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THE GODDESS OF DURGA MAHISASURAMARDINI IN PALLAVA ICONOGRAPHY

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Abstract

This fully field-based study reveals about the sculptural representation of the Durga Mahisasuramardini in Pallava Iconography. Durga Mahisasuramardini is one of the utmost remarkable and formidable Goddess of the Hindu religion. A popular form of Durga Mahisasuramardini plays an important part in the socio religious life of the South Indian people from the earliest time to the present day. The primary function of the deity is to combat demons particular Mahisha. In this part, she is represented as a battle queen with multiple arms each of which uses a different weapon. Her most popular description is Mahisasuramardini, the killer of Mahisasura and her most common iconographic depiction displays killing the demon.

During the 4th-9th centuries, likely outstanding to the inspiration of the Pallava rulers, the image of Mahisasuramardini fine carved in Saivite temples. This idea of forming sculptural images of Mahisasuramardini taken from the Chalukyas. The earliest representations of the image of the Goddess as the killer of Mahisasura in the South India, however, it may be that occurring in the Tamil Silappadigaram. The Pallava artists followed different modes for carving the sculpture of goddess Mahisasuramardini. In Pallava iconography, the goddess of Mahisasuramardini depicted with four, six, eight, ten and sixteen hands which had different weapons. This study provided treasured information to identify the iconographical growth of the goddess Mahisasuramardini.

Keywords: Mahisasuramardini, Demon Mahisa, Buffalo, Silappadigaram, Religion etc.

Introduction

The Pallavas emerged as a frightful power in the South India around the 4th century C.E., who ruled almost 500 years. Pallavas became a major power during the reign of Mahendravarman-I (600-630) until the end of the 9th Century.

Pallavas are most noted for their patronage of architecture and built so many temples in their region. They are constructed Rock cut temples (610-690) and structural temples (690-900).Mahendravarman-I (600-630), Narasimhavarman-I(630-68), Narasimhavarman-II(700-729), Nandivarman-II(731-795) mainly contributed to the art and architecture. Mahendravarman-I built Shaiva temple at Sittanavasal, Narasimhavarman-I built so many temples at Mahabalipuramu like PandavaRathas, Arjuna's penance. Structural temples, it is new architecture in South known as Dravidian Architecture introduced by Narasimhavarman-II. He built popular and well-known structures of Shore temple at Mahabalipuramu, Kailasanatha and Airavateswara temples at Kanchi. Nandivarman-I constructed Mukteswara and Matangeswar temples at Kanchi, and also Parasurameswara temple at Gudimallam, near Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

Pallavas took the idea of creating sculptural representations of Mahisasuramardini from the Chalukyas, only that such imagery was committed to stone in the Chalukya region earlier. The earliest surviving representations of the image of the Goddess as the slaughterer of Mahisasura, in the South, however, may be that occurring in the Tamil Silappadigaram, where not only the goddess, but her worshipped images as well are mentioned, at the date considerably prior to the Chalukya's emergence.

Objectives

1. The beginning and artifact of the faction of Mahisasuramardini in Pallava Art.
2. To examine the method of portrayal and the stages in the development of the iconographical highlights and idiosyncrasies of the figures and pictures of Mahisasuramardini.

Iconographical Features of Mahisasuramardini in the Pallava Art

On the basis of the style of representation, the sculptures of Mahisasuramardini of the Pallava period can be classified into the following four categories.

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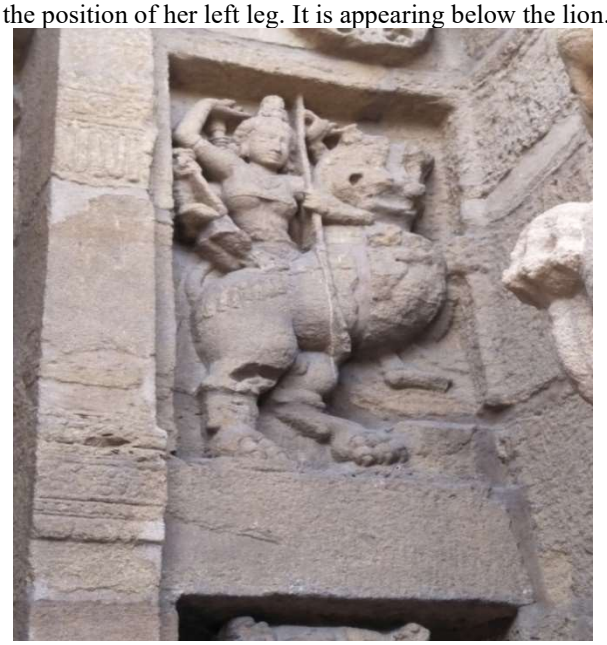
1. **Four armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini.**
2. **Six armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini**
3. **Eight armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini.**
4. **Ten armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini.**
5. **Sixteen armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini**

Four armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini

The goddess represented of Varaha Mandapa, Mahabalipuramu, Tamil Nadu. The goddess stands in Samabhangabeneath a parasol upon a lotus pedestal. She has four hands with a broken hand, wheel, sankha, katyavalambita in her right and left hands. The lion and the stag are in the upper corners. Four gana fly to her, carrying a casket of offerings, a sword and a fly whisk. The self mutilating and lotus offerings devotees' knell at her feet. She wears kuchabandha and other ornaments.

The simhavahana goddess panel found depicted on the north side of the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi. Here goddess is actually sitting on astride her lion. She has four hands. The goddess holds cakra, arrow in her right hands and khadga and bow in her left hands. The goddess seated astride from the position of her left leg. It is appearing below the lion. The lion is seen backdrop.



Mahisasuramardini, Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi.

The goddess is exposed with the worshippers inside of the Draupadi Ratha, Mahabalipuramu, Tamilnadu. She is standing on the lotus. She has four hands and shown in samabhanga pose. She carries cakra and sankha in her upper right and left hands and low lower hands are in abhaya and katyavalambita pose. She wears kiritamakuta, haras, kuchabandha and other ornaments. She is the centre of a worship scene. Her followers here include two pairs of gana flying in above and two male worshippers kneeling below. The devotee on her left seems to hold his hands in the anjalimudra and the other holds his topknot with his left hand gestures as if to cut off his head, with the sword crossing behind his neck in his right. The pair of pratihari is observed within the panel.

The goddess image is seen in the exterior wall of the Draupadi Ratha, Mahabalipuramu. She has four hands. She is standing on the head of buffalo and shown in samabhanga posture. She holds cakra, sankha in upper right and left hands and lower right and left hands are in abhayaand katyavalambita postures. She wears kiritamakuta, anklets and armlets, kundalas, kuchabandha and other ornaments.

The goddess is seen in the devakosta, on the eastern vimana of Shore temple, Mahabalipuramu. She has four hands and holds bow and arrow, cakra and other one in her two hands. She wears kiritamakuta, haras, kuchabandha and other ornaments. The lion is fixed at the side by niches containing gana. Below, gana with swords border and take apart a pair of devotees, kneel down the pilasters of the devakostha in sacrificial attitudes. The one on Devi's right cuts at his narrow part while the other is piercing his hand.

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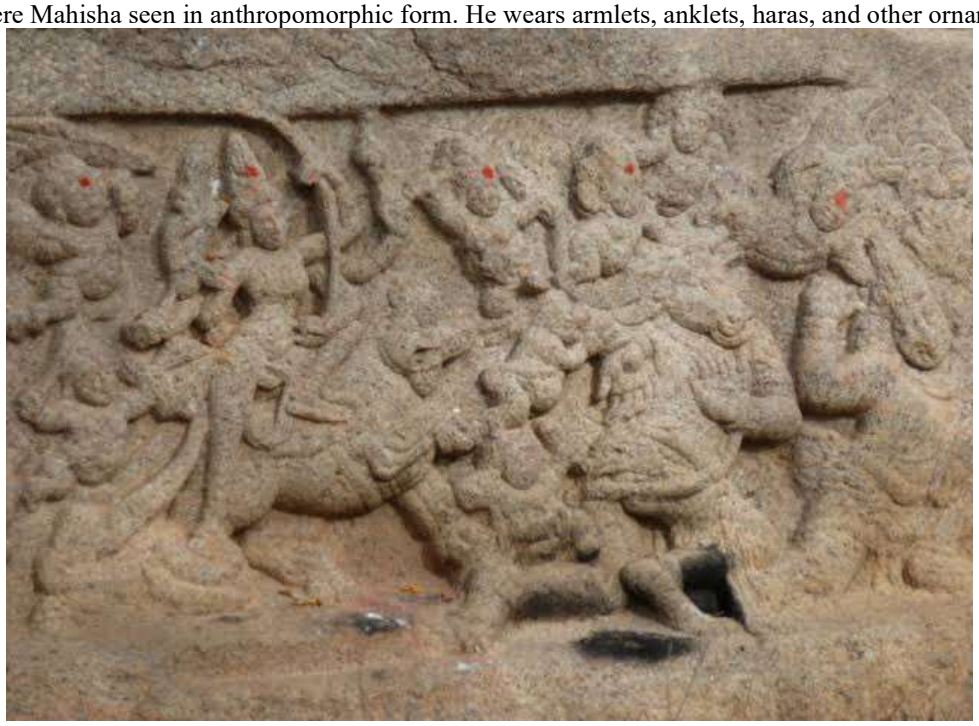
Six armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini

The goddess of Mahisasuramardini image carved at Atiranachanda Mandapa, Saluvankuppam, Mahabalipuramu. She has six hands. The goddess dismounting from her lion, in the midst of eleven or twelve gana. She carrieskhadga, wheel, arrow in her right hands and thesankha, bow in her left hands. Her lower left hand kept on the hip. She wears anklets, kuchabandha and arm ornaments. The goddess astride the lion, she appears here with left leg raised on the haunch of the lion and right leg kept one the lotus pedestal. The demon is showing in the composite form. Mahisasura foots and arms swing in wonderful gestures. Another demon is sketched out in hand face in the higher corner. The scene is completed by the goddess gana, who fill every region of the panel left to them. Against the border one gana below carries a club, while one above carriessankha. In the upper corner is either a third with a deer-face, attitude the sunshade, or the goddess's deer vahana. Directly behind her are three or more one with a fly whisk at the top, one with a khadga and shield and one at her leg. Beyond her, six gana and the lion beset the fleeing demon. Two khadga and shields, while a lion-faced one bites the demon Mahisha on the elbow. Two more come down upon demon Mahisa's head, while the last one descends toward his collapsing accomplice. Here Mahisha seen in anthropomorphic form. He wears armlets, anklets, haras, and other ornaments.



Mahisasuramardini battling the demon, Saluvankuppam

The goddess represented on the north wall of Iravataneswara temple, Kanchi, Tamilnadu. She has six hands. The goddess is side by female pratihari of the type we have become accustomed to, and a stag on the proper right. She stands flat on the plinth in a dvibhangapose. She holds bow, wheel and other one in right hand and shankha and katyavalambitapose on her left hand. She wears kuchabandha and other ornaments. The mount lion stands behind the goddess to her right side.

Eight armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini

The image of Mahisasuramardini found on the north wall of the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi, Tamilnadu. The goddess seated in **Lalitasana** on a throne. Her left leg turned at the knee and kept on the head of the buffalo and right foot fold over at the knee and reserved on the pedestal. She has eight hands. She holds lotus, khadga, arrow and unknown weapon in her right and axe, sankha, bow and indistinct weapon in her left hand. Two worshippers are seen at her lower side.

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Mahisasuramardini, Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi.

The image of the goddess is seen in the devakosta, Trimurthi Mandapa at Mahibalipuramu, Tamilnadu. Here the goddess is standing on a lotus pedestal or flushes with the floor and in Samabhanga posture. She has eight hands. She holds bell, khadga and wheel in her three right hands and another one in abhaya pose and sankha, bow, shield and katyavalambita hasta on the left hands. She wears kiritamakuta, kuchabandha, haras and other ornaments.

The goddess is represented in the Adivaraha Mandapa, Mahabalipuramu. She has eight hands. She holds bell,khadga, wheel in her right hands and another one keeps on the hip and sankha, bow, shield and katyavalambita in her left hands. She is standing on the head of the buffalo with her left leg. Her right leg is bent at the knee and crossing behind her left ankle. She appears in the midst of an elaborate worship scene. To either side gana fly in, bearing the fly whisk and a box of offerings. The lion and the stag stand in the upper corners. Two female guardians stand below in either side. One female guardian holds a bow and the other sword at her feet kneel male devotee's the one on her left gestures with respect, while offerings a lotus. The other holds a dagger in his right hand against the wrist of his left, in the act of offerings his own blood as a sacrifice.

The image of Mahisasuramardiniwell carved on the north wall of the Mahisasuramardini Mandapa at Mahabalipuramu, Tamil Nadu. It depicts the battle between the goddess and demon Mahisa, with each of the principles shown surrounded by a host of supporters. On one side the charging Goddess is portrayed as a slightly larger than human-sized figure, mounted on a lion, surrounded by dwarfish male gana, and proceeded by a female warrior. Before her, she forces the measured retreat of a still very powerful-looking Mahisasura, shown with a human body and a buffalo head, surrounded by his own army of anthropomorphic male warriors.The goddess is shown as a flexible and graceful figure seated spanning the lion. She wears kiritamakuta, kundalas, haras, kuchabandha and others. She has eight hands. She holds bow and arrow in her upper right and left hands. She holds khadga, bell, cakra in her right hands and shankha, noose, shield in her other left hands. The host of eight gana surrounds the goddess like a halo. Four of them embracekhadga and shield. The one in the upper corner flies in with a tray of offerings. Those directly behind her carry the staff of the umbrella extended over her head and a fly whisk, symbolic of her regal divinity. The gana below her imitates her pose, with a bow and arrow. The goddess and her host occupy the half of the composition to the viewer's left. The opposite half of the composition is filled by the demon's retreat. Mahisasura, still very much in the fight, stands hefting a club in his two hands, his body inclined at an angle of roughly thirty degrees, turning away from the goddess in an impressive and dignified attitude. The poses of the surrounding members of his host, however, foretell the asura's doom. Only one of Mahisa's demons is still in the battle, shield and sword in hand at the top centre of the panel. The rest scatter in disarray. The demons at the corner and edge of the panel look to the rear, the upper turning and

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the lower beginning to flee. The figure in the lower corner has fallen, while the one closest to Mahisasura cowers beneath his retreating master. Just who carries the umbrella over Mahisa's crowned head is unclear. Beneath him lies the body of a demon that has fallen. At its centre the opposing sides of the composition are joined by an interesting pair of figures. Below is a female warrior, on her knees' striking upward with sword. Above is the torso of a male figure, with a shaven skull, falling head-downward onto her blade. This pair marks the division between the charging forces of the goddess and the retreating forces of the demon, while at the same time it links them together within the composition of the scene.

The Goddess Mahisasuramardini battling demon, Mahisasuramardini Mandapa at Mahabalipuram.

An eight armed goddess image carved in the sanctum of Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi, Tamilnadu. The goddess is showing in Pratyalidha pose. She is standing with her straight right leg kept on pedestal and left leg kept on the seated lion's upraised paw. She has eight hands. She holds arrow, khadga and flower in her right hands and another one keeps on the hip. Sankha, khetaka, bow on her left hands and another right hand keep on the thigh. She wears kiritamakuta, kundalas, haras, kuchabandha, armlets and anklets, yajnopavitha and others. Male worshippers are seen at her right bottom.

Mahisasuramardini, Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi

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The image of Mahisasuramardini found in the inside of the Mahisasura Rock, Mahabalipuramu. She has eight hands. Devi seated on the buffalo's head and seen in Pratyalidhaposture. Her left leg bent at the knee and kept on the buffalo's head and right leg bent at the knee and resting on the stone pedestal. Her right hands holdskhadga, arrow and two other indistinct weapons and her left hands holds sankha, bow and other unknown weapons. She wears kiritamakuta, kundalas, anklets and other ornaments.

The eight armed image of the goddess found in breast of Durga's Lion, south of the Shore temple compound, Mahabalipuramu. The goddess of Mahisasuramardini seated on the buffalo head. Her left leg is up and resting on the buffalo's head and in Pratyalidha posture. Her right leg bent at the knee and kept on the stone pedestal. She holds trisula, khadga, and arrow in her rights hands and other right in damaged condition and bow, sankha and other indistinct weapons in her left hands. She show offs kiritamakuta, kundalas, haras and ornaments.

Mahisasuramardini, South of the Shore temple, Mahabalipuramu.

Ten armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini

The image of goddess carved on the western niche of the vimana's north wall of the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi. She is standing on her right foot and kept on the pedestal and she lifts her left leg on the lion's upraised paw. Here lion turns out towards the viewer. Here goddess is seen in Pratyalidha posture. She has ten hands. She holds cakra, sword, arrow, and flower in her right hands and other one on the hip (Katyavalambita). She holds axe, shield, bow, snake in her left hands and other one is in katyavalambita posture. There is a trisula behind the goddess. An umbrella is extended above her head. She wears anklets, kuchabandha, haras, kiritamakuta, yajnopavitha and other ornaments.

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Mahisasuramardini, Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi

The Devi image curved in the sanctum of Mahisasura Rock, Near Shore Temple, Mahibalipuramu. Here goddess is in Pratyalidha posture. She is standing on her right foot and kept on the pedestal and her left foot kept on the lion's upraised paw. She has ten hands. She holds cakra, khadga, arrow, and flower in her right hands and other one on the hip. She holds axe, shield, bow and snake in her left hands and other one is in katyavalambita posture. She wears kiritamakuta, kundalas, yajnopavita, kuchabandha, armlets and others.

Mahisasuramardini, Mahisasura Rock, Mahibalipuramu.

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Sixteen armed sculptures of Mahisasuramardini

A sixteen-armed goddess image represented at Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi, Tamilnadu. Here goddess seated on her mount lion and her left foot bent at the knee and kept on her right thigh. She wears kiritamakuta, kundalas, haras and others. She holds cakra, arrow, flower and indistinct weapon in her right hands and sankha, khadga, pasa, bow and other indistinct weapons in her left hands. The well decorated mount lion seen in seated pose and roaring condition.

Conclusion

From the above evidences it can be inferred the worshipped of the supreme Mother Goddess is prevailing in the Pallava period. The goddess Mahisasuramardini particular in some sculptures stands in Pratalidha posture in Pallava art. The artists of the Pallava art depicted the goddess of Mahisasuramardini with four, six, eight, ten and sixteen hands. In some examples, the goddess showed as trampling the buffalo with her left leg and her right leg resting on the ground and folded manner. In another other examples, she is resting left leg on her mount lion and right leg kept on the ground. In some examples, the goddess is shown as a flexible and graceful figure seated on astride lion. In few examples, the demon is shown in anthropomorphic form with human body and buffalo head. The buffalo is absent in some sculptures but decapitate head shown in few examples. It was quite different rather than Chalukyan art.

In the most of the four handed sculptures, she holds bow, arrow in her lower hands and in another examples, her hands in abhaya and katyavalambita posture. In the six handed sculptures, she carries bow and arrow in her front left and right hands. In the eight handed sculpture, she holds sword or arrow in the front right hand and holds bow in the front left hand. In few examples, her front right hand kept in abhaya posture and kept on the hip and her front left hand in katyavalambita posture and kept on the thigh. In the ten-armed sculptures, her front right hand kept on the hip and her front left hand is katyavalambita pose.

In all the examples, lion is depicted in very interesting manner. The lion showed in big size at the left bottom with open mouth and uplifted the front fore paws and also present in attacking the demon Mahisasura.

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