CHAPTER – III
ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF SIVA TEMPLES IN
TIRUCHENDUR TALUK

Narasinganather Temple Angamangalam

Like many of the big temple complexes of South India such as those at Chidambaram and Madurai, this temple was not built all at one time but was the result of many centuries of growth and development. The temple inscriptions furnishes evidence for determining the age of structures.

Narasinganather temple as it stands today is a vast and impressive complex of structures, enclosed by high and massive compound walls all around occupying a rectangular plot of land. The temple measures 140 feet East to west and 70 feet south to north roughly occupying an area of 9800 square feet (21 cent 200 square feet). Thus it is one of the largest temple complexes in South India.

The dimension of the Narasinganathar temple are large and well proportioned with a compound Thirumathil. Dravidian style of architecture was followed in the construction of this temple. It has some structures like central shrine, Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa. The Vimana, Mandapas and flagmast are excellently moulded by sculptures. The main entrance is situated at the western side.

Narasinganathar temple was constructed in the early period. During the sangam age temples were built with perishable materials\(^1\) After the Pallavas stone and other things were used to built the temples. In the

\(^1\) Srinivasan. P.R., *Temples of South India*, Delhi, 1972, p.17.
Narasinganathar temple the Lord Siva and Goddess Avudaiammal are made up of granite stone. Urchavar Narasinganathar in copper metal idol, casting of images in bronze by the lost wax process was increasingly practiced from later Pallava period. So this temple was constructed before fifth century A.D. Narasinganathar temple has a grand structure with lofty mandapas through which the main entrance leads into the inner precincts. This temple was constructed by the various ruler of various dynasties viz, early pandyas and later pandyas.

_Ground Plan of the Temple_

1. KARUVARAI
2. ARTHAMANDAPAM
3. MAHAMANDAPAM
4. NATARAJAR SHRINE
5. SOUTHERN ENTRANCE
6. MUKA MANDAPAM
7. ALTAR
8. MAIN ENTRANCE
9. VASANTHA MANDAPAM
10. SUBRAMANIYAR SHRINE
11. MUKA MANDAPA OF SUBRAMANIYAR SHRINE
12. SANDIKESWARAR SHRINE
13. SANESWARAR SHRINE
14. WELL
15. KALABAIRAVAR
16. BRIMA
17. SURIYA NARAYANAR
18. KANNI VINAYAGAR SHRINE
19. AVUDAI NAYAKI AMMAN SHRINE
20. ARTHA MANDAPA
21. MAHAMANDAPA
22. PANTHAL MANDAPAM
23. TEMPLE TANK
24. TEMPLE CAR
In Angamangalam temple Lord Narasinganather Lingam in sanctum sanctorium is facing west lonely as primary idol and presiding deity. Inside this walled enclosure a series of concentric courtyards noticed around the central nucleus. On which is located the main sanctorium, of Lord Narasinganathar there are thus one courtyards or prakarams in the temple and the local saivaites would add the main street around and touching closely the temple as the second one.

The first pirakaram is situated in between the outer walls of central shrine, Arthamandapa, Mahamandapa, Mukamandapa and compound walls.

Karuvarai or sanctum sanctorium is cavere with wall on east, west, south and north. On the western side middle double half door situated. In Karuvarai Lord Narasinganather in Linga pose, Tiruvatchi decorated around the backside of Narasinganather. The presiding deity of this shrine was called as Narasimhes Varamudaiya Nayanar.³

Urchavar named Narasimesvaramudiya Nayanar in copper metal idol stands at two and half feet height platform in a golden palanquin with Avudaiammal.

Lord is for away from the entry to the temple in the sanctum sanctorium with Vimana of 18 feet height on its top facing west. The length of sanctum sanctorium is 21 feet and width 18 feet and height 12 feet above this terrace the Vimana is situated.

In all the temples both Siva and Vishnu, before entering sanctum sanctorium there are two status in stone called as Duwara Balakar on each

³ ARE 1949 - 50, No. 357.
side before the Karuvarai further they are the security, gate keeper and watchman. They are pleased to receive devotees and extended welcome and they report to god about the presence of devotees. Such two Duwara Balakars stand on eachside of the entrance to Karuvarai before Lord Narasinganathar.

Karuvarai Arthamandapas were constructed by the early pandyas. Mahamandapa and Muka mandapas Nandhi Altar, and Avudai Amman shrine were constructed by the later pandyas. Inscriptions engraved on the walls of Mahamandapa and Mukamandapas were conformed the above fact.

Arthamandapa is of ‘12’ feet length and 34 feet width and its height of 12 feet. Arthamandapa is covered with walls on all foursides and at the front wall, the entrance door is situated. There are nine stone pillar in three rows (9 pillars) in arthamandapa and height of pillar is 12 feet and one feet width. The pillars have a gap of ten feet between each other.

Infront of Karuvarai entrance Nanthi statue is situated. In the south western corner on a platform stone statue of Vinayagar situated. In the north western side of Arthamandapa 63 bronze statue of Nayanmars, Arumugam, Valli, Theivanai, Narasinganather and Avudai Nayaki Amman is situated. In this arthamandapa devotees stand and worship Lord Narasinganather held in Karuvarai. Before this Mahamandapam is situated. It is of 40 feet length 40 feet width and 12 feet height. This mandapa is supported by the four rows of sixteen pillars. In the middle of the north inner wall Natarajar shrine is situated.

The bronze image of Nataraja from top to bottom is 112 cm. The breadth is 99 cm in forehead to foot is measures seven feet, the left foot is raised. The Lord tramples muyalakan on a lotus oval base. The face is avoid
and titled to the right. The upper two hands with the drum and the fire and far apart in the hand of protection is called the cobra rising its hood erect. The Jahastham is thrown across the chest. The planted and lifted feet, the cloth flying from stomach band the upper garment and shaping of the limps all present a graceful appearance. There are twenty nine flames in all the thiruvatchi, fourteen on either side with three tongues each and the top one with five tongues. Southern entrance of Mahamandapa is situated in the southern wall opposite to the Natarajar shrine.

On the western side of the inner Entrance of Mahamandapa, southern side of the door entry there is a sculptured figures of sunathikara nadhi and moon are situated.

Before the Mahamandapa Mukamandapa is situated. It is of 17 feet length, twenty feet width and 10 feet height. This Madapa is situated on the two feet height platform.

Two and half feet length and two half feet width and two half feet height Altar is situation in front of the Mahamandapa.

In the north western carner vasantha mandapa is situated. Four rows of twenty four pillars (4 x 6 = 24) supported this mandapa.

In the south western corner Kannimula Vinayagar shrine is situated. It is often feet height, 10 feet width and ten feet height.

**Avudai Nayaki Amman Shrine**

Avudai Nayaki Amman shrine is situated in the southern side of the temple. The sanctum sanctorium of the Amman shrine is of 14 feet length, 14 feet width and 10 feet height. Above the terrace ten feet height
Thunganaimada Vimana is situated with one storey Mukadu and Kalasam, Suthai Amman Sculptures and Simha lada decorated on the each side of Vimanas. Three kumpha pancharasandone Devakhostas decorated on the western wall of Karuvarai. Four Kumbha panchaas and two devakhostas are decorated on the north and south walls of Karuvarai. Three feet height and three feet width entrance door is situated in the front wall of Karuvarai. Avudai nayaki Amman stands facing East.

Arthamandapa is situated before the Karuvarai. It is of ‘8’ feet length and 18 feet width and ten feet height. This mandapa is supported by the four rows of eight pillars. Palliyarai is situated in the northern side of the Arthamandapa sitting pose of Thavasi siddar statue is kept in the western side of the Arthamandapa. The main entrance is situated in the eastern wall. It is of three feet height and three feet width.

Mahamandapa is situated before the Arthamandapa. It is of 8 feet length and 18 feet width. Eight feet height four pillars are kept infront of the mandapa.

Mukamandapa is situated in front of the Mahamandapa. It is of 28 feet length, 24 feet width and twelve feet height four rows of sixteen pillars are supported this mandapa.

Suriya Narayanar shrine is situated in the south eastern side of the compound wall. Kala Bairavar shrine, well, Bhirama, Someswarar shrine in situated in the North eastern side of the compound wall.

Sandikeswarar shrine is situated in the northern side of the sanctorium
of Narasinganathar. This shrine is supported by the four pillars with a height of three feet.

**SUBRAMANIYA SWAMI SANNATHI**

Subramaniya Swami Sannathi is situated in between the northern side of Mahamandapa and northern side of the compound wall. Sanctum sanctorium of the subramaniya sannathi is of nine feet length and nine feet width and seven feet height. This shrine is built on the two feet height platform. Subramaniyar, Valli and Theivanai statues are kept in the Karuvarai.

Seven feet length and nine feet width and seven feet height. Arthamandapa is situated before the sanctum sanctorium. Mukamandapa is situated in front of the Arthamandapa. This mandapa is supported by four pillars. It is of seven and half feet length, eight and half feet width and seven feet height.

**Main Entrance**

Main entrance is situated in the middle of western wall. It is of twenty two feet length and thirty two feet width. The inner path is of 22 feet length and 8 feet width. The outer side of the northern portion of entrance is decorated with eight kumbha panchara and the southern side is also decorated with eight kumbha panchara. The entrance has a thick teak wooden door with a height of 20 feet and 10 feet width as the entrance to the temple.

This temple has distinguished temple architectural features. Instead of walls, the basement of this temple has niches which are housing kastha deities. No inscription is found in the central shrine and Ardhamandapa. The
Mahamandapa of the Narasinganathar shrine and the walls of the Amman shrine contains more than eighteen inscriptions. The earliest inscription is that of sundara pandya who was pleased to give back sonadu.

Sundara pandyas inscription refer to the sale of land to the temple as sale deed by the people of Karkurichi alias Raja Raja Nallur in Tiruvaludi valanadu. An inscription of Virapandya refers to the gift of land by Ulakuttandan and Vimpu pillai, the latter hailing from Puravarinulur in Tiruvaludi valanadu.

According to another inscription dated in 1425 A.D. the temples renovated and land was gifted to perform Mahapujai the entrance shrine and Ardhamandapa of the temple would have been renovated during this time.

**Kailasanathar and Alakia Ponnammal Thenthirupperai**

15 feet height, 30 feet length and 30 feet width Pandal Mandapam situated in the southern side compound wall of Alakia Ponnammal shrine. 27½ feet passage to the Muhamandapa of Amman Shrine. From the Muhamandapa of Amman Shrine 18 feet length passage leading to the Arthamandapa of Kailasanathar shrine.

**Karuvarai or Sanctum Sanctorium**

Inside the sanctum sanctorium the principal deity Lord Kailasanathar is in lingam. It is at 35 feet length and eighteen feet width and 10 feet height. Duvara Palakar, Lord Vinayaka and Lord Murugan status are kept infront of the Arthamandapa.

Arthamandapa is located infront of the sanctum sanctorium. It is of 24 feet length and 24 feet width and 10 feet height. There are sixteen pillars in
bow rows in Arthamandapa and height of a pillar is 10 feet length and 1½ feet width. The pillars have a gap of six feet between each other. Natarajar shrine is situated in the middle of the rithem wall of Arthamandapa. Arthamandapa is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall the entrance door is fixed. In front entrance of Karuvarai Palipida and Nandi are erected. Eastern and Southern entrance are situated respectively in the middle of east and southern wall southern entrance of Arthamandapa is leading to the southern main entrance of Amman shrine.

Muhamandapam is situated in front of the Arthamandapa. This mandapa is supported by twenty pillars. It is of 30 feet length and 30 feet width. Nandi and Flag mast are situated in between the second and third rows of Muhamandapa. Pudai sculpture of vinayaka are engraved in the first pillars of second and third rows. Kodimara is situated on the 5½ feet platform. Palipida is situated in front of the Muhamandapa. Dakshinamoorthi, Kannimula Vinayagar shrine, Murugan shrine, Sandikeswarar shrine, Saneeswarar and Kalabairawar shrine are situated respectively in the South, South West, North West, North and North East, Total length of Kailasanather shrine is 120 feet and 66 feet width.

Dakshinamoorthi Shrine, Kannivinayagar Shrine, Lord Subramanyar Shrine, Sandikeswarar Shrine, Saneeswarar Shrine and Kalapairavar Shrine are situated respectively in the south, South West, North West, North middle and North East Side of the Kailasanathar temple. Alagia Ponnammal shrine is situated 36 feet south of Kailasanathar shrine. The length of Thayar Shrine Karuvarai is 14 feet, 12 feet width and 10 feet height. Eight Plasters and two Deva chostas are decorated on the north, south and west of Karuvarai.
Arthamandapa is situated before the Karuvarai is in rectangular shape. It is of 18 feet length, 20 feet width and 10 feet height. There are six pillar in two rows in Arthamandapa and a height of pillar is ten feet. First row pillars have a gap of six feet. Seven and half feet gap in between the two rows.

Six feet length and 7½ feet width store room is situated in the north west corner of Arthamandapa. Six feet length and Nine feet width pillayar is situated in the North east corner of Arthamandapa.

Muhamandapam is situated before the Arthamandapa, is in rectangular shape. It is of 30 feet length and 20 feet width and 10 feet height. There are eight pillars in two rows in Muhamandapa.

Twenty eight feet south of Amman shrine southern main entrance of Kailarmathar temple is situated. It is of 30 feet length, 30 feet width and fifteen feet height. The rows of six pillars are kept in this mandapa sitting post suthai sculptures of Kailasanathar and Alagia Ponnammal are decorated on the top of the roof of this pancha Mandapam.

Total length of Thayar Shrine is 120 feet length and 66 feet width.

**Kailasanathar and Soundaranayaki Temple Serthapoomangalam**

Inside the sanctum sanctorum, the principal deity Kailasanathar is in linga form. The length of Karuvarai is 12 feet and 12 feet width and 10 feet height. Four Pilasters and one Devakhosta are decorated on the western wall of Karuvarai sculptures of sitting pose Sivam and Parvathi on the Bull, Brachamma, Murugan, Valli, Devanai decorated on the northern side of first storey. Brahamma and Saraswathi sculptures are decorated on the second row of vimana on the first and second story of southernside of vimana sitting post
Dakshinamoorthy sculptures are decorated. In the eastern side of vimana sculptures of Duvarapalakar, sivan, parvathi, vinayakar sculptures. Infra sitting on the elephant Iravatha and two Devarishis are decorated respectively on the first and second storey’s. In the western side of Kailasanathar vimana Poothakana varis are decorated on the Prastharam. Sculptures of simhdada, griva, sitting pose lakshimi Narasimhar, Thisai Kavdar Nandi Vishnu sitting on the five head copra with Sridevi and Boomadevi. Siva toring the Elephant with his eight arms are decorated respectively the first and second storeys.

Arthamandapa is situated before the Karuvarai in rectangular shape. It is of 14 feet length and 18 feet width and 10 feet height. There are sixteen pillars in four rows are situated in this mandapa. Small size sitting pose Nandi statue is kept before and Karuvarai, Vinayagar, Murugan statues and Palliyarai are situated respectively in the each side before the Karuvarai and North East corner of Arthamandapa.

Muhamandapa is situated before the Arthamandapa on five feet height platform. It is of eight feet length and eighteen feet width Soundaranayaki shrine is situated in the northern side of Muhamandapa. It is of eleven feet length and seven and half feet width. Four Pilasters and one Devashostas are decorated on the each side of the wall of Amman shrine. Amman shrine is situated facing the southern direction southern entrance is situated in the southern wall of Muhamandapa.

**Kodimara Mandapa**

Kodimaramandapa is situated before the Muhamandapa. It is of 44 feet length, 69 feet width and 10 feet height. This mandapa is supported by 28 pillars in four rows. Nandhi altar and Kodimara are situated in front of the
Muhamandapa entrance. Two and half feet length, two and half feet width and two and half feet height sitting pose Nandi statue is kept on the five feet height of flat form.

Altar or Palipida is kept behind the Nandi. It is of four and half feet height, three feet length and 3 feet width. Fifty one feet Kodimara is erected behind the Altar on five feet height six length and six feet width platform on the top of plagmast platform is decorated by the inverted Lotus, and two Karnakudu Suryan and Chandran statues are kept in the each side of last wall.

Dakshinamoorthi shrine 12 feet length and 12 feet width, Vinayagar shrine, 5 feet length and 5 feet width, Murugan Shrine 15 feet length and 8 feet width. Sandikeswarar shrine, Navagraka, Vahanamandapa, and kitchen are situated respectively in the south, south west, middle east, east, north east corner and south east corner.

**Eastern entrance panthal mandapa**

It is of nine feet length, 18 feet width, and 10 feet height. This manadpa is divided into three parts, two feet height platform situated in the northern and southern part. Two feet depth middle part is leading to the Kodimaramandapa. Pandya symbol fish engraved on the ceiling of this mandapa.

Southern entrance is decorated by a panthal mandapa. It is of eight feet width and sixty one feet length.

Total length of Kailasanathar shrine is 120 feet, and seventy feet width four corners of Thirumathils are decorated with sitting pose Nandi and Two Devakanas.
Vimana of Soundara Nayaki Shrine

Total height of Amman Shrine Vimana is 32 feet. Twenty five feet Vimana situated over the roof of Amman Shrine. Northern side of Vimana is decorated by the suthai sculptures of Vishnu. Worshipping pose women and old man, Two Woman being the water and sitting pose Sivanadiyar. In the southern side of Vimana is decorated by the suthai sculpture of sitting pose Amman, Worshipping Vishnu, Lakshmi, Sivan, Parvathi, Brohamma, Saraswathi, Narathar, Rishi.

In the Western side of Vimana is decorated by the Suthai sculptures of sitting pose Siva, Amman, Rishi, Woman beating the drum and sitting pose Amman. In the eastern side of vimana is decorated by the suthai sculptures of Vishnu, women and Nandhi.

In the Karuvarai five feet height soundara Nayaki, Stone statue is erected. Left hand of the Amman is in lifting position right hand holding lotus.

Art in India has been an aesthetic expression as a matter of delight and enjoyment leading to nothing beyond that. This has to be taken as mere statement of fact and neither as complimentary no derogatory to the culture. With very rare exceptions because of the inevitable professional instincts of artist, most of the art in India seeks and attains its appropriate place in the religious arrangement be it sculpture, architecture, iconography, or poetry, music and paintings.\(^4\) South Indian art is known as Dravidian style as there are Garbhagraha, the sanctum of the main deity with a Vimana, over it with an additional corresponding one in many cases for the Goddess. The

mandapams or pillared halls are infront of the Garbhagraha. Within the inner compound wall are the kitchen, the prakhara walls with (gopurams) or entrance towers, Tirtha subsidiary shrines to the main Gods.\(^5\)

Narasinganather temple has massive structure with lofty mandapas. Its present form was constructed by the early and later pandyas.\(^6\) So this temple has the architectural impact of early or medival pandyas and the pandyas of second empire. The correct date and year of construction of this temple is not able to be fixed. But on various time by various rulers this temple was constructed. Generally the temples are constructed facing the east according to Hindu Agamas\(^7\) but this temple was constructed facing the east. This temple was exclusively constructed by stones.

The layout is the beginning stage for art of construction of temple. This is the first stage in accordance with the principles laid down by the Agamas. This temple situates an area of 9800 square feet (21 ½ cents) compound walls ‘140’ feet in length and 70 feet in width.

The temple has two prakarams namely inner prakaram and outer prakaram. It is Garbhagraha, Arthamandapa, Mahamandapa, Mukamandapa, Alter, Kannimula Vinayakar shrine, Avudainayaki shrine, Suriyanayananar shrine. Sandikeswarar shrine, Subramaniya Swamy shrine and main entrance situate. In outer prakaram car street. Temple tank and temple car Mandapa are all main features of the temple.

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Garbha Graha

The main part of the temple is the sanctum sanctorium, Ardhamandapa with one entrance on the west and the Mahamandapa. The walls of the sanctum contain the devagostas and Kumbha panchars. The entire parts are enclosed by an inner enclosure wall. Which has the main entrance on the western side. The sanctum sanctorium houses the stone image of Narasinganather lingam. The Garbhagraha of the main shrine is in square shape. The Garbhagraha, Andarala, Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa have the same Adhisthana, Padaparastara, Grivasikhara and stupi have been built on the Adhisthana in accordance with Hindu Agamas. Vimana to main deity, is higher than other vimanas.  

8 The Adhisthana has some principal features. They are upana, plainpalaka, Tripitta kumuda kantha with flowers and pattika. On the padmapida Narasinganather natha lingam is kept. The characteristic pyramidal tower of the gopuram rest on a single or two storeyed oblong base.  

Sanctum Sanctorium of Lord is known as Karuvarai which is enclosed with walls on three side except at front fitted with double halves doors to opened shut. Thus Mulavar the primary deity kept under protection. On the top of the Karuvarai, Vimana is constructed. Narasinganather temple Vimana is of 20 feet height and Karuvarai is in square shape. Kapothapantha upapidam is situated under the base of Karuvarai.  

Kaputhapantha upapidam includes upandam, padmajagathi, pattikai, smallyali row, kaputham kandam. The central shrine faces the east. The length of Garbhagraha of Lord

Narasinganather is 21 feet length, 18 feet width and ‘12’ feet height and on this terrace Vimana situates.

Karuvarai is covered with walls on north, south and west. On western side of the wall, the front double half door on. Duwara Balakar statues situate on the door entrance of Karuvarai. Duwara Balakas stone statues are of seven and half feet height and four feet width fixed on three feet height platform. Inside the Garbhagraha Lord Narasinganather in linga pose stands lonely in almost all siva temples, the Mulavar Siva in Karuvarai installed in the form of Lingam (Phallus) like in Madurai Sundareswarar and in Angamangalam. Thiruvatchi is kept behind the linga idol. Inner Karuvarai entrance is decorated with Deepas. Different sorts of Vimana are doomed central shrines are mentioned in the agamas and Tantras, some of the square, circle oval. Angamangalam Narasinganather temple Mulavar in linga posture. So Vimana is of square variety. Vimana to Narasinganather, is higher than other Vimanas. In this they depicted puranic themes. The vimana of Narasinganather stands on 12 feet height terrace and vimana height is ‘20’ feet. It has three storeys Griva, stupi, sikara and Kalasam of the vimana are of circular shape. These are done in accordance with agamas. In the eastern side of grivaniche, of the Vimana suthai sculpture of Lord Indira is depicted. In the western side suthai sculpture of Narasimhar is depicted. In the northern side of grivaniche suthai sculpture of Lord Bhirama is depicted. In the southern side of grivaniche suthai sculpture of Lord Guru Bhagavan is depicted. Four dik pala sculptures are also engraved on the each corner of Griva. Simhaladas are decorated on the all sides of the stu pi.

Sikaram is the place ending with Vimana top. It is provided with Kalasam on which poured from the pots containing water. Sanctify in
Pujas at Kumbhabisheka celebration in circular shape as ground floor in square shape of Karuvarai. Narasinganather’s sikaram is of circular shape. Kalasam on the sikara is gold plated and placed on inverted lotus on the top of the Narasinganather temple six Kumbha pancharas and three Devakhostas are provided on the east north and south outer walls of or Bitti of Karuvarai.\textsuperscript{11} The flot roof (12 feet, 34 feet) of Arthamandapa.

**Arthamandapa**

Arthamandapa is located in front of Karuvarai is in rectangular shape. The Arthamandapa is considered as the shoulder of the deity of shrine. Which remains part and pareel of the call arises to a height of about ‘12’ feet from its interior ground level. It is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall the entrance door is fixed. There are nine stone pillars in three rows with a height of twelve feet and one feet width.

Infront of Karuvarai entrance, sitting pose Nanthi statue is situated. In the south western corner on a platform sitting pose Vinayagar statue is fixed. In the north western side of Arthamandapa sixty three bronz icons of Nayanmars, Arumugam Valli, Theivanai, Urchavar, Narasinganather and Avudaiamman kept on the platform.

**Mahamandapa**

Mahamandpa situates before Arthamandapa with walls. This mandapa is supported by the sixteen pillars. It is of ‘40’ feet length and 40 feet width. In the middle of northern wall of Mahamandapa, Nataraja shrine is situated. The bronz image of Natarajar is of 7 and half feet height, Avudainayaki

Amman, bronze statue is of three feet. On the western side of the inner entrance of and southern side of door entry there is a sculpture figures of sun, Athikarananthi and chandran are situated.

Muka Mandapa

Muka mandapa situates before Mahamandapa. It is of 17 feet length 20 feet width and ten feet height. This mandapa is supported by the eight pillars.

Palipida or Altar

Palipida is erected before the Mukamandapa. Palipida became notable feature in the temple architecture from the time of Cholas. Altar became the sculptural formula for the temple as a whole. Puduga, Jagaki kumuda, Kalakumba, Kabotha and padma are the salient features of the palipida. According to the Agamas the palipida is raised to the level of Mulasthana.12

Kannimula Vinayagar Shrine

Kannimula Vinayagar shrine is situated in the south west corner of the temple. It is often feet height, 10 feet width and 10 feet length.

Avudainayaki Amman Shrine

Avudainayaki Amman shrine is situated before the Kannimula Vinayagar shrine and southern side of Mukamandapa and Mahamandapa. The Karuvarai of Amman shrine is of ‘14’ feet length, 14 feet width and ten feet height. Above the terrace ten feet height vimana (Thungani madam) is situated sitting pose suthai sculptures of Amman and shimhaladas decorated

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12 Suresh B. Pillai, op.cit., p.32.
on the each side of the Vimanas. Three kumbha pancharas and one devakhostas decorated on the western wall or Bitti of Karuvarai. Four Kumbha pancharas and two devakhostas are decorated respectively on the north and south walls of Karuvarai.

Arthamandapa is situated before the Karuvarai. It is of ‘8’ feet length and 18 feet width and ten feet height. This mandapa is supported by the four rows of eight pillars. Palliyarai is kept in the northern side of the Arthamandapa. Thavasi siddar statue is kept in the south west side of the Artha mandapa. Three feet height and three feet width entrance is situated in the middle of eastern wall. Annavaripanel sculptures are decorated on the pirastham of the Karuvarai and Arthamandapa walls.

Mahamandapa is situated before the Arthamandapa. It is of eight feet length and eighteen feet width. Eight feet height four pillars are kept in front of the mandapa.

Mukamandapa is situated in front of the Mahamandapa. It is of twenty eight length, twenty four feet width and twelve feet height. This mandapa is supported by the four rows of sixteen pillars.

**Sandikeswarar Shrine**

Sandikeswarar shrine is situated near the northern side of Karuvarai. This shrine is kept on the one and half feet height platform. This mandapa is supported by the four pillars with a height of three feet without the walls. One feet height sitting pose sandikeswarar is kept on the one feet height platform.
Subramaniya Swami Shrine

Subramaniya swami shrine is situated on the northern side of the Mahamandapa of Narasinghnather shrine. This shrine is dedicated to Lord Subramaniyar, Valli and Theivanai. This shrine is consisted of Karuvarai, Arthamandapa and Mukamandapa. Standing pose Valli, Subramaniyar and Theivanai statues are kept in the Karuvarai. It is of nine feet length, nine feet width and seven feet height. This shrine is built on the two feet height platform.

Arthamandapa is situated before the Karuvarai. It is of seven feet length, nine feet width and seven feet height. The entire parts are enclosed by an inner closure well, which has the main entrance on the eastern side.

Mukamandapa or Panthal mandapa is situated before the Arthamandapa. This mandapa is supported by the four pillars. It is of seven and half feet length, eight and half feet width and seven feet height.

Main Entrance

Main entrance situate in front of the Altar and middle of the west wall. This entrance is of 22 feet length and ‘32’ feet width. The inner path is of ‘22’ feet length and ‘8’ feet width. The entrance has a thick teak wooden door with a height of 20 feet and ten feet width. A small wicket gate is kept in the middle of southern door. Both side of the entrance outer is decorated by the eight kumbha pancharas.

Temple Car

Temple car is located at the East car street. This car relates to the 20th century Polygonal shape. Its height is twenty feet. In total there are 306
images of lord Siva, Nandhi, Ganesha, Duwara Balakas are called by the carpenters while making the car.

**Temple Tank**

The huge temple tank situates on the north of the temple at a distance of ‘300’ feet is considered to be sacred one. Outside this tank at west a mandapa of 45 feet length and 30 feet width placed on one feet height platform. This mandapa has twenty five pillars, five pillars on each side. Before entry to tank urchaver is placed in this mandapa. This mandapa is noted for architectural value. The terrace of central mandapa in the tank is made of stone beams. This is like an Island neatly chiseled block of stones used for the steps to the tank in and around four sides and of the central mandapa.

**Sculpture**

Sculpture is the art of making statues.\(^{13}\) Images reveal the abstract concepts and values of metaphysics, religion and immediate spiritual experience.\(^{14}\) Hindu sculptures are of the most magnificent chapters in the whole history of the world Art. Sculpture is generally divided into two categories, free standing sculpture and relief sculpture. Sculpture is generally designed for the portrayal of an image of divinity or secular person. Relief sculpture is mainly utilized for decorating the walls surface.\(^{15}\)

Images are also divided into movable and immovable images are divided into four kinds meant for worship and taken out invahanas on festival

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p.2.

\(^{14}\) Radhakamal Mukerjee, *The flowering of Indian Art*, Delhi, 1964, p.2.

occasions (Utsavaberas) balibaras (are intended for the purpose of daily services in offering bali) and shapane beras (are employed in bathing ceremonies) the period of 250 years from 600 A.D. to 850 A.D. is a major event in the field of architecture, sculpture religion and rituals. The enlargement of temple complex and rituals such as worship and bathing etc, contributed towards the promotion of sculptured Art. When the rituals and festivals were observed in temple. The images were required for bring taken out for procession on the days of festival. Thus it led to the necessity for preparing of deities or idols in matter. This is the beginning of the use of metal images for procession.

**Stone Images of the Temple**

The stone images of the temple are noteworthy for their artistic significance. They reveal the artistic skill and genius of the sculptors of contemporary period.

**Duwarabalakas**

Generally the saiva guardians have no special names. The Duwara Balakas seen on the outer walls surface of Karuvarai.

**Rightside Duwara Balakas**

Rightside Duwara Balakas have the four hands, The upper hands have the usual weapons the right lower is in the danda pose and the left is placed on the top of the mace. The bread chest and the shoulders suggest strength and valour. The bigger and is lowered down up to the anklet. The dress is present upto the knee. The hip ornaments with the simhasmuka clasp are well treated.

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16 Margaret stutley, The illustrated Dictionary of Hindu iconography, Delhi, 1985, p.120.
Left side Duwara Balaka

All features are similar to the first one, except the position of the mace which is held in the right lower hand and left lower which is in the dandapose.

Lord Narasinganathar

In Karuvarai Lord Narasinganathar in linga pose or suyambulinga pose. Thiruvatchi is kept behind the linga idol. Two feet height stone images of sixty three Nayanmars, Suradever, four feet height Thakshinamoorthy. Three feet height Panchalingams, Vinayagar, Subramaniya, Valli, Theivanai, Sandikeswarar, Someswarar, three feet length sitting posture Nandhi and five feet height Avudainayakhi Amman are made of granite stone.

Somanather Temple Attur

This structural temple, on the basis of its dynastic affiliation and chronology, has been divided into two group of architecture. The main shrine and the Pallikonda Perumal shrine become the Chola style and the Amman shrine is of Later Pandya style of architecture. The architectural characteristics of the temple has been analytically and comparatively studied to understand the temple architecture in this particular micro-region under both the Chola and the Pandya dynasties in relation to other contemporary monuments found outside the research area in the medieval days.

The temple has massive structure with lofty Mandapas. Its present form was constructed by the early Pandyas and the Cholas. Later, Nayaks constructed more mandapas. So this temple has the architectural impact of Pandyas, Cholas and the Nayaks of Madurai. Though the exact date of the construction is not known, various rulers constructed several structures and
mandapas at various times. Generally as per the Hindu agamas, temples are being constructed facing the east. This temple was also constructed facing east. This temple was exclusively constructed by stones. The layout is the beginning stage for the art of construction of the temple. This is the first stage in accordance with the principles laid down by the Saiva Agamas. This temple measures five hundred and sixty feet east to west and three hundred and eighty six feet south to north roughly occupying an area of 5.15 acres of land. It has four Prakaras namely, Karuvarai Prakara, Thalavarisai Prakara, Seevili prakara and Outer Prakara. In it Garbhagraha, Arthamandapa, Mahamandapa, Muhamandapa, Panthalmandapa and Kodimara mandapa are situated.

**Temple plan**

On its original layout, the Attur temple has a square sanctum and ardhamandapa. However, the layout of the moderate shrine was expanded by the addition of a square mahamandapa. The ground plan of the temple also shows an expansion with the addition of an antarala between the sanctum and ardhamandapa. The ardhamandapa is with a circumambulatory passage and a tiruch-churru maligai. In the front there is a covered hall (mahamandapa) supported by three rows of six pillars each. The Garbhagraha and the antrala constitute one unit on a common plinth, while the ardhamandapa is at a lower level, from which the antarala is reached by a flight of three steps. There are four pillars in the ardhamandapa in the traditional Imperial Chola style, round and capped by a plain corbel with beveled edges. On the outer front of the ardhamandapa one on either side of the entrance, are two beautifully carved Rajaraja style dvarapalakas, measuring about 1.22 cm (4') in height. There

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17 Suresh B. Pillai, op.cit., p. 33.
are no niche figures in the three niches of the Garbhagraha, which are shallow, with little scope for housing any Koshta deities. There is a sparsely distributed bhutagana frieze below the cornice. On the southern side, there is a Dakshinamurti niche figure and some fine bronzes on the eastern walls of the arthamandapa.

**TEMPLE PLAN**

(Explanation)
Ground Plan of the Temple (Not to Scale)

1. Siva’s cella (Garbhagraha)
2. Antarala
3. Tiruch-churru maligai
4. Arthamandapa
5. Mahamandapa
6. Pandalmandapa
7. Alankaramandapa
8. Dhakshinamurti
9. Chandikeswarar
10. Icons of 63 Nayanmars
11. Chandi (Dwarapala)
12. Nandi
13. Mundi (Dwarapala)
14. Door
15. Suradeva
16. 63 Nayanmars
17. Saptamatrikas
18. Kannivinayaka
19. Utsavamurti
20. Kassi Viswanatha – Visalakshi
21. Chokkar – Meenakshi
22. Somaskandar
23. Muruga – Valli – Deivannai
24. Anantha Padmanabha (Vishnu)
25. Saturn
26. Nataraja
27. Kalabairava, 27 a) Chandra, 27 b) Adhiharanandi, 27 c) Surya
28. Vinayaka
29. Muruga, II Prakara
30. Executive office
31. Madappalli
32. Store room
33. Vinayaka
34. Muruga
35. Yagasalai
36. Vinayaka
37. Muruga
38. Amman Shrine
39. Arthamandapa
40. Pall iyarai, 40a) Nandi
41. Mahamandapa
42. Woman statue
43. Mukha mandapa
44. Unjal mandapa
45. Palipita (Amanshrine)
46. Flagmast (Ammanshrine)
47. Palipita (mainshrine)
48. Flagmast (mainshrine)
49. Pandal mandapa
50. Ayyappa shrine
51. Kattalimandapa
52. Front Gopura
53. Holy tank
54. Big car
55. Small car
Garbhagaha

The main part of the temple is the sanctum - sanctorium. The walls of the sanctum contain devakoshtas and pilasters. The entire parts are enclosed by an inner enclosure wall which has the main entrance on the eastern side. The sanctum-sanctorum houses the stone image Someswarar in the form of linga. The sanctum is of square shape. The adhistana has some principal features. They are the upana, jagati, tripatta, kumuda kanda, patti, wall kanda and vari. On the two feet height stone platform, Lord Someswarar is seen in the linga posture. The sanctum measures 35 ft length and 35 ft width with 9 ft height. The characteristic pyramidal tower of the gopura rests on four-storeyed oblong base. The sanctum-sanctorium (Karuvarai) which is enclosed with walls on three sides except at the front fitted with double-halves doors to open and shut. Thus the mulavar (the primary deity) is kept under protection around it prakaras are provided.

Base

The Attur temple has the padabandha base, comprising the usual mouldings such as jagati, tripatta kumuda, kanta and pattika. The panels of kanta, also called galapadas are adorned with miniature relief sculptural and floral carvings as seen in several Chola monuments of the Cholamandalam. A upapita having upana, padma, jagati, kanta and kapota embellished with mango leaf designs and simhamukha Kudu motifs supports the base of the shrine. Since the Attur temple lies on a loose water logged soil on the bank of the Tamraparani, the architect might have added an upapita to provide more stability to the temple. The yali friezes of the temple show full yalis.

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18 Radakrishna Pillai, op.cit., p.232.
occasionally mounted by warriors holding swords and shields, and miniature relief carvings of opposing warriors of opposing yalis of pearl strings in the gaping mouths of the makaras.

Base of the temple

Mouldings of wall-kanta and vari, either lotus – petalled or plain, run above the base of the temple. The panel is adorned with miniature relief sculptural and floral carvings.
The pranela of the temple is inserted into the kapota of the upapita and it shows a high relief sinhavaktra at the root with grooves throughout the channel area and a lotus bud at the terminal. Apart from these advancements, the pranala of the temple is supplemented by a shallow, circular and spouted sink below to collect the sacred water from the sanctum, and this system of providing a water – reservoir is represented in some of the contemporary Chola monuments of Rajaraja I.

Pranala of the Temple
While analyzing the base of the temple, one can clearly conserve the blending of the Chola characteristic with the existing native Pandya elements. The decorated panels of the *Kanta, padmajagati, Vrtta kumuda*, mango leaf design on the *Kapota*, mounted warriors holding swords and shields in the yali friezes, advanced *pranala* with water-reservoir are the important Chola characteristics which have got mixed with the prevailing contemporary native pandya features as straight *jagati, tripatta kumuda* and full *yalis*.

**Walls**

The walls of the temple become straight having the pilasters and a central niche on each side. Each side of the *sanctum* wall is partitioned into *karna* and *bhadra* sections with a deep recess in between them. While the *bhadra* section of the temple carries *niches*, the recess bears *Koshtapanjara*. Square *pilaster* is arranged on the corner of the wall-segment of the temple.

**Pilaster**

Unlike the Chola counter-parts in the Chola mandalam, the pilaster of the Attur temple has a uniform square variety which might have been freely adopted from the Early Pandya structural temples. Though this temple freely adopted the native Pandya square pilasters, it did not blindly copy them, it rather incorporated several Chola characteristics, so as to make the pilasters a ‘mixed’ one.
Pilasters of the temple

The pilasters of the temple bear all the regular parts and are topped by beveled corbels as in the Early Pandya Structural edifices. While closely looking at the pilasters of the temple, it is evident that apart from the usual embellishment found in the Early Pandya temples, new decorations also appear in some of the pilasters. The most important among them are miniature relief carvings, opposing Yalis, opposing cranes and a female dancer inside the malasthana, pearl-garland decorations at the centre of the padmabandhas and the top of the Kalasas; and mango leaf design at the top, diamond design in the middle and lotus-petals at the bottom of the Kumbhas.
Niches

Like the early Pandya temples, the *niches* of the most of the Chola shrines in the Pandya country are empty which evidently proves the fact that Chola monuments freely borrowed the Pandya architectural characteristics. *Niches* are placed on *pattika* in the case of *padabandha* bases and on yali frieze in the case of *pratibandha* bases and the similar arrangement on niches are found in the early Pandya temples. Several kinds of decorations are seen at the top of the *niches*. Here in Attur temple, the *niches* are instead of the usual nature, *upholdingkapotas* with floral-headed *kudus*. The *Kapotas* support the toranas on all sides, and the semi-circular cavities inside the *Kapotas* are blank. However, there is a Dakshinamurti niche figure.

Niches of the Temple

The niches of the temple has a modern structure to house an old and fine stone sculpture of Yoga-Dakshinamurti. The decorated Kapotas carry
makara toranas on all sides, often depicting riders mounted on the makaras and rows of simhas emerging from the mouths of the makaras as seen in several other Chola monuments in the Pandya country.

**Koshtapanjaras**

The Koshtapanjaras which were first introduced in Tamil Nadu by the Pallavas at Mamallapuram, later became developed elaborately in a fascinating forms under the Cholas and the Nayaks. The Cholas frequently employed this wall-embellishment in the recesses of the sanctum walls of their moderate and higher constructions.
The shallow and empty niches, square pilasters, simple padma, small palaka and beveled corbel are some of the native Pandya features borrowed by the Chola monuments. Kapotas in lieu of toranas, advanced makara toranas with a row of simhas replacing the usual motif, new Varieties of decorations in the various mouldings of the pilasters, very large padma with sharp petals projecting out of the palaka and tenon-boss corbels are some of the designs in the temple.

**Entablature**

Among the entablatures, the kapotas and yali friezes of the Attur temple are apparently later accretions after the loss of the originals. The structure and details of these later replacements do not display the existing artistical features; they rather show certain typical Vijayanagar-Nayak characteristics. The fragmentary pieces of the ruined originals thrown generally in the adjoining streets of this temple also indicates the possible fashion of entablatures of this temple during the Vijayanagar-Nayak period.

**Vajanas**

The vajanas of the Attur temple are decked with rows of lotus petals like some of the contemporary Chola monuments at the nearby areas. The Vajanas are charmed with hamsa and bhuta friezes and also the usual pictures of dancing, fighting, merry-making, playing distinctive musical instruments and aerobatics.
Kapotas

The Kapotas is of uniform manner. It bears kudus above the corner pilasters. The finials of the kudus have been lost, but the sockets found on the top of the kudus indicate that they might have carried simhamuka finials made out of separate piece of stone. The circular cavities of the kudu are empty.
Some of the circular bosses, a surviving example of the nail-heads in the Chola architecture, runs along the bottom edge of the kapotas in the Attur temple. The frames of the kudus in the temple exhibit exuberant scroll work.

Kudu of the temple

Yali Friezes

The Yali Friezes of the temple running in profile, and makara busts projecting at the pilasters.

Yali Friezes of the temple
On the top of the Garbhagraha, vimana is constructed. It is of 20ft height. The Padapantha includes jagati, tripatta, kumuda, kantha and pattika are erected under the base of the sanctum. The vimana situates on the terrace of the sanctum. It is of 10ft height from the terrace and the vimana measures 20ft height. The total structure is 30ft height. It has four storeys. Griva, sikara and stupa of the vimana are circular in shape. Those are done in accordance with Saiva agamas. The vimana has six parts namely, Adhistana, Bitti, Brasthara, kriva, Sikara and kalasa as six parts of human body such as feet, leg, shoulder, neck, head and hair. This temple has Padapantha Adhistana. Vimana situates on the padapantha adhistana. Three devakoshtas and sixteen pilasters are erected on the walls of the vimana. Pranala provides an outlet for holy puja, abhisekha Tirumanjana water of the idol Mulavar leading to the northern wall of the sanctum through a hole reaching outside prakara enclosing karuvarai. This pranala is situated in the upapitha kapota and also under Devakoshta. This can be noticed in the temple.

Pilaster decorations provided in the wall of karuvarai and their front portion alone is visible and the other half is covered inside the walls. Square size appears under the bottom of the pilasters on its Nagabandam, malasudanam, padmabandam, kalasam, Thadi, kudampadma ethal, palakai, veerakantham and potikai are situated. Flower edged potikai engraves on the top of the pilaster. Devakostas are erected on the north, south and the west of the sanctum walls of the temple. Kapota is fixed facing downwards at the

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basement in order to prevent the entry of rain water on the walls of sanctum. *Prastharam* is the roof of the *vimana*. *Griva* is situated on the *prastharam*. *Sudai* image of *Vishnu, karunakudu*, guardian deities, *Dhakshinamurthi* and *simhalada* are decorated on the southern side of the *vimana*. On the western side, *Lakshmi Narayana, karunakudu*, sitting pose of *Nandhi, Lakshmi* sitting on the lap of *Vishnu* are decorated. Sitting pose of *Vishnu* and four-headed *Brahma* are erected on the north. *Indra* on elephant's back and sitting pose of *Vishnu* are installed on the eastern side of the *vimana*.

*Sikara* is the place ending with *vimana* top. It is provided with *kalasa* on which poured from the pots containing water sanctified *mpuja* at *kumbabisekham* celebration. It is circular in shape, *kalasa* is also to check the power of rain, thunder and lightening. Generally, the primary idol *mulavar* is on standing pose having the square shape *vimana*. The *kalasa* on the *sikara* is gold-plated and placed on inverted lotus on the top of this temple *vimana sikara*.

**Arthamandapa**

The *arthamandapa* reflects similar architectural characteristics in the concerned *sanctum* in all aspects, except the walls and *kapotas*. The walls as they have been shrunk, always avoid *niches* and carry lesser number of *pilasters* than the *sanctum*. The *kapotas* bear only two *kudus* irrespective of their number in the *sanctum*. The *arthamandapa* is rectangular in shape and is with a circumambulatory passage and *tirru-churrumaligai*. 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 Imperial Chola style, round and capped by a plain carbel with beveled edges. The Arthamandapa is considered as the shoulder of the deity of the shrine.\textsuperscript{20} The flat roof (30x35’) of Arthamandapa which remains part and parcel of the cell arises at a height of about 9ft from its interior ground level. It is covered with, walls on all four sides and at the front wall the entrance door is fixed. There are eight pillars in two rows in the Arthamandapa with the height of 9ft each and 2ft width. The pillars have a gap of 7ft to each other. Icons are kept on the northern side of the Arthamandapa. Devotees stand to worship the Lord in this mandapa. On the outer-front of the arthamandapa, one on either side of the entrance, are two beautifully carved Rajaraja style dvarapalakas, measuring about 1.22 cm (4’) in height knows as Chandi and Mundi. They are pleased to receive devotees and to extend welcome and they report to God about the presence of devotees.\textsuperscript{21}

**Door-ways**

The architects of the temple left their art-imprints not only on the exterior parts of the temple but also on the door-ways. The refined and delicate door ways of the temple are to be appreciated.


Door-ways of the temple

While the *jambs* and *lintel* of the *sanctum* door-way display wonderful foliage patterns throughout the *jambs* and *lintel* of the *sanctum* entrance, besides the foliage designs show creeper patterns with miniature sculptural carvings at the bottom of the *jambs*. The *jamb* and *lintel* of the *arthamandapa* door-way exhibit foliage patterns.
First Prakara

The first prakara is also called karuvarai prakara. A platform shape encircles sanctum-sanctorum and Arthamandapa. On three sides of the prakara walls encircle it leading to front portion of Arthamandapa in which one door and two ways on each side in north and south. On the southern side of this prakara, Suradeva shrine, 63 Nayanmars shrine and Saptamatarikas shrine are located. On the western side of the karuvarai prakara, kannimula Ganapathi shrine, Utsavar shrine and kasivishwanatha shrine are situated. Subramania with his consorts, Chandikeswarar shrine, pallikondar shrine and Saneeswarar shrine are situated on the northern side of the first prakara, Yoga-Dhaksinamurthi shrine is located on the southern side of this prakara.

Pallikondar Shrine

On the north-western verandah of the first prakara of the temple, there is a shrine, dedicated to Vishnu called the Pallikonda Perumal shrine. The shrine is outside the wall of the tiruchchurrumaligai, the entrance to it being on its wall and the garbhagraha being in a cella built outside, with a wagon shaped vimana. 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. He wears patra-kundalas. These four icons measure 89cm, 69cms, 58cms and 61 cms respectively.
The virmana of the Pallikondar shrine has two storeys. On the southern side, Sudai sculptures of Krishna playing flute, on the north, Vishnu holding conch and cakra in sitting pose. On the west, sitting pose of Narasimha image is depicted and the image of Vishnu is placed at the centre of the eastern side. On the top of the vimana, tungamadada structure stupi is erected and the simhalada structure is decorated on the eastern and western side of the madam. Four Garudalvars. along with eight sitting pose lions are placed on the four corners of the vimana.

Mahamandapa

In front of the Arthamandapa, there is a covered hall known as the Mahamandapa supported by ten stone pillars in two rows and the height of each pillar is 10ft and 2 ft width. The pillars have the gap of 10ft to "each other. The Mahamandapa consists of 35ft length and 50ft width. All the pillars have floral designs and variety of animal structure decorations. In the middle of the northern wall of Mahamandapa, Natarajar shrine is situated. Kalabairavar shrine is located next to the Natarajar shrine towards the north-eastern side. At the right-inner side of the Mahamandapa eastern wall, the statue of Chandra is kept and the left-inner side of the eastern wall, Adikaranandhi and Surya statues are placed. On the western corner of Mahamandapa and infront of the Arthamandapa, sitting pose Nandhi is erected.

Second Prakara

The second prakara is also known as Talavarrisai prakara. It is located between the garbagraha prakara and Seevili prakara.
Third Prakara

It is called Seevili prakara. To enter this prakara, there is an entrance situated in the middle of the southern side of the Mahamandapa. In this prakara, madappalli, temple Executive office, Vinayagar shrine, Yagasalai and Alankara mandapa are located. This prakara as a whole is supported by a single row of 70 pillars and one side walls on each side.

Architecture of the Amman Shrine

There is a separate Amman shrine on the north-western corner of the first prakara of the main shrine locally called as Somasundari Amman. It has a garbhagraha, ardhamandapa, mahamandapa and unjalmandapa. The sanctum is 25 ft length and 25ft width. The walls of the sanctum are decorated with three devakoshtas and twenty pilasters. On the top of the roof, a three-tier vimana of ten feet height is erected. On the northern side of vimana, sitting pose of Saraswathi image and sitting pose of Lakshmi image is placed on the southern side. The sitting posture of Somasundari Amman image is placed towards the western side along with Karunakudu and Simhalada motif. Eight sitting pose lions two on each corner along with the direction guards are erected.

Arthamandapa

The Arthamandapa of the Amman shrine situates infront of the sanctum. A sitting pose of Nandhi is erected infront of the sanctum door-entry and middle of the Arthamandapa. On the middle of the northern wall of the Arthamandapa, palliyarai is situated. Karuvarai prakara of the Amman shrine is located around the walls of sanctum and Arthamandapa. The door-
entry of the same is situated both on the southern and northern side of the Mahamandapa. The Arthamandapa of the Amman shrine is rectangular in size consisting of 15 ft length and 25 ft width supported by six pillars of two rows.

In front of the Arthamandapa, there is a covered hall known as Mahamandapa. It is of 40ft length and 40 ft width. The Mahamandapa is supported by 20 pillars of 4 rows each five with decoration. There is a separate mandapa called Unjalmandapa of 15ft length and 15 ft width with a height of 7 ft is located infront of the mahamandapa. This mandapa is situated on the two feet height platform. The four pillars of the Unjal mandapa are decorated with swan, dancing girls, women holding lamps and the designs of Nayak representatives. Floral decoration with Valaipu potigai is the special features on the top of the four corners of the Unjalmandapa. In front of the Unjalmandapa, Kampathadi mandapa is situated. It is supported by 28 pillars of 4 rows having 7 pillars each. There is a kodimaram of 20 ft height is erected in between the second and third pillars of the second and third rows.

Alankaramandapa

Another important mandapa of the temple is the Alankara mandapa which is situated in between the southern side of the kodimara mandapa of the Amman shrine and the northern side of the Muka mandapa of the main shrine. It is supported by 20 pillars of 4 rows. In between the second and third pillars, 2 ft height platform is erected. Compound wall of the temple is of 160ft length and 106 ft width.
Mukamandapa

Next to the Mahamandapa, Mukamandapa is situated. It is supported by 36 pillars of 4 rows with 9 pillars each. At the entrance of Mahamandapa and the western wall of Mukamandapa, image of Vinayaka and Subramanya are erected on both sides of south and north respectively. This mandapa is of 55 ft length and 40 ft width.

Fourth Prakara

It is known as outer prakara. This fourth prakara is situated out of the compound walls of the temple. The main entrance of the temple is located on the south - eastern side of the compound wall. The main door is of 10 ft height and 10ft width. The compound wall of the temple is 25ft height.

Kodimaramandapa

In front of the Mukamandapa and outer prakara, another mandapa called Kodimaramandapa of the main shrine is situated. It is supported by 52 pillars of 4 rows having 13 pillars on each row. It is of 70ft length and 30ft width. Kodimaram is erected in between the 5th and 7th pillars of the second and third rows. The height of the Kodimaram is of 30ft. Two more mandapas are erected on the western side of the Kodimaramandapa with one feet heights platforms on each side of the main entrance.

Pandalmandapa

In front of the Kodimaramandapa, situates another mandapa called the Pandal mandapa It is of 30 ft length and 30 ft width. It is supported by 16 pillars of 4 rows having 4 pillars each. On the top of it, separate provisions for housing the Sudai images of Vinayaka, Someswarar, Somasundari and
Muruga sitting on their vehicles respectively. Someswarar - Somasundari on bull's back and Muruga on peacock's back respectively are made. Two Sivaganas (guardian deities) are decorated and placed on each corner of the top of the Pandal mandapa (main entrance). The pillars of the Pandal mandapa are beautifully decorated with floral designs of the Nayak period. On the northern side of the Pandal mandapa, another small mandapa meant for the 7th and 8th day festival and a Sastha shrine are located.

Teppakulam

The Teppakulam (holy tank) is situated infront of the south-eastern corner of the temple with a distance of 50 ft from the temple. It is square in shape with 85 ft length and 85 ft width. The tank has symmetrically laid steps of granite on the northern side. In the centre of the tank is an islet-like structure which is more elevated platform in granite red laterite slabs. Both the image of Someswarar and Somasundari Amman are taken in procession around the holy tank on the night of the 10th day pankuni festival.

Kailasanthar and Alagia Ponnammal Thenthirupperai

15 feet height, 30 feet length, and 30 feet width pandal Mandapam situated in the southern side compound wall of Alakia Ponnammal shrine. 27½ feet passage to the Mahamandapa of Amman shrine. Plan the Mahamandapa of Amman shrine 18 feet length passage leading to the Arthamandapa of Kailasanathar shrine.

KARUVARAI OR SANCTUM SANCTORUM

Inside the sanctum sanctorum the principal deity Lord Kailasanathar is in linga form. It is of 35 feet length and eighteen feet width and 10 feet
height. Dwarapalakas, Lord Vinayaka and Lord Murugan statues are kept in front of the Artha Mandapa.

Arthamandapam is located in front of the sanctum sanctorum. It is of 24 feet length and 24 feet width and 10 feet height. There are sixteen pillars in four rows in Arthamandapa and height of a pillar is 10 feet length and 1½ feet width. The pillars have a gap of six feet between each other. Natarajar shrine is situated in the middle of the northern wall of Arthamandapam. Arthamandapa is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall the entrance door is fixed. In front entrance of Karuvarai palipida and Nandi are erected. Eastern and Southern entrances are situated respectively in the middle of East and southern wall. Southern entrance of Arthamandapa is leading to the southern main entrance of Amman shrine.

Mahamandapam is situated in front of the Arthamandapam. This mandapa is supported by twenty pillars. It is of 30 feet length and 30 feet width. Nandi and Flag mast are situated in between the second and third rows of Mahamandapa. Pudai sculpture of Vinayaka are engraved in the first pillars of second and third rows. Kodimara is situated on the 5½ feet platform. Palipida is situated in front of the Mahamandapa.

Mahamandapam is situated before the Arthamandapam, is in rectangular shape. It is of 30 feet length and 20 feet width and 10 feet height. There are eight pillars in two rows in Mahamandapa.

Twenty eight feet south of Amman shrine southern Main entrance of Kailasanathar temple is situated. It is of 30 feet length, 30 feet width and fifteen feet height. The rows of six pillars are kept in this mandapa sitting
pose suthai sculptures of Kailasanathar and Alagia Ponnammal are decorated on the top of the roof of this Panthal Mandapam.

Total length of Thayar shrine is 120 feet length and 66 feet width.

Dakshinamoorthi, Kanni Mula Vinayagar shrine, Murugan shrine, Sandikeswarar shrine, and Saneeswarar and Kala Bairawar shrine are situated respectively in the south, south west, North west, North and North East. Total length of Kailasanathar shrine is 120 feet and 66 feet width.

Dakshina Moorthi shrine, Kannivinayagar shrine, Lord Subramanyar shrine, Sandikeswarar shrine, Saneeswarar shrine and Kalapairavar shrine are situated respectively in the south, south west, North west, North middle, and north east side of the Kailasanathar temple. Alagia Ponnammal shrine is situated 36 feet south of Kailasanathar shrine. The length of Thayar shrine Karuvarai is 14 feet, 12 feet width and 10 feet height. Eight plasters and two Devakhostas are decorated on the north, south and west of Karuvarai.

Arthamandapa is situated before the Karuvarai is in rectangular shape. It is of 18 feet length, 20 feet width and 10 feet height. There are six pillars in two rows in Arthamandapa and a height of pillar is ten feet, First row pillars have a gap of six feet. Seven and half feet gap in between the two rows.

Six feet length and 7/4 feet width store Room is situated in the north west corner of Arthamandapa. Six feet length and nine feet width palliyarai is situated in the north - east corner of Artha Mandapa.
Kailasanathar and Soundaranayaki Temple – Serntha Poomangalam

Kailasanathar temple of Attur sernthapoomangalam situates an area of 12 cents and 135 square feets Thirumathils are of 120 feet length and 70 feet width.

Garbagriha

Garbagriha is of twelve feet length, 12 feet width and 10 feet height one and half feet Kailasanathar is enshrined this Garbhagrahara. Four Pilasters and one Devakhosta are decorated in the western wall of Karuvarai. Poothatham varies are decorated on the pirastharam or border of vimana Thirty feet Vimana situated on the ten feet height terrace of Garbhagrahara. Total height of Vimana is forty feet, two tier stories, Griva, Simhala dam and Kalasam are situated on the terrace of Karuvarai.

Sculptures of sitting posture Sivan, Parvathi on the bull, Brahma, Murugan, Valli and Devanai are decorated on the northern side of first story. Brahma and Saraswathi sculptures decorated on the second row of vimana. Sitting post Dakshinamoorthi sculptures decorated on the first and second rows of southern side story’s. In the eastern side story’s of vimana are decorated by the sculptures of Davarapalakas, Gowri Sankara Ganapathi, sitting posture Indira on Iravathi elephant and two Deva Rishis. In the western side story’s of vimana is decorated by the sculptures of sitting posture. Lakshmi Narasimhar, Thirai Kavalar, Nandhi, Vishnu, Sridevi,
Boomadevi, sitting on the five headed Cobra and Siva toring the elephant with his eight arms.

**Arthamandapam**

Arthamandapa is supported by 10 feet height 4 rows of 16 pillars. It is of 14 feet length and 18 feet width in rectangular shape small size sitting posture Nandhi is erected infront of the Karuvarai Vinayakar, Murugan, Dwarapalakar statues and pilliyarai are situated in the western wall of Karuvarai and north east corner of Arthamandapa.

**Muhamandapam**

Muhamandapam is situated before the Arthamandapa. This mandapa is kept on the 5 feet height platform. It is of 8 feet length and 18 feet width soundaranayaki shrine is situated in the northern side of Muhamandapam. It is of 11 feet length and 7½ feet width 4 Pilasters and one.

Devakhosta are decorated an each side of the walls of Amman shrine Soundaranayaki Amman Shrine is situated facing the south. Southern entrance is situated in the middle of southern wall of Muhamandapam.

Total height of soundaranayaki Amman shrine is 32 feet. Twenty five feet vimana situated over the roof of Amman shrine northern side of vimana is decorated by the suthai sculpatures of Vishnu worshipping pose women, old man, two women carrying the pots and sitting pose Sivanadiyars. In the southern side of Vimana is decorated by the suthai sculptures of sitting pose Amman, worshipping Vishnu, Lakshimi, Sivan, Parvathi, Brahamna, Saraswathi, Natarajar and Rishi.
**Muhamandapam**

Muhamandapam is located before the Arthamandapa. It is of 44 feet length 69 feet width and 10 feet height. This mandapa is supported by 28 pillars in 4 rows. Nandi, Altar and Flag Mast are situated in the middle of Muhamandapam.

2½ feet length, 2½ feet width, and 2½ feet height sitting pose Nandhi statue is kept on the 5 feet height platform.

Altar or Polipida is kept behind the Nandhi. It is of 4½ feet height 3 feet length and 3 feet width.

51 feet Flag mast is erected behind the Altar on five feet height, 6 feet length and 6 feet width platform 2 Karnakudus and inverted lotus decorated on the top of platform.

Vinayagar shrine, Saneeswarar shrine, Navagriha shrine, Vohama Mandapam Chandram, Suryan and Madappalli are situated respectively in the south, South West, North West, North, North East, South and South East.

**Eastern Entrance Panthal Mandapam**

Eastern Entrance Panthal Mandapam is of 9 feet length 18 feet width and 10 feet height. This mandapa is equally divided into 3 parts. 2 feet height platform situated in the north and southern side of Panthal Mandapam. 2 feet depth middle lower part is leading to the Muhamandapa Pandya symbol fish engraved on the ceiling of this Mandapam.

Southern entrance panthal Mandapam is supported by 2 rows of 16 pillars. It is of 8 feet width and 61 feet length.