



Available online at: <http://www.advancedscientificjournal.com>
<http://www.krishmapublication.com>
IJMASRI, Vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 206- 211, Oct. -2023
<https://doi.org/10.53633/ijmasri>

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY
ADVANCED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
(IJMASRI)**

ISSN: 2582-9130

IBI IMPACT FACTOR 1.5

DOI: 10.53633/IJMASRI

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRUCTURE OF SIVA LINGA AND THEIR GLORIOUS WORSHIP

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Abstract

Temple is being a place of worship to a huge majority in Tamilnadu and as a structure, that enshrines a god or some other object of veneration, circumambulation (*pradakshina*), adoration and worship (*puja*), once played and still it plays a vital role in all-important activities of human life. The word “temple” is derived from the origin of Latin word *templum* that denotes holy precincts. Works of Purananuru, Paripadal and Kalittogai are composed by sangam poets (B. C. 300-300 A.D) which throw light on the religion and temples of the people of the period. Gods and Goddess like Muruga-Subramanya, Siva-Rudra, Mayan-Vishnu and Kali-Parvathi were worshipped by the people. Most prevalent icon of Siva and virtually found in all Siva temples, Siva Linga is a rounded, elliptical, an-iconic image that is usually set on a circular base or Peedam. According to some scholars the Peedam represents Parasakti, the manifesting power of God. Siva Lingas are usually made of stone that may either be carved or naturally existing - suyambu, such as shaped by a swift-flowing river. Siva Lingas may also be made of metal, precious gems, crystal, wood, earth or transitory materials such as ice.

Keywords: Chala Lingas, Achala lingas, Suyambu linga, Daivika linga, Ganapa lingas, Arsha lingas.

Introduction

Temple is being a place of worship to a huge majority in India and as a structure, that enshrines a god or some other object of veneration, circumambulation (*pradakshina*), adoration and worship (*puja*), once

played and still it plays a vital role in all-important activities of human life. The word “temple” is derived from the origin of Latin word *templum* that denotes holy precincts. Tree worship is very ancient and dating back to the Harappan times. Side by side primitive ideas about god, worship grew in the form of ancestral

worship and the ideas were considerably develop in the sangam period in Tamilnadu. The Pandya kingdom developed to be vast and spacious in the sangam age. In the sangam age as in later times both systems for worship persisted, and were mentioned in the Tirumurugarrupadai. Murugan, Siva, Balarama and Vishnu are the more worshipped and invoked gods. Works of Purananurru, Paripadal and Kalittogai are composed by sangam poets (B. C. 300-300 A.D) which throw light on the religion and temples of the people of the period. Gods and Goddess like Muruga-Subramanya, Siva-Rudra, Mayan-Vishnu and Kali-Parvathi were worshipped by the people. Temples or shrines mostly use of brick and timber are designated in the sangam work as *Kottam*, *Nagaram*, *Koyil* and *Palli*. The some terms *Koyil*, *Kshetram*, *Devagraham*, *Devakaram*, *Alayam*, *Devayadanam*, *Devasudhanam*, *Devasumam*, *Chaityavishnagraham* and so on were referred to a temple. On the other hand the term *kottam* used in the later sangam works like Silappatikaram would come very much nearer to the proto type of the temple.

Siva in early tamil literature

In Tamil country there flourished a far flung culture which though tinged with notions of Aryanism had its own individual trait. A rich literature known as of the Sangam age beings to the lime light the religious practices of the people. The earliest literary work *Tolkappiyam* divides the country into five topographical segments and assigns each religion a deity. Tamilnadu had not only felt the impact of Aryan culture but also accommodated two of their major deities. Very strangely, Siva or Rudra or the Sivan is not accorded a status of equality along with Vishnu and Indra.

The name Sivan as such fails to appear but the post – Sangam Tamil epic, *Silappatikaram* (5th century AD) notes “Sivakati” the heaven of “Siva” who is Sivan himself. The Tamil form of Rudra, Uruthiran as such fails the appeal by Sangam poets had the names *Uruttirakannanar* one whose eyes were like those of

Rudra (author of *Pattinapalai* and *Perumpararrupotai*) and *Uruthiranar* (Rudra) author of *Kurinchipatu*. The *Silappatikaram* notes the name of a king of north India who was known as *Uruthiran* (Rudran). These suggest the fact the Sivan and *Uruthiran* were not unknown to the Sangam Tamils.

Structure of Siva Linga

Most prevalent icon of Siva and virtually found in all Siva temples, Siva Linga is a rounded, elliptical, an-iconic image that is usually set on a circular base or *Peedam*. According to some scholars the *Peedam* represents *Parasakti*, the manifesting power of God.

Siva Lingas are usually made of stone that may either be carved or naturally existing - *suyambu*, such as shaped by a swift-flowing river. Siva Lingas may also be made of metal, precious gems, crystal, wood, earth or transitory materials such as ice. Some scholars say that transitory Siva Linga may be made of 12 different materials such as sand, rice, cooked food, river clay, cow dung, butter, *rudraksha* seeds, ashes, sandalwood, *darbha* grass, a flower garland or molasses. The Sivalingam is generally mounted on a circular or quadrangular receptacle called the *Auvudaiyar*. This pedestal is designed so as to drain off the water offered during ablution ceremonies. The bottom of the pedestal represents *Brahma*, the octagonal middle represents *Vishnu* and the upper circular portion represents *Siva*. The upper portion of the Sivalingam may be of various shapes, cylindrical, elliptical, umbrella shaped. Images may also be (rarely) carved on a Sivalingam.

Kinds of Lingam

1. *Sama kadam* - Siva pagam, Vishnu pagam and *Brahma* pagam are all equal propositions.
2. *Varthamanam* – *Varthamanam* means Vishnu pagam exceeding all part over the *Brahma* pagam and also Rudra pagam exceeding one part over the Vishnu pagam.
3. *Saivathitheyiam* – means Vishnu pagam and *Brahma* pagam are equal and also Rudra pagam exceeding the other two.

4. Thiriracigam means total height of the linga is divided in to nine parts other parts have been made equal proposition.

Types of Linga

Siva is worshipped in the symbol of Linga. The chief image in the central of a Siva temple is, in a large majority of instances, Lingas are broadly divided into two classes, namely, the Chala - lingas and the Achala lingas that are movable and the immovable Lingas. The large and heavy stone Lingas which are set up in the central shrines of Siva temples are Achala lingas.

Chala lingas

The Chala lingas are divided into Mrinmaya (these made of earth), lohaja (of metals), ratnaja (of precious stones), daruja (of wood), sailja (of tone) and Kshanika lingas, (those made for the occasion and disposed of immediately after there is over).

Achala Lingas

The achala lingas are classified under nine heads, namely, the Suyambu, the Purva, the Daivata, the Ganapatya, the Asura, the Sura, the Arsha, the Rakshasa, the Manusha and the Bana lingas. Of these, the Suyambu belongs to the uttamottama (most superior) variety of the uttamamadhayama (middling superior) variety; whereas the Asura, the Sura and Arsha lingas belong to the uttama adhama (lowest among the superior) variety. The Manusha lingas belong to the madhayamadhama (middling among the inferior) variety.

The most authoritative of all the Saiva Agamas, the Kamikagama states that the achala lingas are divided into six classes, the Suyambu, the Daivika, the Arshaka, the Ganapatya, the Manusha and the Bana lingas.

Suyambu Linga

The suyambu linga is one which rose up and came in into existence by itself and had existed from time immemorial. A Suyambu linga is considered as

sacred that it is above all the rules laid down in the Agamas for him other classes of Lingas.

Daivika Linga

The Daivika lingas are recognized by their characteristic shapes. They may be of the shape of a flame or resemble a pair of hands held in anjali pose; they may have rough exterior with elevations and depressions, deep hollows and scars resembling tanka (chisel) and trisula (trident).

Ganapa Lingas

The Ganapa lingas are those set up by ganas. They are of the shape of the fruits of cucumber, citron, wood – apple or palm.

Arsha Lingas

The Arsha lingas are those set up and worshiped by Rishis; they are spherical in shape, with the top portion less broad than the lower portion.

Manusha Lingas

The Manusha lingas are the largest number of achala lingas. They are set up by human hands. They are sculptured in accordance with rules laid down in the Agamas. The Manusha lingas consist of three parts, namely, the lowest square section known as Brahma bhaga, his middle octagonal section known as Vishnu bhaga and the top of circular portion called the Rudra bhaga.

The Mukha linga is one of the varieties of Manusha lingas and distinguished from all other Lingas as it bears one or more human faces sculptured on it.

Forms of Sivalinga

In Saivism, Siva, the supreme and immanent reality, of His own volition becomes the determinate for the sake of the salvation of millions of soul. The determinate forms of Siva are three, namely Sakala (form), Nishkala (formless) and Sakala Nishkala (form and formless).

Sakala (form)

In the Sakala aspect, Siva manifests Himself in Man's bodily form. The forms, such as, Natarajar, Anugrahamurtis, Samharamurties, Chandrasekaramurtis are Siva's different Sakala forms. In Sakala, Siva is worshipped in the embodied form.

Nishkala (Formless)

Siva alone is glorified as Nishkala. He manifests Himself in the form Linga in Nishkala aspect. In Nishkala, He is worshipped in the Linga form.

Sakala Nishkala (Form And Formless)

It is the state of blended togetherness of Siva's Sakala and Nishkala form. In this aspect, Siva is worshipped in 'Mukalinga' (mixture of Sakala and Nishkala) form. Broadly speaking linga is of two kinds namely Andalinga which means the world and Binda linga which means the human body according to Tirumandiram.

Significance of the Siva Lingam

The non anthropomorphic Linga form of Siva is seen in reverence in all temples all over the sub continent. The Lingam is a symbol. It is a symbol of that which is invisible and yet omnipresent. It is hence a visible symbol of the Ultimate Reality which is present in us (and in all objects of creation).

The Siva Lingam denotes the primeval energy of the Creator. It is believed that at the end of all creation, during the great deluge, all the different aspects of God, find a resting place in the Lingam; Brahma is absorbed into the right, Vishnu to the left and Gayatri into the heart. The Siva Lingam is also a representation of the infinite Cosmic Column of fire, whose origins, Vishnu and Brahma were unable to trace.

Siva lingam as a phallic symbol

Hinduism conceptualizes Brahman, the supreme power, as having three main roles: that of God the Creator, God the Preserver and God the Destroyer. This trinity is represented iconically by the deities Brahma, Vishnu and Siva respectively. Thus, it is Siva, the destructive form of the Almighty, who is represented by the Lingam or Phallus, which is manifestly the creative or generative power of Man. This points to an origin of the tradition of using the Lingam as a divine symbol that is utterly sublime in its philosophical underpinnings.

The form of the Siva Linga serves to further emphasize this inference. The base of the Lingam is the Yoni also known as 'Parasakti'. The upright portion of the Lingam is shown as being protuberant through the yoni, and the two forms have a unified structure. Thus, the Lingam represents the very instant of creation, or rather of regeneration, when the perishable and eventually destructible Old renews and regenerates itself in another form, the New that is to come.

Lingam is the symbolic form of the Godhead. Lingam means that in which this Jagath [creation] attains laya [mergence]; that into which this Jagath goes (gamyathe). The three gunas [primordial qualities] are represented by the three-tiered Peetha [platform]; the Lingam above symbolises the goal of life. Lingam means "a symbol," the symbol of creation, the result of the activity of the three gunas and of the Brahman [Supreme Reality] which permeates and gives it meaning and value. The worship of the Lingam must be done with faith in its symbolic significance.

Scholars say that the interpretation of Siva Linga as an abstract form of God is also consonant with philosophies that hold the notion that God may be conceptualized and worshipped in any convenient form. The form itself is irrelevant, as the divine power that it represents is all that matters. Scholars thus say that Siva linga represents the formless Nirguna Brahman or the formless Supreme Being.

The Sacred Siva Linga

The sexual symbolism of Tantra, like the subject of sexuality in general, has always engaged the human mind. The modern mind seems to be obsessed

with it. Many people into Tantra, as well as most of the scholars who write on it, seem unable to move beyond the physical suggestions of these symbols to their spiritual indications. This has kept the study and practice of Tantric Yoga at a superficial level in which its deeper cosmic and creative energies remain latent.

There is an inclination to reduce the Siva linga and Sakthi yoni, the two main Tantric symbols of ascending and descending forces - which are often represented by upright conical stones for the Siva linga and ring stones or basis for the Sakti yoni - to merely the male and female sex organs, which is but one of their representations, and their erotic glorification. There is the tradition of Tantric sexuality of mithuna which uses sacred sex as part of Yoga practice. But it is not only practice of Tantric Yoga and when done is integrated into a much larger array of practices.

Other Siva Lingas are associated with gold or crystal, the light powers in the metal kingdom. The Siva linga is often described in terms of light, crystal or transparency. Siva himself is said to be pure light or light in its primal in differentiated state, Prakasha matra.

Siva Lingam - A Glorious Worship

Siva lingam is the holy symbol of Lord Siva that is considered quite sacred and worshipped with devotion and piety by the devotees. The Sanskrit word lingam means symbol, so Siva lingam means symbol of Siva. It is considered the foremost sacred symbol for Saivites and has been worshiped for ages. The Puranas like Sivamahapuram talks about the superiority of linga worship. (The Indus valley excavation is an example for the presence of this worship in olden times)

God is formless, attribute less and omnipresent. This state is called Arupa (formless). For the benefit of the Pashus, He took the form of Siva lingam which is neither form nor formless but is a symbol. This symbol of him is called Aruparupam (formless form). He took many forms out of His mercy to bless all, which are called Rupams. Saivite worships the God in all these three states. The oldest form that the formless God took

namely the Siva lingam is called Sadasiva Murtam and is worshipped in the altar of his abodes (temples). The forms later took which are called Maheswaramurtam. They are worshipped in the outer circles in a temple.

This Siva linga worship is superior since it makes the worship simple because of the form while maintaining the truth that God is not having any definite form. There is lot of marvelous principles behind the Siva linga worship which could be found in detail in standard scriptures. In almost all the Siva temples, worship is generally made to Siva Lingas only. Very rarely we come across his images in the sanctum sanctorum of any Siva temple. A Siva Linga is usually a round or cylindrical and protruding object. The cylindrical part is held firmly by a circular base.

Siva linga literally means the body of Siva. Next to the symbol of A Siva Linga is a phallic symbol, representing the male and female sexual organs in a state of conjugal bliss. Mentally it symbolizes the union of mind and body. Spiritually it represents the union between Purusha and Prakriti, the highest principles of the manifest universe.

The Siva Linga is also the symbolic representation of the Supreme Self. It is verily Maheswara himself, the Highest Self and the Lord of the universe. In this aspect it has three parts. The lower part represents Brahma. The middle part, which is octagonal in shape, represents Vishnu. The upper part, which is cylindrical in shape, represents Rudra and is also called Pujabhaga since it receives the actual offerings of milk and other substances.

Conclusion

Temple is being a place of worship to a huge majority in Tamilnadu and as a structure, that enshrines a god or some other object of veneration, circumambulation (*pradakshina*), adoration and worship (*puja*), once played and still it plays a vital role in all-important activities of human life. Siva is worshipped in the symbol of Linga. The chief image in the central of a Siva temple is, in a large majority of instances, Lingas are broadly divided into two classes. Siva lingam is the holy symbol of Lord Siva that is

considered quite sacred and worshipped with devotion and piety by the devotees.

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