

Tirujnana Sambandar

June 8, 2022

In news— Recently ten antiquities (sculptures), including Tirujnana Sambandar retrieved from Australia and the United States were handed over to the Government of Tamil Nadu.

A brief note on some of the returned antiquities-

- **Dvarapala: Retrieved in 2020 from Australia**, this stone sculpture **belongs to the Vijayanagar dynasty** dating to the 15th-16th century. The sculpture was burgled from Moondreeswaramudayar Temple, Tirunelveli in 1994.
- **Nataraja: Retrieved in 2021 from the US**, this image of Nataraja, **a depiction of Shiva**, in his divine cosmic dance form. It is dateable to the **11th-12th century**. The sculpture was **burgled from the strong room of Punnainallur Arulmigu Mariyamman Temple, Thanjavur, in 2018**.
- **Kankalamurti**: Retrieved in 2021 from the US, Kankalamurti is depicted as a **fearsome aspect of Lord Shiva and Bhairava**. The idol is dateable to the **12th-13th century**, and was stolen from **Narasinganadhar Swamy Temple, Tirunelveli in 1985**.
- **Nandikeshvara**: Retrieved in 2021 from the US, this bronze image of Nandikeshvara, dateable to the **13th century**. This sculpture was stolen from **Narasinganadhar Swamy Temple, Tirunelveli**, in 1985.
- **Four-armed Vishnu**: Retrieved in 2021 from the US, dateable to the **11th century**, and **belonging to the later Chola period**. It was stolen from **Arulmigu Varadharaja Perumal Temple, Ariyalur**, in 2008.
- **Goddess Parvati**: Retrieved in 2021 from the US, the image depicts a **Chola-period sculpture dateable to the 11th century**. This sculpture was also stolen from **Arulmigu Varadharaja Perumal Temple, Ariyalur** in 2008.

About Tirujnana Sambandar-

- Thirugnana Sambandar was a Shaiva poet-saint of Tamil Nadu who lived sometime in the 7th century CE.
- He was **one of 63 Saivaite saints, called Nayanmars**, and one of the three who rendered the hymns of '**Thevaram**'.
- He was **born in Sirkazhi** and was a popular **7th-century child saint** who lived just 16 years.
- **He is one of the Muvar, the three principal saints of South India.**
- Information about Sambandar comes mainly from the *Periya Puranam*, the eleventh-century Tamil book on the Nayanars that forms the last volume of the *Tirumurai*, along with the earlier *Tiruttondartokai*, poetry by Sundarar and Nambiyandar Nambi's *Tiru Tondar Tiruvandadi*.
- **Recently, a Standing child Sambandar statue was retrieved in 2022 from Australia and the sculpture is dateable to the 11th century.**
- It was stolen from Sayavaneeswarar Temple, Nagapattinam, between 1965 and 1975.
- The legend goes that **after receiving a bowl of milk from Goddess Uma, the infant Sambandar devoted his life to composing hymns in praise of Lord Shiva.**
- The **surviving compositions of Sambandar** are preserved in the first three volumes of the *Tirumurai*, and provide a part of the philosophical foundation of Shaiva Siddhanta.
- The sculpture displays the **saint's childlike quality**, while also empowering him with the maturity and authority of a spiritual leader.