CHAPTER - VII

SCULPTURE
Thiruvilinathar Temple contains a large assemblage of sculptures of various periods starting from the Imperial Cholas to the modern period. They are the best examples to speak the artistic importance of the temple. The majority of the sculptures of this temple are saivite depicting different aspects of Lord Siva. The images of the Parivara devatas and other subsidiary deities also speak the artistic glory of the temple. The inscriptions of the temple help to a great extent to date the stone, bronze images of the temple. Most of the sculptures of this temple belong to the period of the Imperial Cholas. Both kings, queens, the royal officers, individuals donated the images and lands were also donated for their maintenance.

The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight the iconographical importance of the sculptures. The philosophical and religious significances of the sculptures get a vivid narration in this chapter. The dating of the most
of the sculptures could be fixed based on both inscriptional and stylistic grounds. The inscriptions found in the temple give a clear picture about the donors of the images. Inscriptions play a vital role in dating the sculptures also.

The sculptures of this temple fall under the following phases.

I. THE EARLY CHÔLA PHASE

The early Chôla period is represented in this temple by sculptures of the 10th and the middle of the 11th Century A.D. The sculptures of this period are characterised by simplicity of dress and ornaments which are limited, exhibiting natural modelling with characteristic grace and pleasing demeanour. The style is free from rigidity.

II. THE LATER CHÔLA PHASE

Falling in a period between A.D. 1050-1250, the sculptures have their emphasis on massive size, good expression and versatality.

The stone images of Thiruvilînãñthar Riśabvãhanadēva and the goddess, Thanithanisvarar and
the St. Mānickavācaga are the best examples of this phase. Among the bronze images, the images of Kalyānasundarar, Sri Kṛṣṇa, Rīṣabavāhanadēva, Lord Nāṭarāja, King Svēdekēthu speak the artistic glory and grandeur of the temple.

III. THE VIJAYANAGAR PHASE

The sculptures of this phase are stylistically superb in nature. The sculptures exhibit artistic grace and rhythm. The artistic richness of the temple was enhanced due to the contribution of the kings of the Vijayanagar dynasty. As regards this temple is concerned, the Kings contributed only bronze sculptures. The dating of the sculptures is mainly based on its stylistic attributes.

IV. THE MAHĀṬṬAS OF THANJAVUR PHASE

The phases represented mainly by the bronze sculptures such as Astradeva, goddess Pidāri, goddess Palliarai, Alagiyā Kūthar and Subramanya. Here also, no inscription is available to date the sculptures.

V. MODERN PHASE

The period witnessed mostly the work of new additions. The sculptures of this phase have over-
ornamentation. The bronze images of Kalasamhāramūrti, and Mahaviṣṇu are the best examples of this period.

I. ILLUSTRATION OF THE STONE SCULPTURES OF THE CHŌLA PHASE
1. STONE SCULPTURES

The stone sculptures of this temple are generally classified into the 1. Bas-reliefs (low-reliefs) (the front and side postures alone can be seen) sculpture and 2. Acto Reliefs or High-Relief (all sides of the sculpture can be observed).

I. BAS-RELIEF SCULPTURES

The figures of horse-riders, elephant riders, the dwarf figures, flower designs present on the pilasters of the outer wall surface of the ardhamandalapā are the notable Bas-relief sculptures.

II. HIGH RELIEF SCULPTURES
SCULPTURES INSIDE GARBAGRIHA
1. THIRUVĪLĪNĀTHAR

The presiding deity of the temple in the Sanctum - Sanctorum is in Linga form. The upper part of the Linga is cylindrical in shape while the lower part (Āvudaiyār) is in
circular form. The full height of the Linga from the base to the top is approximately 5 ft. The Linga is a very ancient one, but the avudaiyar is a later addition which may be assigned to the 9th Century A.D. Siva is all the Saivite temples of the Chōla period is generally worshipped in the form of the phallus (Linga) fixed on a pedestal.¹ It was Vijayalaya who had installed this Linga of the main shrine of this temple.

2. KALYĀNASUNDARAR GROUP

Two huge images of Lord Śiva and goddess Pārvati in stone in their marriage form are present just behind the Linga inside the garbagriha. Both of them stand on padmapitha. The anthropomorphic representations of both the images are superb in their artistic workmanship.

LORD ŚIVA

This image has two hands, the right hand is in abaya pose and the left hand is in varada post. He is in samabhanga pose. Jatamukuta adorns His head. His third eye is prominent on the forehead.² The usual emblems like the crescent, the datura flower and the skull are not visible

on the *makuta*. Ornaments like necklaces, armlets, wristlets are seen.

Folded dress is seen from the hip to the ankle. Siva has oval face. The beautiful execution of the nose, lips and chins adds artistic beauty to this image. The nose is very sharp. The arms have *kēvutaras*. The gestures of the hands are somewhat quite natural and it enhances the beauty of this figure. An inscription belongs to Rājarāja I, records a gift of gold ornaments offered to this deity.¹ (Plate No.3).

An inscription mentions the standing posture of the goddess.² She stands on *pattāpiṭha*. Her head is slightly bent. The arms and legs are more elongated. Of the two hands, the left hand is lowered down and the right is raised in position to hold a lily flower. The head is adorned with *krita-makuta*. It is decorated on all sides with pronged ornaments. The face is oval and looks very beautiful. The neck is adorned with necklaces. One end of the lower garment hangs on the left thigh. The other end hangs between the legs. It is worked in wavy form. The rear portion of the image shows the two rows of twisted straits

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¹ *A.R.E.*, No.449 of 1908.
of hairs, which are shown one over the other. Yajnopavita (sacred-thread) is seen and it is divided into two strands below the Brahma knot. Kēyura is seen. Ornaments like armlets, anklets beautify the figure. This image also could be dated to the period of Parantaka I, on the basis of stylistic features.

The presence of two hands for Siva, in this marriage form is quite an unusual depiction.

4. GODDESS DURGA

The image of goddess Durga is installed inside the garbagriha. Usually this image would be installed only on one of the niches of the northern side of ardhamandapa. The presence of the image inside the sanctum, speaks of its religious importance. The figure stands on the beheaded buffalo-head. The head has Karantamakuta (A conical crown or hair style in tiers bulging in horizontal sections the whole resembling a basket in shape, the tiers are called the Karantás). Prominence is seen in the treatment of the nose. Mēkhalā (hip ornament) is present. Delicacy is seen in the treatment of the eyes. Based on its artistic attributes, it could be dated to the period of Paṇṭaka I.
DVARAPĀLAKAS

At the entrance of the garbagriha, are seen two Dvārapālakas one on each side.

RIGHT SIDE DVĀRAPĀLAKA

This image is in standing posture. Of the two hands, the left hand bent and touches its right shoulder. The right hand is also bent and it touches its left waist. The hands are devoid of weapons, and it itself speaks the uniqueness of the image. As the main deity is in marriage form, there occurs no necessity for the dvārapālaka to keep weapons. Ornaments like necklace, anklets, armlets adorn the figure (see Plate No.7). The face is oval in shape. The nose is flat. The left leg stands firmly and the right leg is slightly bent. Protruding teeth emphasise the threatening posture.

LEFT SIDE DVĀRAPĀLAKA

The image is in standing posture. Of the two hands, the right hand is bent and touches its left shoulder while the left hand also is bent and it touches its left waist. The nose is flat. The face is oval. The right leg stands firmly and the left leg is slightly bent. Ears are decked with kundalams with the figures of owls (see Plate No.8).
III. SCULPTURES AT THE ENTRANCE OF ARDHAMANDAPA

At the entrance of the ardhamandapa are seen three sitting Vināyaka images. The name Ganapati indicates that He is the chief of the Saiva gaṇas.¹ Gaṇapathi is a very important deity in the Hindu pantheon. Supposed to be the Lord of obstacles (Vignēsvara) he is worshipped by all classes of Hindus, at the commencement of every religious ceremony. Mudgala-purāṇa, Silparatna, Kāśyapa Silpasāstra refer to various forms of Ganapati. All the three images of the temple are in sitting postures. Each of them has four hands. Of the four hands, the right upper hand holds āṅkusa, the left holds pāsa. The right lower hand holds broken tusk and the left holds mōdaka (sweet meat) which is placed in the mouth of the trunk. Stylistically they could be dated to the period of the early Chōlas of 9th-10th Century A.D.

PADALA OR UNDERGROUND NANDI

This image is called as padala Nandi because it is present under the ground level, inside the mahāmandapa. The hump is prominent. The horns are very short. A single ordinary garland of bells adorns the neck. Folds are seen

on the neck. The tail is squeezed in between the two hind legs and encircling the hoofs. Stylistically this image could be dated to the Chōla period of 9th-10th Century A.D.

MUNNAI VINĀYAKA

This image is seen inside the Munnai Vināyaka shrine. Being in the sitting posture, the hands hold the usual weapons. The trunk twisted towards the left side. Stylistically this Vināyaka belongs to the period of 9th-10th Century A.D. (see Plate No.5).

DAKSINAMURTI

This image is present in the dēvakōśṭha present on the southern wall of the garbagriha. The Āgamas mention, twenty five sportive forms (līla-murtis) of Siva, most of them are seen in the South Indian temples. One of the more important of these is Daksināmurti. Four forms of Daksināmurti are described in the Āgamic texts. They are Vyākyāna, Īśana, Yōga are Vīṇādhara Daksināmūrtis. Here this image is in Vyākyāna form sitting under a banyan tree. A basket is seen hanging, in one of the branches of the tree. The left leg is bent and the right hangs down and

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rests on the floor. Muyalaka image is absent at the foot of Dakṣināmūrti. The absence of the image of Muyalaka is a rare feature. Mostly the images of Dakṣināmūrti have Muyalakas below the feet. According to one of myths of the temple Muyalaka could get mōksha, by worshipping the Lord of this temple. Due to the attainment of mōksha (nirvana stage), Muyalaka is invisible under the foot of Dakṣināmūrti. The ears have patrakundalas. Of the four hands, the upper right hand holds nāga, the corresponding left holds the fire. The right lower hand is in Chinmudra and the left holds a book. Jatāmakuta beautifies the head. Jata's are hold together with a pattapandha. The Jata is embellished by the presence of the flower dhatura. A serpent is visible on the left side and a crescent moon is on the right side. In the middle of the jatābhāra is seen the Gaṅga with smiling face. This image could be dated to the period of the Chōlas of 9th-10th Century A.D. based on its stylistic finishing.

SŪMĀSKANDA

This image is also known as Selvathiyakesa. Sūmāskanda is the most common one of all the forms of Siva. The group in general consists of three figures namely Lord Śiva, Uma and child Śkanda. Lord Śiva and Uma are
in sitting postures and the child Śkanda is in standing posture in between His parents.

LORD ŚIVA

The left leg is bent and rests on the pedestal and the right hangs down. Of the four hands, the upper right holds deer, and the left holds the Parasū. The lower right hand is in Varada pose, while the left hand is in kataka pose. The armlets are beautifully worked out. Keyuras are artistically well designed. Jatamakuta adorns the head. The neck is adorned with necklaces of various designs. Yanṇopavītā enhances the beauty of the figure.

UMA OR PARVATI

Parvati is sitting to the left side of Siva. The right leg is raised and bent and rests on the pedestal and the left leg hangs down. The image has two arms. The right hand is in the Kataka pose holding a nilōtpala flower (a long tubular flower). The left hand hangs down and touches the pedestal. The neck is adorned with necklaces Karantamakuta, beautifies the head.
SKANDA

The child Skanda is standing in between his parents. Innocence is depicted on the face of child Skanda. Karanđamakutā adorns the head. His right hand is in sūchihasta and the left holds his mother's right hand. Stylistically this group belongs to the period of the Chōlas of 9th-10th Century A.D.

SUBRAMANYA WITH VALLI AND DEIVAYĀNAI

This group is present inside the Subramanya shrine, located in the western side of the first prakāra.

SUBRAMANYA

The god Subramanya stands on the Padmapīṭha. Of the four hands, the upper left holds Sakti and the upper lower holds Vajra. The right lower hand is in abhaya pose and the left lower is in varada pose. Udarabanda is seen. Vajñopavītā, goes into two strands below the Brahma knot. The ornaments like necklaces, armlets, wristlets adorn the figure. Stylistic foldings are seen on the cloths. Karanţamakūṭā adorns the head. The ears have makarakundalas.
SRI VALLI

The image of Sri Valli is seen to the right side of Subramanya. She stands on padmapitha in tribanga pose. The ears have patrakundalas. The right hand is in lṭalhasta and the left is kataka pose. Dress is seen upto the foot. The head had Siracakra.

DEIVAYĀNAI

She stands on padmapitha to the right of Subramanya. Of the two hands, the right hand is in kataka pose and the left hand is in lṭola-hasta. Dress is seen upto the foot. Folds are uniformly seen on the dress. The ears have makarakundalas. Necklaces adorn the neck. The back portion of the head has Siracakra. Stylistically this group belong to the period of the Cholas of the 11th-13th Century A.D.

VINĀYAKA

An image of Vināyaka is present on the South Western corner of the first prakara. The hands are rhythmically arranged. The Karanda makuta is well fitted. Stylistically this image could be dated to the period of the Chōlas of 10th-11th Century A.D.
THIRUVÂNÂNASAMBANDAR

Being in standing posture, both the hands hold a disc called tāla. The ears have patrakundalas. The ornaments like armlets, kēyuras, wristlets decorate the figure. The fingers have rings. A garland of bells decorate, the lip portion. The nose is somewhat pointed. The face is oval in size. Based on such features, the image could be dated to the period of 10th-11th Century A.D. (See Plate No.9).

SUNDARAR

Being in standing posture, both the hands hold a disc called tāla. The hands are depicted as if playing tala. Dress is seen from the hip to the knee. He is represented with tiars on his head as a sign of a noble birth. Stylistically this image belongs to the period of 10th-11th Century A.D.

MUKTADEVI

Her sitting posture is well arranged. She is supposed to be the sister of goddess Laksmi. This image is stylistically belong to the period of 10th-11th Century A.D.
SCULPTURES OF THE NORTHERN SIDE OF FIRST PRAKĀRA

1. CHANDIKESWARA

The left leg is bent and the right hangs down and is placed on the pītha. Of the two hands, the right hand holds the axe and the left hand is in Chin-mudra. Jataḥbhāra adorns the head. The ornaments like necklaces, keyuras (shoulder ornament) armlets, anklets adorn the figures. Yajnopavita is seen with three strands. Delicacy is seen in the execution of the facial expression. The face is oval in shape. An inscription of Kulōttuṅga I, found on the east wall of the Chandikeswara shrine, refers to the building of the shrine of Adichandesvaradeva in stone. Further it is clear from the same inscription that the installation of the image was happened during the period of Kulōttuṅga I (See Plate No.2).

SCULPTURES IN THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE FIRST PRAKĀRA

1. BAIRAVA

One of the ugra (terrible) forms of Siva, is Bhairava. The work Tantrasara mentions eight forms of Bairava which

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1 A.R.E., No.427 of 1908.
are fit for worship.\textsuperscript{1} Being in the standing posture, the image here has four hands. Of the four hands, the upper right holds a \textit{damaru} (noisy making instrument) the left holds a bell. The lower right is in \textit{katakā} pose. (It is the pose in which the middle finger and the thumb joined together) and the left holds a bowl. \textit{Jatāmakūta} is seen. The braided locks of hair on the head is very beautiful to look at. A serpent is seen on one side and the crescent and the dhatura flower decorate the other side. \textit{Yajñōpavīta} is twisted like a rope and it has two strands. The garland of skulls called \textit{mundamala} adorn the figure. Two serpents, with their bodies twisted, went round the waist. \textit{Nāgavalayas} are seen on the armlets. Stylistically this image belongs to the period of Chōlas of 9th-10th Century A.D.

\textbf{SUN GOD}

Standing on \textit{Padrapītha}, His two arms hold the lotus flowers. The artistic exposition date the figure to the Chōla period of 9th, 10th Centuries A.D.

LORD SATURN (Sāni)

The image is present in sitting posture on the eastern side of the first prakāra. Of the four hands, two hold a danda and dvāja. Of the remaining two, one is in kātaka pose and other is in abhaya pose. It’s artistic features confirms its date to the Chōla period of 10th Century A.D.

Except the Sun and Saturn no other images of Navagriha are present. As the main deity is in marriage form, it is said that there is no necessity to install the other Navagraha images here.

4. KĀSI VISVANĀTHAR AND RĀMĒŚWARAR

As per the mythical account, it is stated that Śiva as Kāsi Visvanāthar and Rāmēśvaramūrti visited this place, during the marriage occasion of the god, Tiruvilimilaināthar. In memory of that, two Lingas are present and they in all probability, can be ascribed to the period of 10th Century A.D.

5. BALSUBRAMANṆYA

The image, based on its stylistic execution, can be dated to 10th Century A.D.
SCULPTURES OF THE GODDESS SHRINE ON THE NORTH WESTERN SIDE

1. SUNDARA KUJĀMBIGA

This deity is also called as Alagiya Māmulai Amman. This image is in standing posture, on ardhapadma-pītha. Of the four hands, the upper two hands hold aksamāla and padma. The lower right hand is in abhaya, and the lower left hand is in varada poses. Pominency is depicted in the treatment of face and the nose. The ornaments like necklaces, armlets, wristlets and anklets enhance the beauty of the figure. The slender waist, expose the faminine grace of the figure. Stylistically this image belongs to the Chōla period of Parāntaka I. An inscription also confirm the above date.¹

2. DVARAPĀLIKA

At the entrance of the garbagriha of the Goddess shrine, are seen two Dvārapālika images one on each side. Both of them have protruding teeth. Their heads have Kṛitamakutas. The ornaments like armlets, wristlets, anklets enhance the wholesome appearance of the figure. Their stylistic depiction, date the figure to 10th century A.D.

¹ A.R.E., No.444 of 1908.
3. BAIRAVAR

Being in standing posture, the four hands, hold pāsa, ankusa (weapon to control elephant), trisūla and kapāla. A garland of skulls goes around the entire figure. The image is dated to 10th Century A.D., based on its stylistic embellishment.

IMAGES OF THE SECOND PRAKĀRA

1. SUNDARAR

Being in standing posture, he holds disc called tāla in his two hands. Dress is seen from hip to knee. His noble birth is clearly indicated by the presence of tiar on his head. His bodily artistic features date the image to 10th Century A.D.

2. THIRUNĀVUKKARASU

His head is adorned with rudrākṣa (Chaplets). Hands are in the anjali pose. He holds Ulavarappadai with which he used to dig up the herbs inside the premises of the temple. An inscription of Rajaraja III, refers to the installation of this image. The closed eyes speak of his unperturbed devotion.

\[1\] A.R.E., No.409 of 1908.
SCULPTURES IN THE THIRD PRAKARA

1. PADIKKĀSU VĪNĀYAKA

This image is said to be called as Padikkāsu Vīnāyaka because St. Thirunāvukkarasu had received padikkāsu from this Vīnāyaka during one famine occasion. The Karanta makuta, the exposition of the hands and legs all ascribe this image to 10th Century A.D.

3. DVARAPĀLAKAS

Two Dvārapālaka images are present at the entrance of the rājagōpuram one on each side. These two images on stylistic ground belong to the period of the 9th-10th Century A.D.

Thus the proper analysis of the stone sculptures present in this temple, highlight the artistic significance of the temple. The contribution of the Chōlas will ever be considered as a milestone in the art history of the temple. Even today, the sculptures of the Chōlas speak the artistic glory of the temple. Due to the regular performance of the pūjas, the images are being intact.
II. ILLUSTRATION OF THE BRONZE SCULPTURES

Most of the Bronze images, belong to the period of the Imperial Chola. The sculptors of the Chola period were noted for their artistic calibre. The period of Rajaraja I, witnessed quite a number of images, noted for their flawless artistic execution. The best examples, are found in the temples at Thanjavur, Tiruvenkādu, Tirukkaḷar, Tirukkaravāsal, Ārrur and at Tiruvilīmilalai.¹

There are about thirty six bronze images present in the Vilināṭhasvāmi temple at Tiruvilīmilalai, dated from the 9th Century to the 19th Century A.D. Three images belong to the Chola period, of twenty one to the Vijayanagar period of 14th-16th centuries A.D. five to the Maharāṭṭa period of 17th-18th century A.D. and seven to 19th century A.D. Most of the bronze images have artistic importance.

IMAGES OF THE CHOLA PERIOD

1. KALYĀŅASUNDARAMŪRTI (or) MĀPPILLAIṢVĀMI

As Siva in this aspect is in bridegroom form. He is also called as Mappillaisvami. This group consists of the bronze images of Lord Siva, Pārvati and Risaba.

2. LORD SIVA

Lord Śiva is in abhanga pose. Based on the legendary origin Lord Siva appeared here as a bridegroom to marry Kātyāyani, the daughter of saint Kātyāyana. Of the two hands, the right hand holds the left hand of Parvati. The left hand is in kataka pose. Parvati stands by the side of Śiva. Pārvati is depicted shorter than Śiva and her height including the crown comes only upto the ears of Siva. Śiva's third eye is prominent on the forehead. The top of the makuta has the emblems like the crescent, the dhatura flower. Both the ears have makarakundalas. The oval face and the sharp nose enhance the face. The neck is decorated with necklaces of intricate designs. Vajnopavīta flows stylistically. Wrists are decorated with Valayas. The broad girdle is worked with floral designs. At the foot of Lord Siva is present the lotus flower representing the eye of Lord Visnu offered as a mode of worship of Siva and also a wood-apple offered by St. Milalai Kurumbar to Lord Siva. The aforesaid representation is mainly due to its mythical background, which has been discussed in the chapter no.2. The images imbibing the artistic expressions, based on mythical story, made its appearance in large number during the period of the Chōlas. In the Agnisvarar
temple at Tiruppugalur, the presence of a nandi, in the left hand of Parvati, in the Sūmakanda aspect, is purely based on the puranic story, which states that as Nandi stood as a barrier to Lord Rāma to have the worship of Śiva, Parvati caught hold of the Nandi in his hand and thereby paved a clear vision of the Lord Śiva to Rāma. In all the other images of this form, the left hand of Parvati, is simply placed on the pitha. The group is of the Chōla style. Yet another example is from the temple at Tiruppugalur. Here, the left hand of Śiva, in the somaskanda form, holds the mango, which remind the story of Tiruvilaiyadal Pūrāṇa, which states that Siva conducted a competition among His sons Vināyaka and Muruga and announced that Mango fruit would be given to one who came first after circumambulating the world Vināyaka, thinking that His parents only represent the world, He made a quick circumambulation of them and thereby rewarded with the fruit. This group is also ascribed to the Chōla period. The Kalyānasundarar group of Tiruvilaimilai also come under that category and this group is also treated as one of the masterpieces of Chōla art. The presence of Rsaba, nearby Lord Siva is also a unique feature. The Kalyānasundarar groups of the temples at Tirumanaṉēri and Tiruvenṅādu, Rsaba is absent. Further the presence of two hands for Siva
also speak the unique ness of the image. In the aforesaid examples four hands are present.

PĀRVATI

Parvati stands to the right side of Lord Śiva. She is in abanīga pose. Her right hand is lowered in tōla-hasta pose. The karantamakutā decorating Her head is well knitted. A thick fillet is seen and its workmanship is a superb one. Both the ears have makarakundalas. The neck has necklaces of different types. Yajnopavīta is present with three strands. Padasāras and rings are intricately worked out. Foldings of the dress is artistically well executed.

RŚABA

An image of Rśaba is seen to the left side of Lord Siva on a pitha. The head of the rśaba is slightly bent and turned towards Lord siva. It has budding horns. Neck is adorned with the garland of bells (See Plate No.14). It is known from an inscription that this group was installed by one Śridevi during the period of the King Rajendra.¹ The same group attained the name Alagiya Manavañālan during the period of the King Kulottunga I.²

¹ A.R.E., No.444 of 1908.
SWEDA KETHU MAHARAJA

The image is beautifully executed and dated to the period of the Cholas of 10th Century A.D. It’s height measures 43 centimetres from head to foot.

4. NATARĀJA

Being in dancing posture, His right leg rests on Muyalaka and the right is rhythmically lifted up. Of the four hands, the upper right arm is slightly above the right shoulder and holds damaru. The upper left arm is in ardhachandrahasta carrying the fire. The lower right hand is in the usual abhaya pose and beautiful serpent is seen in its fore-arm. The lower left arm is in Gajahasta pose. The flexions of the body enhance the beauty to the figure. Ears have patrakundalas. The head is decorated with dhatura flower and crescent. The face is in smiling attitude. Neck has the ornament of beads. The falling of the hairs on the back is fascinating and much more attractive. Stylistically this figure belongs to the period of 10th Century A.D. It measures 88 cm. in height (See Plate No.15).
GODDESS SIVAKAMI

Parvati or Sivakami is standing to the left of Naṭarāja on padmapītha. Of the two hands, the left hand is in lōla-hasta and the right hand is in kataka pose. She has Karandamakuta. Ears have makarakundalas. Yajnopavīta is seen with a single strand. The dress has stylistic folds. The ornaments like necklaces, armlets, wrislets, anklets highlight the aesthetic beauty of the figure. The image measures 71 cm. in height. On stylistic ground, it can be dated to the period of 16th-17th Century A.D. (See Plate No.16).

11. VIJAYANAGAR PHASE (14th-16th Century A.D.)

The images of this period speak the artistic richness of the temple. Each one of them reflects the characteristic features of Vijayanagar Art.

1. APPAR

Standing on padmapītha, he is in the anājali pose. Ulavārappadai is attached with the shoulder. The ear lobes and the closed eyes expose his unblurred devotion.
2. Jñānasambandar

He stands on one leg on padmapītha. The other leg is raised. The face is oval in shape. The image measures from head to the pītha 54 cm. in height.

3. Mānickavācagar

The figure stands on padrapītha. He has a shaven head and long ears. His hands carry chaplet and palm leaves. It measures from head to pītha 63 cm. in height.

4. Goddess Bōgasakthi

She stands on padmapītha. Of the two hands the left hand is in lōla-hasta and right in kātaka pose. Karandamakuta adorns the head. Both the ears have makarakundalas. Yajnopavīta flows stylistically. The face is oval. It measures from head to pidam 67 cm (See Plate No.22).

5. Chandrasekar with Goddess (Ambal)

Chandrasēkar

He stands on padmapītha. Of the four hands, the upper right holds parasu, the upper left holds deer. The lower left is in Varada pose and the right is in abhaya pose. Forehead is adorned with puridam. Dress is present from
the hip to the ankle. The ornaments like necklaces, armlets, wristlets are intricately worked out. The head has crescent which is a symbol of growing knowledge. It measures 69 cm in height. (See Plate No.18).

**CHANDRASEKARA AMBAL (GODDESS)**

She stands to the left of Chandrasekaranar on *padmapitha*. The head is adorned with Karandamakuta with *siracakra*. Both the ears have *makarakundalas*. Dress is seen from the hip to the foot. It measures 54 cm in height.

**6. SÖMÅSKANDA GROUP**

This group consists of Lord Siva, Parvati and baby Skanda. The characteristic features of these images almost resemble the same group in stone, which has already been discussed.

**7. SÖMÅSKANDA AMBAL (GODDESS)**

She stands on *padmapitha*. Of the two hands, the left hand is in *lōla-hasta* and the right hand is in *kataka* pose. Karandamakuta adorns the head. Both the ears have *makarakundalas*. It measures 73 cm in height.
By the side of this image are present figures of two servant maids one on each side. They are in standing postures. Both of them have Karandamakutas. The foldings of the dress are uniformly executed. Ears have patrakundalas. Of the two images one measures 30 cm in height, and the other 37 cms.

8. PIRADÖSA-NÄYANAR WITH GODDESS

This group consists of both Lord Siva and goddess Parvati.

**LORD SIVA**

He stands on padmapitha. Of the four hands, the right upper hand holds pārasu, the upper left hand holds deer. The right lower hand is in abhaya pose and the left lower hand embraces Parvati. This image is in tribhanga pose. The makuta is more elongated. Yajnopavīta is beautifully exposed. Dress is visible from the hip to the ankle.

**GODDESS PARVATI**

The image of Parvati is seen to the left of Lord Siva on Padmasana. Of the two hands, the left hand is in lōla-hasta pose, and the righthand in kataka pose. Folded dress
is seen from the hip to the toe. Karandamakuta adorn the head. Ears have makarakundalas.

9. CHANDIKESVARA

He stands on padmapitha. The hands are in anjali pose. The workmanship of the ornaments like necklaces, armlets, wristlets are adoritly worked out. Dress is seen upto the knee level.

III. MAHRATTAS OF THANJAVUR 17th-18th Century A.D.

The best specimens of the bronze sculptures of this phase also enhance the artistic importance of the temple.

1. GODDESS PIDARI

She stands on padmapitha. Of the four hands, the right upper hand holds damaru, the left upper holds a long rod. The lower right hand holds a sūla and lower left hold a kapāla.

Jvālamakuta is shown. Dress is seen from the hip to the ankle. The sacred thread divides into two, below the Brahma knot. Number of inscriptions present in this temple, provide an ample information about the proper
conduct of Pujas and the celebration of festivals related to this goddess Pidari (See Plate No.23).

2. ASTRADEVA

Lord Siva is in standing posture. Of the four hands, the right upper hand holds astra, the left upper hand holds deer. The right lower hand placed on the head of the rsaba and the left lower hangs down.

A rsaba is present just behind Lord Siva. It measures 46 cm. height with pitha (See Plate No.25). The other idols of this age are the Palliarai amman, Alagiyakūttar and Subramanya.

IV. MODERN PERIOD

The bronze idols of the modern period also reflect the traditional artistic features.

1. Sri Sumangali Amman, Kālasamhāramūrti, Sundarar, Chakrapradānamūrti and Mahāviśnu and Ayyanar are the best examples of this period. Of all the images, of Kālasamhāramūrti is noted for its fine workmanship.
KĀLASAMHĀRA MŪRTI

Just like Markandaya who was saved from the clutches of Lord Yama by the Lord Śiva in Tirukadaiyur, here also Svētakēdu is saved from Yama by the Lord Śiva of this temple. The right leg of the god is placed on the pītha. The other leg (left) is bent and slightly raised as if in the pose of kicking Yama. Lord Śiva is in an angry look. Four arms are present. The right upper hand holds the trident pointed downwards and raised to the level of the ear. The right lower hand holds the axe. The left upper hand is in vismaya (with skull in palm) and the lower is in varada. Svētakēdu is lying down on the pedestal lifelessly (See Plate NO.17).

LORD VIŚṆU

The image of Viśṇu is in abangā pose. Of the four hands, the upper two hands are holding Cāṅku and Cakara which have single flames on it. Kirītamakūṭa is seen. Yajnopavīṭa and the broad Udarabanda, well suit the body. This image measures from hand to foot 50 cm in height. During the reign of Rājendra I an individual called Kali Adichar Sembian had donated the bronze image of Sri Kṛṣṇa to this temple.¹

¹ A.R.E., NO.443 of 1908.
AYYANĀR GROUP

There are two groups of the bronze images of Ayyanār present in this temple. Ayyanār is considered to be the village god. He is otherwise called Hariharaputra or Mahā-Sāsta supposed to be, as his name implies, the son of Śiva and Viṣṇu.¹ Both these group consists of god Ayyanār and his two consorts namely, Puranai and Pudgalai sitting near him one on each side.

AYYANĀR

Ayyanār is sitting on the padmapīthaka. Of the two hands, the right hand holds the goad, and the left hand is placed on the thigh of the left leg. The right leg hangs down and the left leg slightly raised and placed on the pedestal. Head has a well designed, crown. Yajñopavīta with three strands gives a beautiful appearance. Both ears have patrakundalas. An yogapatta is present connecting the left leg with the stomach. Channavīra adorns the chest. The closing eyes expose the attitude of meditation.

GODDESS PŪRĀṆI

She is in sitting posture. Of the two hands, the right hand holds a flower and the left hangs down. Karandamakūṭa is seen. Ears have makarakundalas of refined workmanship.

GODDESS PŪDGALAI

She sits on bhadrapiṭṭha. Right leg hands down and the left leg is bent and slightly raised. Of the two hands, left hand holds a flower and the right hand hangs down. Karandamakūṭa is seen. Dress is seen from the hip to the toe (See Plate No.24).

SILVER SCULPTURES

The Thiruviḷīnāṭhar temple is noted for the presence of the silver image of Lord Chandrasekharar. It was during the reign of Rājendra I, an individual by name Selvan Mūvayirabhattan donated a silver image of Lord Chandrasekharar.¹ It is artistic execution is superb. In style it almost resembles the bronze image.

One of the inscriptions of Rājādhirāja I mentions about the donation of Copper Pirabhai made by one lady

called Anukkyar Pallavan Pāṭtalinangai.\(^1\) It is even now present in the temple. The stylistic execution of the prabhāi is a highly admirable one.

**STUCCO SCULPTURES**

The stucco images also occupy an important place in the art history of the temple. The study of the sculptural art could not be completed, without the inclusion of the stucco art. The stucco images of the temple are well executed and they are noted for their fine worksmanship. These sculptures have mythical importance.

**STUCCO IMAGE OF GAJA LAKSMI**

She sits on padmapītha. Two elephants are present one on each side of this image. The head has karantamakuta. Ears have patrakundalas: Channavīra is present. Both the hands hold flowers. On stylistic ground the image can be ascribed to Mahrāṭṭa period.

**STUCCO IMAGES OF THE MAIN VIMĀNA**

The super structure of the Vīṇāli Vīmāna of this temple contains stucco images. In the southern side is seen the figure of Daksināmūrti and the northern has the figure

\(^1\) **A.R.E.**, No.384 of 1908.
of Brahma. The figure of human heads adorn the grīva of the vimāna.

**VIMĀNA OF THE SUBRAMĀNYA SHRINE**

On the four sides of the vimāna of the Subramānya shrine are present the figures of Daṇḍāyuthapāni, Subramānya with the vehicle peacock.

**SCULPTURES ON THE RĀJAGŌPURA**

The Rājagōpura is adorned with sculptured panels. One panel depicts Mahaviṣṇu in worshipping posture. The images of Dvārapālakas, on either sides of the entrance of the tiers, Rāsabavāhanadeva, Subramānya with Valli and Deivayānai, Kālasamhāramūrti, risis and the gōpura bearers all stand as the best examples of stucco art.

**KAṬṬAGOPŪRA OR INNER GŌPURA**

The Kaṭṭagopūra contains the stucco figures of Chandrasekharar. Biskshātanār, Dvārapālakas, Vināyaka, Murugan with Valli and Deivayānai. All such images are artistically well designed.
MUHAMANDAPA

On the top of the muhamandapa are seen the stucco figure of Mahāviṣṇu with His two consorts and the devotees are in worshipping postures.

VIMĀNA OF THE GODDESS SHRINE

The Grīva of the Goddess Shrine contains the stucco figures of goddess in sitting postures on all the four sides. Each one of them has four hands.

VI WOOD

The wood carvings is one of the hoary antiquity of the past. The vehicles present in the temple and the damaged car are the best examples of wooden art of the temple. They are also of fine workmanship.

CAR

During the past, car festival had been performed in this temple in a grand manner. But now it is not celebrated because the car (Thēr) of this temple is in damaged condition. The sculptures of the car are well carved. Kalyānasundarar, Gajasamhāramūrti images are well artistically carved out.
BŪTAVĀHANA

This figure has four hands. The ears have nāgakundalas. The big eyes and the strong moustache expose the Ugra aspect. The garlands of beads and bells embellish the figure.

YAMAVĀHANA

Since this temple is connected with Lord Yama, the wooden vāhana of Yama acquires both religious and artistic importance. The four hands are well artistically arranged. Here also the presence of moustache emphasise the threatening attitude. Buffaloe is a naturalistic depiction.

YĀLI VĀHANA

The dwarf figure of yāli is also well executed. It has its own charm and beauty.

HORSE VĀHANA

Horse vāhana exhibit a delicate execution. It is in gallopping position. The neck is highly ornamented. Two riders stand by the side of the horse one on each side.
PAINTINGS

The Thiruvilinathar temple is also noted for the presence of modern paintings depicting various scenes. Eventhough they are modern, its religious importance is of a highly admirable, one. The paints on the ceiling of the Vasanathamandapa depict the lilas of Krsna. Lord Krsna is depicted with fine workmanship. The Gopikas are also well exposed. This painting could be dated to the period of Vijayanagar of 16th-17th Century A.D. The inner walls of the Nataraja shrine also contains the modern painting depicting the story of Nandanar of Chidambaram. Further on the southern side of the inner enclosure wall is seen the beautiful painting of Lord Kalyanasundarar. Four devotees are also visible by the side of Kalyanasundarar.

The artistic greatness of the temple is highly enhanced with the presence of above-said stone, bronze, stucco and wooden images. All are artistically well-executed and their workmanship is well precised. They will ever have an unique place in the art history of the temple.