CHAPTER – II

STRUCTURE OF THE SIVA TEMPLES

The Someswarar Temple – Attur

The origin of most of the South Indian temple is a mystery. It is very difficult to identify the exact date of establishment. With the help of inscriptions alone is difficult to confirm the person who constructed the temple. However, with the help of literatures, inscriptions and the style of architecture, one can define the date of establishment. The origin of the Someswarar temple is also a riddle. This temple is located at the centre of Tuticorin and Tiruchendur highway. It is about 15 kms distance from Tiruchendur towards the northern direction. The original structure of this temple was constructed during the early Pandya period and was developed by erecting more mandapas by the Chola king Rajaraja I (A.D. 985-1014) in 1006 A.D. when he annexed the Pandya territory.

The special feature of this temple is that the Vishnu Shrine by the name, Pallikonda Perumal, located on the north-west of the central shrine in the form of Ananda Sayanam (sleeping posture) worshipping Siva. There are five holy sites in Tamil Nadu on the basis of this structure. They are Tillai (Chidambaram), Nellai (Tirunelveli), Uttarakosamangai (Ramanad), Tiruchiralaivai (Tiruchendur) and Arrur Sendamangalam (Attur). The above mentioned five holy places are called Panchasthalas.

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1 Balasubramanyan, S.R., Middle Chola Temples, Faridabad, 1975, P. 331.
2 ARE 1929-30 No. 415.
3 ARE 1929-30 No. 415.
The inscription\(^4\) which was inscribed on the upper side of the Vinayaka image on the Mahamandapa mentions about the origin of the temple. Attur area was filled with forest and grass land in ancient time. It was a centre of grazing land for cattle from the nearby areas. One fine morning when the cows were grazing, to the great surprise, one of the cows extracting its milk by itself in a particular place. This wonderful incident happens every day. A cattle-rearing boy noticed the scene and the same was reported to the king. The king went to the spot along with his ministers in person and witnessed the scene. Then he returned to the palace. In the midnight of the same day the king had a dream and got the vision of god. The deity in dream told him that he was in the form of Linga under the ground, take the Linga by digging the soil and conduct pujas on the basis of Saiva agamas. Moreover, if you construct a temple for me in the same spot, you and your country will be benefited. After uttering these words the deity disappeared. The king rushed to the spot in the very next day and dug the soil. To his great surprise, he could find a Sivalinga inside the soil as per the dream of the previous day. So he constructed a temple and worshipped Lord Siva in the form of Linga. The prime deity of the place named as Someswarar (Somanathar) and the goddess as Somasundari Amman\(^5\). The prime deity is named so, because once rishi Gautama, after taking bath in the holy tank Chandra Pushpakarni got the vision of God in the form of Soman (Chandra) and got relieved from his leprosy.

**Structure of the Temple**

The main shrine consists of a Garbhagraha, an antarala, and an

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\(^4\) SII. Vol. XIV No. 186, pp. 102-103.
\(^5\) Attur Sthalapurana, p.24.
arthamandapa with a circumambulatory passage and a tirucchurwnaligai. In the front there is a covered hall (mahamandapa) supported by three rows of six pillars each. The garbhagraha and the antarala constitute one unit on a common plinth, while the arthamandapa is at a lower level, from which the antarala is reached by a flight of three steps. There are four pillars in the arthamandapa in the traditional Chola style, round and capped by a plain corbel with bevelled edges.

On the outer front of the arthamandapa one on either side of the entrance, are two beautifully carved dvarapalas, measuring about 1.22 ms (four feet) in height. The three niches of the Garbhagraha, which are shallow, very much in the Pandyan style, with little scope for housing any Koshta deities. There is a sparsely distributed bhutagana frieze below the cornice. On the southern side, however, where there ought to be a Dakshinamurti niche figure, and have a modern structure to house an old and fine stone sculpture of Yoga-Dhakshinamurti. Away from the dvarapalas and infront of the eastern wall of the arthamandapa, there are some fine bronzes. There is a separate Kodimaram (flag pole) on the outer circumambulation of the temple and the flag hoisting ceremony is being done during the Pankuni festival.

Sculptures Stone

From east to west along the southern wall in the tiruch-churru-maligai, there is a fine image of Jvararahadevar, facing north, followed by the sculptures of the 63 Nayanmars (Saiva Saints); further west along this wall, there is an excellent set of sculptures in stone of the saptamatrikas, with Virabhadra and Ganapati bracketing the group, facing each other at right angles to the row of the seven Matrikas (saptamatrikas). In the south-western
corner of the prakara, facing east, is an image of Ganapati. Correspondingly on the north-western corner, a fine set of stone images of Kartikeya and His two consort (Valli and Deivayani), facing east. In the north-eastern corner, adjoining the northern wall and facing south is an image of Bhairavar. On the inner side of the eastern wall of the mahamandapa are images of chandra in the north and surya in the south. Close to surya and near the door way of the mahamandapa leading to the later date agramandapa is an image of Adhikaranandi.

**Bronzes:** In this temple some of the finest bronzes are those of Nataraja, Sivakami, Manikkavasagar and Karaikkal Ammaiyyar, all in one group, in a chamber to the north-east of the circumambulatory passage. The Nataraja image measures 112 cms (3'8") from the base of the padmapitham to the top of the jatha, which is beautifully shaped and from tip to tip of the fingers of the outstretched arms breadthwise it measures 81 cms (2'8"). From the top of the aureola (arthachandra element) to the base of the bhadrapietham it measures 160 cms (5'3"); there are 12 tongues of flame on either side of the ardhachandra, which rests on two pillars (kals).

Nataraja wears the jathamakuta, on which are the crescent moon and Ganga-Bhattari; He wears the usual malu in the upper right arm and the fire in the upper left arm; the lower right in varada pose has the coiled snake on it while the fourth arm is in the gajahasta posture. He stands with his right foot on Muyalagan who is prostrate on his belly and holds a snake by the neck which lies along the entire length of Muyalagan's body. He is on a padmapitham placed on a bhadrapietham.
The equally beautiful and majestic image of *Sivakami Amman* stands on a *Padmapitham* with a *nilotpala* in the right hand. The other arm falls gracefully with a fine natural bend down. The length of the left thigh, measures 84 cms (2'9"). Both the *Nataraja* and *Sivakami* images are rest on a common *bhadra pitham*. To the proper right of *Nataraja*, there is an image of *Manikkavasagar* with the *chevudi* in the left arm and the right arm is in the *chin-mudra pose*. There is a small image of *Karaikkal Ammaiayar* with sagging breasts and shrunken belly and holding cymbals in both hands. This entire group constitutes a fine set of bronzes in the true Chola tradition, installed in a Chola temple built in the Pandya country. The style of these sculptures may be termed Chola-Pandya.

There are also two beautiful *Somaskandar* metal images and a *Tani Amman*. Besides, there are the icons of *Appar, Tirunavukkarasar, Sundarar, Astradevar* and *Chandesvarar*. Flanking the stone *dvarapalas* referred to earlier, there are, on the south, metal images of *Bhikshatanar* and of *Kevala-Chandrasekharar*. North of the *dvarapalas* are images of *Subramanyd* along with his two consorts. All these are exquisite specimens of Chola-Pandya bronzes of the period.

Inscriptions refer to the gift of a number of icons to the temple of *Someswarar*. Mentioned among them are images of *Uloga vitankar* and *Nityasundarar*. While the former could be identified with the *Somaskandar* in the *rear verandah* adjoining the *Ganapati icon*, the identification of the latter presents some difficulty. Yet, it is believed that it was the other *Somaskandar image*, on the northern side of the *rear verandah*. 
Inscriptions again refer to the gift in the days of Rajaraja I of two villages, viz., Varandiyal and Kiranur for various services of the temple. They could be identified with Varandiyal, a suburb of Attur, which is less than a kilometer from the temple and with another suburb which goes by its old name of Kiranur. These places are at present hamlets of Attur.

**Pallikonda Perumal Shrine**

The special importance about the Someswarar temple is the existence of a shrine on the north-western verandah of the prakara, dedicated to Pallikonda Perumal (Vishnu), similar to the one at the Nellayappar temple at Tirunelveli. This temple was also referred to as "Rajaraja Vinnagar Pallikondarulina Devar" during the time of Rajaraja and in the period of Sundara Pandya the deity was called Tirunarayana Vinnagar. The shrine is outside the wall of the tiruchchurru-maligai, the entrance to it being on its wall and the garbhagraha being in a cella built outside, with a wagon shaped vimana. This shrine was built by Rajaraja I during his 22\textsuperscript{nd} regnal year (A.D. 1007). The recumbent Vishnu has his head to the west and the feet to the east and lies on a serpent whose coils however are not to be seen above the floor level; the hood (with five heads) is a modern replacement. Sridevi and Bhudevi are seated. In the same chamber, on the western side, there are four bronze images of exquisite quality and finish, of Rama, Vishnu, Sridevi and dancing Krishna. The image of Rama is fascinating. His two arms are in the posture of holding the bow and arrow, which however, are not there now.

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6 ARE 1929-30 No.387.
7 ARE 1929-30 No.425.
8 ARE 1929-30 No.415.
9 SII, Vol. XIV, No. 61, p. 43.
10 ARE 1929-30 No.388.
\end{flushleft}
He wears *patrakundalas*. These icons measure 89 cms (2'11''), 69 cms (2'3''), 58 cms (1' 11'') and 61 cm (2') respectively.

**Inscriptions of the Temple**

The temple contains a large number of inscriptions ranging from the days of Rajaraja I to the sixteenth century A.D. These are of the Later Cholas and their Chola-Pandya viceroyals cover almost half the number of the total of ninety and odd records. The remaining, relating mostly to the Pandyas of the post-Chola era. The inscription¹¹ refer the presiding deity as "*Somadeva alias Ten Tribhuvanam Udaiyar*" and the *Vishnu* shrine as *Rajaraja Vinnagar PalliKondarulina Devar* and was also called as *Tirunarayana Vinnaga Devar* in the period of Sundara Pandya.¹²

There are ten inscriptions of the days of Rajaraja I, which are the earliest to be found in this temple. They are all engraved on the walls of the central shrine. A twenty first year (A.D 1006) inscription¹³ which is the earliest of them, records a gift of sheep for a lamp to the temple of Someswarar by *Kandan Sittan* of *Alangudi* in *Vandalai-Velur* in *Arulmolideva valanadu*. Three others belong to his twenty second regnal year (A.D 1007); one of them stops with the mention of *Somanatha devar alias Ten Tiruppuvanam Udaiyar*.¹⁴ Another incomplete piece¹⁵ in the same characters mentions a merchant *Velan Teran alias Purusha- Manikka Setti*.

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¹¹ ARE 1929-30 No.415.
¹² ARE 1929-30 No.388.
¹³ SII, Vol. XIV, No. 61, p.43.
¹⁴ ARE 1929-30 No.415.
¹⁵ ARE 1929-30 No.392.
The next record\textsuperscript{16} seems to state that *tiruvunnaligaiyar* agreed to provide for offerings to the deity with the income from the land endowed, by purchase, to the temple by the kings regiment called *Arulmolideva terinda parivarattar*. The third one\textsuperscript{17} of the year registers a gift of land as *Kudininga-devadanam* for the expenses of the *tiruchchennadai* of the images of *Olakka-Vitankar* and *Nityasundarar* in the temple of *Somanathadevar alias Ten Tiruppupvanam Udaiyar* at Arrur, a *brahmadeya* in *Kudanadu* in the sub-division of *Rajaraja Valanadu* by *Bharadvajan Madhava Udaiya Divakaran of Kalitavamangalam*, with himself as a tenant.

There are two records\textsuperscript{18} of the next year, the twenty third (A.D. 1008) year. One of them mentions a sale of land made tax-free by the assembly of *Kiranur* for worship and offerings to the images of *Rajaraja Vinnagar Pallikondarulina-dever* (Vishnu), *Durga-Bhagavati*, *Sapta-matrikas*, *Kshetrapalar* and *Ganapati* set up in the temple of *Somanathadevar alias Ten Tiruppupvanam Udaiyar at Arrur Sendamangalam*. The other inscription\textsuperscript{19} which is on the basis of the characters belonged to the time of *Rajaraja I* refers to a gift of sheep by a person from *Parantaka valanadu*.

In the twenty-fourth year (A.D.1009) inscription,\textsuperscript{20} a lady of *Kalkurichchi* in *Tiruvaludi valanadu* makes a gift of sheep for a perpetual lamp to the temple. In continuation of this inscription is another record\textsuperscript{21} of the 17\textsuperscript{th} year (A.D.1002) of the same king recording gift of sheep by a *Vellala*

\textsuperscript{16} ARE 1929-30 No.419.
\textsuperscript{17} ARE 1929-30 No.409.
\textsuperscript{18} ARE 1929-30 No.415.
\textsuperscript{19} ARE 1929-30 No.390.
\textsuperscript{20} ARE 1929-30 No.386.
\textsuperscript{21} ARE 1929-30 No.413.
of Marudur in Manavira-Valanadu. Another record\(^{22}\) of the twenty-seventh regnal year (A.D. 1012) of Rajaraja I also refers to a gift of sheep for a lamp. A twenty-eighth year (A.D. 1013) inscription\(^{23}\) mentions a gift of land after purchase from the uravar of Varandivayal, for the mid-day offerings to the image of Purambalai Pillaiyar Ganapatiyar in the temple of Somanathadevar alias Ten Tiruppuvanam Udayiar at Arrur-Sendamangalam.

Surprisingly, there are only five records of the days of Rajendra I (A.D. 1012-1044), three in his third year (A.D. 1015) and the rest in his fifth year (A.D. 1017). Among his third regnal year inscriptions,\(^{24}\) one is incomplete and another\(^{25}\) refers to a gift of sheep and the third\(^{26}\) which is on the east wall of the Perumal shrine, registers a sale of land to the temple of Someswarar by the assembly, the Karanmai tenants and Nakkan Tukka dichchan. The two records of the fifth year (A.D. 1017), one\(^{27}\) of the 200\(^{th}\) day, both refer to the gifts of sheep for perpetual lamps from persons in Chola mandalam.\(^{28}\)

Next, there are three records of the days of Vira Rajendra; (A.D. 1064-1070) the fourth year (A.D. 1067) inscription\(^{29}\) mentions the provision made for offerings in the temple of Somanatha devar every Sunday by one Narayana Tiruvengadam alias Atula-Vichchadira Muvendavelan, the

\(^{22}\) ARE 1929-30 No.397.  
\(^{23}\) ARE 1929-30 No.387.  
\(^{24}\) ARE 1929-30 No.391.  
\(^{25}\) ARE 1929-30 No.399.  
\(^{26}\) ARE 1929-30 No.471.  
\(^{27}\) ARE 1929-30 No.412.  
\(^{28}\) ARE 1929-30 No.414.  
\(^{29}\) ARE 1929-30 No.401.
headman of Attur. The fifth regnal year (A.D. 1068) inscription\(^{30}\) of Virarajendra on the north wall of the Someswarar temple registers a gift of land, after purchase, by Virasir Muvenda Velan, the headman of Karuppur and a resident of Vetchiyur, a village in Serrur Kurram, a sub-division of Arumolideva Valanadum. Chola mandalam, for providing on the day of Ayilyam, the natal star of the king, special worship to the several deities in the temple. A seventh year (A.D. 1070) record\(^{31}\) deals with a gift of money to the aganaligaiyar for a twilight lamp in the temple by one Arangan Sodi, a Vellala of Tidarcheri in Pampur nadu. Apart from these records, there are others given with the regnal years of the Chola-Pandya Viceroy, three relate to Jatavarman alias Sundara Chola Pandya deva and are of his sixth, twenty-first and thirtyeth regnal years; The first\(^{32}\) (A.D. 1024) refers to a gift of buffaloes for a lamp in the temple of Somanathadeva by a Vellala of Arrur-Sendamangalam, a brahmadeya in Kuda nadu. Two Sivabrahmanas of the temple received the gift and undertook to supply the ghee required for the lamp. The second inscription\(^{33}\) found in a random stone in the pavement of the Soma Sundari Amman shrine, records the provision made by Bharadvajan Lokaditya Kuttan of Arrur for a perpetual lamp. The third inscription\(^{34}\) records a gift of sheep and a lamp-stand for a perpetual lamp by one Pandan Kattangan of the Sundara Sola Pandya terinda palayaval (a unit of the army).

Similarly of another Viceroy, Maravarman Vikrama Chola Pandya

\(^{30}\) ARE 1929-30 No.389.

\(^{31}\) ARE 1929-30 No.400.

\(^{32}\) SII, Vol. XIV, No. 135, P.70.

\(^{33}\) SII, Vol. XIV, No. 172, P.96.

\(^{34}\) SII, Vol. XIV, No. 169, P.93.
deva's four records have been found. One, inscription\textsuperscript{35} of A.D. 1020, records a gift of buffaloes for a perpetual lamp to the temple of Somesvarar. Another inscription\textsuperscript{36} of his twenty-second regnal year (A.D. 1042), also deals with a gift for a perpetual lamp to the temple of Someawarar, Attur in Rajadhiraja Chaturvedi mangalam, a brahmadeya of Kudanadu, a sub-division of Uttamachola Valanadu in Rajaraja Pandi Nadu, by a native of Kshatriyasikhamani Valanadu. A third of his twenty-fifth year (A.D. 1045) inscription\textsuperscript{37} states that the gift of money made by one Kandan Ayyanar alias Nirpasikhamani Muvendavelar of Mangalakal which was invested in the purchase of lands out of the yields of which the aganaligai Sivabrahmanas of the temple agreed to provide milk-porridge to the deity and feeding 15 Sivabrahmanas in the temple on each 'New moon day'. The menu is given for the food to be served in detail and the articles to be used in cooking, including pots and vessels, as well as betel and nuts are also mentioned. And finally, the fourth inscription,\textsuperscript{38} also of his twenty-fifth year (A.D. 1045) mentions coins a unit of measure for grains called the Somanatha marakka\textsuperscript{39} which throws light on the social aspect of the period and was named after the prime deity of the temple.

The Amman Shrine

The Amman shrine is devoted to 'Somasundari', the consort of Siva. It is located in the north-western outer-circumambulation of the temple complex. The shrine is divided into four parts-the Garbhagraha,
Arthamandapa, Mahamandapa and the Unjalmandapa. There is a Kodimaram (flag pole) on the Unjalmandapa of the Amman shrine and the flag is being hoisted during the Aippasi festival of the shrine. All the three shrine viz, Someswara shrine, Pallikondar shrine and the Amman shrine have separate vimanas. All such vimanas are specially meant for architectural and sculptural beauty. There is a 25 feet height compound wall constructed around both the Somesvarar and Amman shrine. The top of the front entrance of the temple, there were images of Siva and Parvati (Sakthi). The Patchai Sathi Mandapa in the outer-circumambulation of the Mahamandapa which is meant for the Pankuni festival is being nowadays used as a granary for paddy.

The first entrance of the main shrine is housed with Vinayaka on the left corner and subramanya on the right corner. On the southern side of the first Prakara of the central shrine, Surya, Sura Devar, 63 Nayanmars (Saiva saints), Kanni Vinayaka and Dakshinamoorthi images were placed. Kasinathar Visalakshi, Subramanya with his consorts Valli-Deivanai, Anantasayana Perumal, Saneesvarar, Chandikesvarar, Chandra and Vairava images were installed on the western prakara of the main shrine.

There is a Vinayakar image on the southern side of the outer Prakara and Vinayaka and Subramanya images were also placed at the entrance of the Somasundari Amman shrine. On the outer-circumambulation, there are images such as Vinayaka, Subramanya, Chandikeswara, Kodimara Vinayaka and pillar-Hanuman. A separate shrine with the Someswarar temple called Dharma Sastha shrine is being constructed at Melamadaviti near Attur. A special variety of sculptures of the women of the Chera country on the Somasundari Amman shrine is a unique feature in this temple.
Structure of the car

A car is a group of wood carved monument noted for its structural and iconographical excellence. It was not just a monument of architectural and iconographical excellence but an institution which was deep-rooted in the socio-economic and religious tradition of the society.\(^{40}\) As an institution, it acquired a multi-dimensional character encompassing the entire fabric of the Attur society in the medieval period. The temple car seems to be a Cakadai or Cattatter Tervidi\(^{41}\) (car street) also figures prominently in the Twin Epics which stands for the street in which temple car procession moves.\(^{42}\)

The temple car is an embodiment of gods and sacrifices. By exalting the position of gods and sacrifices, its cosmic symbolism is indicated. In structural designs and ritualistic aspects, the car is the symbolic of the cosmos. The fact that its structural outline from base to finial strikingly compares with the Buddhist Chaityas (halls of worship) proves its cosmic symbolism.\(^{43}\) The car is bulky in nature which is the characteristic of the earth. In thepurana, Bhudevi (Mother Earth) is said to have served as the car to Siva in his war against the demons of Tripura. Ter and ratha are the Tamil and Sanskrit words respectively which mean a car. The word Ter implies an elevated structure connected with the term terri which means high or elevated structure.

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\(^{40}\) Raju Kalidas, Temple Cars of Medieval Tamilaham; Tanjore, 1989, p. 5.
\(^{41}\) Samuel Beal (ed.), Travels of Buddhist pilgrims from China to India, NewDelhi, p.7.
\(^{42}\) Subramanyan. N., Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index, Madras, 1969, p. 459.
\(^{43}\) The Buddhist Chaitya is supposed to be the symbolic of the five cosmic elements, viz; earth, water, fire, sky, ether.
and that the phrase terriambalam stands for an elevated mandapa (pavilion) or temple.\textsuperscript{44} In all Dravidian languages ter or teru is popular.\textsuperscript{45}

The Attur temple car is a wood carved one called vairater, seems to have derived its name from vairm (literally diamond, heart-wood) from which it was made. Since vairam was considered to be strong and keep thing made out of it away from whiteants and worms; it was generally preferred for making all kinds of domestic agricultural and technical implements. So the popular expression, vairam panja kattai (the wood permeated with diamond) was used to denote anything exceptionally strong. For making the axles, wooden beams and logs meant for carving icons, the heart-wood was used. So the car of Attur temple made of heart-wood was known as Vairatter\textsuperscript{46} and was also called citti ratter (the carved car) which came after the icons which were carved in the plinth of the car. Cittiram refers to the icons. Namalvar, one among the twelve Alvars, has the earliest reference to this phrase\textsuperscript{47} Kambar describes the car of Indrajit as citti ratter.\textsuperscript{48} The similar type of ter is found in Attur which has a permanent fitting plinth containing wood carved images.

The Someswarar temple car is significant in two respects, viz; (i) its architectural order which imitates the garbhagrha of the temple and its location (placement) in the temple complex. This temple car was a replica of the garbhagrha in architectural design. The constituent parts of garbhagrha viz; plinth, pada and vimana were brought out in the temple car. It has an

\textsuperscript{44} Tamil Lexicon, Madras, 1963, IV, pt.I, p. 2042.
\textsuperscript{46} Census Report of Tirunelveli, 1921, Madras 1928 p. 267.
\textsuperscript{47} Nalayiram Divya Prabandam, VIII, seventh, Ten, V. 3.
\textsuperscript{48} Kamba Ramayanam, VI, 18, V. 181.
elaborate plinth, consisting of ddhdra, upapitha, adisthdna and ndrasana. The wheels in the vairatter of the Attur temple are solid. The wheels are attached to the axle at the nabhi or kudam (nave) point. The linch-pin, called dni (nail), holds it closely attached to the axle. The rim is known as Patta or Vattai.\textsuperscript{49}

The minute details relating to the measurements of the wheels are given in the Silpasasstras.\textsuperscript{50} Its height is half the measure of the height of plinth. Depending upon the height and weight of the car, the diameter of the wheel extends from a minimum of 2'8" to a maximum of 10'2" from the smallest to the biggest cars. The rimi measures from a minimum of 6' to a maximum of 1'10". All the component parts of the wheel, including the wedge\textsuperscript{51} are made of wood. It is also enjoined by three or five kinds of wood to be employed for making the wheels.\textsuperscript{52}

The car of the temple, belonged to the 20\textsuperscript{th} century one.\textsuperscript{53} The shape of the car is octagonal and the height is 12 feet. The length of the axle is 11 feet and contains 6 wheels. The measurement of arc is 3 feet and the car has 5 pars in all.\textsuperscript{54} The car height here stands for the height of plinth and not the total height of the car. The total height could be worked out by multiplying plinth height with 4. This is because the pada and vimana are usually 1-2 and 2-3 times as tall as the plinth.

\textsuperscript{49} Tirunagarapatalam, V. 64.
\textsuperscript{50} Mayamata Ch. 31, V. 29. (Acharya P.K., Architecture of Manasara, V.V. 9-18, New Delhi, 1979).
\textsuperscript{51} Visvakarma Vastusastra Chap. 84, p. 799.
\textsuperscript{52} Kumaratantra, ch. 44, V.V. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{53} Raju Kalidoss, op.cit., p. 274.
\textsuperscript{54} Field study of the car dated 26-05-2013.
There are 126 iconographical specimens in the car. The specimens are located in the first row of the back side. Architecturally, the car has an octagonal framework and an octagonal platform and is rectangular in shape. The adhisthana and narasana are designed octagonally. It has a vimana and the cuts are found both at the platform level and upto the level of adhisthana and narasana. For the upapitha, slight projections are provided in the centre of all the four sides. In the right and left sides, these projections are so arranged that they present the shape of an inverted pyramid, which at the summit are decked with rearing yalis on all four sides with images of gods in between them. Devakosthas lodging the images of gods, are also set up in the front and back of the first tier of the car.

**Arrangement of Images**

The upapitha, adhistana and narasana are the depositories of images in the temple car. The devdsana and simhasana contain some sculptures. The Mdnasara gives a list of images that are expected to be deposited in the temple car. They are lions, elephants, crocodiles, nataka bhutas (dancing demons), yaksas, hooded serpents, Gurupada (Brahma) Saroruha (Vishnu), Sanmukha Saraswati, Ganapati, the beloved of Sankara (Durga), the nude images of heavenly women, minor gods, kings, chiefs, priests, Brahmanas, bhaktas, dvarapalas (gate-keepers), Kinnaras, nagas, Garuda and others. So Silpasasstras have ordained the temple car to be the abode of iconography.

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According to the *Visvakarma Vastusastra*, all gods must be seated on their mounts. The *Isvarasamhita*, *Sriprasanasamhita* and *Kumaratantra* give clue to the various gods who are to be installed in the various parts of the temple car. These are mostly carved out of solid blocks of wood and affixed to the tiers with the use of *ayaskila* (iron nails). Each of these tiers of sculptures are usually bordered by a row of miniature sculptures at their base. The height of images in the main tiers differ from a minimum of 8 inches to a maximum of 2½ feet, depending upon the height of the *plinth*. The miniature sculptures are at the most 6 inches in height. The axles are the lower most part of the temple car to lodge sculptures. These sculptures are usually of the same number as the cross bars and affixed on the main axles, just below the cross bars. The images enshrined here are mostly those of *bhuta ganas*. *Ganapati* and *Muruga* are found among them in rare specimen. They are supposed to be the guardians of axles. In the Someswarar temple car the *bhuta ganas* are placed in the first tier of the car. The love making parrots are placed at par edges in the Attur temple car.

The *upapitha* is the next member of the car which lodges images. Here the arrangement of images is done on a uniform pattern in all four sides without leaving any empty space. In rare cases sculptures are arranged sparsely. In the *polygonal car* the images are arranged as alternated by

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56 *Visvakarma Vastusastra* Chap. 84, V.V. 11-15.
57 Infra Chap. IX, N. 41.
59 Infra Annexure I, N. 22.
60 For all practical purposes the expressions first tier, second tier and third tier stand for the upapitha, adhisthana and narasana respectively.
brackets. At times a few sculptures are grouped together and enclosed by brackets. The brackets are mostly yalis, rearing horses, rearing lions, standing elephants and hooded serpents. The Octagonal car (Attur car) has brackets only at the four corner. The busts of the images of Zoomorphic kurma, Bhudevi and the hooded Adisesa are lodged in the front centre at the base of the upapitha. The tails of kurma and Adisesa and the feet of Bhudevi are lodged in the back side of the same tier. They are supposed to bear the weight of the car. The right and left sides of the upapitha are much hidden by the outer wheels. It is this concealed zone which provides the encampment for erotic sculptures. The natakabhatas are lodged in the centre of these two sides. Yalippen (girls resting on yali) also find a place on both the extremities.

The adhisthana and narasana enshrine sculptures in the same pattern as in the upapitha. A feature characteristic of the adhisthana is the arrangement of sculptures in slanting way which gives a pyramidal shape to it. In both the adhisthana and narasana also the images are bracketed. In the Someawarar temple car, the brackets are provided at the corners of the octagon. The adhisthana lodges iconographical specimen of a multitedious nature relating to Hindu mythology and the day-to-day life of the Hindus, their beliefs and customs. Some decorative aspects such as ornamental pillars, bud-like wooden bulbs, arches, metallic bells and the like are also lodged here.

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61 By brackets we mean the yalis and such other figures which are used to enclose images.

62 Yalis are mythical dragons, having a leonine face and elephantine proboscois. Yalis are always presented in the rearing attitude. In between the hind legs of a Yali usually an elephant stands. Both their trunks are twisted. This is a characteristic features of Nayak art.
The last member to lodge images is the pedestal. Images of dancing girls, instrument players, acaryapurusas, astadikpalas and Gajalakshmi are in two tiers. In the car of the Someswarar temple, the first tier of the pedestal alone lodges sculptures. Here images are found very sparingly. The images carved in the temple car are out of solid blocks of wood. Generally, woods containing milky substance alone are preferred for making images. Such woods alone are expected to keep the longevity of images.

Silpasastras and agamas codify elaborate rules relating to the wood meant for iconic purposes and the methods for procuring them. The master craftsman among silpis was called sthapati. He was assisted by sutragrahi (surveyor), takasaka (sculptor) and vardhahin (builder or plasterer). Inscriptions refer to them as taccan and the remuneration due to them as taccaryakkani. All the artists worked in groups as directed by a sthapati.

The Teppakkulam

The Teppakkulam (the holy tank) of the temple is called as Chandra Pushpa Karani. It is located on the south-eastern side of the main entrance of the temple. Today the tīrta seems to be a holy pond and the top of the entrance of the pond is placed the image of Selva vinayaka. It is believed that one can heal his sickness and get a fresh life if he takes bath in the holy tank. Hence the tīrtakattam (holytank) in this temple is considered to be of divine significance. During the Pankuni festival season, both the images of

65 ARE 1909 No.188.
66 At present a number of reputed group of artists are engaged in fostering the art of the temple car.
Somesvarar and Soma Sundari Amman are taken in procession around the holy pond for 11 times on the night of the 10th day Pankuni festival.

**Sri Meikandeswarar Temple Kayalpattinam**

Kayalpattinam is located eight kilometers from Tiruchendur. The town has Srimeikondeswarar temple, Sri Ganapatheswarar Sri Samanatheswarar and Sri Sankaralingaswarar temples. Sri Meikandeswarar temple is an ancient one. The temple covers an area of 3000 square feet. The Principal deity of the temple is Sri Meikandeswarar in the form of a lingam. Agurukkal conducts poojas twice a day. The important festival celebrated in this temple is margazhi festival. The villagers administer the temple. The temple is in a dilapidated condition.

Sri Ganapatheeswarar temple covers an area of 15 cents. The Principal deity of the temple is Sri Ganapatheswarar in the form of a lingam. The temple of Sri Somanatheswarar is located nearby. There is also a temple of Sriakralingeswarar in the form of a lingam. Which covers an area of eight cents. Agurukka conducts Poojas twice a day. The important festivals celebrated in this temple is Karthigai Deepam. The villagers administer the temple.

**Chera Chola Pandeeswarar alias Kasiviswanather temple Thirukalore**

The temple is an ancient one. The temple covers an area of 0.44 hectare. The Principle deity of the temple is Srikasiviswanathar in the form of a Swayambhulingam. The Goddess is Srivisalakshi. The other deities in the temple are Sri Sivakamasundari, Juradever, Dakshinamurthy, Kanni Vinayakar, Subramaniyar with Valli and Deivanai, Chandigeswarar
Sanneswarar and Bairavar. The temple derives its name from the three
dynasties that ruled this region at various points of time, the Cholas, the
Cheras and the Pandyas, who have contributed to the building of this temple.
Agurukkal conducts Poojas four times a day. The temple owns 1.42.5
hectares of dry land and 0.26.5 hectares of wetland. The H.R. and C.E.
Department administers the temple. The lithic records call the presiding deity
as Chola Pandyaeswararn Udaiyar. The earliest inscription belongs to
Jatavarman Kulasekhara Pandya Justifying, thereby its erection in his time.
The art technique coincides with his period. The Mahamandapa was erected
in Sundarapandian region by one Arupudakkuttan and his two brothers.

**Sirchidambareswarar Temple Kulasekarapattinam**

Kulasekarappattinam lies on the Tiruchendur Nagercoil highway. It
once served as a seaport in handling merchandise to and from western ports
but later declined its importance with the rise Thoothvai as a major part. This
village has two Siva temples. One is Srichidambareswarar temple and
Srikanichi Vijayakachikonda Pandeeswarar temple.

Sri Chidambaraswarar temple is said have been built in the 17th
century. This temple is also known as Thenthillai. Chidambaram of the
South. The Principal deity of the temple is Sri Chidambareswarar. The
Goddess is Sri Aram Valarthanayagi, As per legend, a local business man was
a devotee of Lord Nataraja of Chidambaram. He used to make an annual
pilgrimage to witness the Thiruvadhirai festival. Once due to a terrific storm
he was unable to travel to Chidambaram. Deeply anguished he prayed to the
Lord. The Lord moved by his prayer appeared before him in the same form
that he assumes at Chidambaram. The devotee over whelmed by the divine grace built the present temple. Duscchra is the main festival in the temple Agurukkal conduct poojas. The H.R. and C.E. Department administers the temple.

**Sri Kanchi vijaya Kachikanda pandeeswarar temple**

The temple is an ancient one. There are three inscription in the temple. Inscription refer this place as Manaviravalunattu Kulasekarapattinam. Whether this Kulasekhrara belongs to the line age of medival Pandya. The Presiding deity of the temple is presently called Kachikonda Kanchi Vijaya Pandiswaramudiyar Inscriptions refer the diety as Kachi Kondapandiswarar. The temple perhaps might have been erected in honour of Pandya Kings victory of the Three inscriptions in this temple one is dated in Kollam 732 (1557 A.D.) The present Temple structure is in the 16th Century style. The temple is fairly well preserved as it is under worship. An interesting inscription dated 1569 A.D. records an order of the king Veerapanayak. The order was conveyed by Neinmudaliyaraiyur directing there on secretion of God Kulasekharavinnayagar Embruman in Kulasekharapattinam in Manaveeravalanadu. The inscription also records the grant of one nail per head of Paddy passing through the warehouse at the port and through the brokers for the daily worship of the God by the Thenattar of the place.

The Principal deity of the temple is Sri Pandeeswarar in the form of Swayambhulingam. The Goddess is Sri Aramvalarthanayagi. There is a
separate shrine for Sri Savithrasuryanarayana and his consorts. The specialty of this temple is the Shrine of Lord Saneeswarar (Saturn) with his parents Saint Pathanjali, Valli and Karaikkal Ammaiyyar are believed to have offered Prayers at this temple. Agurukkal conducts Poojas four times a day. The important festival celebrated in this temple is Brahmatsavam in Chithirai. The H.R. and C.E. Department administers the temple.