

Annexure VIII -Sl.No. 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14

Report on Objectives, Achievements, Summary and Contributions of the Minor Research Project

Title of the Project: “A study on the Iconography of Bhuta Cult in Karnataka”

UGC Reference No.: MRP(H)/13-14/KAMA025/UGC-SWRO-28.03.2014

Name and College of the Principal Investigator:

Prashantha Shetty

Lecturer Departemnt of History, Ancient History and Archaeology

St. Mary’s Syrian College, Brahmavara-576213

10. Objectives of the project

The main objective of the study is to document and to trace the antiquity of the Bhuta icons of the region. The study had also the objectives like to trace the origin and development of the Bhuta iconography, to understand the technology of casting the icons, to find the source of the Bhuta iconography, to find the influence of main stream religions on the Bhuta icons, to conduct a comparative study on Bhuta icons of different regions.

11. Whether Objectives were achieved

The objectives of the project are achieved in large extent with some limitations. The observations of the icons in the Bhuta shrines revealed the iconographical features of the Bhuta cult. The iconographical representation of many prominent spirits were analyzed. They represent the indigenous iconographical concepts of the region. The study on casting methods is conducted where the lost-wax method was identified. The representation of spirits with snake, trident is identified as the influence of mainstream religions on the Bhuta cult. The ideas of Bhuta iconography is observed in the paaddanas, where descriptions of the spirits were identified. The bhuta icons which maintained their originality were limited in number is the main limitation of the project. As a result of the renovations of the bhuta shrines, the antique icons were replaced with new one. Therefore the comparative study on the

iconographical features is not undertaken in the project. It was also not possible for taking the measurement of the icons as a result of the sanctity of these Bhuta icons.

12. Achievements from the project

The main achievement of the project is that many antique icons in the various Bhuta shrines were documented and the iconographical features of the different spirits were identified. . The paaddanas were considered as the base for the Bhuta iconography. It also analyzed the casting methods and the use of lost-wax method in the casting the Bhuta icons were identified. The present study also identified the different phases of the origin and development of the Bhuta iconography. The influence of mainstream religions can be observed on the bhuta cult by affiliating the spirits with Shaivism, Vaishnavism or Shaktism. The some of the elements of bhuta iconography was traced to prehistoric time is also one of the prominent outcome from the project.

13. Summary of the Findings

The present study is conducted in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts of Coastal Karnataka, where the Bhuta cult is still prevailed as a vibrant cultural element. In the process the fieldwork was undertook during 2014 to 2016 by visiting many bhuta shrines. The shrines and the icons of the bhutas which maintained their originality were considered for the study. The interviews were conducted with the local people who were related to the Bhuta shrines and thereby historicity of the bhuta icons was identified.

The rituals of the spirit cult is a base for the bhuta iconography, there the basic aspects of the spirit rituals were also considered for the study. Spirit worship involves a number of actions and rituals like singing of folk epics or ballads called Paaddanas which depict the stories of the spirits, dancing by the impersonators of the spirits, wearing gorgeous costumes and masks, and delivering messages of the divine spirit.

The study has tried to trace the origin and development of the bhuta iconography where the different phases were identified. The element of the spirit cult is traced to the prehistoric time with the help of prehistoric engravings from the Gavali, Buddhanajeddu and Basruru in the Kundapura Taluk. Like the other folk cults the spirit cult was originally represented in non-iconic form, which developed in the animistic form and then mask and later humanistic

representation of the spirits. The study mainly analyses the iconographical features of the animistic and humanistic representation of the Bhutas.

The emphasis was also given to understand the technology of casting the bronze icons of the Bhutas. Many numbers of traditional bronze casting families were consulted and the techniques of casting were recorded. The particular community called Vishwakarma community is indulged in casting the Bronze icons and they are using the lost-wax method in casting these icons.

The iconographical features of the different spirits were identified by observing the icons from the different shrines. In the process the attributes, adornments and the vehicles of the respective spirits were identified. In spite of the lack of the literary base the bhuta icons were maintaining their own traditional values through which the Bhuta iconography is developed. The representation of Ani (halo like structure) and Jakkelani (tied on the waist) is a common feature in the Bhuta icons. The different types of the headgear and ornaments even with the influence of western world were identified in the icons. The attributes like sword, shield, stick and bell were also recognized. The figures of spirits were represented as riders is a common trend in the Bhuta iconography is also observed

The social, economic and political influences in structuring the Bhuta iconography are also analyzed. The iconographical representations as a symbol of royalty are also observed. The spirits with royal status were generally adorned with the elaborate adornments and attributes. The spirits of lower status were denied from the Ani and Jakkelani even in the iconographic representation. The Bronze icons of the spirits were observed in the shrines of the houses which had the feudal background. Large number of antique icons of the spirits is found in the shrines related to the Guttu houses and these icons are the symbol of their royalty.

14. Contributions to the Society:

The antique bronze icons of the Bhutas are in great danger as a result of the replacement of the old icons with the new one in the name of renovation of the shrine. The trafficking in international sphere with its antique values is also a threat in the preservation of the antique icons of the Bhuta. Therefore the present study traced the antiquity of the bhuta icons and records them by identifying its iconographical features. This will reveal the historical value of the bhuta icons thereby it can spread the awareness among the people about the traditional values of these icons. It also reveals the diverse cultural elements in the indigenous cult

thereby it helps in preserving the traditional cultural and ritual elements in the region. The conservation and preservation of these antique Bhuta icons is one of the immediate need of the present study area.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Prashanth Shetty

PRINCIPAL

Dr Y Ravindranath Rao