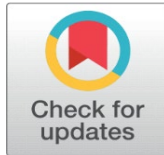


REPRESENTATION OF KIRATARJUNIYAM IN THE TEMPLE SCULPTURES OF KADAPA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the narrative episode of the famous Kiratarjuniyam in the temple sculptures of Kadapa district. This theme is commonly found at Chilamkuru, Attirala, Pushpagiri, and Animela in the Kadapa district but varies in depiction. Its significance is in terms of sculptural carvings in seven panels. The Kiratarjuniyam episode was rendered with great skill and stood out for the master's skills in sculptures. Though the story is depicted in limited panels, it is the best narrative in the whole sculptural heritage in Kadapa. Proportions and narrations and compositional values are discussed to unfold the aesthetics of the temple sculptures. The author tried to study the variations in the theme depicted in the temples of the Kadapa region. The aesthetic evaluation of the compositional and carving skills of the sculptors is to be considered subject to the limitation of space and place of execution.

Keywords: Kadapa, Chilamkuru, Animela, Pushpagiri, Narration, Kiratarjuniyam
Viswakarmas

1. INTRODUCTION

The Kiratarjuniya theme describes Virarasa was written by poet Bharavi in the sixth century A.D., who used this poem for the first time before Kalidas. It is a small episode from Vanaparva in Mahabharata in Sanskrit literature [Nagaraja Rao \(1979\)](#). The sculptural representation of this theme is found in South Indian art. T.N. Ramachandra Rao and M.S. Nagaraja Rao studied extensively on this theme with regional variations. The Kiratarjuniyam episode was a favorite theme from the Chalukya period. The works like Kiratarjuniya of Bharavi, Vikramarjuna-Vija of

Pampa, and Bharata Champu of Ananthabhatta also narrate a similar story. [Chowdhury \(2014\)](#).

During the Pandavas' exile, Draupadi and Bhīma urged Dharma Raja to declare war against the Kauravas. Even Sage Vyasa visited Dharma Raja and advised him to send Arjuna to Indra for securing weapons from Indra. Finally, Arjuna, by the instruction of Indra, persuaded Lord Shiva with severe penance in the forest to be blessed with Pasupatha from Shiva's grace. Shiva was pleased by Arjuna's severe penance and thought to test his bravery before rewarding him with Pasupata. Shiva ordered "Mookasura" as a wild boar, which was charged and aimed at Arjuna to test his ability and bravery. God Shiva himself arrived in the Kirata form as he was hunting the wild boar to disturb the penance of Arjuna. The wild boar terrified sages in the forest and disturbed the forest animals. Arjuna saw the boar and decided to kill the wild boar to save the sages in the forest with a bow and arrows. Both Kirata (Shiva) and Arjuna killed wild boar with their bows at once, and an argument was held over who shot the boar first. They fought for a long time to win over one another. Arjuna was unable to conquer in the long battle; the two fought until Arjuna fell unconscious. After a while Arjuna recovered and realized and recognized that the opposite person was nothing but Lord Siva and surrendered himself to Siva. Then Shiva and Parvati blessed Arjuna with the Pasupatha weapon for his strength and courage. But Bharavi's version differs from the Mahabharata version, in which the god Shiva was the victim in the wrestling.

This intriguing narrative panel is sculpted on one of the navaranga pillars in the sabhamandapa of the Pacchala Someswara temple, dated to the later Chalukyan period. The same theme is depicted on the three panels of red sandstone, which are preserved at the Alampur Archaeological Museum, ascribed to the Rashtrakuta period of the 10th century A.D., and supported by the inscriptional evidence. In a comprehensive study on Kiratarjuniyam by M.S. Nagaraja Rao, it was cited that the story differs slightly from that known from the standard Mahabharata. This was very well discussed in Kiratarjuniya in his Indian Art, 1979. The same theme was carved in sculpture and can be seen at the Mamallapuram rock boulder carving as "Arjuna's Penance." Again, the Kiratarjuniyam episode is found as low-relief sculpture panels on the eastern prakara of Sri Mallikarjunaswamy temple at Srisailem of Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh. The continuity of the theme reflected in several temples in Andhra Pradesh in both forms of painting and sculpture at Lepakshi Temple is remarkable. The penance of Arjuna on Indrakeeladri was depicted at the Akkanna-Madanna caves at Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

Rayalaseema, the southern part of Andhra Pradesh, is a cradle for temple complexes of different periods with notable art and architecture. The temples of Kadapa have beautiful and rare iconographical wealth bestowed by the successive kingdoms from the Pallavas to the Vijayanagara kings. The geographical position of the district made a barrier between the southern and Deccan kingdoms and led to the rise of many local dynasties. The local dynasties played an important role and frequently paid their allegiance as the subordinates of the powerful dynasties of either the south or the Deccan. Several successive dynasties, including the Pallavas, Chalukyas of Badami, Rashtrakutas, imperial Cholas, Chalukyas of Kalyana, Kakatiyas, and Vijayanagara, controlled the region of Kadapa. Among the local dynasties, like the Renadu Cholas, Banas, Vaidumbas, Pottapi Cholas, Telugu Cholas of Nellore, Kayasthas, and Matlis, were important [Gurumurti \(1990\)](#). Most of the rulers and subordinates were great builders and patrons of art and architecture. Most of the temples were structural temples built of hard granite stone. The narrative episode is portrayed as per the taste of the sculptor, and subject to the

availability of space in the temple, the sculptor tried his best to minimize the number of panels and did his compositions accordingly. In the Rayalaseema region, this episode is noted in the temples at Siddeswaraswami temple at Hymavathi, Chilamkuru, Animela, Pushpagiri, and Peddamudiyam and Veerabhadra temple at Lepakshi on the outer walls of Ardhmandapa. The sculptor didn't attempt the details due to the temper or hardness of the granite stone.

Figure 1



Figure 1 Panels on the Pillar at Agasthyeswara Temple, Chilamkur

Kiratarjuniyam in Kadapa district Temples:

This theme is found at Chilamkuru, Attirala, Pushpagiri and Animela in Kadapa district.

Agasthyeswara temple at Chilamkuru.

Among these, the Agasthyeswara temple at Chilamkuru is the earliest, dated to the 9th to 10th century A.D., and the remaining temples are ascribed to the Vijayanagara period. The Kiratarjuniyam was well depicted in four stages on the pillar of Mukhamandapa in the Agasthyeswara temple at Chilamkuru. In the first panel, the gods Shiva and Parvati, depicted in the form of a Kirata couple (hunting family), appeared in the place where Arjuna was performing severe penance. In the second panel, we notice two tired compositions. In the upper tier, the wild boar face is seen as it is entering into the space where the sages are worshipping. In the lower tier, Kirata and Arjuna are rendered in a standing pose, facing each other and aiming arrows to shoot the boar. We find a small gap where the image of a wild boar is carved between Arjuna and Lord Shiva in the form of Kirata. It is a tight composition. The boar in a sitting posture on its hind legs is similar to the standing poses of Shiva and Arjuna. It seems the boar is wild and gigantic. The composition was very tight, and special gaps are very small, as the panel measures 15 inches x 15 inches in area. Within the single panel, the sculptor depicted the boar twice to intensify the role of the boar in the drama of Kiratarjuniyam.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Kiratarjuniyam Episode in Sangameswara temple, Animela

In the third panel, also divided into two tiers as horizontal upper and lower, in the lower tier of the composition, it was depicted that the Kirata and Arjuna are fighting hand to hand (wrestling), and Shiva has fallen down and Arjuna is rolling over him. Parvathi, in the getup of Kirati, is shown at the feet of Shiva and Arjuna, looking on with her right hand raised as if she is asking to stop the fight between Arjuna and Shiva. An organic tree was carved to suggest the forest scene. In the upper panel, the god Shiva is seated with Parvati in Umasahithamruti form to bless Arjuna with the weapon Pasupatha. In the bestowing pasupatha panel, Shiva and Parvathi are depicted in seated posture, and Arjuna is on his knees praying to the lord with his hands in Anjali mudra. The image of Shiva is depicted with four hands, carrying a trisula (trident) and damaru in the upper right and left hands, respectively. His lower right hand is shown in Abhaya mudra, and his left hand is holding pasupatha, which is not visible or blurred. This style of the carving of the panel seems to have more refined and dynamic forms with more affluence than the earlier panel.

Sangameswara temple at Animela:

The Sangameswara temple at Animela, 50 km from Kadapa, near Virapunayanipalle village, dates to the Vijayanagara dynasty of the 15th century A.D. Kiratarjuniyam was depicted on exterior walls in the west and north directions of the girbhagriha in more detail and with more panels than other temples in Kadapa. The compositions can be divided into three tiers.

The upper tiers were depicted with gods and celestial beings like Shiva as Kalyanasundaramurti, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Brahma, Bhudevi, etc., who are connected with the panigraha episode of Shiva and Parvati's marriage. The lower panels are depicted with the Kiratarjuniya episode separated by cloisters. Almost all panels are small, not more than 12 inches x 15 inches in size. Most were whitewashed during temple festivals, but they can still be read. It is noticed that the artist cleverly organized each composition in terms of the proportions of the figures, which are appropriate to the particular scene.

Again, the limited place in the panel played an important role at the temple as well as in Chilamkuru; the depiction of wild boar is small in scale due to this lack of space. But the sculptor cleverly composed both Shiva and Arjuna, with the boar carved in the middle of Shiva and Arjuna into a single frame, whereas auxiliary participants in the events are on pillared cloisters. Parvati in Kirati (Huntress) gets up and sits on the right of the panel. Kirata depicted Shiva on the left side. In another panel, the scale of the wild boar was depicted as big in the single panel with the support of two trees as background and also to suggest the size of the wild boar is above the humans.

Figure 3**Figure 3** A Panel of Wild boar at Sangameswara Temple, Animals

It is very interesting to notice that a monkey of one inch in size and a yali above the monkey in minute details on the left side of the tree and one monkey a little bigger than the earlier one carved on the right side of the tree are remarkable practices of capturing the immediate surroundings of Vijayanagara sculptors. In the next panel, where Arjuna and Shiva killed the boar, the boar was shown as small, and images of Shiva and Arjuna were given emphasis as the story demands. In the fourth panel, the two figures are arguing with each other, and in the fifth panel, they are wrestling again. One more interesting panel is that Kirata forcefully flies into the air onto Arjuna, but Arjuna catches hold of his feet with the intention of wrapping him on the ground in wrestling [Gurumurti \(1990\)](#), this kind of moment or dynamism is not carved anywhere in the Kadapa temples except in the Animela temple. In the last panel, in the extreme corner of the northwest, it is noticed that Shiva is blessing Arjuna with the Pasupata weapon.

Figure 4**Figure 4** Arjuna and Kirata Argument, sangameswara Temple. Animela

On the western wall of the girbhagriha, some scenes related to Kiratarjuniyam and other sculptures with scenes like Arjuna doing penance on a single leg with one leg folded, the appearance of Indra, and the suggestion to do penance for Shiva, who can bless you with the weapon pasupatha, besides other pictures that are not related to this episode and not arranged in a sequence.

Parasurameswara temple at Attirala:

The Parasurameswara temple at Attirala depicts the story of Kiratarjuniyam. It is found on the south face of the wide gully. In the first stage, Arjuna is represented as doing penance on one left leg, and the right leg is folded and touches the left knee. In the next panel, Kirata and Arjuna are standing on either side, facing each other. They are in a stance for discharging the arrow and hold bows in their hands. In the other, both Shiva and Arjuna seem engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. And one has fallen above them. The person who is lying down can be recognized as Shiva, as seen by the third eye on his forehead.

Pushpagiri Temple complex (Eastern bank):

The episode was carved at three places in the temple complex of Pushpagiri on the eastern bank. The first one is a small panel that has a monoscenic representation of Arjuna and Shiva shooting the wild boar at once. It's located on the top plinth of Adhithanam, facing the south side of the Chennakesava temple, and is, besides, very close to the Rajyalakshmi shrine. It measures 15 inches in width, 5 inches in height, and 1 inch in depth. The same scene of the narration with refined and intricate carving skills is again carved in minute details on the outer northern wall of the girbhagriha just above the adhithana of the Chennakesava Temple. It is found above the adhithanam in a panel that is 6 inches tall and 19 inches long. In this panel, the size of the wild boar closely resembles that of a human figure, despite the boar being depicted in a sitting posture with minimal dynamism. The panels can be divided into three parts and read from left to right. From the right, in the first scene, Arjuna is shown doing penance to achieve the weapon Pasupatha from God Shiva. In the second scene, the boar was shot by Arjuna and Shiva at the same time. Arjuna is depicted on the right side, and Shiva and Parvathi are shown on the left in anjali mode, praying to stop the battle between Shiva and Arjuna. In the third panel, the goddess Parvati, Shiva's consort, manifests as Kirati, a tribal woman. The platform, which is four inches high and features a decorative pattern, depicts Arjuna in a running mode.

Figure 5



Figure 5 Kiratarjuniyam on Top Plier of Adhithanam of North Exterior Wall of Girbhagriha Chennakesava Temple, Pushpagiri



Kiratarjuniyam on The Plier South Adhithana of Chennakesava Temple, Besides Besides Rajyalakshmi Shrine

Again, the same story of Kiratarjuniyam is represented in the five panels on the outer south wall of the garbhagriha, the upper tier of the Adhisthana of the Santana Malleswaraswamy temple, which is immediately adjacent to the Chennakesava shrine at Pushpagiri. When compared with the earlier two panels, this narrative panel is much bigger and carved with the finest and most minute details within the measurements of a 15-inch x 15-inch area with high relief in a decorative panel. The carved bitti sthambas, lavishly carved and highly decorated in the Hoyasala style, create compartmental divisions for each episode.

Figure 6



Figure 6 Narrative Episode of Kiratarjuniyam on the Exterior South Wall of Garbhagriha of Santana Malleswaraswami Temple, Pushpagiri

The first panel shows that Arjuna convinced Indra of his desire to possess Pasupatha, and in response, Indra recommended that he perform severe penance at Indrakeeladri to appease Shiva in order to obtain the weapon Pasupatha. The second panel, which is carved with the images of Shiva and Parvati, depicts them as a hunting couple—Kirata (the hunter) and Kirati (the huntress)—who test Arjuna's ability. The hairstyle of Parvati resembles a tribal hairstyle, and Shiva is wearing a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right hand, flanked by the sages. In The third panel depicts Arjuna performing severe penance on his left leg, which is bent at the knee of his right leg, with his hand placed on his chest in Anjali mudra while praying to Shiva for blessings. To show the seriousness of Arjuna's penance, the head is slightly tilted towards the sky as if he is praying to God. The fourth panel shows that Arjuna and Kirata were in disguise, killing wild boar. The boar is depicted in the middle of Arjuna and Kirata, being struck by the two arrows released by Shiva and Kirata (Shiva) at the same time. Parvathi is shown in the dress of a Kirati, or huntress, with the suggestive headgear of a tribe. Here one can notice the finest details of arrows that fiercely penetrated into the wild boar's body at a time. Unlike the earlier one, to unfold the dynamism, the boar is depicted in a left diagonal pose looking at Arjuna. Here sculptors cleverly used the image of Kirati (Goddess Parvati) to distinguish both characters, Arjuna and Kirata (God Shiva). The image of Kirati was shown on a small scale, as she is far away and watching the scene, intensifying the drama.

Figure 7**Figure 7** Fight between Arjuna and Kirata at Santana Malleswara temple at Pushpagr Temple Complex

The fifth panel depicts the wrestling between Kirata (Shiva) and Arjuna as watched by Kirati (Parvathi) and celestial beings from the sky and a sage in the dense forest. The sculptor captured the sensitivity of the posture as Shiva's body is lifted from the waist upwards, supported by his left hand firmly resting on the ground. Parvathi is positioned to the left of the combatants and is attempting to stop the fight. Near the feet of Arjuna and Shiva, a sage with raised hands above his head expresses wonder about the fight between god and man. Figures in slanting positions create a dynamic expression of the fight within the composition. All details are carved very meticulously as the ivory carving and gold design by goldsmiths of the clan of Viswakarma (Sampathkumarachar V.S. 1969); the only clue to the regional variations in the text used by these artists is contained in the inscription dated Malaguru 1117. This record refers to the artist named Hoyasalacharya, who also has the title Viswakarma [Collyer \(1990\)](#).

The last panel depicts Shiva along with his consort, Parvati, bestowing Pasupatha to Arjuna in the appearance of a divine couple. Shiva is depicted in the middle of the panel in a larger size than Arjuna, Parvati, and the sage. Although the heights of the figures appear equal at head level, their bases are depicted at different levels. The image of the sage is inserted between the characters of Shiva and Arjuna. The mudra, where the rishi's left-hand thumb and index finger touch, indicates that the sage is conversing about the event in which he blesses Arjuna with Pasupatha. Again, the meticulous and intricate carvings are very dexterous and highly appreciable. Particularly, the jewelry worn by the participants in the events, and the sculptor's adherence to Shilpashasthra's canons in distinguishing between human and divine personalities, as well as male and female, are noteworthy.

In all the panels, sculptors followed levels of depths while carving the scenes, which unfold the aesthetics of the high relief of the sculptures, the delicate carvings, the color of the stone, and the incidental light falling on the sculptures, enhancing factors that evoke the rasa of the narrative drama of Kiratarjuniyam. The variations in the stone colors occurred both accidentally and through chemical washing as part of the restoration works by the Archaeological Survey of India, which are still enriching the beauty of the other sculptures at the Pushpagiri temple complex. It is astonishing to the beholder; one can imagine the beauty of the temple carvings five

hundred years ago. It seems the local stone used to build the temple brings natural beauty to the location.

They seem as if they were carved by the sculptors of Vijayanagara with the influence of Hoyasala. Some areas of this temple's work might involve the engagement of Hoyasala master sculptors. It is hypothesized that the sculptors might belong to the Viswabrahmins (goldsmiths) community, who were experts in ivory carving, and a PhD thesis also supported this. Due to this, at Pushpagiri temple, they could achieve refinement, and meticulous details in the carvings bring the reminiscence of Hoyasala sculptures.

Figure 8



Figure 8 Wrestling between kirita and Arjuna God shiva Blessing Arjuna with Pasupata Weapon at pushpagiri temple Complex

2. CONCLUSION

In the Kadapa district temples, the narrative of Kiratarjuniyam was visualized in sculpture at Agasthyeswara Temple at Chilamkuru, Sangameswara Temple, Animela, Parasurameswara Temple at Attirala, and the Chennakesava Temple complex at Pushpagiri. The oldest temple is Chilamkuru, while the others date back to the Vijayanagara period.

The sculptures at Chilamkuru, Attirala, Pushpagiri, and Animela depict Shiva as the victim in the fight with Arjuna. The story of Kiratarjuniyam is represented in four to six stages at the above places. In the final wrestler's fight, Shiva is shown falling beneath Arjuna. This painting is a somewhat identical version of Bharavi's Kiratarjuniyam. [Mrutyunjaya Rao \(2019\)](#).

Figure 9



Figure 9 Field Visit at Pushpagiri Temple Complex

The observations from above the temples are that this Kiratarjuniyam is the best represented at Pushpagiri when compared to the rest. Due to the limited space, the sculptors reduced the number of narrative frames to effectively carve the story. It is very interesting to note that no single panel and composition of elements are similar to another one, though the story is one. Each and every panel is unique, as an expression of art is purely personal and differs from individual to individual in all aspects of narration and pictorial composition. The limitations of space and the location where the story is executed, along with the sculptors' compositional and carving skills, may influence how the narration is visualized; however, the sculptors adhered to some fundamental elements of the story's concept. For example, the boar is depicted as gigantic to convey the emotional tone of valor in the story.

In the Pushpagiri temple complex, chronological developments in terms of narrative skills, compositions, and sculpting minute details are noticed among the three places. Pushpagiri carvings of Kiratarjuniyam are more refined, though they are on a small scale when compared to the rest. Comparatively, the figures are very energetic and depicted in action-oriented, delicate minute details rather than the other temples' narrations. In all narrations, the boar is depicted only once to unfold the story. In the other temples, though the size of the panel is small, the wild boar was depicted repeatedly and rather large in size to connect the sequence, certainly helping the beholder to support the narrative skills. The visualization of the theme chiseled with dexterous skills on the stone, highly decorated and squeezed into minimum space, is a good example of the skill and imagination of South Indian sculptors.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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