



Ichonography of the Deities at Kunrathu Kumaran temple

Lord Vinayaga or Ganesha

Ganesha is the Lord of good fortune and the destroyer of obstacles. His grace is invoked before any task to ensure success. Ganesha symbolizes AUM (the Pranava mantra) and considered the incarnation of the entire Cosmos. The 'elephant' head of Ganesha symbolizes fidelity, wisdom, understanding, and a discriminating intellect necessary to attain perfection in life. A goad (ankusa) in the upper left hand represents the retrenchment of all desires. A noose (pasa), in the upper right hand symbolizes the highest goal of human evolution, in order to attain spiritual perfection. The lower right hand holds a broken tusk, with (protection giving ('abhaya mudra') pose). The lower left hand is shown in blessing/boon granting pose ('varadha mudhra'), holding the 'modhaka' a sweet. Coconuts are dashed to crack down in to pieces in front of Ganesha to symbolize the shattering of the ego in front of him.

The mouse (mooshikam) is a symbol of ignorance that is dominant in darkness and fears light and knowledge. The mouse shows us to remain always on the alert and illuminate our inner-selves with the light of awareness.



Pancha muka Vinayaka (Lord Ganesh with five faces)

The feature of Pancha muka Vinayaka is the combination of the following five forms namely Maha Ganapathy, Chiththa Ganapathy, Viddhya Ganapathy, Sakthi Ganapathy and Mohsha Ganapathy. Pancha muka Vinayaka possess a human body with two legs, five heads and ten hands. Each hand possesses the one of the following weapons namely, kudaram, pasam, chakram, musalam, abupam, dangam sulam, dhuvajam and the two front right hand with 'abhaya mudra' (protection giving), The front left hand is shown in 'varadha mudhra' (blessing/boon granting pose). The apex of the trunk (the long flexible nose) is turned towards right, clockwise called 'Valampuri'.

Valzi Pillayar

The Vinayakar form with two hands in the pose seen at at Kunderathu Kumaran (Rockbank Murugan) Temple is very unique.

The Valzi Pillayar installed at, Kunderathu Kumaran Temple, is made of granite according to the correct dimentions mentioned in agamas and pujas were performed for 48 days at Pillayarpatti or Karpaga Vinayakar temple. The idol of Ganesha at the mulastana of this Shrine is familiar to many, as this image is found in the rock cut Karpaka Vinayakar Shrine at Pillayarpatti near Karaikkudi, one of the oldest Cave Temples (Rock Cut) temples of Tamil Nadu. Situated between Karaikkudi and





Pudukkottai , Pillayarpatti is named after “Pillayar”, the Tamil name for Ganesha Karpaka. At Pillayarpatti Temple, Vinayakar or Desi Vinayaka Pillaiyar is the presiding deity; he is portrayed with two arms and a trunk curled towards his right in the valampuri mode. This six feet tall image of Ganesha is a bas-relief in a cave excavated from a big rock, now behind the temple.

Hence the Valzi Pillayar statue installed at, at Kundrathu Kumaran possess the significance of being installed at the famous Pillayarpatti temple for pujas prior to the instalment at this shrine, during the Kumbhabhisheka ceremony.

Lord Subrahmanyar

The representation of Lord Subrahmanya is shown in standing pose, holding the spear (vel - Jnana sakti) the force of knowledge) in standing pose with a handsome face together with his sakthis (inseparable power) Valli (Icha sakthi -the force of desire) and Devasena, (Kriya sakthi- the force of action) on each side all in the standing pose.

Mythologically Lord Subrahmanyar the son of Siva and Sakthi, shows the highest status of spirituality. The representation of Lord Subrahmanya has four hands. The upper right hand holds the lance, the upper left hand holds spear, lower right hand is shown in the pose of bestowing grace (abhaya mudra), and the lower left hand pointing down words blessing pose (varda mudra) representing the cosmic energy.

The peacock is the carrier mount (vahana) standing on a serpent. is seen behind the Lord. The serpent represents the time factor and the peacock keeping the serpent under its control and being the vehicle of Subrahmanya indicates that the Lord is beyond the time limits.



Lord Shanmugar

The standing pose of Shanmugar is seen as a human form, with two legs, six heads and twelve hands. The following weapons are seen in the hands namely , sakthi, saram, kadgam, dhwjam, gadhai, vil (bow), kulisam, kedayam(shield), soolam (trident), pankajam(lotus flower) the right front hand is in the position of protection giving pose (abhaya mudra). The left front hand is shown in blessing/boon granting pose(varadha mudhra).The six heads represent the six rays or the six

attributes namely, Jnana (wisdom), Vairagya (dispassion), Bala (strength), Kirti (fame), Sree (wealth) and Aishvarya (divine powers). His flag is the cock and vehicle is the peacock which stands clutching a serpent in its talons. His saktis (inseparable powers) are Valli (Ischa sakthi) and Devasena (Kriya sakthi)

Sivalingam

Sivalinga is the symbol of the supreme Self. Sivalinga is the primary icon of the sixty four different forms of Siva. The appearance of Sivalinga is without any particular form (rupa) or formless (arupa).This structure could be felt by sense of touch and could be seen by sense of sight, but without having any particular forms as head, limbs, ornaments etc. Sivalinga is usually a round protruding object. The cylindrical part is held





firmly by a circular base. The lower part of Lingam represents Brahma. The middle part, which is octagonal in shape, represents Vishnu. The upper part, which is cylindrical in shape, represents Rudra which is known as Pujabhaga.



Lord Vishnu

Lord Vishnu is symbolized as a human form with four arms. A discus (chakra), named Sudarshana in His upper right hand to protect all from evil. The gada (mace) named Kaumodaki in the left lower hand signifies that He sustains the world. The sankha (conch) named Panjajanya in the upper left hand indicates love and understanding. His front right hand is depicted bestowing grace. The crown is a symbol of the Lord's

supreme power and authority. The two ear-rings that the Lord wears signify the dual nature of creation, such as knowledge and ignorance, happiness and grief and pleasure and sorrow.

Lord Brahma

Lord Brahma is symbolized as a four-faced, deity in a human form with four-arms, represent the four aspects of the human personalities. The Rudraksha maala (rosary) in the upper right hand symbolizes the cycle of time (creation to sustenance, from sustenance to dissolution, and from dissolution to new creation). The rosary also symbolizes the materials used for the creation. A book in the upper left hand (symbolizing the intellect) illustrates knowledge. The lower left hand symbolizes the cosmic energy. The front right hand is in the pose of bestowing grace. The four faces represent the sacred knowledge of the four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharvana). The four arms represent the four directions and thus represent the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence



Lord Nataraja



Lord Siva in the form of Nataraja, is the master of all the rhythmic movements of creation. The cosmic dance ensures the orderliness (ritham) of the universe, the movement of the earth, the heavens, the arrangement of the galaxies and the inter stellar spaces, on which rests unsteadily the whole balance. The halo circle of Flame (Thiru vasi) represents samsara (reincarnation), the endless cycle of birth and death. The snake around His neck symbolizes His control over the powers of nature. The crescent moon in the crown of His matted hair represents the highest principle of awareness or enlightenment. The two different ear-rings symbolize that He embodies both masculine and feminine aspects. The third eye symbolizes insight or enlightenment. The river Ganges signifies the fertility. The expression on Siva's face is calm. The raised foot is seen out of the plane of the rest of the image.

The upraised left foot symbolizes release from rebirth and the assurance of liberation (moksha). The leg that rests symbolizes the creative force of the universe. The dwarf asura, Muyalakan





being crushed by the right foot symbolizes the ignorance of moksha. The dwarf symbolizes absentmindedness, negligence, blindness. Two feet together symbolize interplay of insight and forgetfulness.

Lord Somaskandar



Lord Siva together with His consort Uma and Skandar (Sa+Uma+Skandar) is known as Somaskanda murthy.

The five activities (pancha-krityas) are: srishti (creation), sthiti (preservation), samhara (destruction), tirobhava (veiling) and anugraha (grace). These, separately considered, are the activities of Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesvara and Sadasiva. Lord Somaskandar is seen seated on the badhra peeta (seat) in suhasana pose with three eyes on his face. The left leg is folded and kept at the knee joint. Right leg is seen in the hanging position from the seat. Siva is seen to wear the skin of a tiger

with parasu in the back right hand and a deer in the back left hand. The right front hands are in the position of 'abhaya mudra' (protection giving), The left front hand is shown in 'varadha mudhra' (blessing/ boon granting) pose. On the right ear makara/simha kundala type of ear ring and on the left ear bhadhra kundala type of ear ring are seen. On the head jata makuta (the type of hair) on head, crescent moon, and simha chakra are seen. Many serpents are worn as bangles in the hands. Goddess Uma holds lotus flower in the right hand. Left hand is kept in the simha kashana hasta mudra position. Head bears karanda makuta type of hair crown.

Parwathee

Parvati (the supreme divine mother) is considered the absolute reality (Parabrahman) who is dynamic essence of the formless static God. Parvati carries a blue lotus in full bloom in one hand, which shows fearlessness (abhaya mudra). She is referred to as Trigunatmika (having the three gunas (namely; sattva, rajas, and tamas) and at the same time being nirguna (without any gunas). Her Mudras (symbolic hand gestures) are kataka, fascination and enchantment.



Lord Dakshinamurthy



Dakshinamurthy portray Siva in pleasant mood facing south wards, seated on a elevated seat, with one leg folded while the other rests on the Apasmarapurusha, the deluded self. The front right hand is in 'chinmudra' (gnanamudra) where the fingers (thumb and the forefinger touching each other the other three fingers are stretched straight) posture of presenting knowledge and holding the aksamala (rosary). The front left hand holds the Vedic scripture. The back right hands hold a drum, and a serpent. The back left hands hold a fire. Dakshinamurthy is seen seated silently in yoga posture, under a banyan tree and the sages, animals and plants are seen beneath around Him. The trident is the symbolic illustration of the triple character of nature, termed, sathva, rajas and tamas.





Lord Chandrasekharar (moon ornamented Lord, bhoga murthy)

Chandrasekharar is seen together with His consort (inseparable Sakthi / power) in standing pose. The appearance of this Chandrasekharar sculpture is a straight body with the feet in the same plane. The three matted locks on the head symbolize the integration of the physical, mental and spiritual energies. River Ganga, signifies the destruction of sin, removes ignorance, bestows knowledge, purity and peace. The two eyes symbolize the activities in the physical world and the third eye the spiritual knowledge. A snake (Vasuki) symbolizes the yogic power. Rudraksha mala around the neck illustrates the cosmic laws. Trisula (three-pronged trident) symbolizes His three fundamental powers will (iccha), action (kriya) and knowledge (jnana). The right front hand is in 'abhaya mudra' (protection giving), and the left front hand is in 'varadha mudra' (boon granting) postures. The right front hand holds the axe. The left front hand holds the deer. The face appears with a pleasant expression, with a blossomed face and expressive eyes. The crescent moon is seen on the crown signifies the time factor.



Goddess Durga



Goddess Durga protects mankind from evil and misery by destroying evil forces such as selfishness, jealousy, prejudice, hatred, anger, and ego. Goddess Durga is seen facing north in the niche on the northern side of the garbagraha of the shrine of Siva linga. Goddess Durga is seen with four hands, standing on the head of a buffalo. The back right hand holds discus (chakra), the back left hand holds sankha (conch), the front right hand depicted bestowing grace (abhaya mudra) the front left hand is seen to be kept touching the waist. The crown on the head is beautifully ornamented (karanta makuta) and the body is decorated with different types of attractive ornaments. The two horns of the buffalo are seen directed backwards. She stands on the head of a buffalo. A buffalo symbolizes unlimited power. The head of the buffalo represents the egoism and the standing pose of Goddess Durga indicates that She is on control of egoism.

Sri Rama, Sitha and Lakshmanan

Sri Rama, Sitha and Lakshmanan are all seen in the standing pose. Sri Rama is seen with a decorated crown on the head with two hands, holding bow in left hand and an arrow in the right hand. Body is highly decorated with ornaments. Lakshman is seen with two hands, holding bow in left hand and an arrow in the right hand with a decorated crown on the head. Body is highly decorated with ornaments. Sitha is seen holding a flower on one hand and just leaving the other hand free.





Chandeshwarar

Chandeshwarar is installed in the North Eastern corner to the garbagraha (moolas-tana) of the shrine of Siva Linga, facing south. Chandeshwarar is seen in the seated pose with two hands, one holding parasu, and the other grasps the thigh of the leg. Chandeshwarar is always so absorbed in his worship of Siva that he is unmindful to anything.

Lord Bhairawar

Lord Bhairawa shrine in a temple is installed at the position in between North East and Eastern corner of the temple. Bhairawa is the custodian of the temple. Bhairawa statue is seen in standing pose with a fearful appearance in the face with big rounded eyes. The two opening positions of the nose is wide and the two incisor teeth protrude projecting outside from the upper and lower jaws. The belly is large and is seen wearing a garland of skulls. The ornaments are the serpents without any cloths on the body. The Bhairawa efigy is seen with four hands possessing the weapons namely, kadgam, kedham, pindy, and kapalam (skull). The dog is the vahanam (vehicle) seen behind the statue of Bhairawa. The temple keys are left with him every night and taken on the following morning from him during the first puja ceremony.



Ayyappan, (Sastha, Hariharaputra, Arya)

The manifestation of Ayyappan is seen to possess two hands and a peaceful expression (yogasana) with a seated pose with the legs folded at the knee. His name means that he is able to control the entire world. The right hand is shown in the pose of bestowing grace (abhya mudra) pose and the other left hand points downwards resting at the knee-point. Different varieties of ornaments are seen around the neck with sacred thread, the yajnopavita. His worship is mentioned in Amsumabdheda Agama, the Suprabheda Agama and the Karana Agama

Nandi

Nandi the recumbent placed in front of the main shrine of Lord Siva. Permission of Nandi is required for the devotees to enter the innermost shrine. Symbolically, the bull represent the animal intincts, especially the sex, and Lord Siva riding on it reflects His absolute mastery over it.





Pali Peedam

The Bali pitam is the special elevated, circular granite stone decorated to a design as prescribed in the scripts of rituals. The Bali pitam is the place where the oblations are placed after the offerings to the deity in the inner sanctum- sanctorum



The Peacock.



His peacock mount symbolizes his destruction of the ego .The peacock is the carrier mount (vahana) standing on a serpent is seen behind the Lord. The serpent represents the time factor and the peacock keeping the serpent under its control and being the vehicle of Lord Subrahmanya indicates that the Lord is beyond the time limits. The peacock shows the shape of the Pranava AUM. It is of the shape of the bindu (circle). When the peacock spreads out its tail, it has the round shape of the Pranava.

Nagathambiran

The veneration of the cobra (serpent) worship has been an ancient custom of the community of farmers

The people of ancient era invoke the blessings of God Nagathambiran with five headed cobra before they embark any activity of importance. God Nagathambiran symbolizes fertility and prosperity hence the devotees belief that by worshipping they acquire a better life in future.



The Vel

The Vel or spear was given to Lord Subrahmanya by divine mother Parvati, the embodiment of Siva Sakti. The shape of Vel also shows that knowledge in the form of jyotis will start from themMuladhara chakra, represented by the bottom of the Vel, pass through the intermediate nadis (which are represented by the body of the Vel) and pierce through the thousand-petalled Brahma randhra, which is represented by the sharp, leaf-shaped end of the Vel, and in the end will shine resplendent in the top beyond all these chakras or nadis.

The serpent

The subordinated serpent kept in check by the peacock's feet shows that Maya or impurity is completely overpowered by the power of Pranava.





Cock in the banner

The cock in the banner signifies the sound-form or then nada of Pranava. It is the nature of the cock to crow at the moment when the sun rises in the horizon.

Thanda Paani

There is another form of Lord Subrahmanya which is known as Danda Pani. When He is presented in that form, He stands alone, with the Vel but without Valli or Deivayanai. That also shows that He can be without the forces of desire and action, but cannot be without the force of knowledge.

Lakshmi Narasimhar



The sculpture of Lakshmi Narasimhar is seen in seated pose possessing four hands with a form of a lion face and human body. A chakra (discus), seen in His upper right hand conveys that this weapon is to protect His devotees from evil. The sankha (conch) is held on the upper left hand is the communication with His devotees. The front right hands are in the position of protection giving pose (abhaya mudra). The front left hand is shown in blessing/boon granting pose (varadha mudra) embracing His sakhi Lakshmi who is seen seated on the left thigh of Lord Narasimhar. The right leg of this deity is seen freely hanging out and the foot rests on a lotus flower. His left leg is kept crossed at the knee joint and this foot touches the inner part of the right thigh. Puranic evidence shows that Lord Vishnu assumed the form of Narasimha which was neither man nor animal came out of a broken pillar, laid hold of the demon king by its teeth, put him up on his thighs and tore him up in the middle by his claws. It was evening time (twilight) - neither day nor night. The manifestation of the face of Lord Narasimhar accom-

panied with Lakshmi shows a calm and peaceful appearance.

Anjaneyar

The deity of Anjaneyar is seen in standing pose with a form of a face of Hanuman (monkey) and human body, possessing two hands with adoration (anjali) mudra. This anjali pose (reverence gesture) is a form of respect and greeting in which two palms are held softly together and slightly cupped. This unique form with adoration pose of Anjaneyar has a decorated crown on the head. The body is highly decorated with ornaments. Anjaneyar personifies Vedic knowledge. Anjaneyar is highly erudite, cultured, refined form with strong physique, wise and highly devoted to Lord Vishnu





The Navagraha (nine planets)

The Navagraha are considered as of greatest astrological importance and believed to influence and govern the destinies of the life of the individuals. The images of nine grahas (nine planets) are installed in a separate pedestal, in a square that no two of the them will face each other. The Navagraha platform is located in the North Eastern corner of the temple.

The Navagraha (nine planets) are namely; The Surya (Sun/ Ravi/ suriyan) is in the centre, The Chandra (Moon/ chandran) is in the South Eastern corner, The Angaraka (Mars/ Kuja/Sevvai) is in the South, The Budha (Mercury/ Pudhan) is in the North East, The Brihaspati - Guru (Jupiter/ viyalan) is in the North, The Sukra (Venus/ velli) is in the East, The Sani (Saturn/ sani) is in the West, The Rahu (ascending node/ rahu) is in the South Western corner, The Ketu (descending node/ kethu) is in the North Western corner. The names of the seven days of a week derive their nemes from the first seven planets respectively. Rahu and Kethu are not planets but ascending node and descending node of the moon. Kethu is depicted as the personification of comets and meteors.

Surya (Sun/ Ravi/ Suriyan)

The appearance of the statue of Suriya takes the figure of a human form and seen at the centre of the planets, facing east and all the other eight grahas (planets) fixed around the Suriya (Sun) each facing a specified direction. Sun symbolically possess two hands holding lotus flower in each hands. Surya is accompanied with two sakthies (consorts) named Usha devi, and Prathusha devi on either side. All the three idols are seen to be seated on a lotus flower. Suriya is seen to fold his legs at knee position while his sakthies seated on the left lap of Suriya on either side freely hanging their legs where the foots rests on lotus flower

Chandra (Moon/ Chandran)

The statue of Chandra is of human form possessing four hands holding lotus flowers in two hands lower right hand is seen, with 'ab-haya mudra' (protection giving), and The lower left hand is shown in blessing/boon granting pose ('varadha mudhra'), Chandra is accompanied with his sakthi (consort) known as Rohini seated on the left lap. Chandra is having white horse as his vehicle.



Angaraka (Mars/ Sevvai)

The statue of Angaraka is of human form possessing four hands holding weapons mace and javelin on the posterior hands while lotus flowers in the other two anterior hands is accompanied with his sakthi (consort) named as Sakthi devi seated on the left lap. Angaraka seems to have goat as his vehicle.

Budha (Mercury/ Pudhan)

The statue of Angaraka is of human form possessing four hands, three hands wielding the weapon sword, shield and mace. The fourth hand shows the blessing/boon granting pose ('varadha mudhra'). Budha is seen to accompanied with his sakthi (consort) named as Gnana Devi seated on the left lap. Budha seems to have lion as his vehicle.





Brihaspati - (Jupiter/ Guru /Viyalan)

The figure of the statue of Brahaspati of human structure possessing four hands holding weapons on the two posterior hands while the right hand is seen, with 'abhaya mudra' (protection giving), and a lotus flower on the left front hand. Brahaspati is seen to accompanied with a sakthi (consort) named as Tharadevi seated on the left lap. Brahaspati seems to have elephant as his vehicle.



Sukra (Venus/ Velli)

The shape of the statue of Sukra is of human appearance possessing four hands holding weapons on the two posterior hands while the left hand is seen to possess lotus flower, Sukra is seen to accompanied with his sakthi (consort) named as Sukirthi seated on the left lap. Sukra seems to have horse as his vehicle.

Sani (Saturn/ Sani)

The shape of the statue of Sani is of human appearance possessing four hands holding weapons on the two posterior hands while the left hand is seen to possess lotus flower, and another weapon on the front right hand. Sani is seen to accompanied with his sakthi (consort) named as Neeladevi seated on the left lap. Sani seems to have crow as his vehicle.

Rahu (ascending node)

The figure of the statue of Rahu is of human appearance possessing two hands. The right hand is seen, with 'abhaya mudra' (protection giving), while the left hand is seen to embrace his sakthi. Rahu is seen to accompanied with his sakthi (consort) named as Simhidevi seated on the left lap of Rahu. Rahu seems to have lion as his vehicle.



Ketu (descending node)

The character of the statue of Rahu is of human appearance possessing two hands. The right hand is seen, with 'abhaya mudra' (protection giving), while the left hand is seen to embrace his sakthi. Kethu is seen to accompanied with hisa sakthi (consort) named as Chithraleka, seated on the left lap of Kethu. Kethu seems to have pigeon as his vehicle.





Nayanar (Four saints of Saivism)

Manikkavasaakar

One of the four saints of Saivism, is considered as the founder of the path of truth (sat marga). He is well known for his intelligence from his early age. He worked as a chief minister in the court of a Pandyan king for sometime before he became a true speaker about religious philosophy. His work, Tiruvachakam is considered to be a pioneering work in Saivism.

Thirunavkkarasa Nayanar (Appar)

Thirunavkkarasa Nayanar is reckoned as a great saint of Saivism. He is a contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendra1. and he is credited for the path of the services of an obedient servant (dasamarga) in Saivism. He composed a lot of poems out of which only a few are available today.

Thiru Gnana Sambandha Nayanar

Thiru Gnana Sambandha Nayanar is considered one of the great saints of Saivism, who founded the path of the relation of a son (satputra marga) to attain liberation (moksha). As a talented child, he was dedicated to Lord Siva and devine mother Parvathi from a very early age. He was blessed with the divine feeding by the mother of universe, Parvathi. Thiru Gnana Sambandhar and Thirunavkkarasar toured many places and is said to have performed many miracles. He composed many poems extolling the virtues Siva and Parvathi. But only a few poems are available today.



Sundaramurthy Nayanar

Sundaramurthy Nayanar is one of the greates saints of Saivism. He founded path of the friend (sahamarga). Just before the preparation for his marriage he renunciated his life. He traveled far and wide singing songs in praise of Lord Siva. He composed a lot of devotional poems of which very few are available today.

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