CHAPTER - FOUR

SCULPTURE IN
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4.1.1. Indian sculpture

Sculpture is called silpa. The Indian construction of sculpture begins from the Pre-Ariyan period. The Hindu believes about the World’s creation is that when the creator, Brahmá first brings it into existence.

Arts are said to be sixty – four in number; “Aya kalaikal Arupattunangu is an of quoted saying. The most prominent of them are, painting, sculpture, dance, music and poetry. Primitive man danced in ecstasy as an emotional out burst at times of peril and pleasure. Music came to occupy an integral part of dance later.

The world kalai in Tamil and kala in Sanskrit are the equivalents of the English word, Art. In samgam poetry, Kalai connoted deer as well as its horns. It is also used to mean wide knowledge – paranta arrivu. In the Cilpadhikaram, kalai is used to mean body in the word kalaiyilan he without a body. Kallvi-education is derived from kal meaning read. Karpu-chastity, kalai-art are also derived from kal. Kala in sanskrit it derived from kal, which means spreading. Whatever be the original of kalai in Tamil and kala is sanskrit, art may be taken to mean all that is beautiful, serene and elevating.

Sculpture is one among the fine arts. This sculptures has its rules laid down in the sastras. The sastras are the science of sculptures and Architecture. There are many sastras mentions the rule for the creations of the images are called silpa sastras though they have mentioned the
Architecture. The images or the Silpa is the form of object. The images of Divine Beigns, human, animals and natural things have to be made as sculptures. Sculptures have been classified into major classifications, as bass-reliefs sculptures which is scooped out of rock, stone, wood or any other materials. One portion of the images are visible while the other portion is attached with the material where it is carved generally called bass-relief sculptures or relics.

The another kind of sculptures on the basis of erection is called rounded-sculptures. In this form of sculptures, all the portions are noticed, or visible.

Apart from these classifications, there are also:-

1. Stone Sculptures
2. Metal Sculptures
3. Wooden Sculptures
4. Stucco Sculptures
5. Terracotta’s
6. Ivory carvings and
7. Sand Sculptures etc., on the basis of material.

Hindu temples in Pudukkóttai are the treasure-house of sculptures. There are many forms of a single deity is noticed in the same temple. The Śiva temple has various aspects of Lord Śiva while the Vaishnavaite temples have the idols of Vishnu and his ten incarnations. Apart from the presiding deities there are innumerable idols of miner deities, Alwars, Nayanmars and the Donors, The King and royal patrons.
4.1.2. Development of the Sculpture in Tamil Nadu

4.1.2.1. Pallava

The Pallavas should be considered as a power who enriched that tradition by incorporating foreign influences from other equally vital centres of Dravidian art at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Badami and Vengi.

The Gangádhara panel in the upper cave at Tiruchy is a fine piece of art of the days of Pallava Mahéndravarman I (7th century A.D.). At Mamállapuram we have a large number of picture-galleries. The icons and portraits on the Dharmaraja and the Arjuna rathas, the two sets of rotal portraits in the Adi-Varáha cave temple, the spirited battle scene in the Mahishásuramardini cave, Varáha uplifting Bhúdevi in the Varáha cave, the pastoral life depicted in the Govardhana cave, and above all, the devas, men and animáls (elephants, lions, monkeys and cats in different moods, postures and activities) sculptured in the ‘Fresco in stone’, the Ganga-avatarana panel these are among the grandest in art.

4.1.2.2. Chola

This great tradition is carried on to further heights of glory by the Cholas. The continuity of this movement is as much astonishing and wonderful as it is varied and widely distributed.

“But excepting certain Chola statuary of the eleventh century, which is pre-eminently excellent, the southern figure sculpture does not often attain high quality\textsuperscript{78}. In quantity, it is enormous, the gigantic temples and halls characteristic of the Dravidian kingdoms being commonly over-loaded with sculptured ornament in every member. Mythological subjects from the Puranas and Tantras are the favourite, and the tendency is to treat the
conception of a luxuriant mythology with exuberant fancy. The result to often is merely grotesque, and very few of the individual images can claim to be beautiful. The sculpture of the south is really the successor of its mediaeval art of the north. The figure sculpture is purely iconographical and executed exactly according to literary canon.”

4.1.2.3. Vijayálaya

The earliest Chola sculpture is the icon of Nisumbha-sudani a broken image of perhaps the original temple of Nisumbhasudani built at Tanjavur by Vijayálaya Chola⁷⁹ himself. It is a fine spirited image. Next, we have the Saptamáтриki group of the original parivara-alaya, and the Nrsimha and Vinadhara images (vimana-devatas) of the Vijayálaya chóliśvaram at NárttáMálai.

4.1.2.4. Áditya I

Some of the unidentified sculptures of the Koranganatha temple at Śrinivasanallur are some of the best productions of this age. In the sublimity of expression, the delicacy of chiseling and elegant ornamentation, they have their counterpart in the Nagesvara temple at Kumbakonam. Represent the sculptured achievements of the sthapathis during the closing period of the reign of Áditya I in Tondaimandalam, far from the heartland of the traditional Chola desa. Perhaps the last phase of sculptural attainment in Áditya I’s age can be seen in the devakoshta figures of the Tirumulasthanattup-perumanadigal at Tirukka-lukkunram.

4.1.2.5. Parántaka I

The noblest artistic expression of Parántaka I time is found in the devakoshta sculptures of the Brahmápurisvarar temple at Pullamangai
Ganapati, Durga, Lingódbhavar, and Brahmá (Dakshinamúrți is inaccessible) are gems of art.

Naltunai Iśvaram at Punjai and the Muvarkóvil at Kodumbálúr which come next in chronological order have to be assigned to the period of Sundara Chola and Áditya II. The sculptures of Pullamangai are slender and elegant resembling those of the Nagesvarar temple at Kumbakonam, whereas those of Erumbur are heavy and well-built, similar to those of Punjai.

The Muvarkóvil at Kodumbálúr however stands apart, and has intrigued students of art for nearly half a century. There is greater resemblance between the sculptures of Pullamangai and Kodumbálúr. Viewed from the basic facts of history and Paleography, Bhuti Vikrama Kesari the builder of the Muvarkóvil, has to be assigned to the latter half of the tenth century A.D. Barrett calls it “a late lingering of (his) phase I style of art out of the main stream of development near the Chola court”. Gangádhara, Kalariṁúrți, Gajasamharamúrți and Ardhanariśvarar reveal an attractive conception of life and beauty, delightful delineation and charming flexion.

4.1.2.6. Uttama Chola

The last phase of the Early Chola period is represented by the stone-sculptures of the period of Uttama Chola when under the inspiration and guidance of his queen-mother Sembîyan Mahadevi, great encouragement was given to temple-building and to the art of sculpture. Now metal images received greater attention and patronage with the result that stone-images became stereotyped and lost much of their individuality and originality of the earlier period.
4.1.3. Torana

The Torana is a decorative element over the gateway or the devakoshta. The earliest extant examples of an ornamental gateway are those at the four main gates of the Sanchi stupa. Another good example is the one at the entrance to the Muktesvarar temple, Bhuvaneswar.

This architectural element becomes a decorative feature in Pallava and Chola temples to span the area over the koshtas.

The Manasara describes four kinds of toranas patra, pushpa, ratna and chitra. The patra-torana is an arch in the shape of a crescent decorated with leaves. If, in addition, it has makara faces at the bottom and in the junction at the top, it is called makara-torana. The makara-torana has generally five bends and sometimes birds like the swan are introduced as in the torana over the devakoshta-panel in the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakkal.

If birds are introduced, it is considered as an example of chitra torana. Sometimes they are also adorned with Vidhyadharas, Bhutas, simha, yáli, hamsa, babies and men carrying garlands of flowers or precious stones, as if emerging from the mouths of makaras. Inside the torana, a deva also is introduced. The Sokkesvara torana has Ganapati in the centre, Uma-Śiva on the right and Parvati worshipping Linga on the left. The Tiruchchendurai torana has pearl festoons. It may be the ratna variety. There are very interesting makara toranas at Śrinivasanallur, with Adi Varáha in the centre of the torana over the western niche Pullamangai, Kilappaluvur and Punjai have excellent makaratoranas.

The term vimana has been variously defined. One of the inscriptions of Rájarája I makes the meaning clear. He ordered that his gifts, those of his elder sister and those of his queens, were to be engraved on the vimana of
the temple of Rájarájesvaram. This inscription is found on the outer walls of the garbhagriha, including the adhishthana. So the term vimana must refer to the whole structure of a temple from the upana to the stupi.

Vimana devatas are installed not only in the devakoshtas round the garbhagriha, but also in the upper talas, one or more as the case may be and in the koshtas of the griva. The second tala of the Sundaresvarar temple at Tirukkattalai has Bhikshatanar (s), Vishnu (w) and Brahma (n). The figures of the griva are Dakshinamurti (s), Varahamurti (w), Brahma (n) and Indra (or Balasubrasmanya) (e). So also vimana devatas are found in the twin shrines of Avani Kandarpa Isvaram at Kilaiyur, and the shrines of Muvarkóvil at Kodumbálur.

The Pancharatra Agama of the Vaishnavites contemplates seven talas and assigns the following vimanadevatas. We shall merely mention those pertaining to the first three talas, as I could not find any with seven talas. “In the first tala are to be installed the gana deities, like Kumuda and Upendra, dancing demi-gods. In the second tala, Nara form of Vishnu, Narayana, Hari and Krishna and the twelve manifestations of Vishnu (Kesava etc.) and in the third tala Purusha, Satya, Achyuta, Ananta, the eight guardian deities, twelve Adityas, Gandharvas, Apsaras and Kinnaras”. But nowhere do we find a temple with these vimanadevatas.

4.1.4. Panels of Miniature-Sculptures

Over the Vyala-Mála and beneath the pillars and pilasters of the devakoshtas of some temples, there are panels of miniature-sculptures of great artistic merit. Some of them deal with the various manifestations of Śiva and Vishnu and some Puranic episodes.
4.1.5. Devakoshtas Sculpture

According to Mayamatam, in the mula-tala of the vimana, the deities to be installed are in the east dvarapalas or Nandikesa and Kalan in the south, Dakshinamúrti in the west Mahavishnu or Lingod-bhavar and in the north Brahmádevar. In the mandapa (ardhamandapa) Vináyáka in the south and Nataraja to the east of it and Katyayani and Kshetrapala in the north. According to another silpa text, Isana Śivagurudeva-Paddhati, the sculptures prescribed are, “In the walls of the vimana, images should be installed in the different quarters Dakshinamúrti in the south, Lingódbhavar or Vishnu or any other of His manifestations in the west and Durga or Brahmá in the north. An image of Vináyáka may be set up in the wall of the ardhamandapa, while a Kshetrapala may be sculptured in the north-east corner.”

Though there are some variations, this general scheme is in conformity with the practice obtaining in early Chola temples. The chief variations may be stated.

In the Muvarkóvil at Kodumbálúr we have in the devakoshtas of the mula-tala Ardhanariśvarar and Śiva (standing) in one shrine, and Gangádharar, Śiva and Dakshinamúrti in the second shrine.

4.1.6. Ashta Parivara Devatas

All early Chola temples have only one prakara enclosed by a madil, wall of enclosure, with a gópura to serve as a gateway. Inside this madil and close to its wall—except in the case of Chandesvarar’s, which is located close to the main shrine—there are eight subsidiary shrines called the Ashta parivarakóvil (alayam) housing eight deities. These shrines are different
from the attached or limb shrines (anga-alayam) round the garbhagriha of the Pallava Kailasanathar Temple at Kanchipuram.

In the Vijayálaya Chóliśvaram at Nárttámálai, there are six sub-shrines round the main shrine each is an ekatala structure with an ardhamandapa in front. There are no deities in them now. The Sundareśvarar temple at Tirukkattalai has seven sub-shrines, intact and with deities housed in them. They are those of Surya, Saptamátrikas, Ganapati, SuBrahmányar, Jyeshtha, Chandra and Chandesvarar.

In the Muchundésvarar temple at Kodumbálúr there now exist four out of the eight sub-shrines. One of the sub-shrines has no deity. The other three have Subrahmányar, Chandesvarar and Bhairavar. In the Sundareśvarar temple at Nangavaram there are four shrines. Two shrines with round sikharas house Subrahmánya and (a later) Mahalakshmi. One is for the Saptamátrikas which is rectangular in shape and has a wagon-roof. Another for Ganapati is apsidal in shape. The Kasyapa Silpam gives the names of the eight deities. They are Vrshabha-devar (Nandi), Agni devar or Agni, Durgai, Saptamatas, Virabhadra, Vináyáka (Ganapati), Shanmuga (Subrahmánya), Jyeshtha, Vishnu, or Katyayani and Surya (46th pathalam).

On the other hand, the Mayamatam prescribes the following eight parivara devatas Vrshabha, Ganatipan, Brahmá, Matrikas, Guhan, Aryan, Achyutan and Chandesan. In the temples of the early Chola age, there is neither Vishnu nor Brahmá among the Parivara devatas.

There are eight subshrines in addition to Nandi in a madapa in front of the main shrine. There is no doubt or uncertainty about seven of them as we find seven subshrines with the original deities at Tirukkattalai. They are those of Surya, Saptamátrikas, Ganapati, Subrahmányar, Jyeshtha, Chandra
and Chandesvarar. We have pointed out that the Muchukundéśvarar temple at Kodumbálúr has a subshrine of Bhairavar in the north-east of the prakara of the temple of Agastyesvaram at Kiliyanur. Thus in addition to Nandi in the Nandi-mandapa, we had in early Chola temples eight sub-shrines, Bhairavar being the eighth deity.

The excavations at Kodumbálúr indicated that there were 15 subshrines round the Muvarkóvil of which only the basement could be traced now. We are not in a position to know what deities were housed in them. The Mayamatam describes temples which may have 16, 24 or 32 subshrines. We are at a loss to know which deities were housed in these subshrines. The worship of the Saptamátrikas and Jyeshtha devi fell into disuse as a result of the influence of the Nayan-mars and Alvars, Tondaradipodi Alvar denounces Jyeshtha worship.

4.1.7. Bronze Sculpture

In ancient India, metallic images were made of gold, silver, copper, brass and alloys, and western scholars have used the term bronzes as a blanket description of the whole class. Metal-casting in India goes back to remote antiquity. It is an epic in itself. However, we have to admit that there were alternate periods of growth and decline but its continuity throughout the historical period is well attested. So it is not possible to agree with the extreme view that “the classical movement in bronze and stone sculpture, the period of most original achievement lasted little more than a century and a half from about A.D. 850 to the early decades of the eleventh century A.D.”

The bronze of the dancer found at Mohenjo Daro (B.C. 3000-2500), the figure of the Mother-goddess (about B.C. 1000) found at Adichanallur in
the Tirunelveli district in the extreme south of India, the Buddhist icons found at Buddhapad near Guntur, the Hindu and Buddhist images discovered at Nagarjunakonda, the Melaiyur Maitreya the Vishapaharana of Kilappudanur and the Tiruvalangadu Somakanda maintain the continuity of the tradition in metal casting, though there may be some gaps or missing links.

Pallava bronzes though it would be difficult to give them as early a date as A.D. 600-800”. We have at the same time to admit that there is so far no dared bronze of the Pallava period, and the distinction between later Pallava and early Chola is difficult to establish on the basis of scientific evidence.

4.1.8. Chakra and Sanka

Sculptures based on the evolution of Vishnu’s Chakra and Sanka. No doubt, the form, the mode of holding them and their decorations are true up to a point in respect of certain images at a particular point of time, but it is its generalization that has caused the difficulty and confusion. The Vishnu images attributed to the 8th-9th centuries A.D.

“In the Pallava period from about 600 to 800 A.D., these are held between the thumb and forefinger of the closed hand and are without flames or other decorations. During the 9th century they came to be held between the raised first and second fingers, but are still undecorated. In the 10th century, flames first appear. Upto this time, the discus is held with one of its flat faces turned towards Vishnu, but by the 13th century, it is held obliquely and by the 15th with its edge towards Vishnu.”
4.1.9. Yajnopavita

The yajnopavita passing over the right forearm of an image was considered a distinct Pallava feature. There are Pallava sculptures of the 7th – 8th century without this feature. On the other hand, there are three Chola sculptures of the tenth century which have this feature, namely Dakshinamūrti of Erumbur (A.D.935) and Chandesvarar of Tiruvaduturai (A.D.932) and of Punjai (A.D.955-960). So this cannot be a distinctive feature to fix the age of a sculpture. The fine images of modern times with all the characteristics of work of the 10th century or earlier, in either stone or metal. South Indian images has been fancy or speculation which could be considered in no other light than as guess-work, pure and simple.”

4.1.10. Nataraja Cult

There is some misconception about the origin of the Nataraja cult and the date of the creation of the sculpture of Nataraja in the ananda tandava form. It is states: “It was probably during the time of Parántaka I that the very first sample in stone of the ananda tandava form of Nataraja was created”. The Karana Agama and describes seven kinds of dance.

The first concerns the ananda tandava form. Nataraja has four arms, three eyes and spreading jathas. He is to be decorated with peacock feathers, dundura flower, the crescent and the Gangai, Karna patra, makara kundala, yajnopavita, tiger’s skin, padasara with kimkinis on the legs, abhaya hastha and damaru. The right leg is to be bent and planted on Apasmara. The right leg is to be bent and planted on Apasmara. The left leg in gaja hasta form is turned towards the up-lifted left foot. In addition, other Tandava forms viz. Sandiya, Uma, Gauri, Kalika, Tripura and Samhara are described.
The Kasyapa Silpa mentions 18 kinds of dance and deals specifically with 9 of them. The first form is elaborately described with iconometric details – four arms, again, damaru, abhaya hasta (with sarpa valaya) and danda hasta. The jathas may be 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11. The jatha majuta is to be adorned with karoti-ratna-bandam (skull adorned with precious stones). He wears the tiger’s skin and padasara. The ends of the udarabandha are to be attached to the prabha mandala and decorated with three-tongued flames. The left leg is to be placed on Apasmara who is to paly with a snake in his left hand and a knife in his right hand. His head is to be turned towards the earth. Uma is to stand on the left.

The Silpa Ratna describes nine kinds of this icon more or less on the same lines. The Bharata Natya Sastra describes 108 karanas and forms of Tandava poses. These forms are represented in stone sculptures in the round in the second tier of the garbhagriha of the Rájarájesvaram temple at Tanjavur built in the days of Rájarája I. The Karana poses are also sculptured with descriptive labels on the east gópuram of the Sarangapani temple at Kumbakonam (late Chola period) and on the two inner sides of the gateway of the east and west gópurams of the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram (Later Chola – Vikrama Chola and Kulottunga II). The Tamil epic Silappadikaram mentions a number of dances associated with Śiva, Vishnu, Durga, Muruga, and Krishna but their identification is not yet established.

Without attempting the larger question of the origin of the Nataraja-cult and its beginnings, it may be stated that there was a phase of the widespread Hindu revival in the sixth century A.D. We have early sculptures of dancing Śiva at Badami, Aihole, Udayagiri (near Nellore),
Elephanta and Ellora—the western and northern parts of the ancient Dravida desa.

4.1.11. Kongu country Broze Sculpture

Some excellent bronzes from the Kongu country, Kodumudi, Singanallur and Puttur. These should be considered as examples of the Kongu idiom of Dravidian art. These are subject more perhaps to Pándyan influence than to Chola85.

“In the absorbing serenity of expression, in the rhythmic sways and the dynamic symmetry of the poses, above all in the moving and generalized forms of an original, yet artistic, anatomy, the bronzes of this school translate the abstruse conception of Brahmánic philosophy into which the artists have skillfully mingled their own meditations, their prayers and all the hopes of their lives. To know them and to appreciate them is to receive an initiation into a new world of plastic dreams, not revealed in any of the master-pieces of Greek or Renaissance bronzes.” The memory of these great and immortal sculptors and their noble creations will inspire mankind for all times.

4.2. Sculptures in the temples of Pudukkóttai district

4.2.1 Tirugókarnam Gókarnéśvar Temple Sculpture

Tirugókarnam Cave Temple the face of the bracket is curved and bears the usual Pallava roll ornaments. There are no dvárapálakas here; but the figures of the huge Ganéśa on the south wall of the veranda and of
Gangádharamúrti on the north wall are typical Pallava sculptures. They are carved in bas-relief.

On the rock face to the south-east of the rock-cut cell are in bas-relief the figures of the Saptamáthrikas with Ganéśa and another God who may be identified as Virabhadra or Muni on either side. The mahamandapa and the other mandapas built of cut stones in front of the central rock-cut shrine belong to the Chola and Pándya periods.

4.2.2. Structural Temple sculpture

The large mandapa in front of the Amman shrine, and the corridor leading into the temple from the street belong to the ‘Madurai’ style. The pillars in the large mandapa contain beautiful figures of Rati-Manmata, Ravana etc. On the pillars of this mandapa are figures in high relief of chiefs and nobles who have not yet been satisfactorily identified. Within the temple are shrines to Bakulavanesvara in the form of a linga, Śri mangalambika and Dakshinamúrti. On top of the rock-cut shrine are those of Subrahmánya, Durga, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Bhairava, Jvaraharesvara or the ‘Destroyer of fever’. At the base of a Bakula (Mimusope elengi) tree within the temple is a sMáll image of Śri Sadaśiva Brahmendra.

4.2.3. Jain Cave Temple Sculpture in Śittannavášal

Śittannavášal Cave Temple On either side of the doorway to the inner shrine are ornamented pilasters enclosing two niches, one on either side. These pilasters are smaller but of the same type as the pillars. They have on the upper cubical parts of the outer face lotus medallions carved in bold relief, a usual feature of this type of cave-temples. There is a large niche in each of the northern and southern walls in the front-hall.
The niches on the southern wall of the outer hall contains a figure in bas-relief, nude and seated cross-legged, in the meditative pose. The hood of the five-headed serpent above its head denotes that it is the image of Parsavanatha, the twenty-third Tirthankara. The figure on the opposite wall, placed in a similar niche, seated in the same pose with a single umbrella over his head, is designated Tiruvasiriyan or the Great Acarya in a Tamil inscription on the eastern face of the bottom of the pillar in front of it.

On the back wall of the sanctum above the middle line of the wall are three images carved in relief, all in the same seated meditative posture. The northern and central figures have triple umbrellas, showing them to be Tirthankaras, while the southern has a single umbrella, and probably represents a Cakravartin or an Acarya. The ceiling of the sanctum shows a wheel with a hum and axle which no doubt represents the dharma cakra or wheel of the law.

4.2.4. Sikhánatha Temple Sculpture in Kudumiyánmálai

Kudimiyanmálai Cave Temple two Dvarapala (gate-keeper) figures cut in bas-relief on the sides of the veranda are admirable specimens of sculptural work in stone. They stand 7'-3" high, crowned in the head, and ornamented in the ear, neck and waist. As usually found in the Pallava shrines of the 8th and earlier centuries, they possess only a couple of hands, but the hands rest one on the hip, and the other on a club entwined by a hooded snake.

4.2.4.1. Valampuri Vináyáka

The Valampuri Vináyáka figure lies to the south of this temple. It is cut in base-relief on the vertical slope of the rock, nearly to the same height as the temple itself. It may be assigned to the Pallava age.
4.2.4.2. The Aruvattimuvar

For above the rock-cut temple, but a little to the north of it, and also on a vertical surface of the rock approached by a narrow and dangerous ledge are found the well-known figures of the aruvathimuvars or the 63 South Indian Saints with an image in the center of Śiva and Parvati riding on the sacred bull.

4.2.4.3. Kudumiánmálai Structural Temple Sculpture

The two dvárapálakas at the entrance of the ardhamandapam, are fine pieces of art.

The sabhamandapam almost as big as the mahamandapam, is of later Pándya style. Some of the pillars contain divine images. The anivettukkal mandpam, to which one passes between the two huge dvárapálakas and ascending an annex, called Gangaiaraiyan Koradu, contains many sculptures in the pillars. They are Ganapathi, Subramanya, Ravana, Ugranarasimha, Rama, Mohini, Virabadra, Kali, Nataraja, Vishnu, Rathi Manmatha. There are also many portait sculptures possibly of the Náyák and Pallavarayar chiefs. This mandapam is a veritable gallery of Tamilian sculptural art.

Before the entrance gópuram there is the ayirakkalmandapam, the hall of thousand pillars. Actually there are only six hundred and fortyfive pillars only. They contain a great number of sculptures many in folk or popular tradition. In the lower sections in these pillars there are representations of lotus, intertwined snakes, fish and such natural objects. In the front row of the pillars there are sculptures of avatars of Vishnu, Hanuman, Sugriva, Vali and some portrait sculptures.
4.2.5. Śiva-Vishnu Temple Sculpture in Tirumayam

4.2.5.1. Vishnu Cave Temple

The entrance mandapa has tall pillars containing large crude sculptures. To the left are three shrines facing east, containing Cakrattalvar or the presiding-deity of Vishnu’s discus. Andal and Krishna, and to the right are a shrine to Lakshmi-Narasimha, and the rooms to keep the processional bronze idols.

Entering the second mandapa, the visitor turns to the Amman shrine to the left. Ujjanivanittaryar, the Amman, is believed to be very propitious. To the right is a narrow shrine containing the sculptures of the Vaishnavite Acharyas-Ramanuja, Madhurakavi and others, and the Alvars. Behind this mandapa is the mahamandapa of the Satyamúrti shrine, which contains a shrine for Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu. This mandapa is structure of the “late Pándya” period, and displays on the walls both decorative and artistic pilasters and kumbha pancaras.

The recess to the north is called Sundara Pándyan kuradu and leads the main shrine of Śri Satyamúrti, which is surrounded by cloistered halls. The principal shrine, which adjoins an overhanging cliff belongs to the ‘late Pándya’ period. The pilasters on the walls are round, with square bases and nagapadams, the idals have delicately carved lotus petals, and the corbels have pushpapodigais. The sculptures of Vishnu on the prakara are of the Pallava period and the images are represented as holding the discus as if in the act of hurling it.

The main idol is an imposing sculpture lying on a serpent couch the five hoods of the serpent which cover the god’s head as a canopy, are half
drawn back-ward. The deity has two arms, one stretched behind him as if consoling the serepent named Adisesha, and the other represented as protecting Lakshmi who is seated on his breast. All around the main idol is a wealth of sculptures including Garuda, Citragupta, Markandeya, Brahmá, the Devas, the Vasus and the Kinnaras. Near the eastern wall are two demons, and sheltered near the god’s feet, is the image of Bhuma Devi, the Earth goddess. The legend that is associated with this group of sculptures is that when the demons Madhu and Kaitabha approached the god in an aggressive attitude, Brahmá, Lakshmi and Bhúdevi were frightened. Adisesha, in his sudden wrath, spat poison which consumed the demons, but was immediately stung with remorse of his hasty action without so much as asking his Lord’s permission but the God comforted him with an assurance of his approval of the act. At the southern end of the street leading to this temple is a shrine to Vedanta Desika, the founder of the Vedagali set of Vaishnavas.

4.2.5.2. Śiva Cave Temple

Thirumayam Śiva Cave Temple in between the linga and Lingódbhava Bas-relief sculpture is an ardhamandapa with its facade facing south. The pillars and pilasters of the ardhamandapa are of the usual Pallava style, massive and cubical at the base and top, and octagonal in the middle, and carrying a corbel with roll ornamentation. The linga which rests on a circular yónipitha and the nandi are cut out of the same rock. There is a Valampuri Gánéśa. The dvárapálakas have only two arms the one on the north has his clothes reaching down the ankles, wears an yajnopavita of rudraksa beads and a peculiar coiffure, and holds up is right hand in adoration, while the other figure rests one of his arms on a club.
4.2.6. Śiva and Vishnu Temple Sculpture in Málayadipatti

4.2.6.1. Śiva Cave Temple

Śiva Cave Temple on the walls of this ardhamandapa are panels with figures in bas-relief including the Saptamátrika group, Ganéśa, Virabhadra, Śiva, Vishnu and Mahishásuramardani. The Durga or Mahishásuramardani panel is of particular interest; and the Goddess here as at mamállapuram is represented with a benign countenance, eight-armed, riding on a lion, and aiming a spear at the asura. The dvárapálakas like all Pallava dvárapálakas, two armed. One of them bears a bull’s horn and a coronet. Evidently this figure represents a person of rank probably the chief who built the shrine.

4.2.6.2. Vishnu Cave Temple

Málayadipatti Vishnu Cave Temple the pillared hall in front of the cell contains large panels cut in the side walls filled with sculptures in high relief including Narasimha and Varáhamúrti and standing and seated images of Vishnu with his consorts. The cell proper contains the principal idol, a marvelously carved image of Vishnu as Seshasayi or the God lying on the serpent Adisesha. The five hoods of the serpent are spread out like a canopy over the God’s head. From his navel raises a lotus stalk crowned with a flower on which Brahma is seated.

The feet of the God rest on another lotus. On the wall are the figures of Madhu and Kaitabha, two demons who threatened to slay Brahmá, but were themselves slain, and other sculptures represent ly devas. In front of the serpent couch are the kneeling figure of a Rishi believed to be Bharadvaja,
and of a Goddess, probably Bhúdevi. This fine image of Vishnu, lying down as at Śrīrangam on a stone serpent is smaller than the one at Śrīrangam, which in turn is smaller to Tirumayam. The two armed dvārapālakas here are also do not seem to be conventional figures, but may be portrait-sculptures.

4.2.7. Śiva Temple Sculpture in Málayakkóvil

Málayakkóvil Śiva Temple nandi in front of the linga and a Valampuri Ganéśa in the west wall of this hill. The mahamandapa is a later structure. There are some layers of pilaster on the walls which shows that they were once covered with stucco. To the east of this cave temple is a miniature square niche with a linga in it.

4.2.8. Śiva Temple Sculpture in Dévarmálai

Dévarmálai Cave Temple the northern niche contains a figure with flowing beard, presumably a saint. To the north of this is another figure believed to be that of Perumizhalai Kurumba Náyanár. He is seated, the right leg is bent upwards and it is recorded that his right hand holds peculiar staff commonly carried by yogis, the left hand rests on the thigh. In the extreme south is the figure of Valampuri Ganéśa. The lingam with in the shrine stands on a square yónipitha. The figure believed to be that of Kurumba Náyanár is actually not that of the saint. It does not carry a yogadandam but a thick club, with entwined cobra. The hair decoration is in jadabara. He wears a hara of rudharaksha and yajnopavitha. The face is graceful. It may by Lakulisa form of Śiva (the form of Śiva as worshipped by the Pasupathas and Kalamukhas of Saivait sect). The icon of this form of Śiva is rare in Tamil Nadu. The only other such examples is found at Arittapatti cave temple in Madurai District.
4.2.9. Vijayálaya Chóliswaram Temple Sculpture in Nárttámálai

4.2.9.1. Paliyili Iśvaram

Nárttámálai Paliyili Iśvaram Cave Temple cylindrical linga and two dvárapálakas, two armed, belonging to this temple have now been excavated, and now placed on the platform.

4.2.9.2. Samanar Kudagu

Norttamálai Sammanar Kudagu (or) Vishnu Cave Temple of the sanctuary is empty, but the ardhamandapa contains twelve wonderful images of Vishnu cut in high relief, two on the sides and five each on the two sides of the doorway leading to the sanctum.

The figures are all alike, and each holds in its upper arms a prayogachakra (a discus as if in the act of hurling it) and a conch. One of the lower arms is in the abhayamudra, or pose indicative of protection from danger, and the other touches the thigh. The sankha, the chakra, the garments and the ornamentation deserve praise. The twelve figures perhaps represent those of the twelve common names of Vishnu-Kesava, Narayana, Madhava, Govinda, Trivikama, Vamana, Achyuta, Śridhara, Padmanabha, Damodara, Vasudeva and Madhusudana. In front of the temple is the moulded plinth of the mahamandapa with figures of lions elephants, yális and kamadenus carved above the beading.

4.2.9.3. Vijayálaya Chólísvaráram Structural Temple Sculpture

Structural Śiva Temple Vimana stone stüpi (finial), which should have once adorned it, is missing now. Among the figures in the niches,
those of Umamaheswara and Vinadhara Dakshinamúrti are very graceful and interesting. The Vina in the hands of the later figure is peculiar. The ‘sound box’ at the lower end is rectangular and not circular.

The main entrance of the central shrine in front of the ardhamandapa has a fine floral design above the lintel. There are two door-keepers, dvárapálakas of great artistic value on either side of the entrance to the ardhamandapa, though in some temples they are placed at the entrance of the mulasthana itself. Dvárapálakas\textsuperscript{93} are five feet each in height. They stand with their legs crossed.

They have only two arms each, one resting on a thick club and the other held in ‘vismaya’ (wondering) pose. Each is crowned with ‘jatamakuta’ and loose hair radiates on either side. Their heads are also surrounded by a halo (prabhavali) and two horns like the limbs of a crescent project on either side. They wear big circular ear-rings in their long ears and are adorned with the usual ‘katibandha, udarabandha’ for the body, armlets on the wrists, bracelets on the upper arms and be jeweled necklaces on the neck. The rolled type of the sacred thread (yajnopavita) runs round the left shoulder across the chest, rests on the right hip and is ornamented with a series of tassels and bells.

4.2.10. Kunnandarkóvil Śiva Cave Temple Sculpture

The chief objects of interest in the temple is the Bas-relief Sculpter of big Ganéśa (7’ high and 4’ – 11” across) with his trunk curled to the right which is on the rock-face to the south of the cave, and to the north is a Somáskanda group in which Subrahmánya\textsuperscript{94}, who is generally placed between Śiva and Uma, is placed to the left of Uma. In my opinion the figure left to Uma does not seem to be Subrahmánya, but seems to be a
female figure with the right hand in raised position with a plate containing some fruits in it, and the left hand in downward position. The headdress is in the spreading manner like jala-bhara. Hence it may be called Umamahesvara rather than Somaskanda. The two dvárapálakas are portrait sculptures. A fine figure to the south with royal personage probably be the Pallava King himself or a Muttaraiya vassal of his.

4.2.11. Kodumbálur Muvarkóvil Śiva Temple Sculpture

Muvarkóvil Śiva Temple as regards the topmost tier of the vimanas, each has a four-sided curvilinear roof which is ornamented on its four sides with projecting kúdus filled with sculptured shrines in miniature in the middle and crowned by simhalatas. Its corners are carved with elaborate scroll work and the whole length of its lower edge had incised a series of semicircles simulating lotus petals.

There is no linga inside shrines but a complete linga and the fragments of two others have been found in the excavations conducted as that site. The niches on the walls and vimanas contain sculptures of great beauty. Śiva is represented in these sculptures either as a terrific, destructive deity or a pacific, boon-conferer. They are Ardhanarisvara, Vinadhara-Dakshinamúrti⁹⁵, Gajasamharamúrti, Kalarimúrti, Alinganamúrti, Gangádharamúrti and Rishabhanugrahamúrti. The sculpture of Kalarimúrti is superb. It represents Śiva in the act of chastising the God Yama for attempting to take away the life of Markandeya, his staunch devotee, in his sixteenth year.

The figure of the God is fierce-looking. Yama is represented groveling on the ground with his face upturned towards Śiva. Śiva’s left leg is placed on Yama while the right one is raised. He has four arms, the upper
right holding a parasu (axe) while the lower one is raised and holds a pasa (noose). The upper left hand holds a black buck, while the lower one points towards Yama (Sucihastra pose). The image of a lady at her toilet, probably representing Mohini, is perhaps the finest of the unearthed sculptures. Except for two in the Government Museum, Madras and two in the Puddukkottai Museum, all the other loose images of this temple are kept in the site as a site museum representing a fine gallery of early Chola sculptures. In main, they resemble Pallava sculptures in form, pose, and proportion of parts, but are more highly decorated, the decoration being simple though elegant.

4.2.12. Avudaiyarkóvil Athamanthar Temple Sculpture

Athamanthar Temple Sculpture breath-taking sculptures, so characteristic of this temple, appear in the front mandapam. In the first row there are sculptures such as Narasimha, Kali, Nataraja, Bhairava, Muruga, Rishbhanatha and Vishnu. In a further row behind there are some popular images. One of these, called the “Kudiraiswami” depicts the story of the foxes that turned into horses. Its rider is black in colour whilst the tooth of the horse are pale white. The images of a hunter and his wife are fine statues in stone. These sculptures are good feast to art lovers as well as laymer. In style, these sculptures resemble the Náyák masterpieces of the far south, like those in Krishnapuram in Tirunelveli District and the Madurai Meenakshi temple.

These are also a god many portrait sculptures. But they cannot be identified except for a few by tradition. It is believed that some of them depict the Tondaimáns of Aranthangi and Puddukkóttai and the Zamindars and royalty of the area. In the final analysis, this remarkable temple is
artistically known for its sculptures. Its sculptors were titans who wrought like goldsmiths. As if in playful mood, one of them has made, out of a single stone a lotus with a thousand and eight petals. Above all, of course, there is the association with Manikkavasakar.

4.2.13. Muchukundéśvara Temple Sculpture in Kodumbálúr

Muchukundéśvarar Śiva temple is stated to have been renovated and the stone idols of Dakshinamúrti, Vishnu, Brahmá and two Dvárapálakas are stated to have been installed evidently in the niches of the main walls of the central shrine and in those on either side of the entrance of the ardhamandapa, in the 6th regnal year of Kulottunga III, i.e., about 1183-84 A.D. None of these images is found in its place now but the Dakshinamúrti now found in a corner of the open mandapa might probably be one of the images referred to in the inscription.

The walls of the main shrine are adorned with four-cornered pilasters with kalasam, padmam and palagai on top. The corbels are decorated with a roll-moulding with a median band of the Pallava type. The arches above the figure niches are surmounted by makhara toranas. The kúdus have trifoliated finials. Above the cornices are friezes of bhutaganas and vyalas, from the corners of the latter of which makhara heads jut out. The dome shaped stone kutams resemble that of the Tirukkattalai temple is also found. Prakara Images are placed in two of them, Subrahmánaya in the sub-shrine of the rear side, and Bhairava in the sub-shrine in the north eastern corner of the main shrine. No images are found in the two other sub-shrines nor is there any gópura standing above any of the four sub-shrines. Originally there should have been seven sub-shrines surrounding the temple, and an image should have been placed in each of them.
In the mahamandapa many images not connected with the shrine are placed of which a linga (prismatic linga with sixteen faces) similar to the lingas of the Pallava King Rajasimha’s time is prominent. There is also an image of Jyestha Devi which would have an image in one of the sub-shrines.

4.2.14. Kaliyápati Śiva Temple Sculpture

Kaliyápati Śiva Temple nandi figures lying on the floor should have once adorned the four corners of the griva and the image of Dakshinamúrti of the southern niche of the vimana also lies on the ground.

The temple which was badly out of plumb has now been repaired, the idols of Brahmá, Vishnu\textsuperscript{96} and Dakshinamúrti have been restored to their respective niches is the griva of the vimana, and two of three stone bulls discovered in the site have been placed at the corners of the top of the shrine and the third on a pedestal in front of the temple.

4.2.15. Kannanúr Bálasubramaniya Temple Sculpture

The Kannanúr Bálasubramaniya Temple frieze of bhutaganas below the single arched thick cornice (kodungai) which is also decorated with kúdus having beautiful scroll work. Over the cornice is a frieze of standing yális. There are niches for deities in the outer walls of the garbhagriham but they are now empty, the except, the southern one which contains an idol of Dakshinamurthi.

At the four corners of the griva are four figures of sitting elephants, as the vehicle of Subramanya\textsuperscript{97}, a special feature of this temple. Generally, Subramanya has the banner of the cock which is held in the hand with
peacock as his vehicle, standing behind. But the Sangam Tamil literature and some of the Agamas and Puranas mention the elephant also as His vehicle. Gajavahana (elephant rider) being one of the important names given to Subramanya, this is evidently an emblem of the presiding deity, here viz., Balasubramanya. This temple is one of the rare temples which has elephant as Subramanya’s vehicle.

4.2.16. Sundaréśvara Temple Sculpture in Tirukkattalai

Sundaréśvara Temple vimana over the central shrine is two storeyed structure. The vimana is square. Below the stupi and simhalalams and in the tier below are two rows of niches, one above the other those on the south contain seated figures of Dakshinamúrti and of Bhikshatanamúrti, those on the west figures of Varáha and Vishnu and those on the north two figures of Brahmá. The corbels are fluted, and over them is a line of rampant yális. The figure in the southern niche of the outer wall of the garbhagriha is peculiar. Usually, in all Śiva temple of South India, this niche is occupied by Dakshinamúrti. But here is figure holding a how and arrow instead of usual vina which makes us to identify as Triparantakamúrti. However this is an interesting feature and an uncommon feature to note in Śiva temple. In the western wall contains a figure of Lingódbhava and that on the northern wall a figure of Brahmá.

The ardhamandapa connects the garbhagriha and the mukhamandapa in front of it. There are two standing Dvárapálakas on either side of the outer entrance of the ardhamandapa. Both of them are standing with two arms and they face east. Both have jatamakutas, and yajnopavita in the form of rolled cloth and wear large parakundalas in their ears. The right hand of the figure on the southern side has the tarjani pose and its left hand rests on the hip. The face of the northern figure is slightly mutilated. Its trunk is
turned towards the entrance. Its right hand rests on the hip the left one in vismaya pose. The two figures measures 5 feet 6 inches in height each exclusive of the basement.

All round the main shrine and close to the walls of the enclosure are the sub-shrines for the parivaradevatas – Surya, Saptamátrakas, Ganéśa, Subrahmánya, Jyesthadevi, Chanina and Chandikesvara. The shrine of the Saptamátrakas99 is rectangular shape and as a wagon-type roof. Among these deities the figure of Surya is peculiar. Of its two arms the left hand rests on the hip and the right in abhaya pose. The usual lotus but is not shown in the hands as in other Surya figures. The existence of even parivaradevatas instead of eight in their respective sub-shrines is a features peculiar to early Chola temple.

4.2.17. Śri Vyagrapuriśvara Temple Sculpture in Tiruvéngaiváśal

Tiruvéngaiváśal Śri Vyagrapurisvara Temple in idol of Gnana Dakshinamúrti has vare iconographic features. The deity is in seated pose; with his left leg kept in utkulikasana posture, a posture suitable for concentration. It has four arms, and the front left arm is stretched on the left leg, which unusual.

In the southern prakara there is a shrine facing west containing an interesting sculpture of Subrahmánya in bas-relief in the virasana pose, the upper right hand holds a rosary, and the upper left a Sakti or spear, the lower right hand is in the abhaya pose and the lower left hand rests on the thigh. Within the cloister of the southern prakara is an idol of Yoga Dakshinamúrti, Subrahmánya with two arms, two Ganéśas, two lingas with their yónipitha and a Gajalakshmi. In the northern prakara is a shrine facing
west and containing three sculptures of Bhairava, Surya and Subrahmánya. Another shrine is in the same prakara towards the western end facing towards south, and contains a four armed Subrahmánya with his consorts- Valli and Devasena. A mutilated loose sculpture of Bhairava is also in the northern prakara.

4.2.18. Agastisvara Temple Sculpture in Panangudi

Agastisvara Temple sculpture fine images of Indra, Dakshinamúrti, Vishnu and Brahmá are installed in the niches. Each image is one foot and two inches high. The sikhara is four-sided and curvilinear. The stone stūpi is also four-sided in keeping with the shape of the sikhara. Images of Jyesthadevi, Ganapati, a Naga and four Nandi figures were found buried in the ground. Jyesthadevi should have been one of the deities of the sub-shrines of the original shrine.

4.2.19. Arankulanatha Temple Sculpture in Thiruvarankulam

Arankulanatha Temple niche on the south has a finely carved figure named Vinadhara Dakshinamúrti. But the figure is not holding the usual Vina in the hands. The figure is more or less in the same type as found in Sundaréśvara temple at Tirukkattalai. The figure is in the standing pose, and the left arm holds a bow. It seems like a Triparantakamúrti. However, the kudu above the niche contains a figure of YogaDakshinamúrti. If the figure in the southern niche is taken as Dakshinamúrti, the pose of Dakshinamúrti is unusual and attractive and draws the attention of the archaeologists. The niche on the west contains Lingódbhava and that on the north one Brahmá. The western niche is surmounted by the figure of Subrahmánya with Valli and Devasena, and the northern niche with a bhutagana.
To the north of the shrine, about a furlong and opposite to the Union Office, are three shrines for Kali, Karuppar and Thaiyal Ammai. The small temple of Thaiyal Ammai contains a Mâle and a feMâle figure made out of stucco. The mâle figure is small and is sitting on the lap of the feMâle figure.

### 4.2.20. Subrahmânya Temple Sculpture in Viralimálai

The idol of Śri Subrahmânya has six faces and twelve hands. The God is seated on a peacock, with the two Ammans – Valli and Devasena, standing on either side.

Some panels containing dancing figures in bas-relief evidently belonging to a ruined early Chola temple at Kodumbálúr, have been built into the walls of the northern prakara. The two lion-pillars in the ardhamandapa at the feet of the hill are of the Pallava type, and probably brought from the ruined Aintalai or Aivarkóvil at Kodumbálúr.

### 4.2.21. Pudukkóttai District temple Iconographics

Pudukkóttai temples are mostly dedicated to Śiva and Visnu but the images relating to Śiva, Visnu, Devi, Ganapati and Skanda are available. There is an image of Surya but not a temple for him in Pudukkóttai. This will not preclude Surya from the picture of an overall cult development because the Sun God in his aspect as Surya-Narayana is found in the Thiruchirapalli owercave, assigned to the Pándyas. Within a centre like Pudukkóttai, it is not possible to trace temples or images of all the gods of the sanmatas.
The iconographical typologies found in the Pudukkóttai region are the following: Linga, Lingódbhavamúrti, Umásahitamúrti, Gangádhara Harihara, Candikéśvara, Seated Visnu, Sthánaka Visnu, Sésaśáyi, Varáhamúrti, Kevala Nrsimha, Kevala Nrsimha, Ganapati, Skanda, Mahisásuramardini and Saptamattrkas. Forming part of a bigger theme the following appear: Brahmá (Sésaśáyi), Virabhadra (Mattrkas), Laksmi (Sathana or seated Visnu) and Bhúdevi (Sthánaka or seated Visnu). The lesser divinities who form part of Sésaśáyi are Narada, Tumburu, Jambavat, Garuda, dikpalakas, and the demons, Madhu and Kaitabha. The Sapta Mattrkas include Brahmi, Maheśvari, Kaumári, Vaisnavi, Aindri and Camunda Among other are dvárapálakas or dvárapálikas and rsis. The actual number of iconological themes is thirty-five though strictly speaking all these come under eighteen iconographical variables. An enumeration of the iconographical features of the images with due reference to the variable is presented herein.

4.2.22. Umásahitamúrti

There are two images from the Piránmálai and Kunrántarkóvil cave temples. Umásahitamúrti means the Lord (Śiva) in the company of Uma. If united with Skanda, then the form gets named as Somaskanda, a form very popular with the Pallavas, and housed in garbhagrhas. Of the two images in the Pudukkóttai area one is housed in the cella (Piránmálai) and other present in mandapa.

Later day silpa works such as the silparatna and Káśyapiya deal with two forms of Śiva, called Sukhasanamúrti and Somáskanda but do not talk of Umásahitamúrti. Somáskanda is a form which includes Śiva, Uma and Skanda. Sukhasanamúrti is seaed all alone. But in Umasahitmúrti both Śiva and Uma are present. Its presence in early medieval art would mean that it
became quite unpopular in later times due maybe to the increasing cult value of Somáskanda.

Uma is said to be a maid whose speech resembles that of a parrot, kilicer moli mankai is an important idea because in few of the specimens in the kailasanatha temple at Kanci, Devi appears holding a parrot. The Lord is pleased to be in the company of Uma all through day and night, praised by the celestials.

The Piránmálai image finds Śiva and Uma seated on a bhadrapitha, both in sukhasana and maharajalilasana postures, meant for Śiva and Devi respectively as they may appear in Somáskanda form.

From the iconographical features, it is quite evident that Kunrantarkóvil is later in point of time. It represents a stage when the cult image as in Piránmálai and Tirumálai was expelled from the cella to the mandapa, Such moves have much to reflect on the history of Saivism when the question of the Linga as cult múrti comes to the picture for a discussion.

4.2.23. Lingódbhavarmúrti

Lingódbhavarmúrti (linga phallus, udbhava originate, múrti Lord) is the Lord who manifests in Phallus. According to silpasastras (sarasvatiyacitrakarmasastra chap. 15), Lord Candrasekhara One who is united with Candra (the Moon) appears within the Linga. The only image of Lingódbhavamúrti in the Pudukkóttai region is from the Tirumayám Cave II. In the peripheral zone, there are two outstanding images from the Pillaiyarpatti and Kunrakkuti cave temples. All three are of an archaic form and deviate from the models found in the later structural temples of the early
medieval period e.g. Kailasanatha of Kanci, Virupaksa of Pattadakkal, Svarga Brahmá of Alampur.

Lingódbhava is a form syncretised with the phallic cult. That means this form could have originated only after the popularity of the Linga cult. Scholars who assign the origin of rock-cut temples to the Pallavas usually think that both the Linga and its allied form came to the Pándya country only after their introduction in the Pallava art. They also opine that all Lingas in Pallava cave temples are later interpolations of the 8\(^{th}\) century A.D. and so it is only after the 8\(^{th}\) century that these migrated to the Pándya country, including Pudukkóttai. But the evidences from Pillaiyarpatti, Tirumeyyam and Kunrakkuti present case against the status quo.

The Tirumayam image is an inaccessible Phallus which is rooted in the earth, i.e. the base of the cave and merges with its roof. Sparks of fire emanate from both sides of the Sthanu. In the centre there is an image of Candrasekhara. The Lord is a samapada personality and dvibhuja. He shows abhaya in right hand and has the left in uruhasta attitude. He wears a jatamakuta, kanthahara, vastrayajnopavita, kankanas and keyuras. The body below the uru is merged with the Stanu.

In fact that the Linga cult (from which Lingódbhavamúrti comes) is dated after the 8\(^{th}\) century could not be accepted. There are plenty of literary clues in the hymns of the Nayanmar to the wide popularity of the Phallic cult. This is the mythological version of the story of Lingódbhava. All these find their due note in the humns of the Nayanmar. All these find their due note in the hymns of the Nayanmar so, by about the 7\(^{th}\) century A.D. not only the Linga but the mythology linked with the Udbhavamúrti form were very popular in the Tamil country. So, it need not be surprising if the
earliest iconic representations are found in some of the rock-cut caves in the Far South.

Though the only one of its type in the Pudukkotai region, supported by two more in its periphery at Pillaiyarpatti and Kunrakkuti, the Tirumayam image of Lingodbhava is the antique and most striking piece of work on the theme.

4.2.24. Gangádhara

The Lord who possess the Ganga on his matted locks of hair is known as Gangádhara. The only specimen available in the Pudukkotai region is from the Tirukókarnam cave temple. There is another remarkable piece of work in the Tiruccirappalli upper cave of the Pallavas.

The image of Gangádhara in the Tirukókarnam cave temple is Sthánaka-tribhanga. The Lord is caturbhuja and has the front left hand in uruhasta attitude. The front right is held close to the thigh as though in abhayamudra. The back right is lifted up, holding an aksaMála, a rare idiom. The back left holds a lock of the hair, issuing forth the jatamakuta. Atop the left corner of the panel Ganga is found in kneeling attitude with head downwards in anjali mode, descending on to the head of Śiva. The Lord wears a kanthahara, vastrajnopavita, keyuras and kankanas.

Totally there are twelve images of Gangádharamúrti in Tamilnadu of which eight are concentrated in kancipuram; two each are from MaMállapuram and the Pudukkóttai -Tirchy circles. Evidently the only image in the Pándya zone is from Tirukókarnam. Given the due credit to its date as envisaged in the present work, the Tirukókarnam image of Gangadara is likely to be the earliest in Tamilnadu.
If compared with the Umásahitamúrti of Kunrántarkóvil, it may be suggested that the Tirukokaram programme suggests an expusion process of Gangádhara from the garbhagrha. This generalization is on the basis of what we have suggested in case of the Kunrántarkóvil Umásahita. In early times, it is quite likely that Gangádhara also occupied the garbhagrha. As a testimony, the subsidiary chapel, going around the garbhagrha of the Kailasanatha temple of Kanci may be noted here. The chapel on the north-western corner houses Gangádhara in its cella. So, it is quite likely that the Tirukókarnam image is on a par with the Kunrántarkóvil Umásahitamúrti.

4.2.25. Harihara

Hari means Visnu and Hara stands for Śiva. The fusion of the two principal divinities of the Hindu religion is variously known as Hari-Rudra (in the Mahabharata), Kesavardhamúrti (in the Sarasvatiyacitrakar-masastra) and Harihara (in the Devatamúrtiprakarana). The image combines the features typical of Śiva and Visnu in one image, the iconographical aspects of which are elaborated in a number of silpasastras like Silparatna and Káśyapiya (Patalam 76).

The syncretised Harihara\(^{103}\) was a popular form with silpis from very early time, dated from atleast the Kusana period. Harihara is a popular form in the early medieval art of the Decan, but only few specimens are found in the Far south and only two are found in the Pándya region. These are from the Málaityatippatti cave temple and the monolithic temple at KalukuMálai.
4.2.26. Virabhadra

There are three images of Virabhadra. All of them form part of the Sapta Matrkas. They are from the cave temples of Tirukokarnam, Tirukkolakkuti and Malaiyatipatti (cave I). Virabhadra usually accompanies the Malaiyatipatti (cave I). Virabhadra usually accompanies the Matrkas in western Indian art of the contemporary period. The image of Virabhadra in the Tirugokarnam cave temple is caturbhuta. The parahastas are lifted as though in avahana inviting mudras. The front right is in dhyanamudra, rested on thigh. The front left is simply rested on thigh. The Lord is seated in sukhasana. The Malaiyatipatti image is of a different mode. The Lord is seated in yogasana with the knees erect and tied by yogapatta. The Lord is caturbhuja and has the hands in a pattern akin to the Tirugokarnam image. The image is much defaced and so the emblem could not be identified. The front hands are rested on thighs.

4.2.27. Candikeśvara

Candikeśvara was one among the 63 Nayanmar, extolled in Cekkilar’s periya Puranam (12th century A.D). The earliest literary reference to this Náyanár is in the Tiruttontattokai of Cuntarar, one among the Tevaram-trio, dated in the 8th century A.D. Cuntarar’s note gives a succinct biographical detail about this Náyanár. At Kunrántarkóvil and Malaiyatippatti the Lord faces the south, though appearing on the northern side. In theses respect, he is on a part with Daksinamúrti. In the Arittapatti cave, he faces the west.

The Kunrántarkóvil and Malaiyatippatti images are of the same typology. The Lord is robust, seated on a bhadrapitha in sukhasana attitude.
He is dvibhuja and has a hand rested on thigh. The right hand holds a club in both cases but is fitted with a thin blade at the head of weapon, making it a battleaxe. Thus the features of both danda and parasu are mixed. He wears a jatabhara (like Virabhadra in the Málaiyatippatti cave), patrakundalas, kanthahara, vastrayajnopavita, kankanas and keyuras.

The numerous references to Candikeśvara in the later inscriptions of the Pudukkóttai region and the iconographical illustrations would prove the fact that the cult of Candikeśvara was deep-rooted in this region.

4.2.28. Linga

The Linga Phallus is the most popular form of Śiva in the Pudukkóttai cave temples. Only one of the caves, i.e. PiránMálai, houses an anthropomorphic form of the Lord in its cella. In all other cases Lingas appear. An important feature of the Pándya caves in that the Linga is mostly rock-cut and part of the cave. In the Pallava zone the avutai may be rock-cut but the linga is removable and so in many instances the originals have gone.

The Linga consists of two important sections called avutai, the circular disc, representing the feminine part of it and the cylindrical linga is the masculine. Later silpasastras divide the Linga into three equal segments, the square base sunk into earth called Brahmábhaga, the octagonal middle called Visnubhaga and circular upper part called Śivabhaga. Avutai (yoni) represents Devi. Though called Śivalinga, the sastraic mandate would prove the Trimúrti orientation of the Linga.
4.2.29. Nandi

Nandi, the ursabha-Vahana of Śiva, appears mostly in zoomorphic form in early medieval art. The anthropomorphic version of the bull, called Adhikara-Nandi\textsuperscript{107} and placed on a par with Śiva himself in Tamil tradition, is not to be found in Pallava-Pándya temples. In few of the Somakanda panels of he Pallavas, the Nandi appears as Vahana, e.g., the Mahisásuramardini mandapa central cella. In many of the Saivite forms also Nandi appears, e.g., the Ellora caves especially the corridor running behind the monolithic temple. Umasahita in Pándyan art is devoid of the Nandi emblem. In these caves nandi mostly appears on a pedestal in front of the garbhagrha facing the cella.

There are two good examples of the Nandi on pedestal in the Pudukkóttai region. They are Tirumeyyam and Málaiyatippatti. In both cases a rock –cut pitha ‘Pedestal’ is carved in the mandapa part of the cave houses the couchant zoomorphic Nandi.

Nandi in the Tamil bhakti hymns of the Nayanmar is a covered subject. He is called by various zoomorphic names like itapam the bull that never is afraid of anything. He is Nanti and vitai, or meaning thereby that Mál Visnu is the bull vehicle of Śiva. Nandi is both dharma incarnate and the symbol of sexual protency. So as custodian of Śivadharma Śiva a righteousness he finds a place in the dhvaja flag of the Lord. This may be found in case of the images of Nataraja in the Virupaksa temple at Pattadakkal and the Tirupparankunram north group of caves.

In cave temples other than Tirumayam and Málaiyatippatti the Nandi is not to be found. His absence indeed is enigmatic as even the images of Umasahita in PiránMálai and Kunrántarkóvil do not include the Nandi.
There are two cave temples, dedicated to Visnu, in the Pudukkóttai region. These two are Tirumeyyam I and Málaiyatipatti II. The NárttáMálai Cave temple is full of the presence of Visnu but the Lingapitha in cella is a problem to reckon with. Otherwise it should have been a cave for visnu. The iconographical variables appearing in these vaisnava caves are seated Visnu, Sthánaka-visnu, Sésaśáyi, Varáhamúrti Kevala Nrsimaha, Śridevi and Bhúdevi. This is a feature typical of the Pudukkóttai caves.

4.2.30. Vishnu

The only image of seatd Visnu is from the Málaiyatippatti cave temple. Seated image of the Lord appear in garbhagrha in the Tirupparankunram (north group west facing cella). This is the only one of its type in the entire early medieval temple tradition. The Badami Cave III houses an outstanding image of Adimúrti in its mukhamandapa part but its cella is empty now.

It is likely to have housed a seated image originally. With reference to the seated image on the lintel of the Dasavatara temple of the later Gupta time at Deogad, It has been suggested that the temple is likely to have housed a seated image. Besides, we have rare astangavimans of the later Pallava period Vaikuntha Perumál at Kanchi and Sundara Varadaraja at Uttiramerur where the seated image is supposed to occupy one of the cella in the verticle order. This form of the Lord is called Adimúrti or Vaikunthamúrti, provided Sesa offers a seat to the Lord as is the case with Badami cave III.

There are not less than sixteen seated images of Visnu\textsuperscript{108} in Tamilnadu and two in the Badami region. In Upper Deccan, not even a single image is reported. again the seated images in garbhagrhas appear only in Tamilnadu
if Badami III is not taken into account for want of authentic evidence. The uniqueness of Málaiyatippatti is that the Lord appears in the company of Śridevi and Bhúdevi, a model of which could only be found in the temples of Kanci, viz., Vaikuntha perumál and Kailasanatha. It might suggest the influence of Śrivaishnavism in which school Visnu without Devi is powerless. These are few earliest evidences of Śrivaishnava imagery in the art of India.

The left kostha in the mandapa of the Málaiyatippatti cave temple houses the image of seated Visnu. To his right Śridevi and to the left Bhúdevi are seated. Vishnu is in suknasana posture. He is caturbhuja and holds the sankha and cakra in parahastas. The front left hand is in abhayamudra adn right rested on thigh. The image is plastered and painted which is not an original work but the outcome of a renovation in the recent past. So it is not possible to study the original ornamentation. The cakra for example which in early medeeval art is prayoga is not like that. However the kiritamakuta, Vaijayantimála, Udarabandha and pitambara are there.

4.2.31. Sthánaka Vishnu

Totally there are thirteen images of Sthánaka-Vishnu in the Pudukkóttai region. The unusually large number of the figure is due to the fact that in the Nárttámálai cave alone there are twelve standing. The NárttáMálai images are of a common pattern, all standing in dvi-ortri-bhangar. The parahastas hold the sankha and prayoga-cakra. The purvahastas show the abhayamudra and urauhasta.

The images are decorpted with kiritamakutas, necklaces, Vastrayajnopavita, Kankanas, Keyuras and pitambara. The standing image of Málaiyatippatti is also of the same mould but added with images of
Śridevi and Bhûdevi. This is another evidence of Śrivasnava impact in the making of the image. There are not less than 31 Sthánaka images of Visnu all over the early medieval centres of art of which this is the only one appearing with Śri and Bhu.

4.2.32. Sésaśáyi

The Lord Visnu reclining on his serpent couch Ádiśesa, Sesa or Ananta, is a coverted theme in early medieval art. The Guptas at Udayagiri set the model for colossal images of Sésaśáyi coming to the Tamil country, perhaps first with the Tirumayam image. From the Krsna basing at Undavalli to Tiruttankal in the Far South, there are number of places in which rock-cut and structural temples for Sésaśáyi exist. The Structural temples are the Shore at Mamállapuram (middle) cella Vaikuntha and Sundara Varadaraja temples at Kanchi and Uttiramerur. There is a rock cut image near the Bhutanatha temple in Tamilnadu are Cinkavaram, Málnaiyattippatti Tirumayam, Namakkal and Tiruttankal. Of these, the images at Cinkavaram, Tirumayam and Namakkal are colossal, challenging comparision with the Udayagiri prototype. Such images fall within a huge frame are not to be found in the core zone of Chalukya and Rastrakuta art. Credit goes to the Pallava, Pándya artists who are sure to have been inspired by the Gupta prototype at Udayagiri.

There are a number of texts which present a copious of the iconography of Sésaśáyi, e.g., Mahabharata, Visnudharmottara, Caturavarga Cintamani, Jayakhyasamhita, Skanda Purana, Rupamandana and Silparatna. The perception of the Alvars though a disconnected tissue of notes is indeed panoramic. Of the divyaksetras in the subcontinent, Visnu is supposed to appear in reclining postures in the following places.
Tiruvarankan, Tirukkurantai, Tillai Cittirakutam, Tirumayam, Tiruppullani, Tirutankal, Śrivilliputtur, Tiruvanatapuram, TirukkatanMállai, Tirupparkatal, (your mind thought action) and so on.

Sésaśáyi in the Tirumyam temple is of the same mould as in the Tiruvarankam temple i.e. has the head on the west and the legs stretched to the east. He faces the south while the back is turned to the north. A colossus, the image measures nine metres in length, expanding over the entire space of the cave. The height is about three meters. He is in yoganidra. The hands are two. The left is in avahana mudra and right laid flat on bed. The ornaments include kiritamakuta, Makarakundalas, Kankanäs Keyiras, haras, udarabandha, pitambara, paridacaram etc. A lotus emanates from the navel and shoots up majestically. Atop the blossomed lotus, trimukha-Brahmá is seated. Other attendants include Gauruda, Tumburu, Vidhyadharas and apsarase. Citragupta is seated near the head. Bhúdevi is found massaging the feet. A unique feature of the image is the sparks of kopangi which emanate from the Lord and move towards the demos, Madhu and Kaitabha. It is supposed to be the poison emitted by Ádiśeṣā. Other images of the type from Udayagiri in the north to Tiruttankal in the south do not include this idiom and thus it is the most remarkable work on the subject.

The Málaiyatippatti image is also a colossus in the sense that it is thrice the height of an ordinary human being. It measures about 4.6 meters and is positioned in contrast with the Tirumayam mode. The head is to the east and legs to the west. The face is directed to the north and back shown to the south. The garbhagriha is a rectangle and in all three sides, excepting the open north, is filled with attendant gods. The Lord is in yogasayana. He is dvibhuja, having the right rested on bed and falling down.
The right is in avahanamudra, perhaps inviting the demons to attack him and face the consequences. The feet is rested on a padamapitha, an emblem not to be found in other images. Devi is seated near the foot in kneeling aspect and in anjali mode. The Lord is decked with kiritamakuta, hara, keyuras, udarabandha, mekhala, pitambara and padacarams. The serpent is fitted with five hoods within the fold of which the Lord’s had is enclosed. The wall part of the sanctum sanctorum is occupied by a number of demi-gods. On the east wall are found Garunda, and dikpalakas. The back wall illustrates Brahmá in centre, followed by Narada, Tumburu, Jambavar, Vidhyadharas and apsarase. On the west wall are the gigantic demons, Madhu and Kaitabha in war-like posture.

There is no inscription in the Ranganatha cave temple. So its art from the stylistic point of view is a problem. The other cave for Vágiśvara has foundation inscription of a Muttaraiya chief, taking the Pallava title and accepting Pallava mastery over the area. But a recent study by Gopalakrishnan on iconometrical basis finds the Pándyan norms artistically. So our earlier generalization that the Ranganatha cave is of early Pándyan origin gets supported. The Málaiyatippatti Sésaśáyi and that of Tirumayam are likely to have been outcome of Pándyan sculptors who perhaps took the model of Udayagiri.

4.2.33. Varáhamúrți

The only image of Varáhamúrți in the Pudukkóttai region is from the Málaiyatippatti cave for Ranganatha. He is seated on a bhadrapitha in sukhasana posture. He has the face of a boar and the body below neck is human. He is caturbhujā, holding the sankha and cakra in parahastas. The purvahastas show abhaya and varadamudras. The Lord is decked with a kiritamakuta and other usual ornaments.
Beginning with Udayagiri, BhuVarāhamúrti is a popular form in early medieval art. In all these illustrations the Lord appears with Bhúdevi, lifted and held near his snout. Málaiyatippatti is the only centre where Varāha is kevala, peculiarly all alone. When Visnu in seated and standing mode appears with Devis, It is an enigma to see Varāha alone. Another peculiarity of the image is that he is seated on a pedestal whereas in all other centres he stands in alidha attitude. The Málaiyatippatti artist is the first to set the norms of a new form of Varaha.

4.2.34. Kevala Nrsimha

Akin to Varāha is Nrsimha who is seated all alone. Nrsimha in early medieval art is usually in the company of Hiranya either fighting with him or slaughtering him Kevala Nrsimha first appears in a grotto in the Udayagiri caves in Sthánaka posture. The same mode is repeated in the Durga temple at Aihole, Cave III of Badami Vaikuntha Perumál temple at Knaci and Namakkal cave for Ranganatha. The seated type appears first in the KalukuMálai Pándyan monolithic temple and then at Málaiyatippatti. So, this form itself is of Pândyan category, not found anywhere else. This may add another support to the Pândyan hand of the cave.

Nrsimha in this cave is seated in maharajalilasana attitude. He is caturbhuja the parahastas holding the sankha and cakra. The front right is rested on the erect knee and left placed on thigh. The image is plastered and painted and so it is difficult to trace the original ornametations. In its present status, it includes a Karandamakuta, haras, Kankanças, Keyuras and all other ornaments.
4.2.35. Devis

The Literature of the Alvars have references to Tirumakal (Laksmi) Nilamakal (Bhúdevi) and Áymakal (i.e girl of the gopis, i.e. Pinnai or Nappinnai). They also refer to the 16,000 consorts of the Lord. But in early medieval art, only in few centres (e.g. the Kailasanatha and Vaikuntha Perumál temples of Kanci and Málaiyatippatti cave) Visnu in forms other than Sésaśáyi appears with Devis, the Lord is attended by Śri and Bhú only. The lady carrying pots on head in the Govardhanadhari panel of Mamállapuram is supposed to be Nappinnai. Śri and Bhú appear only in the Málaiyatippatti cave. Seated or standing, both accompany Visnu, and are dvibhuja. They hold a flower in one hand. Śri is to the right and Bhu to the left of the Lord. They are decorated with all kinds of ornaments like karandamakutas and neckless.

4.2.36. Sakti Goddess

There are rock-cut temples for Devi the Sakti Goddess in other zones of early medieval tradition. Draupadiratha and Kotikkal mandapa of Mamállapuram and the Tirupparankunaram north group of caves. In the Pudukkóttai region, no such temple is found but images of Sakti goddesses appear in caves of Śiva. Otherwise, Sakti is mostly part of saiva themes; e.g. Umásahitamúrti of kunarntarkóvil.

The Sakti images of Mahisásuramardini is found in the Vágiśvara cave at Málaiyatippatti. The Sapta Mattrkas appear in the caves at Tirukókarnam. Tirukkolakkuti and Vágiśvara of Málaiyatippatti. During a recent study, it was discovered that there is alos an image of Simhavahini in the Málaiyatippatti cave.
Mahisasuramardini is a Sthánaka image. She is fighting with Mahisasura as in the Mamállapuram image of the classical type. Such images appear at Pattadakkal and the Kailasa at Ellora also. But Devi here is standing and not seated on her simhavahana as in the other cases and fighting with in buffalo-demon.

4.2.37. Sapta Mátrkas

The Mátrkas appear in a row, united with Virabhadra and Ganapati in the cave temples at Tirugókarnam, Tirukkolakuti and Málaiyatippatti. They begin with Brahmi and end with Camunda, Mahešvari, Karumari, Vaisnavi, Varahi and Aindri falling in between. This is the pan-Indian pattern of arranging the Mātrkas.

Brahmi is trimukha and attended by hamsa vahana. She holds the Kamandalu and aksāMāla in parahastas. The purvahastas show abhaya and varada. Maheśvari is attended by bull vehicle while others are associated with peacock (Kaumári), eagle (Vaisnavi), boar (Varahi), Elephant (Aindri) and owl or corpse or jackal (Camunda). The Mātrkas are feminine versions of their Māle counterparts, i.e. Brahmi Brahmá, Maheśvari-Indra. Camuda is the ghora form of Śiva. In the Pudukkóttai region the Mātrkas mostly fall in line with the pan-indian mode.

The Vahanas in the Málaiyatippatti cave appear on dhvajas which are shown behind the head of each figure. In the Tirukókarnam cave these laksanas are not shown. Again, the Mātrkas here are dvihhuja, excepting Brahmi. The Mātrkas of Tirukkolakkuti and Tirugókarnam appear on boulders outside the cave. These two are of an early period. It might suggest till the later Pallava Period the Mātrkas were not inducted into the temple complex and there may be ritual values behind. The Calukyas in their
inscriptions treat the Matrkas as their mothers. Perhaps it was not so in early Pândya tradition. From the later Pallava period they appear within the temple (e.g. Málaiyatippatti and the Kailasanatha temple at Kanci). Separate chapels for them were erected only during the early Chola period (e.g. the Melappaluvur temple). These may be significant from the cult point of view.

4.2.38. Ganapati

Ganapati, popularly called pillaiyar is present in many of the cave temples in the Pándyas zone. Ganapati and Mattrka cults were imported from the Chalukya country and that they came to the Pândya country from the Pallavas. If Ganapati could be found in a Pándya cave of the 5th century A.D. (i.e. Pillaiyarpatti), how could he be the gift of the Chalukyas through the Pallavas and so it is suggested that the cult of Ganapati in the Pândinadu region has nothing to do with either the Pallavas or Chalukyas.

The myths centering around the origin and place of Ganapati and Hindu religious tradition are sporadically noted by the Nayanmar. So by about the 7th century A.D the Ganapati cult is unmistakably present in the Tamil Country.

Ganapati in the Pudukkóttai region appears in two different modes: In association with the Matrkas, and Independently. The Mattrka oriented images are from Tirukókarnam, Tirukkolakkuti and Málaiyatippatti. The independent images are from Makupalanpatti, Kutumiyanmálai, Tirugókarnam, Kunrántarkóvil, Málaiyakkóvil and Puvalaikkuti. He appears as a kosthadevata within the mandapa of the caves at Tirugókarnam, Málaiyakkóvil and Kunrántarkóvil. In other places like KutumiyaMálai, Málayatipatti and Puvalaikkuti the image appears outside the cave in a special grotto.
4.2.39. Skanda

The only image of Skanda is from the Vágiśvara cave at Málaiyatippatti. In the core Pándinadu area Murukan occupies the cella in the Ánaimálai Cave II. Other images are for Tirupparankunram north and the Tirumálai cave.

Skanda or Kumara from the days of mahakavi Kalidasa of the Gupta period down to the Skanda Purana is a hero and war-like God in Indian tradition. The Sanskritic Skanda and Tamil Murukan by about the 3rd – 4th century A.D. get amálgamated in Tamilnadu.

The Málaiyatippatti Murukan is novel theme. The Lord is standing in samapada-Sthánaka posture. He is caturbhuja and holds the Vajra and aksamata in parahasthas. The purvahastras are in abhaya and uruhasta. The Lord wears patrakundalas, udarabandhas, kankanas, keyuras and other ornaments. The Lord also wears the cannavira, a pointer to the belligerent attitude. This emblem appears in the Anaimálai and Tirumálai images also.

4.2.40. Other Gods in Pudukkottai District

The list of minor gods from the Pudukkóttai regions is pretty long; Brahmá, dvárapálakas, dvárapálíkas, rśis, Narada, Tumburu, Jambavat, Garuda, Ananta, dikpalakas, Madhu and Kaitabha.

Brahmá appears independently in the western Indian caves. But no such representation is found in Tamilnadu. In the Pándinadu caves. Brahmá mostly appears on the lotus emanating from the navel of Vishnu. Kulacekara Alvar beautifully says Nanmukan caturmukla Brahmá is endowed with nankuma four tongues, Iriantumukan (2 x 2) four faces
elirkankalettu eight beautiful eyes and obviously the hands should also be eight or sixteen.

The Lord appears in the Tirumayam and Mālaiyaitippatti caves. He is seated on the padmanabhi. The faces are three as one is supposed to be behind the frontal one. Two are protile. He is four handed, holding the aksamāla and lotus or kamandalu. One of the front hands is in abhaya and the other rested on thigh. He is usually in padmasana posture, seated on padma.