

A rare sculpture : Eka pada Trimurthi

- Anagha G. S, Bengaluru.



Image by Spoorthi R Bhat

Temples are sculpture houses that encapsulate the true essence of art. One such treasure trove of sculptures is the Kurudumale Someshwara temple in Kolar. The Ekapada Trimurthi sculpture is one of the many noteworthy sculptures to be found here. Ekapada is a one-footed Shiva with Vishnu and Brahma on either side, forming the Ekapada Trimurthi.



Image credits: Google
Ajaiapada Bhairava Temple, Odisha

In sculptures, you will find variations similar to the Ekapada concept. When one of Vishnu's and Brahma's legs is visible, it is referred to as Tripada Trimurti. If the torsos of Vishnu and Brahma are missing, it is known as Ekapada. You can also see a variation of this Ekapada with one leg, four arms, three visible heads, and one head above and behind called Mahesha or Sadashiva. Another type is the Bhairava form, which has a wrathful expression and is found primarily in Orissa.

The Ekapada Trimurthi is popular in southern India. Shiva is depicted in this sculpture with one foot standing on a pedestal and

four hands, two holding the Abhaya hasta, which means protection, and Varada hasta, which means bestowing a boon. Shiva is usually depicted holding a tanka and a deer in his other two arms in Ekapada Trimurthi sculptures. Vishnu and Brahma emerge from Shiva's body, who are four-armed with their forearms folded in Anjali hasta. Ascetics are seen meditating on this form of Shiva. One can also see this sculpture in the Gopuram of the Halasuru Someshwara Temple in Bengaluru.

This form of Shiva is mentioned in the Vedic period and is associated with Aja ekapada (the unborn with one foot). References can also be found in agama texts such as Amsumadbhedagam and Uttara Karanagama. (*Elements Of Hindu Iconography* by T A Gopinatha Rao).

The concept of Ekapada depicts Shiva as the supreme lord from whom Vishnu and Brahma originate. Shiva is the cosmic pillar of the universe, responsible for the universe's creation, preservation, and destruction. He is both the beginning and the end. He is also the cause. The sculpture may also represent the powerful union of the universe's supreme divinities. This Shiva sculpture represents stillness and bliss to me. Whereas Shiva represents movement in the form of Nataraja, Ekapada represents stillness like that of a pillar, which ascetics perform penance upon. Although the sculpture is centered on Shiva, the presence of Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva in one form symbolizes strength, balance, and bliss.



About the Author :

Anagha G S began her training in Bharatanatyam under the tutelage of Guru Dr Shubharani Bolar and is currently training under Guru Smt Shweta Prachande. She has completed her Masters in Bharatanatyam from Jain University, Bangalore. She has had the fortune of performing in dance productions and festivals. She has also been awarded a scholarship from Karnataka Sangeetha Nrithya Academy. **An internee in NrityaShilpa Yatra - a temple study Internship programme conducted by Noopurabhramari.**