



THE NARRATIVE ASPECTS OF SIVA AS KALAHARAMURTI

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ABSTRACT

The anthropomorphic form of Shiva associated with aesthetic, philosophic, narrative and religious perception, executed according to the characteristics of traditional paintings. The paintings capture a frozen moment, though they narrate whole story with proficient approach. Visual narrative paintings have been one of the media through which the anthropomorphic form of Siva is effectively expressed. These visuals provide ready understanding and experience of the mythological symbolism of Samharamurti to the viewers. The present paper enquires about the presence of a story, visuals, and characters in the narratives within selected traditional painting styles from South India

KEYWORDS

Shiva, Samharamurti, Anthropomorphic, Narrative, Murals

1. Introduction

Indian traditional paintings based on legends of gods and goddesses from Indian Epics, Purānas, and Mythology with a narrative quality. The word 'narrative' used to highlight the narrative quality of the visual like an adjective. Narrative used as a qualifier and is added as a prefix to refer to any visual that has a narrative aspect.¹ Narrative is a universal phenomenon, which, as Roland Barthes remarked, "is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like like itself," A narrative has two aspects-a story or content that generally consists of a sequence of events, and the form or expression, which is the means by which the story is communicated and its actions presented.² The word 'painting' enlightens about the representation i.e. it could be an image, illustration and a scroll.³ Visual narrative tradition survived through the oral practices, namely storytelling, heroic narration of epics, legends, and depiction of mythological stories through the sculpture and paintings. Hence, the narrative paintings create a wide scope for understanding unique cultural aspects of particular region through descriptive characteristics of visuals.

Mysore traditional paintings of Karnataka are good illustration for narrative paintings known for their religious and mythological themes. As an example of the Mysore traditional paintings, Śrī - *Tattva - Nidhi*⁴ an illustrated manuscript is a prime source of narrative paintings. The *Śivanidhi* one among the nine divisions of Sri - *Tattva - Nidhi* describes the concept of Lord Śiva; the main deity of Hindu Śaivaites and one among trinity. *Śivanidhi* contains five seventy-three stanzas; hundred and sixty four forms of Śiva, Ganapati and Subrahmanya are depicted in this illustrated manuscript.⁵ The different forms of Śiva are represented as *anugrahamūrti* in *Chandēśānugrahamūti*, *Nṛttamūrti* in *Ānandatāṇḍava*, as *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* in *Vyākhyānamūrti*, *Kaṅkāla* and *Bhikṣāṇamūrti* and other aspects of Śiva as *Gaṅgādhamamūrti*, etc. The present paper discusses the representation of Śiva as *Samhāmūrti*, choosing unique form '*Kalaharamūrti*' painting. This painting analyzed based on the powerful visual narrative aspects which are visual, narrative and story.

2. Śiva and his Manifestations

The supreme reality is called Śiva, and regarded as beginning less, uncaused, free from defects, the all - doer and the all -

knower, who frees the individual soul from the bond which fetter them.⁶ The manifestation of 'Śiva' (from *Si* with *Van*, meaning 'auspicious'), signifies 'auspicious' or 'averting the inauspicious'.⁷ Śiva identified with universal representation in *Linga* form, which is an abstract and non-figurative form of the god. Śiva is represented as 'Liṅga'; according to *Liṅgapurāna* the primary unevolved matter, the cause of the universe is *Liṅga*.⁸ The entire phenomenon of creation is symbolized by the phallic image of Lord Śiva.⁹ Śiva's complete form found in the *Yajurveda*. He invoked by one hundred names. The seeds of the later *purānic* stories found here.¹⁰ According to Radhakrishnan, Śiva is everlasting, since he is not limited by time. He is omnipresent. He works through his *śakti*, which is not unconscious but conscious energy - the very body of God.¹¹ The early iconographic manuals like *Tantra - sāra*, *Vishnudharmottara* and *Manasollasa* describe various aspects and forms of Śiva, all of which are anthropomorphic in character. Detailed characters like three eyes, which signify sun, moon, and fire, crescent moon on crest, matted hair as crown, serpents as ornaments, tiger skin as garment, and battle - axe and deer in the hands, described in these texts.¹²

2.1. The "Anthropomorphic" manifestation of Śiva in Narrative Paintings

Coomaraswamy describes the Indian or Far Eastern icon, carved or painted, is neither a memory image nor an idealization, but a visual symbolism, ideal in the mathematical sense. The "anthropomorphic" icon is of the same kind as a *yantra*, that is, a geometrical representation of a deity, or a *mantra*, that is, an auditory representation of a deity.¹³ Zimmer analyses the form as - the anthropomorphic images of Śiva known as "movable" (*cala*), festival, or ceremonial, figures" (*utsavamūrti*) "images for festival enjoyment" (*bhogamūrti*).¹⁴ The significance given to anthropomorphic form of Śiva in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, *Aitareya Upaniṣas*, *Bhāgavata Purāna* and *Bhagavadgītā*, is considered to be the perfect symbol of the correlation and the harmony between microcosm and the macrocosm.¹⁵ The *Śaivāgama* texts classify several sportive forms, each of them associated with a myth, which are represented in the Śiva temples and also in Indian paintings.¹⁶ Three such anthropomorphic forms of Śiva depicted as *Sam-*

hāramūrti are analyzed here as exclusive examples with rich narrative quality, the *Kālaharamūrti*.

2.1.1. Śiva as Samhāramūrti

The images of Śiva are divided into five main forms, namely the *Samhāramūrtis* (destructive aspects), the *Anugrahāmūrtis* (boon – conferring aspects), the *Nritta - mūrtis* (dancing aspects), the *Dakshināmūrtis* (the yogic, musical, and philosophic aspects), and other aspects.¹⁷ According to Stapathi, *Samhara* means the act of removing the *tanu, karana* and *bhoga* that has given living beings.¹⁸ Gopinath explains the form of Samhāramūrti of Śiva which is represented in narrative paintings either as a terrific, destructive deity or a pacific, boon conferrer. In the former aspect he is known by several names, each one being indicative of destructing a particular malevolent and troublesome demonical being; for example he is known as *Gajhāmūrti* for having killed an Elephant – formed *asura; Kālarimūrti*, as having killed *Kāla*, the god of death; *Kāmāntakamūrti*, because he burnt down the god of love who came to interfere with his austerities. In the latter aspect, Śiva is represented as seated with his consort be it noted that the company of *Dēvi* is always to keep Śiva in a pacific turn of mind bestowing boons and blessings on his deserving votaries.¹⁹

3. Kālaharamūrti

Rishi Mṛikaṇḍu and his wife Marumati worshipped Śiva and sought from him the boon of begetting a son. Śiva appeared and asked about a son with long life, not an intelligent, and a son with short life with intelligence. The couple chooses the later, and blessed with a boy destined to die at the age of sixteen. Mārkaṇḍeya grow up and on the eve of his sixteenth birthday decided to spend his remaining hours in worshipping Śiva. At the appointed hour Yama appeared. Mārkaṇḍeya however had not finished his prayers and requested Yama to wait for a while. Yama laughs and reminds him that the death will not wait for no one and flung his nose began dragging out Mārkaṇḍeya's life breath. By accident or fate, the nose mistakenly landed around Śivalingam and Mārkaṇḍeya abandoned himself to Śiva with cry. Upon hearing it Śiva emerged from Śivalingam with all his anger, kicked Yama for his act of aggression; rescued his devotee from death. Mārkaṇḍeya went to Kailasa along with Śiva, lived forever as young boy. By this event, Śiva known as *Kālarimūrti* and place is known as Yamakeshwar.²⁰ The story narrated with slight variation according to *Amśumadbhēdagamā, Kāmikāgamā*

He has three eyes. In his four hands, he carries a Spear, a Chisel, a sharp pointed needle, and a good nose. His face looks fierce with fangs. His bent leg pressed against Yama's chest. The Lord has matted hair disheveled. Goddess Girijā accompanies him. He is the god of the whole world. His raised left foot is on Yama's chest, right foot is on the *Liṅga*, and his face produces terror.²¹

Mārkaṇḍeya is on the right side; touching the lower part of *Liṅga*; has two eyes and two hands. His forehead and body smeared with ashes; wears a *rudrākṣha* garland, is calm and worshipping and meditates on Śiva. On the left side of Lord stands *Kāla*, who is death personified. *Kāla* has crown and earrings, has big fangs and an awful form. In his two hands, *Yama* is shown as seated on a Buffalo.²²

Conclusion

Visual art has been one of the media through which the anthropomorphic form of Śiva is effectively expressed. These visuals give the viewers a ready understanding and experience of the mythological symbolism of these forms of Śiva. The forms of Śiva principally developed according to traditional painting techniques of Mysore style is very well illustrated in the *Śivanidhi*. Though the paintings capture a frozen moment from an event, they speak the whole story in uniqueness of form, colour and distinctive experience of narration. The style of Śiva narrative paintings are unique and distinctiveness of Śiva is shown through the armaments he carries in his hands and the position when action takes place.

Concepts of Śiva as Samhāramūrti is narrated effectively and though painting shows only the frozen moment of the story, still these paintings communicate the whole story to the viewer which is characteristic of narrative paintings. The onlooker will relate himself with the untold story of the narration.

Gaurī is seen accompanying Śiva while granting boons to Mārkaṇḍeya. The architectural elements are shown in the painting of Kālaharamūrti, though the palette is limited, dominated by brown, red, yellow, white, gold, and green have not followed the characteristics mentioned in the traditional texts, but the paintings still communicates the story in an effective mode. Thematically the narrative aspects of the painting are dominating. Visually the lines that regulate movement upkeep the beauty in these paintings with graceful characteristics. Mysore traditional Paintings, finest illustrations, which show their uniqueness in narrative painting style in Śivanidhi manuscript.

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Kālaharamūrti, Śivanidhi.

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