. Kottayam, 1971)
of Aihole temples, it has been suggested that 'it would be reasonable to think that the temple like structures of Aihole, Pattadakkal and Tigowa are in fact memorial monuments. If we accept this theory, the problem would be to find out to whose memory the shrine is built. To fix it as that of Parasurama, the eponymous hero will be unhistorical as the character is a mythological one. In fact every temple, whether big or small in Kerala, takes pride in associating with Parasurama, as is the case with Agastya in Tamilnadu. Even if we accept the view, Parasurama is a Ciranjivi, living even now in Mahendrapuram. There is also a tradition that Shankaracharya shed his mortal remains in the precincts of the temple. The traditional account was corroborated by a literary work found in a manuscript by a State Archaeologist. The temple complex has a 'square structure dedicated to him whose presence is represented by a sankhu and chakra in front of the Shankaranarayana temple. We may, therefore, argue that the shrine was built to the memory of Shankaracharya.

However, if the object of worship is a pitha, as observed by Mr. Pisharoti, it might be pada of Siva, as the documents refer to pada mūla. The conception is unique and, therefore, we have to search for parallels if, any, in the State itself.

The Hemambika Bhagavati temple at Kallekulanagara, district Pal-__


2. Pillai, K.K., op. cit., p. 11.

ghat, where goddess is represented by two forearms only with spread out fingers, is the family shrine of the erstwhile Rajas of Palghat. It is on record that one Palghat Raja worshipped Vatakunāthan for procuring an offspring. When a son was born to him, the Raja assumed the title of "Sekhari-varma" as a token of his gratitude towards Siva.¹ There are three temples in Palghat district dedicated to Siva but tradition has associated with same organic parts of Siva the following temples:—

1. Siva Temple, Tripavallur, Alatur, district Palghat, is associated with Pada of Siva.
2. Siva temple, Pallavur, district Palghat, with teeth, and
3. Siva temple, Ayaloor, district Palghat, with the hands of Siva.

All these temples are located within a radius of four miles. The name of Alatur has been suddenly catapulted to the historical map of ancient Kerala, thanks to an inscription found here. It refers to Gunavayilkottan, where Ilango, the author of the epic Silappatikāram, composed his masterpiece.² There is a temple at Kattussery, one mile west of Alatur, dedicated to Devar of Trikanavu.

The Trippavallur temple shows some features of the

Vatakkanāthan temple. It is situated on the banks of the Gayatri river and consists of temples of three principal deities, viz. Siva, Krishna and Narasimha. The former two shrines are square dvitala, while the latter one is circular ekatala. The temple complex has a mural painting on the inner southern wall of cuttambalam depicting Vāsukisavana which is found in Vatakkanāthan also.

From the above examples, it would appear that there exists a tradition to represent Siva by his organic parts though in some cases, the aniconic forms are also seen. It is, therefore, likely that the same pītha was converted as the pada of Siva and become the object of worship. Hence the name of the temple as Pādamula.

The worship of pada is not restricted to Kerala but was in vogue in the mainland also. The Minakshi temple, Madurai, has a palliyarai (room for rest) where no idol is kept. Normally one can expect the idols representing Sundaresvara and Minakshi in the room. But there is only a pāda kept for worship. To understand and appreciate this phenomenon, we have to seek the philosophy behind it.

An idol or vigraha represents a symbolic concretization of the abstract, absolute and for a definite period. The absolute is beyond the comprehension by the mind to render it

1. See Chapter on 'Painting'.
2. Menon, K.K., Daksinendiyile ksetrangal, p.106.
comprehensible. It has to be concretized just as sound waves are concretized and represented in the form of an undulatory line.\textsuperscript{1} If the god principle is transferred in the medium of idol or \textit{vigraha} and worship is offered to such idol, it is known as \textit{sarupa} worship.

Human beings are classified into three groups: those in whom the faculty of intellect and reasoning is dominant; those in whom emotion plays the highest role; those that are controlled by their impulses and instincts.\textsuperscript{2} The last category is composed of children or those with underdeveloped mind and they cannot think. The bulk of humanity resorts to the mental and mechanical measures to stimulate their emotions to the desired strength. To them \textit{sarupa} worship is possible and advisable. To the first group, abstract thinking is easy and they find satisfaction in rational philosophy. To them \textit{arupa} worship is possible. The people belonging to the second group can be elevated to the level of first by performing the \textit{arupa} worship.\textsuperscript{3} The worship of \textit{linga} or \textit{pitha} is \textit{arupa} worship.

So after having worshipped Sundaresha and Minaksi in benign attributes of \textit{sarupa} worship, the earnest devotee would have undergone necessary changes in his mental make up, shedding all his dross and will be in a position to comprehend


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
and worship the *pada*, an *arupa*\(^1\) attribute. Similarly the *pitha* in Vatakunathan is an *arupa* attribute of Siva. Ritualistically, therefore, the worship offered here is *arupa* which can be either to the *Linga*, if not to *pitha* or *pada*. Perhaps this philosophy may be the reason for the absence of any image and also the absence of *Nandi* in front. But, however, later additions of Parvati and two Nandis yonder, have lowered the philosophical content of *arupa* worship into *sarupa* one. It is this philosophical condescension which is the clue to the mysteries with regard to the Tenkailanathan or Vatakunathan. (Lord of southern Kailas or Lord of north).

**PARVATI**

The *vigraha* of Parvati is installed on the rear side of the Vatakunathan separated by the eastern wall of the inner square structure.\(^2\) The orientation is towards east where the outer circular wall is scooped to provide a door. There is no balustrade for the priest to reach the idol and instead a stepping stone is kept. Such improvised and crude arrangement smacks of the late installation of the icon. Otherwise, there would certainly be an integrated balustrade like that of the western *naga*.

The granite idol is about five feet in height in

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2. Vide Chapter on 'Architecture'.
the samabhanga pose. The goddess has two hands, the right one in abhaya-mudra and the left in varada. She has elongated eyes with a long prominent nose. She wears a conical kirita on head and a pair of large studs in ears. There are four rows of chain lifted by the contour of the kuchabhāra and a katisutra on the waist securing her dress which has frills and is tucked at the back. She also wears anklets. The profuse ornamentation exhibits the dexterity of the artist whose mastery in plasticity is revealed in the softness of the abdomen and attenuated waist. The icon is worshipped as Parvati.

From the features of the icon mentioned above, we cannot ascribe it to the eleventh century, when the shrine was rebuilt or built. The eleventh century examples of the dvārapālas are stylistically different. The profuse ornamentation and drapery have similarity with those of the Nayaka statuary. Almost similar are the sculptures in the astamandapa which was built by the queen of Tirumalai Naickar of Madurai during 1623-1659 A.D. ²

From the mature classical tradition represented by the dvārapālas of the Kaviyur cave temple³, there seems to have been a stunted progress till the sixteenth century, when one comes across a resurrection in the plastic art from

1. Vide Chapter on 'Architecture'.
2. Menon, K.K., op.cit., p.192, photoplate X.
3. Kramarisch, Stella, and others, op.cit., photoplate XXI(a) assigned to the eighth century A.D.
Suchindram (now in Tamilnadu) to Kozhikode Tali. In between the output is meagre and unimpressive. The Trichur Museum has a broken idol of Kaumari assigned to the eleventh century A.D. Sitting in the *lalitasana* pose, she wears a conical *mukuta*, *kundalas* and anklets. Two arms are seen while the right leg is broken and worn out. Less finished and lesser sophisticated, the image seems to compensate in the full breasts which have no *kuchabandha* and a shapely waist. Similar is the image of Brahma in the same museum with lesser perfection of the twelfth century. The Vijayanagar period shows an elaboration of details, unknown to the earlier period. Their successors, the Nayakas, continued the same tradition in architecture and sculpture. The last flicker of the work of the Vijayanagar sculpture is to be seen in the *pudumandapa* (ashtamandapa) of Madurai. Stylistically, therefore, the image of Parvati has more affinity to the Nayakas style and hence, we can date it to the seventeenth century.

The earliest literary reference to Parvati is to be found only in the *Kōkilasandēśa*, i.e. of the fifteenth

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2. Kramarisch, Stell, and others, *op.cit.*, photoplate XXI(b)
3. *Ibid*, photoplate XXX(b)
century. According to the poet, "the Kökila is to be greeted by the breeze carrying the fragrant foam from the mouth of the divine Bull of Siva and scented with the touch of the wavy locks of Parvati sporting on the lap of her husband consecrated at Vrsabhapuri (Trichur).

There is a traditional report that the goddess enshrined in the temple and popularly looked upon as Parvati has nothing to do with the deity in front; it is only the family goddess of the priest of the Matam. This view of the traditional account also supports the fact that the idol was installed later.

Literary evidence confirms that the vigraha is not earlier than the fifteenth century; the tradition assigns it to as late as the eighteenth century, whereas stylistically it may belong to the seventeenth century.

SANKARANARAYANA

In the central circular shrine, the deity is a syncretistic one, worshipped as Sankaranarayana or Harihara. The vigraha is vertically divided into two parts, the right for Sankara and the left for Narayana. The right side of the head has jatā-mukuta and no kundala, the right hands holding parasu(axe) and a trident (which can be removed). The left

1. Unni, N., Kokila sandses of Uddanda, pp.12, 40 and 73. slokas 82 and 83.
side has kirita, kundala hands holding a conch and mace. The idol about five feet in height, has all the iconographical attributes of Harihara.¹

The concept of Harihara (Sankaranarayana, as popularly called in Kerala) is a compromise to prevent those who fight in the name of Hari or Hara. Many a mythological legend have woven around the origin of this syncretistic god.² Siva has the unique credit of having given his better-half, half of his body and, thus, the Ardhanāri form was formed, to show to the devotees that they are inseparable as the word and meaning. The form of Harihara is an extension of the same concept of reconciliation of different cults. The image of Harihara like that of Ardhanareśvara is a visible symbol of the doctrine of reconciliation.³ In front of Hara (Siva) the patron god of erotic and ascetics, Hari is considered feminine. There is an allusion in the Ramayana in which Sita herself refers to Rama as a 'strīyam purusā vigraham'. Hence the form of Harihara is a composite of masculine and feminine principles or the Purusā and Prakṛti, like Ardhanārisvāra.

There is also another interpretation from the material point of view. The Harihara cult was prominent from the ninth

² Ibid, p.335 and 338.
³ Majumdar, R.C., "Evolution of religio-philosophical cult in India", Cultural heritage of India, Vol.IV, p.50.
century onwards but failed to reconcile the growing antegonism between two different classes of larger and smaller land-hold­ers which appeared as theological quarrel between the worshipp­ers of Siva (former) and Vishnu (latter). A big move to combine the two deities into one as Harihara failed though the much earlier hermaphroditic combination of Siva with Parvati had succeeded.¹

However, the situation was different in Kerala where all the Perumals (emperor) of the second Chera dynasty were ecletic unlike some of the Pallava, Chola or Pandya Kings of Tamilnadu. The concept of Sankaranarayana was accepted and popularised as can be seen from the names of the courtiers. One of the authorities in astrology and astronomy of the ancient Kerala was Sankaranarayana (825-900) who adorned the court of Ravi Varma.² His greatest contribution was an ob­servatory to study stellar movements and the arrangement of ringing bells, exactly at particular period to show the time.

The earliest plastic representation of Harihar is found in the Badami caves. The Chera emperors were quick to borrow it as is evident from the number of temples dedicated to Sankaranarayana like Peruvanam, in Trichur district, and Tiruvegappaura in Palghat district.

The earliest literary reference to Sankaranarayana is found in the poem Tenkailanāthōdayam. According to the composition, after having decided to dwell at Vrsabhapuri, Siva requested Vishnu to be near Him and Vishnu occupied, therefore, the southernmost position. Siva also wanted that there must be union of both Himself and Vishnu for those human beings who consider that they are two different gods. As ordained by Siva, both the gods joined in the form of Sankaranarayana to bless the devotees.

That the shrine enjoyed special importance can be judged from a peculiar practice followed in yester-years. The convicts condemned to be hanged used to be brought in front of this deity for the last prayer and taken out through the southern Gopuram where 'once was the abode of denizens' known as tekkinkadu (forest full of teakwood). Probably it might be due to the belief that if one worshipped Sankaranarayana, he would be serving the twin purpose of worshipping two gods. This practice of the yester-years bears testimony to the popularity of Sankaranarayana.

Although the literary evidence of Harihara takes us to fifteenth century, it may not be so late. In front of this shrine, to the right of the entrance of cuttambalam,

1. Tenkailanathodayam, p.21.
2. Ibid, sloka No.62.
there is an inscription which can be assigned to the twelfth century. As discussed in the chapter on 'architecture' this shrine is coeval with that of the Vaṭakkunāthan and the vigraha is also coeval i.e. of the twelfth century.

RAMA

The presiding deity in the southernmost shrine is Rama, one of the ten avatāras (incarnations) of Vishnu. The vigraha is about four feet in height in standing samabhanga posture. In the left hand He holds a bow (which can be removed), The deity is worshipped as Rama, even though the requisite iconographical details are absent.

Since the deity has only two hands. We cannot rule out the possibility of the icon being that of Vishnu Himself with two hands. The earliest mention of Vishnu is in the Adi-parva of Bhagavata wherein Narayana is described as having a disc and mace, implying thereby only two hands. The Brhat-samhitā, Vishnudharmottara, Matsyapurāṇa and the Samarāṅgana-sūtradhāra also support this. The image of Rama has only two hands and the removable bow, may be a later addition to associate and confirm the deity as Rama.

Iconographically, Rama must stand in tribhanga holding the arrow in the right hand and a bow in the left hand.

1. Vide Chapter on 'Administration' for full details.
3. Ibid.
The shrine of Rama is to be built in the south east corner of a Vishnu temple. In the shrine so situated, standing image of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman should be set up. This icon of Rama does not have any of the characteristics of the posture nor has the company of consort, brothers or Hanuman, along with Him. Especially the idol of His most faithful servant Hanuman is nowhere seen, either as a kōśtha-devata or as pari-dēvata. The kōśtha-devatas, on the first storey, are sitting Vishnu, Garudarudha Vishnu and two figures which are worn out. On the second tala, there are Narasimha, Siva, Brahma and a weathered image. These dēvatas do not afford any clue to the sectarian cult of Rama.

The literary evidence found in the Tenkailanāthōdayam speaks of Vishnu and not of Rama. "As desired by Siva, Vishnu occupied the southernmost position and became Tekkunāthan (Lord of the South)." Further, the King prays, "Thou art sun to lotus; a crimson dawn to destroy the darkness of the sins of the devotees; an ocean which bears all the living being: the Moon in emitting glows of grace; Brahma in Satva state; and Siva in offering the desired object." The text does not speak of Rama though it says that Parasurama was the main architect in bringing his preceptor to Trichur from

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1. Ibid.
2. Tenkailanathodayam, slokas 60 and 61, pp.20-21.
Kailasa. Hence the reference to Vishnu and not to Rama either by name or by implication. The popularity of Vaishnava gods gathered momentum from sixteenth century onwards due to the yeoman service rendered by savants like Tuncatha Ezhuthacan, Kunjan Nambiar, Puntanam Nambutiri. The <em>Adhyatma Ramayanam</em>, a composition in Malayalam, earned its author Tuncatha the title of the father of Malayalam literature. During the regime of Saktan Tamburan, the Madhvas influenced the members of the Royal family much to the discomfort of the redoubtable King who could not stem the tide. The cult of Rama and Krishna became popular. Might be that this temple also had to move with the current of the time during the eighteenth century.

There are instances of Vishnu temple converted into Rama and Lakshmana shrines. The classic examples are the twin temples at Tiruvillanala. They are square dvitala temples built adjacently, one facing the east and the other west. The icon facing east has four hands with padma, chakra in the right hands and sankhu and gada on the left identifiable as chatur-bhuja Vishnu. The icon in the west has four hands holding the same weapons, but flanked by Bhudevi and Sri Devi and the whole family is shown to be protected by the five-hooded Ananta. Unmistakably both the icons are those of Vishnu in different postures. But the enthusiastic cult of Rama and Lakshmana

1. See Chapter I, p.50.

2. <i>Souvenir of Tiruvillamala Sri Vilvärināthan</i>, (Tiruvillamala, 1972) p.3, and photoplates I and II.
converted them as Lakshmana facing the east and Rama facing the west, though there is no change with regard to rituals or other ceremonies related to Vishnu. Since the temples of Tiruvillamala were also under the administrative control of the Cochin royal family, the influence of the Madhvas extended there during the eighteenth century.

GANAPATI

An idol of Ganapati is enshrined in a square structure in between the shrines of Vatakkunatha and Sankaranarayana.1 The God is shown in lalitasana facing east with his trunk towards his left holding pāsam and ankusām in the rear hands and a broken hasti and mōdakam on his frontal hands. His protruding belly has a nāgabandha tied around it.

Ganapati has epithets like Vighneshvar2, Ekadanta,3 and Lambodara4 and mythological legends are diverse and often conflicting in the Puranas. The shrine of Ganapati has to be situated in the south-western part of the Siva temple.5 In this regard, the position of Ganapati in this temple is in accordance with the canons of sculpture.

1. See Chapter on 'Architecture'.
5. Ibid, p.49.
The earliest image of Ganesha is from Sankisa which is exhibited now in the Museum Fur Volker Kunde. Although He became popular much later, He was worshipped and propitiated at the beginning of every religious ceremony.

Adjacent to the shrine of Ganapati, there is a rectangular structure which has an inscription belonging to the twelfth century. It is reasonable to think that this was the shrine of the Saptamatrikas. Usually the seating arrangement of the Saptamatrikas is that it starts from Virabhadra, the seven Goddesses and Ganapati, in a straight line or the seven goddesses forming a straight line; Ganapati would be seated in front of Chamundi and Virabhadra in front of Brahmi. At present the rectangular structure is used as a store-room to keep coconuts as the inmates are thrown out of the nālambalam. The sacrilege committed by an iconoclast has already been referred to in the previous chapter. In September, 1776, Hyder Ali camped near the temple. The temple priests took refuge in Cennamangalam. When they returned after a month they found everything in tact. But on 14th Dec., 1789, Tippu Sultan converted the temple as his temporary Head Quarters for opera-
tion and the havoc wrought by him and his men cannot be narrated in any medium of communication.¹

It is, therefore, likely that the iconoclast was Tippu Sultan who removed the images of the goddesses along with Ganapati and Virabhadra. A new image of Ganapati was made after his retreat and installed in a new structure built in front of the rectangular structure. The present image of Ganapati has kirita, nāgabandha of the decadent Nayaka style.²

**VETTAKARAN**

Towards the north of Vatakkunathan, there is an idol of Vettakaran about one foot in height and enshrined in a small structure by partitioning the veranda of the cuttambalam. It is worshipped as Vettakaran which means a hunter. The deity is also referred to as Vettakaruman (black hunter) or Vettakorumakan (son of a hunter) or Kiratamūrti in Sanskrit.

He is worshipped more in the northern parts of Kerala than in the southern parts of the State. Kiratamurti is none else but Siva Himself who wanted to bless His devotee Arjuna, disguised as a hunter.³ He was granted the weapon Pāśupata, a formidable one, to be used against his cousins in the great battle.⁴

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¹ Ibid, p.172.

² Since photography of the idol was not possible a photo of the dvarapalakas of Ganapati is taken. It has all the attributes of Ganapati. See Pl.16. Another photograph of idol for Pudiyankon, district Palghat, for comparison, see Pl.17.


As in south India, the *Kirātārajuniyam* has been found as popular theme for Kerala artists who carved it in stone, metal, modelled in wood and also painted in murals. The earliest representation comes from Vilinjam cave where the *mūrti* is in a standing posture. He has four arms, the frontal two holding an arrow, the rear right holds something which cannot be identified but the left holds an axe. The bow is kept between the frontal arms, on the left shoulder. The left foot is raised, bent and kept on a dwarf, the right is firm on the earth. The mobile stance and grace of this sculpture has affinity with that of the Pandyas as the southern parts of Travancore were ruled by Ay kings who had to either befriend or confront the Pandyas. But the plastic tradition of the Pandyas was accepted.

Another scholar has identified it as Tripurantaka. But Tripurantaka as a concept was rarely represented in the state of Kerala whereas *Kirāta* is found throughout the state. Hence this image is *Kirātamūrti*. The form of the Vettakkaran of the late centuries, has been evolved from this form and is stylised to-day.

During the days of the Perumals, we seldom come

across this deity. After the disintegration of the Perumal's empire, the rulers of Cochin, Ernad and the Zamorins have accepted Vettakkaran, as one of their family deities. From the sylvan surroundings, the deity gained prominence in the Tantric fold due to the fact that the god was the *Ishta devata* of Cennos Narayana Nambutiri, who composed the work *Tantrasamuccayam*. The Vettakkaran continues to hold the same position even to-day.

Iconographical details have undergone changes as centuries rolled by. The icon in question (Pl.20) is in standing *samabhanga* pose, holding a bow and an arrow in left hand, while the right hand is akimbo. The left arm is lifted up to the level of the chest, holding the upper middle portion of the bow. The head dress is a *kirita* which is conventionalised by the art form of Kathakali. Usually the stance of Vettakkaran is that he holds the bow by the outstretched left hand, the tip of it (and not the upper middle portion as this image does) while the other end of the bow is on a *pitha* on which he stands. Some of the most important temples where these specimens are found are:

The Pudiyankam (Alatur), Nemmara, both in the district of Palghat; Nilambur, Andaladi near Pattambi, both in Malappuram

2. Vide ante p.25.
and Balussery in Cannanore district.\(^1\) (Pl.21).

However, the improvised structure speaks of the late arrival. Since there are no sources to fix the date, we have to rely on circumstantial evidence. The Zamorin was responsible for bringing this deity in the complex when performed special pujas during 1753-1757.\(^2\)

**KRISHNA (VENUGOPALA)**

Beyond the Vilakkumāṭam to the right of the temple, is a dravida shrine, the image in which is worshipped as Venugopala Krishna.\(^3\) The icon about three feet high holding conch and *padma* in the right hands; *chakra* and *gada* in the left hands. Other details cannot be studied.

Venugopala has to be depicted with *Venu* (flute) in hand in the performing posture flanked by cows and *gopis*, along with him. The iconographical details of this idol do not conform to that of Venugopala but it had the attributes of Vishnu.

The concept of Krishna as a divine sporting child, was popularised by Kulasekhara Perumal through his composition *Mukunda-Māla,*\(^3\) but the state had to wait for half a millennium to revive the concept. The Bhakti cult started by the religious reformers extolled the virtue of devotion and popularised both

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1. See photograph 21. This image was carved by the Balussery artists in 1924 and consecrated in Pudiyankam temple.
2. See chapter I, p.44-45.
the cults of Rama and Krishna. While the Vishnu shrine of the main temple complex was converted into that of Rama, this idol was accepted as Krishna or Venugopala, though the latter remained the same, in iconographical details. \textsuperscript{1} A concrete example of Tiruvillamalai has already been discussed. \textsuperscript{2} Another example of Krishna as a Parivāradeśvata is the Gosala Krishna of the Padmanabhasvami complex, Trivandrum. An inscription found on the northern wall dates it to the late fourteenth century A.D. \textsuperscript{3} Like this shrine in Vatakkunathan complex, the style of Gosala Krishna is also a Dravida from the base to the stūpi. Similar in style and camouflaged by another rectangular structure is the Krishna temple of Ambalapula which came into prominence during the eighteenth century due to the association of the poet Kunchan Nambiar. \textsuperscript{4}

From all the available examples of the association of the concept of Krishna with this image, it may be inferred that the image belongs to not earlier than fourteenth century.

\textbf{UDARĀMUKHESVARA}

Beyond the Vilakkumadām towards the east, there is a square dvitala, enshrining Udaramukhesvara facing west. The iconography of this image is rather uncommon in the sense that the idol is in standing posture, holding a trident in the right hand and a bowl in the left. It has a bulging belly on which there is a numinous face with projected canine teeth. It has

\textsuperscript{1} Vide, p\textsuperscript{129}.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{4} Ayyar, Krishna K.V., \textit{op.cit.}, p.375.
a ferocious look exhibiting the devilish quality of the deity.

With a trident and bowl, we can identify an image as that of Bhikshātanamūrti. We cannot identify this image as Bhikshātanamūrti because of the bloated belly which is a paradox for the form of a beggar who is depicted as lean and emaciated. We can find similarity with regard to certain features of Kṣhētrapāla (guardian of the temple). The iconographical details of a Sātvika-Kṣhētrapāla are trident and bowl in the two hands with side tusks (teeth) exhibiting pacific look. The dissimilarities are more and hence this image cannot be that of Kṣhētrapāla. We have a literary reference to a creature in Ramayana wherein it is described as a demon whose head is in the stomach. "Udaremukha motif is seen at Amravati and Ajanta, became popular in Chalukyan and Pallava sculptures, reached the distant Prambanan in Java". Since it is a demon, this image cannot be of that demon, since the deity is worshipped as a Dēvā.

A ritual so funny to be performed in front of the deity is that not to fold the hands for worship but to clap the hands and the devotee has to look and see the stūpi of Vaṭakkunāthan, through a crevice as though to redeem the sin or heinous deed committed by him. Besides, another ritual is to keep a stone just outside the shrine to the left of it. The idol is a complex one and, therefore, its identification

is a problem as there are no known parallels in the State.

**SASTA OR AYYAPPAN**

Towards the south of the temple complex, a small apsidal structure enshrining the deity known as Ayyappan. This deity is practically unknown to the regions north of the river Godavari, and is less popular in the eastern coast but extremely popular in the western coast. It is the only god, whose followers profess and practise castlessness in the whole range of modern Hindu religious sects. According to the statistics taken by us, more than ten lakh devotees worshipped the Ayyappan of Sabarimala (Kerala) in 1978.

Ayyappan has epithets like Hariharaputra, Dharma-sasta and Arya. Ayyanar is the Tamil version of Ayyappan. According to the tradition of Kerala, Ayyappan was born to Hara through Hari who disguised as Mohini, the enchanting damsel who outwitted the demons and brought back the ambrosia to the Devas. Through the union of Hari and Hara, a boy was born as Ayyappan. He was brought up by the King of Pantala and built a temple at Sabarimala, in the dense forest of Kerala.

The Mohini episode is referred to in the Bhagavata-purana and other *Silpa* texts. The *Amarakōsha* refers to Sasta as Buddha. According to the *Suprabhādāgama*, he should have two eyes and two hands holding vajradanda in one of the forearms, must sit in *vīrasana* posture. *Vajradanda* is the weapon

attributed to Buddha or Bodhisatva. The form of Buddha conceived and worshipped in Tamil country might have been included in the Hindu pantheon and puranic story invented to accommodate in the Hindu iconology.¹ In the later middle ages, Jayadeva accepted Buddha as one of the Avatāras of Vishnu.

The Padmasamhita states that puja should be performed by a parasāva (an anuloma born of Brahmin father and a Sudra mother).² There were many Ayyappa Embrans (priests for the worship of Ayyappa),³ in Kerala attached to the temple during the twelfth century. That the Sasta temples were built outside the Vilakkumadam is a pointer to the degradation in status partly due to the association of Buddhism and partly to the low caste priests, when compared to the high caste Nambutiri. This temple for Sasta is no exception.

This idol is in sitting posture, left hand stretched down while right hand is shown as resting on the right thigh. Generally a yoqapatta is shown as is soon in other Sasta icons but is conspicuous by its absence in this idol. He wears no crown but a jatāmukuta. The form of architecture of the shrine in which Sasta is installed is gajaprsthā locally known as Mikkālāvaṭtam.⁴ To-day Ayyappa cult is so popular that there are Muslims and Christians amongst his devotees.

¹ Ibid, p.488
² Ibid, p.487
³ Vide chapter on 'Administration'.
⁴ Pillai, E.K., Malayalabhashayute vikasa parinamangal, p.84.
SAPTAMATRKAS (Seven Mother Goddesses)

Towards the north-western corner, are placed seven images all under a banyan tree. All of them are found weathered due to exposure for centuries. These idols are identified as Saptamatrkas or seven mother goddesses, viz. Brahmi, Maheshvari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Mahendri, Varahi and Chamundi.

In order to kill Andhakasura who had the superhuman power of begetting as many a demon as that of the drops of blood when split, these goddesses appeared as the feminine counterparts of the gods Brahma, Siva, Subramania, Vishnu, Indra, Varaha and mother goddess respectively. The worship of the mother goddesses was popular in Kerala from the pre-Christian days. Korrvai was the name of the goddess referred to in the epic Silappatikāram. Chera king erected an edifice in stone in order to perpetuate the memory of Kannaki, the heroine, whereas his brother Ilango, wove a literary masterpiece in honour of the Pathini-daivam (chaste wife). The Chera king ordered that all should worship the chaste wife Kannaki and later identified as Bhagavati.

The propitiation of Kali or Bhagavati goes back to

protohistoric times in India but is seen as a living cult only in Bengal and Kerala. According to the theory of cultural diffusion, the survival of the old practices is to be sought not in the original homes but outside, almost in the periphery.¹

In the early phase of temple architecture, many rectangular temples enshrining Saptamātrkās were built. At Cranganore, identified as the erstwhile capital of the Cheras, there is the famous Bhagavati temple, in which, along with goddess, the seven goddesses can be seen. In fact, it is the general practice found in Bhagavati temples throughout. Examples are (i) Pudukulangara temple, Alatur, Tirumandhamkunnu, Perintumanna and Kongad Bhagavati, Kongad, all in Palghat district. Iconographical canons prescribe that there must be Ganaṇapati and Virabhadra along with the seven goddesses.² Particularly in every temple dedicated to Bhagavati in Kerala the Saptamātrkās are represented by seven cylindrical stones with two more in a separate row signifying the figures of Virabhadra and Ganaṇapati.

Due to mutilation and weathering, these idols are beyond identification excepting that of Vaishnavi. A worn out Chakra provides the clue for identification (Pl.18). These idols now pining under the banyan tree, discarded and neglected

²Vide p.131.
were once the occupants of the rectangular structure adjacent to the shrine of Ganapati. The western side of the wall of the rectangular structure contains an inscription assignable to the twelfth century. Because of this evidence, we can say that the Saptamatrikas were under active worship since twelfth century. The wanton destruction perpetuated by the iconoclast (as discussed elsewhere) bears witness in the raped icons.

SCULPTURES IN ROUND

The sculptures in round are very few. Excepting perhaps the dvarapālas and the yaksas supporting the water-chute, all others are miniature sculptures in relief. In this temple complex, sculpture has become secondary and utilised more as an embellishment to architecture.

VATAKKUNATHAN SHRINE

There are two dvārapālas (door-keepers) about five feet in height, guarding the entrance of the deity. (Pl. 19) Massive and masculine, they express vīra rasa, holding gada to caution the erring devotees. Stylistically, these figures are more akin to the Chalukyan sculpture especially of the Ellora Caves not the ornate ones of the Hoyasalas.

The ornamental balustrades flanking the stepped entrance to the shrines form an interesting and distinguishing highlight of the Kerala temples. Probably in no part
of India such special attention was bestowed on them as in Kerala. The form of balustrade has already been discussed elsewhere. The face of the balustrade has carvings of ghanadvara and purnakumbha (Pl.25). It is so depicted that the facade is divided horizontally into two parts and on each side the motifs are encrusted. The dwarf supporting the ornamented water chute is slightly weathered. It wears a head-dress and circular kundalas. Serenity is writ large on its face. Other details cannot be studied (Pl.15).

The dvarapalas of the Sankaranarayana temple are equally massive, like those of Vatakunathan but squattish in stature. They wear a kiritā, bracelets and chains. The ear lobes are elongated. The canine teeth are projected to strike terror. The sentry on the left holds in his right hand a gada pointing down and on which he has kept his right foot, as a support while the left is placed on the ground. The left hand is placed on the ground. The left hand points towards the entrances. Similarly the guard on the right holds the gada in his right hand and his left hand points the entrance. Stylistically, they have affinities with those of Vatakunathan though the latter exhibit different postures.

The balustrade is different in execution as discussed elsewhere. The flights are direct and the facades are

on the sides. The same motifs of qhanadvāra and pūrnakumbha are carved. The goblin, who supports the ornate waterchute is in the squatting posture is almost weathered.

The dvarapalas of the Rama shrine are similar to those discussed earlier. The sculpture has added "three-headed serpants" on the raised foot, which rests on the gada (Pl.23). The artists have employed variety with regard to the carving of these three guards as can be seen from the different models though all of them are coeval with regard to the age of their production.

The balustrade is similar in design as that of the northern neighbour. It has a padma-pītha base, vyalamukha top, proboscis and creeper border. In the centre of the scene is depicted the qhanadvāra topped by a makara-tōrana and flanked by pūrnakumbhas. There is variety with regard to the janitors whereas the sculptors adhered strictly to uniformity, with regard to the carvings in balustrade, which otherwise could have been used for other artistic motifs, as Kudakutu, Gajalakshmi, Nataraja, Dakshinamurti, Umamaheshvara, etc., as elsewhere. However, this austere motif is not confined to this temple complex alone, as we have come across Krishna temple at Guruvayur, Sasta temple of Aratpula, district Trichur, Tali temple, district Calicut.

However, the date of construction of the temple can

The goblin does not support the ornate water chute (Pl. 24). He dances, raising his right arm holding his left on the thigh. He has a smiling countenance. There is a cistern in which the water falls and an image is seen with folded hands on it. It is certainly refreshing change from the full uniformity in design and execution.

In front of the shrine of Ganapati, there are two elephants guarding the entrance (Pl. 25). As a rule, male guards occupy the entrance of male gods. There are no guards at all in the temple of Sri Vallabha, Tiruvalla, district Alleppey. Female guards keep vigil at the entrance of the temple, Tiruvalatur, district Palghat, dedicated to a goddess. In the Navamukunda temple, Tirunava, there are two elephants to guard the entrance. Since this temple (Navamukunda) is of the thirteenth century, it is reasonable to think that Vatakunathan complex might have borrowed from Tirunava. Iconographical details do not permit to identify the sculptures at the entrance of the Ganapati as Siddhi and Buddhi. Two similar sculptures in the Suchindram temple have been identified as Ganeshini.

Opposite the idol Parvati, there are five votaries carved at the base of the pillars of cuttambalam. One is

2. Ibid, p. 109
3. Pillai, K.K., Suchinndram temple, p. 366.
female whose hair-do is shown as slanting towards her left, a typical Kerala style (Pl.27). She is facing Parvati with folded hands. Others are males with anjalimudra facing Parvati (Pl.26). Another male may be identified as a patron. His dress reaches only upto his knee. He has no crown, and, therefore, cannot be a king (Pl.29). May be a chiftain who had in some way association with the temple.

A Nandi in granite occupies the Vilakkumatam towards the north of it. The recumbant Nandi faces south. According to a tradition, it once faced towards east and hence is known as Tiriyumnandi (Nandi that turned). While the paridevatas are installed this Nandi might have been installed in order to conform to the Saivite cult. Otherwise, one cannot find justification for Nandi who ought to have been in front of his lord. The literary references about Nandi are of fifteenth century and, therefore, it can be safely assumed that this Nandi might have been consecrated as late as fifteenth century.

The Vilakkunmatam has also its share of sculptural wealth. On the fillet above kantha portion of the granite base are carved figures numbering three hundred and fifty out of which three hundred and fifteen are spared from vandalism. All the figures are miniature sculpture in relief encircled in a radius of four inches (Pl.66). A majority of the figures are that of Siva linga, and human heads in different forms are next in number. They are 'clean shaven', 'with beard and jata' 'with moustache and beard', 'with jata' and 'without jata or moustache'. Singletons are a goddess, a saint in dhyāna posture
face of a lady, elephant, Nandi, tortoise, cat, squirrel, a dragon about to charge, dragon in still and a floral design. The figures have grace and uniformity.

While the Vijayanagar influence swept the whole State, resulting in an unprecedented harvest in sculpture in Balikkal-mandapa or Dipalakshmi in metals, this temple seems to have only a lesser in number to offer, though more in other media. The Vilakkumatam might be of late Vijayanagara period.

There are three square Balikkal oblation stones, each in front of the principal deities. The location of the Balikkal is outside the Vilakkumatam, and in front of the deity. Generally there used to be a mandapa which enshrines the Balikkal. But this temple complex does not have a mandapa which otherwise would have obstructed the vision as is the case with all other temples of Kerala. The Balikkal is a miniature shrine, with all the members. The Tantrasamuccaya\(^1\) prescribes the canons to make it. Of the three, the one in front of Vatakkunathan is comparatively less weathered (Pl.30). It has upapitha, paduka, jagati, kumuda (round) and kantha above which is a fillet which has vyali motif. There are four ghanadvāras interspersed by salas and kutas. Above them are carved figures. On the top is the full blown lotus. On the west side of the stone are carved four flying figures. On the north is a figure in vīrasana pose surrounded by human figures. Ganapati is on the east and a goddess on the south.

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a goddess on the south.

An image at the entrance of the nālambalam of the Vatakkuṇāthan shrine is noteworthy. It has a jata like headdress. The dress, reaching the feet has frills, denoting royal association. The ear-lobes are long. Due to weathering the expression cannot be studied (Pl.28). If he be a king, the identification is a problem. Two relief sculptures are seen at the entrance immediately after the gopura. One is worn out and the other that of lady looks fresh. She folds her hands in anjali. She wears bodice and mundu (local dress) and wears ornaments. Her naval is seen, partly because of the contours of the bodice which is drawn up; and that of mundu which is slipped down. A good workmanship can be seen in this device (Pl.28). This may be the latest addition to the sculptural wealth because the typical bodice became a fashion among the Kerala women only during the beginning of this century.

MINIATURE SCULPTURES

To compensate the dearth of the sculpture in round, there are miniature sculptures aplenty. The circular wall of the Vatakkunathan has lent itself so pliable for the miniature sculpture that it has become a circular ornament to the presiding deity. The following are the details as one circumambulates the Vatakkuṇāthan shrine:

1. KĀLIYAMARDANAM: Krishna dances on the serpants Kāliya. He keeps his left foot over the hood of the serpent and the other
is in the air, to keep rhythm. The image of Krishna is far from attractive but is cute. The effect of movement is achieved here. Within the available space of 9"x4" the artist has divided it vertically into two or three parts in which figures are carved. Similar arrangement can be seen throughout the State.

2. **DAKSHINAMURTI** (Pl.91): Dakshinamurti (Siva) keeps his left leg on the right, over which one of the left hands rests. The form and posture are exactly like the one in Irunilankode cave temple and unlike the usual cool and composed figure in meditation, the image is characterised by movement. Probably the artist has his reason for this posture after Krishna's dance, the rhythm should not be lost to the next image, Siva dancing and, therefore, in between he has employed a chala (moving) image rather than dhyana in achala posture. A tree is seen over the deity. Below him, there is a votary.

3. **DANCING SIVA**: Siva performs a dance on a reclining Nandi. This is a rare stance, among the Nātyamurtis inasmuch as while Siva dances, Nandi will be away or standing nearby or in rare occasions, would enjoy His Master's performance. The flexion in stone is accomplished with irreducible minimum slants.

4. **KIRĀTAMūRTI**: Siva holding a bow and arrow identifiable with the help of snakes on his shoulders. Below, there are two votaries (Pl.92) which are completely ruined.

5. Above: a dancing figure; Below: another dancing figure.

6. **MAKHANCHŌR**: Krishna indulges in his favourite pastime, steal-
ing butter. The scenario is from the \textit{Dasamaskandha} of the \textit{Bhagavata}. Depicted as holding the pot in the swing with left hand, and eating with his right, the onlooker swings along with Krishna.

Below: Two ladies, may be gopika damsels.

7. \textsc{Kāliyamardana}: Krishna dances on Kāliya with the same details as that of No.1. An addition is a girl who also dances along with Krishna.

Below: a girl dancing.

8. Above: The figure is completely worn out. Below: It depicts the killing an animal. If the theme of Krishna is continued, it may be Dhēnukasuravadha.

9. \textsc{Yogadakshinamurti}: Siva as Dakshinamurti in dhyāna posture. The figure is partly worn out. We can see the 'patron of ascetics'.

Below: two votaries.

10. \textsc{Uma sahita Siva}: Siva and Uma in sitting posture.

Below: A votary with only one leg. He may be identified as Bhrngi who refused to worship goddess.

11. \textsc{Dancing Siva}: Siva dances on the bull, which looks up to see His Master's performance. Siva's left rear arm holds a drum is the identification of Siva (Pl.86)

Below: two votaries.

12. \textsc{Gōvardhanagiridhāri}: Krishna lifting Gōvardhana.

Below: one figure taking shelter under it.

13. \textsc{Ganapati}: Ganapati squatting.

Below: a votary.
14. **BHIKŞHĀTANAMŪRTI**: Siva as Bhikṣhātanamūrti (Pl.90). He is shown feeding a stag.

Below: a votary.

15. **NARA** and **NARAYANA**: Nara and Narayana are shown as sitting.

Below: two votaries.

16. **VARĀHA**:

Below: a demon.

The circular walls of the Sankaranarayana has fourteen miniature sculpture. The spatial schemes are the same as those of the Vatakkunathan. The following are the details:

1. Above: a lady holding gada, in her right hand, while the left hand is raised above her head. The rest of the details are not visible.

Below: A lady keeps her right hand on her hip, the left one is broken. Probably to denote 'a pause' in a dance sequence.

2. **DANCE OF HARIHARĀ**: Hariharā is shown in a dancing posture, holding a trident in the right arm and a disc on the left. A snake coils over the right ear. The right toe is on the ground while the heel is up. The left foot is on the ground forming a chatura pose. A unique piece of art in design and contents rarely has any parallel in the State or outside.

Below: A votary blows conch to glorify the Lord's dance.

3. Above: a dwarf yaksha.

Below: The same image shown as though carrying the upper one.

4. Above: A devotee with Sirasyanjali mudra in a dancing posture (Pl.93).

Below: A deity ready to shoot an arrow.
5. There is only one carving of pūrnakumbha. From a pot, two flowery stems are sprouting out.

The sixth, seventh and the eighth have the same motif.

9. DANCER: A dancing figure is shown. The right hand is raised, the left is kept as katyāvalambita pose. The feet in chatura pose i.e. the left heal is up while the toe on the ground, the right is on the ground.

Below: Sitting yaksha.

The tenth, eleventh and the twelfth are the same as No.5.

13. A DANCING FIGURE: The image is shown dancing. The right hand is worn out, the feet conform to the chatura posture.

Below: standing yaksha.

14. Above: A yaksha is shown standing.

Below: A yakshini is standing. His right hand touches her cheek probably extending an invitation to the upper figure.

The square walls of the Rama shrine do have the same type of miniature sculptures like the others. The following are the details:-

1. Pūrnakumbha.

2. A human figure carrying a pūrnakumbha on his head.

3. Above: a dancing figure.

Below: A yaksha (Pl.87)


Below: A votary in śirasyānjali mudra (Pl.88)

5. There are three figures, one below the other.

Above: A Nātyamurti, can be identified as Siva due to snakes.
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Middle: A votary (Pl.89)
Below: A motif (weathered).

Below: A votary.

7. Above: Two figures.
Below: A lady.

Below: A lady.

9. Above: may be a deity.
Below: A saint with folded hands.

10. Above: A deity granting a boon.
Below: A devotee who shows śirasyānjali.

11. Above: Rama holding the bow.
Below: Lady may be Sita.

12. Above: A devotee plays on a vina, vertically. This musical instrument throws light on its age. The present vina which is kept on the lap, is Raghunatha vina innovated in the eighteenth century. The earlier vina has to be played vertically and, therefore, it is certainly earlier than the eighteenth century. Below: A devotee shown having cymbal keeping rhythm probably.

These miniature figures bear testimony to the artistic accomplishments of the age especially in the field of music and dance. The musical instruments like flute, vina and the method of performance help reconstruct the history of fine art of the land. Dance postures are sufficient bits of information of its popularity.

13. KōSHTHA DĒVATAS: There are four kōshtha dēvatas on the walls
the second *tala* of the Sankaranarayana shrine. Three of them are worn out beyond recognition while the figure on the east is a little bit spared from weathering. Three heads are seen and hence identified as Brahma, seated in *padmāsana*, his frontal hands show *dhyāna-mudra*. The rear left hand holds a vessel. The object in the right hand is missing. According to the Nibandha, Brahma or Siva can be on the east in *dvitāla prasādas*.

14. **BHUTĀVALI:** The Bhutāvali or the row of *yakshas* in terra cotta occupy the first row below the Uttara portion of the Rama shrine. The moulding and modelling in clay is not as polished and finished as objects of art; but they present a lively stance. Some of the figures dance with joy, while others play on percussion instrument, *mrdangam* and keep rhythms with cymbals to the dance. The craftsman has failed to produce grace for the figures are dull and without expression.

15. **A ROW OF ANIMALS:** Above the row of *yakshas*, there is a row of animals, consisting of lions, elephants and bulls (Pl.31, 32, 66). The forms of those figures are elegant unlike those below it. The animal instinct is delineated with consummate perfection. The stance and posture are as varied as the number of animals. The spirited animation with which two lions killing an elephant arrests the attention of the beholder (Pl.32).

16. **KOSHTHA DEVATA:** Three *kōshta devatas* occupy north, east and southern cardinal points, on the second *tala*. They are Vishnu in sitting posture, Vishnu as Garudārūḍha and Siva in *utkutika-*

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1. Pisharoti, K.R.R., 'Extracts from Ratnavali', *I.H.Q.*, Vol.XXX, No.1(1949), p.27. A tabulated list is given. There is no unanimity with regard to the deities to be wrought on the major sides.
sana posture. According to the Nibandha, Krishna should occupy the north. Due to weathering, it is difficult to identify it but the attributes are found to confirm Vishnu. On the east is Vishnu mounted on His vehicle. None of the texts prescribe this form to be on the east and hence, there is a deviation from the accepted canons. The figure on the south is that of Dakshinamurti Siva.

The rafters of Vaṭakkunāthan shrine have been utilised for ornamentation besides the architectural function. The tail end of each of them is adorned with a bronze plaque. Out of the sixty-four figures, fifty-eight are of Sivalingas, three are seated Ganapatis, two Siva and a lone figure of Subramania. Each figure is of 2"x2" in dimension. Three specimen are discussed below:

A DANCING SIVA

The figure of Siva (Pl.94) is depicted in a dancing pose. The left rear hand holds a stag and the right one holds a parasu. The front arms show dandahasta and abhaya mudras. The right hand is raised, ūrdhvajānu to achieve the effect of dance. He wears a headdress. The size of the body and limbs is rather heavy. To a dancer, disproportion of body is a negative attribute. Though the craftsmanship is that of a lower standard, the figure has a lively stance.

DAKSHINAMURTI

Dakshinamurti (Pl.95) seems to be popular as there are specimen in other media. He wears a head-dress, not similar
to that of the dancing Siva. A book of palm leaves is in the
left hand. The right hand depicts vyākhya-na-mudra. Though this
figure is also heavy in the sitting posture, the disproportion
of the limbs does not spoil the figure much.

SUBRAMANIA

This figure (Pl. 96) represents Subramania riding on
his vehicle, pea-cock. With the help of horizontal and vertical
lines, the artist has created the pea-cock plume remarkably
well. Though dictated by the paucity of space, the tail end
of the pea-cock feathers coiling up, gives the optical illusion
of movement of the bird.