CHAPTER X

Sani Sthala at Thirunallar
Thirunallar is one of the six communes of Karaikal. The name Thirunallar is said to represent the association of king Nalā of Nishada Country since as per legends and Puranas Nalā who was under the evil spell of Saturn got his redemption only here, hence the name "Thirunallaru". The word "Āru" literally means "to heal" and the two words "Nalā" and "Āru" put together means to say the place of Nalā's redemption form the evil spell of Saturn. There are other definitions also for the place "Thiru Nal – Āru" so as to mean as a place between two rivers namely Vānijar and Nōolar. Besides the name of Thirunallar, this place also have other names such as Ādipuri, Dharbhāraṇyam, Nāgavidaṇgapuram and Nallēswaram. Thirunallaru is situated 40 kms east of Kumbakonam and 5 kms west of Karaikal. It is also one of the seven "Sapta Vidāṅga Sthalās" gifted by Ṛṣa to a Chōla king called Muchukundā.

Thirunallar is a small area which is part and parcel of Karaikal. Karaikal is studded with lot of temples some of which are especially significant, "Their origin goes deep into the hoary past., their occult influence is a active even in the material present., and their blessing assures a felicitous future". In the case of temples of the ancient past whose origin has been shrouded in mystery, the Sthalā Varalāru based on Purāṇas and legends forms the only source of information. The accounts of Sthalā Varalāru cannot be dismissed as false and fictious, since they are of esoteric significance. They also warrant an in-depth study which would reveal that they are a store house of lofty
truths and morals. They also can be regarded as the repositories of all arts and sciences.

Karaikal with its hoary pas may well be called a theertha. Here in this area exists a large number of temples, of which thirty are dedicated to Lord Siva, thirty three to Goddess Amman, fifteen to Lord Mahâ Vishnu, eight of them have been dedicated to Lord Ganesh or Vinayaka and some thirteen of them have been dedicated other Hindu gods. Surprisingly, in the whole region, there is no separate temple dedicated to Lord Muruga or Subramaṇya.

The temples which exist in the region have been constructed during the rule of different dynasties which ruled over the Tamil Country through ages. The Pallavas were succeeded by the Chōlas who had been great patrons of art and architecture. Most of the temples that are found in TamilNadu today were most probably constructed during the time of the Chōlas. The Chōlas have constructed temples, dedicated both to Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu. The revival of the Chōla empire during the second half of the 9th centre A.D., under Vijiyālaya and Ādiṭya I has brought about new dimensions in the annals of South Indian art and architecture. The art and architectural style of the Chōlas can be regarded only as a continuation and development of that of the Pallavas and the Early Pāṇḍiyas who had developed certain distinctive styles and innovative features. The Chōlas, who had been master builders of massive and elegant structures of temples, have contributed a lot to the realm of
South Indian art and architecture. During the course of 7th century A.D., Sri. Darbāraṇyēśwara temple at Thirunallarū has become the most sacred place for the Saivites and there are specific references in the Devarām hymnals about the various festivals and abhishekas of the Lord. Saints Thirugnāna Samambandar, Thirunavukkarasar and Sundarar have referred to such festivals and abhishekas in their holy hymnals. The holy shrine was visited by Saint Thirugnāna Sambandar in the 7th Century A.D., who sung pious devotional hymns in praise of the Lord Darbāraṇyēśwara which runs to 44 lines. Saint Thirunavukkarasar who was his contemporary also have visited the temple and sung beautiful holy hymnals in praise of the Lord which runs into 40 lines. Saint Sundarar, belonging to the Lord and sung holy hymnals constituting 40 lines in praise of the Lord.

The history of the temple can be reconstructed with the help of the stone inscriptions that are found on the walls of the shrines of lord Darbāraṇyēśwara, Sandikēśwara, Thiagarāja, Durgā, on the walls of the Rajāmandapa and on outer walls of the first Pragārā. There are thirty four inscriptions found in the temple of which twenty six belong to the Imperial Chōlas and the rest belong to the periods of the Pāṇdiyas of Madurai and the feudatories of the Chōlas.

The earliest inscription in the temple is found on the northern wall of the central shrine of Lord Darbāraṇyēśwara. It belongs to the twenty seventh renal year of Rājēndra I, the son and successor of Chōla Rājarāja, the great.
Puranas and Legends:

The Hindu temples of South India are noted for their rich legendary and puranic background. These legends and puranic events, which are associated with these temples, could not be logically maintained as valid and historic events. The holy shrine of Lord Darbāraṇyēśwara at Thirunallar is also noted for its rich legendary and puranic background. It is also the unique glory of the temple that it Possesses the Paçchāi Pađigam, which occupies a pride place, in the History of the Hindu Saivite Hymnal literature. This pađigam glorifies the Salient features of the Lord and begins with the opening line "Bhogamartha Pōōn Muľaiya". It is also said to have withstood an ordeal of fire and preserved the evergreen character, hence, came to be familiarly known as "Paçcai Pađigam".

During the course of the Seventh Century A.D., when the Pāndiya Kingdom was under the rule of the King Kun Pāndiya, also known as Ninraśir Neďumāran, Jainism was haunting the kingdom like a wild fire. The king himself had converted to Jainism and became an ardent follower of Jainism. Most people had embraced Jainism except the queen of Kun Pandiya, Mangaiyarkarasi and his minister Kulaçchirai Nāyanār who remained to be very staunch Saivites.

Queen Mangaiyarkarasi and her minister Kulaçchirai Nāyanār were very much worried about the rapid spread of Jainism and the staunch patronage extended to it by the King Kun Pāndiya. So they wanted to find out some other alternative to manage the situation.
During that time, the young Saivite Saint Thirugnāṇa Saṃbhandar was camping at Vēdaraṇyam and performing several miracles. Having learnt of the miracles performed by the young Saivite Saint Thirugnāṇa Saṃbhandar in the Thanjavur district, the Queen and the Minister sent an urgent message to him, and requested him to pay a visit to Madurai and extricate the king and his subjects from the clutches of Jains. The boy saint was quite willing to go to Madurai and help the queen against the spread of Jainism. But his senior companion saint Thirunavuṅkkarasar was quite reluctant and advised his junior companion not to proceed to Madurai as he senses bad signs which may had the boyish Saint at Madurai. But Saint Thirugnāṇa Saṃbhandar had a different opinion and said “If what I think and Praise constantly are tinkling feet or our Lord, no harm will touch me”. Then the Saint sang a pious hymn beginning with, “the Lord Umā with bamboo like shapely shoulders”, and praised and worshipped the Lord and proceeded to Madurai.

When he reached Madurai, the Jains plotted to kill him by setting fire to his place where he had stayed. But the saint, with his yōgic powers got transferred the burning heat to the king Kūṇ Pāndiya and hence, the king unable to tolerate the agony of the heat, wriggled like a worm, due to extreme pain that the scorching heat that had taken hold of his person produced. Saint Sambandar, after learning the agony of the king, reached the spot, sang pious padhīgam starting with the verse, “Maṇṭīnārṇāvathu Neēru”, and then sprinkled a few
grains of the holy ash on the right side of the King's body and also some more grains of it into his mouth. To the astonishment of all present there, the pain had left the region of the king's body. The Jains also, in their turn, chanted the "Aruga Maṇṭra" and stroked the left side of the king's body with peacock feathers, but it only had aggravated the pain. At the request of the king and his ministers, Sambanḍar also applied some more grains of the holy ash on to his left side also. It had been a greatest wonder, that the king who was in great agony of pain, got relieved completely and thus Saint Sambanḍar had established the superiority of Saivism over Jainism.

The Jains who were humiliated with the failure of healing the king's ailment, behaved rashly and threw a foolish challenge over the Saivite Saint Thirugāna Sambanḍar. They Challenged that both the parties should write down their respective mantras on a palm leaf and throw it over a fire and the one that survived the ordeal of fire shall be considered as having established its superiority over the other. The king must have been impressed by the miraculous performance of Gnanāsambanḍar's treatment with a pinch of the holy ash and he might also have been possibly distressed at the collapse of Jainism to which he was a votary. The Saivite Saint also had accepted the challenge, who wanted to convince the king of the superiority of Saivism over the other. The Jains first threw their mantra into the flames which was immediately burnt into ashes by the flames of the fire. Then saint Sambanḍar brought the Thirumurai and pulled one
leaf form the bundle which contained a verse of the forty ninth padigam of Devaram entitled “Bhōgamārtha Pūṇī Muḷaiyal” which was sung earlier by the saint in the Darbāranṣvēswara shrine at Thirunallar. He threw it to the flames and to everybody’s astonishment, the fire could not burn the palm leaf into ashes and the leaf remained absolutely unscathed by the fierce flames. The glory of Saivism was established through this fire ordeal and the palm leaf containing the padigam remained as green as it was, hence, these padigams which were sung in praise of Lord Darbāranṣvēswara and Goddess Prenēswari of Thirunallar, came to be known as “Paçchai Paṭīgams”.

Puranic Stories associated with the temple:

a) Nalā’s redemption:

Nalā was the king of Niṣhadā country who ruled over his kingdom very fairly to the fullest satisfaction of his subjects. He heard about the alluring beauty of Damayanthi daughter of Bhimkā, the ruler of Vidaṛbā Kingdom. So he wanted to marry her, king Bhimkā had decided to the Swayamvara of his daughter for which he had extent invitations to all the princess of the world. Nalā also have received the invitation and proceeded to Vidarbā to attend the Swayamvarā. At the same time four gods namely Īndran, Varnan, Agni and Yaman also proceed to Vidarbā to participate in Swayamvarā in Nalā’s appearance. Nalā had an opportunity to see the alluring beauty of Damayanthi while she was in palace garden. On the day of
Swayamvaram, all the invitees have assembled in the hall, appointed for the purpose and were eagerly awaiting for the arrival of Damayanthi. At the appointed time, Damayanthi entered into the hall holding a garland in her hand. She was accompanied by her close friends and the goddess Saraswathy herself accompanied her and explained the name and other related matters of each and every king and advised her to select carefully a person of her choice. Damayanthi was slowly walking through the hall, carefully listening to the explanations of her divine companion. At last she came to the end of the hall where to her great astonishment saw five persons quite identical in look and dress. Damayanthi, who had already learn about Nalā and his handsome personality had a desire to marry him, but she was greatly got confused while seeing five persons in Nalā’s appearance. Hence, Damayanthi uttered a silent prayer to the gods to help her to reveal the real identity of them, and the gods answered her prayer, she was to differentiate the real Nala and the Celestial beings on certain clues, and thus identified the real Nalā and garlanded him. Thus Damayanthi and Nalā got married and lived quite happily for twelve years. Nalā ruled over his country very nicely and his subjects were greatly benefited by his rule. Nalā and Damayanthi had two children, the elder was a son named Īndran and the younger was daughter Īndrāsēna. Meanwhile, the god of evils, Lord Sani wanted to have his influence on Nalā and thereby creating troubles and misfortunes to Nalā. Hence, Sani was waiting for a change to find out
any flaw to be committed by Nala in his life and activities, so that Sani can use his influence of misfortunes on him. One day, as anticipated by Saturn, Nala, had committed a mistake and thus Saturn’s evil influence and the evil spell fell on Nala. Nala’s younger brother Pushkarā who was also instigated by Saturn, Challenged Nala to a game of gamble, thereby causing trouble to Nala. Nala accepted the challenge and the two brothers began the game and as per the evil designs of Saturn, Nala gradually lost everything, including his Kingdom. Therefore, Nala sent his two children to his father in law, the king of Vidarbha. The he and his wife left for the forest where they wandered here and there eating the available edible fruits only. Both Nala and Damayanthi took shelter in an 100 Mandapa in the forest one night and Nala was very much worried about the Sad plight of Damayanthi. Due to the influence of Saturn, Nala had decided to abandon Damayanthi there itself and accordingly he left his beloved wife Damayanthi and departed to an unknown destination. As he was wandering, one day he saw a serpent called Kārkōta, suffering amidst a fire and so Nala unmindful of the trouble it may cause him, rushed towards it and rescued it but the serpent, in turn, had bit him and Nala’s original figure began to reduce in size and also he lost his original Colour and turned to be as dark as a burnt wood. All these were the result of the evil spell of Saturn.

Kārkōta, the snake rescued by Nala told him that Nala can regain his original form and colour by wearing the snake skin given by
Kārkōta. It also advised Nalā to go to Ayōḍhya and to meet its king Ritupaṇṇā who will engage him in his service. So, as per the advise of the serpent Kārkōta, Nala went to Ayōḍhya where the king entertained him and appointed him as his charioteer and cook. In the meantime, Damayanthi who was deserted by Nalā in the rotten mandapa of the forest, woke up and shocked to learn that Nalā, her husband had deserted her. In the morning she happened to meet some Brahmin who, after learning the pathetic story of Damayanthi, directed her to got to Kingdom of Chēdi. She also went and settled there. Bhimka, the father of Damayanthi who had learned the sad career of his daughter, sent out his soldiers in divergent directions in search of his daughter. Meanwhile, Suvaṅgūgaṁ, the king of Chēdi had learnt about Damayanthi, and sent her to her father in a chariot with all royal honours. Thus Damayanthi reached father’s palace. After she had reached her fathers’ house, a messenger form Ayōḍhya informed Bhimka that Nalā had been appointed the charioteer of Ritupāna. The much worried Bhimka wanted to find to the identity of Nalā, for that an idea had flashed up in his mind. He wanted to conduct a second Swayamvara for his daughter, for which, he thought that king Ritupaṇṇā will also attend with charioteer, so that he may have a chance to find out Nalā. After fixing the date of the second Swayamvara of his daughter, Bhimka sent invitations to all the princes. On the date of Swayamvara, all the those who were invited for the Swayamvara had reached the palace of Bhimka including
After Ritupān̄a with his charioteer Nala. When Bhimkā met Nalā, he asked him certain questions and Nalā in the form Bahukā could not avoid his questions. So Nalā was compelled to reveal his real identify by wearing the Snake's Skin. Soon after wearing the Snake's skin, Nalā had regained his original form and figure. Both Bhimkā and Damayanti were quite surprised to see Nalā, and Damayanti, with great love rushed towards Nalā, and embraced him. Long they stood there speaking no words in silent ecstasy. His children were brought to him, and Nalā embraced them with great love.

The reunited family offered worship and expressed their gratitude to the Lord Almighty. With the help of his father in law, Nalā regained his empire Niśhadā after defeating his brother Pushkārā in the game of gambling. Once again he began to rule over his country fairly to the benefit of his subjects. But still, Nalā could not lead a happy and content life since, still he was under the evil spell of Saturn. Hence Nalā was advised by a Saint called Bharadwāja of Viruṭṭhāchalam who directed Nalā to go to Thirunallar, and offer worship to the deities after having a holy bath in the sacred tanks of the temple. As per the advise of saint, Nalā went to Thirunallar, has a holy bath in the sacred tanks, then offered sincere worship to all the deities there and thus got relieved from the evil curse of Saturn. He regained his metal equipoise and peace of mind. Nalā, after got relieved from the curse of Saturn, stayed at Thirunallar, carried out some renovatory works in the temple. He also have performed the
Kumbābiṣṭeka of the temple, and also excavated a tank which was named after him as “Nala Thīṛṭha”. He prayed to Lord Darbāranyēswara quite fervently that who ever have a holy bath in the tank should get relieved from the evil clutches of Saturn. The Lord also conceded to his request and blessed him with all his choicest blessings and fortunes.

The second legend associated with the temple is concerned with king Thōōyakanda, king of Vēdavarthana Kingdom, which was situated on the banks of the river Gōḍavari. King Thōōyakanda, had no children ever since his marriage, hence he had performed several rites and his marriage, hence he had performed several rites and rituals and ceremonies. At last, he was blessed with a male child. As a token of gratitude and also to share his happiness, he performed yāgās and gave away presents, alms and other things to the poor and needy. He also have donated one hundred cows as free gift to one hundred Brahmins. Those Brahmins who were the recipients of one cow each, found fault with the cows on the ground that one cow is big and another one is small. Hence, there arose a wordy altercation among the greedy Brahmins which finally resulted in mutual exchange of blows. Unfortunately, a severe blow struck on one of the cow’s head which died on the spot bleeding profusively. Hence, the Brahmin who was responsible for the death of the cow, lost his vision and became blind. The poor Brahmin wandered hither and thither in search of remedy for his Sin. At last, he met a saint called Rōmasa,
who directed him to go to Thirunallaru and offer worship to Lord Darbārṇyēswara, who alone could grant redemption of his sins. As per the advise of sage, the poor Brahmin reached Thirunallaru and with high hopes and prayer entered into the temple. When he just entered into the temple, a drop of water fell on his head from a pilgrim who was drying her hair, just after taking a holy bath in the holy tank of the temples. The very moment, the poor Brahmin had regained vision. Then the Brahmin stayed there itself and breathed to his last rendering pious service to the deities and the temple.

The third legend deals with Urichi, the king of Avanti. The sage Bradwaja visited the king’s court one day. He was accorded a very warm welcome by the king and his courtiers. The sage had a course of conversation with all and the king raised a question with regard to the nature of charities. He asked the sage that which or what can be considered the superior charity when compared with others. The sage rightly answered that performing the charity of “anathana” is the superior charity of all. Serving food to the poor and needy, to the starving stomach is the most superior charity of all, said the saint. The Saint also informed the king that if the Charity of anathana was performed at Thirunallaru, in the holy shrine of Lord Darbārṇyēswara, the performer would be blessed with manifold blessings. Hence, the king went to Thirunallaru, worshipped Lord Darbāranyēswara and then performed the charity of anathana. Pleased with the performance of Urichi, the Lord appeared before him and
condescended his grace. The grateful king stayed in the sacred place for a long time and performed the charity of anṇathānā.

The fourth legend associated with the temple is about the Agnivaṇārs. in the city of Kāmbily, there lived a merchant called Daṃtigupta. He was honest and earnest in his business and led a magnanimous life. He had two sons namely Agnivānars. after the death of Dantigupta, his two sons turned themselves to be culprits, indulging in all sorts of mischieves and other corrupt practices in their business. Thereafter, they also turned to be highway robbers and robbed the travelers and others who passed on the highways. One day, a saint passed on the highway and the two brothers attacked him wounded him. The saint who sustained bloody wounds, very affectionately advised the robbers, about the evil of their misdeeds and asked them to suspend their evil doings and to lead a good life. The robbers were moved by the advise of the saint and confessed that they would lead a good life hereafter and requested the saint to instruct them as to how they can be freed from the sins that they have committed so far. The saint took them to Thirunallaru, and asked the brothers to offer worship to Lord Darbāraṇyēswara. The two brothers also did so and obtained salvation.

The next legend connected with the temple is concerned with the king of Kalingā. He was a good ruler who ruled over his kingdom quite fairly and his subjects were greatly benefited by his rule. He wanted to perform the ‘asvamedayāgā’ and also performed it. A saint
who came late to the yāgā got wild as no one was there to receive him. He grew very angry and cursed the king, the queen and his children to turn to be wild elephants. As per the curs, the king and his family became wild elephants and began to wander in the forest. His subjects were very much worried about the pitiable condition of their king and fickle and hence prayed to gods for the recovery of their original form and shape. One day Lord Nāradā had seen the king and his family as wild elephants, took pity on them and advised them to get a drop of water fall on them form the sacred tank Brahmāthitha at Thiruhallaru. The king, the queen and their children were transformed into their original shapes, when a drop of the sacred water fell on them from the head of a pilgrim, who was mopping his wet hair just after a bath in the holy tank.

The last legend associated with the temple is concerned with the ‘Palipita’ of the temple. In ever temple, the Palipita will face the Sanctum Sanctorym, straight at a distance in front of the shrine of the presiding deity of the temple. But in the holy shrine of Lord Darbāraṇyēswara, unusually the palipita has been located not straight to the sanctum sanctorum but a little bit drifted away. The reason for this peculiarity is connected with a legend. In the ancient past, a milk man used to supply milk daily to Lord Darbāraṇyēswara for the purpose of abishēka, as per the order of the king. The accountant of the temple was greedy man who want to misuse the milk meant for the God for his personal use, hence, directed the poor
milk man to supply the milk to his house and in the temple records it would be entered in such a way that the milk has been daily supplied to the temple for abisheka. But the milkman was a honest man who bluntly refused to oblige to the demand of the temple accountant. Hence, the greedy accountant wanted to punish the honest milk man by framing false charges on him and thus got an order from the king that the milkman should be beheaded on the alter of the temple. The poor and helpless milkman prayed and appealed to the Lord Darpārangyēswara that he was innocent and honest. At last, at the time of punishments, the Paḷipita moved away form its original and usual position, in such a way so to face Lord form sidewise. They very act of drifting away of the Paḷipita had very well proved the innocence of the milk man and thus he was rescued from death.

These rich puranic and legendary episodes associated with the temple ad colour and beauty to the history of the temple.

**Architecture:**

This chapter describes about the architectural value of the Lord Darpārangyēswara temple. It is one of the greatest saivite temples in South India. The famous temple is wonderfully constructed with special sculptural and architectural features.
**Lord Darparanyeswara:**

Lord Darparanyeswara is represented in the form of ‘Lānga’, inside the ‘garba-griha’. It is placed on the top of the circular pāta and and the inner entity of the sanctum is free form any embellishment.

The sanctum is square in size and it is measuring 12 ½” in each side. The height of sanctum up to the cornice is 9 ½”. the basement of the sanctum consists of Upapītha, Upāna, Padmavāri, eight edged Kumuga, Kāntha and Varimāṇa. The Padmavāri, located in the lower portion is no clearly carved. There is no yāli frieze or Bhūta or cornice at the basement. The Chōla inscriptions are found on the Upapītha, Kumuda and the walls of the sanctum.

The wall portions of the sanctum are decorated with eighteen and three dēva – kōṣṭhās. The niches of the dēva – kōṣṭhās contain two small pilasters(height 3”) and two tall pilasters (height 5”). Makara-tōrana is placed at the top to the small pilasters and it is carved in a beautiful manner.

The south side dēva-kōṣṭha contains the image of Dakṣināmurthi. At the centure of this Makara – tōrana, a flower design is shown. On the west side dēva-kōṣṭha Lord Lingobhava is housed will all iconographic details. On the north side dēva-kōṣṭha Lord Brahmā is shown and a ‘linga’ is placed at the center of the Makara-tōrana.
The pilasters of the wall contain a square base, rectangular shaft and a capital. The capital is composed of three component parts namely, Kalasa, Palagai and Pidigai. The base is simple and plain. Beautiful flower decoration is shown on the shaft portion. The Palagai and is not so thick. Above the pilasters gana friezes are found. These gana friezes are nicely carved, showing the workmanship of the Later Chōlas. They are shown with various fancy postures, such as playing on musical instruments, dancing and some of them somersaulting. Above the gana frieze, a massive cornice is found. It is decorated with six kūdūs. Above cornice, Vimāna is found.

**Vimāna:**

It is an ēkaṭaḷa structure with circular grīvā and sikarā. The Vimāna is being built with bricks and mortar. Images of Nandi are seen on the four corners of the Vimāna. The griva contains niches on four sides and they contain the Vimanādevadās such Sōmaskaṇḍa on the east, Dakshinamūrthi on the south, Vishnu on the west and Brahmā on the northern side.

The sikarā is adorned with grīvā and it has projecting kūdus crowned by lion face (Simhala Lata). Padmapīṭha is placed at the top of the sikarā. Above the Padmapīṭha, a beautiful kalasā, made up of copper is placed.
**Ardha – Mandapa**

The grabha-friha is proceeded by an ardhamandapā, which is rectangular in shape and it measures 14” X 7”. In outward appearance both the ardhamandapā and the garbha-grihā are in the same unit, but internally it is divided into two by means of a wall with an opening.

The plinth of the ardhamandapā is also decorated like garbha-grihā. It has four niches and foursham niches. The northern side niches of the ardha-mandapā are filled up with the images of goddess Durgā and Pitchādēar (Siva). The southern side niches of the ardhamandapā are filled up with the images of Ganapathi and Jiradēvar.

The walls of the Mandapā are decorated with four pilasters. The size, shape and decoration of the pilasters resemble the garbha-grihā. The Bhūta friezes and the cornice adorn the prastāra portion. The cornice is decorated with six Kūdus. There are no figures in the center of the Kūdus. The Bhūtagaṇas are depicted in different poses such as playing on musical instruments, Jumping, fighting, somersaulting and beating.

**Mukha Mandapā**

This rectangular Mukhamandapā is placed in front of the ardhamandapā and it is measuring 35” x 25”. This Mandapā has two
On the eastern side of this mandapa, a small portico is found. It is supported by four pillars. A big Nandi is placed at the eastern end of this Mandapā and it is facing the garbha-grihā. The ceiling of this mandapā is adorned with modern paintings, related to ancient legends of this temple.

First Prakārā:

The temple has two pārkas (enclosures) one inside and the other outside. The inner prahāra wall (madil) measure 16’ in height with 7’ thickness and 205’ form east to west 105” from north to south. The images of kings, bulls and lions are placed on the top of the walls at equal intervals. It is reflecting the Dravidan style of architecture. The portrait of Sundaramūrthi, one of the sixty three Nāyaṇmārs is housed on the eastern side of the first Prakāra. On the south side of this prakāra long platform is found with the height of 5’. A row sixty three Nāyaṇmārs in the form of sculptures and placed on the platform.

A square small mandapā is found, at the end of the platform. It popularly known as Nala Mandapā, measuring 4’ in each side. It is being constructed by bricks and mortar. The inner dies of this mandapa is free form any embellishment. This mandapa might have been constructed, in memory of king Nalā in the previous century.
sham niches and six pilasters. The outer walls of the Mandapā are bearing Chōla inscriptions.

Some notable figures are found between the pilasters. They are nicelay decorated. Among them are tow women shown in jumping and dancing positions which are enchanting. The pilasters are also interesting and impressive. The palagai of the pilaster is as thick as that of ardhamandapā and garbha-grīhā. Generally the walls of this Mandapā are simple and plain.

Inside of this Mandapā, six pillars are placed in two rows. A small entrance is found on the north corner of the Mandapā and the usual entrances are found on the south and east side of the mandapā.

There is a four feet height platform found at the north side of this mandapā. The processional idols of the temple are kept there behind the safe iron gate, which covers the platform.

**Mahā Mandapā**:

A rectangular Mahāmandapā is found in front of the Makāhamandapā. It is popularly known as Rajamandapa. This is the longest Mandapā in the temple and it measure 62" X 50". This Mandapā is supported by 42 pillars. These pillars are arranged in six rows with broad gap at the centre. These pillars are square in size and decorate with elephant figures.
The shrine of Lord Sorna Ganapathi is located on the south western corner of this prakar. A small portico is found in front of this shrine. It is supported by four pillars.

On the north western corner, a rectangular Mandapā is located, which is called Ennaikāppu Mandapā and it measure 26’ x 20’. This mandapā is supported by twelve pillars each pillar is having a square base, a rectangular shaft and capital. The parts of the capital are arranged in an orderly manner, bearing the parts as kalasā, kudam, ideal palagai and pōdigal. At the centre of this Mandapā, a square dais is found. It is simple and plain. The walls of this mandapā are being constructed with bricks and mortar.

Pulavar Tirumēni Nagārajan is of the opinion that the pillars, may be assigned to the feudatories of the later Chōlas on Stylistic grounds. Further two inscriptions of Kōpperunginga are found in the temple. Hence this mandapa might have been constructed by Kōpperunginga kādavarāyan, one of the later Chōla feudatories.

Chandikēswara Shrine:

A small rectangular shrine is dedicated chandikeśwar. It is found at the middle of the northern side of the first praran and is measuring 14’ X 8’. The adhisthāna portion of this shrine resembles the adhithāna of the Darpāraṇyēswara shrine in the temple. In shape, style and decoration. On the basis of the architectural style, the central shrine of Lord Darpāraṇyēswara and this shrine may be
considered as a part of the original shrine. The walls of the shrine are decorated with pilasters and without deva-kosthas.

It is an ēkatāla structure. The glober griva, in the Vimāna contains niches at the four sides. The niches contain stucco figures of Vimanādevas. Apart from these, small stucco figures of rishis and gods are seen on the intervals of the above said niches. The griva is topped by round shaped 'sikarā'. A beautiful ‘kalasā’ is present at the top of the sikarā.

A small portico is found in front of this shrine. It is a square structure and it measure 8’ in all side. It is supported by four pillars. These pillars are having square base, rectangular shaft and capital. The ceiling of this portico is attached to the northern wall of the Mukhjamanḍapā.

A separate shrine facing the south is constructed for Lord Bairavā. It is situated on the northern part of this prakara. The walls of the shrine are simple and plain.

The shrine of the Lord Natarājā is placed next to the shrine of Bairavā on the northern part of prakāra, and it is measuring 20’ X 14’. The walls of the shrine are decorated with pilasters.

Thrirumaligai portion of this prakāra is raised structure found throughout this prakāra. It has one story. This tiurmaligai portion is totally supported by 88 pillars - 52 pillars are in front row and 36 pillars are in the back side row. Only the pillars in the front row are
decorated. They consist of a four edges base, over which are an eight edged shaft, 'palagai' and 'pēdigai'.

The south west walls on the tirumaligai portion carries some paintings associated with 'Sthala Purāṇa' stories. On stylistic ground this tirumaligai portion may be assigned to the Vijayanagar period.

**Kootaigōpura:**

The basement of this gōpura (Fig. 8) is made of stone and it measures 25' X 17'. The height of this gopura is 55'. Eight pilasters appear on the wall potion of the gōpura. 'Padmāvari' and sixteen angled 'Kuda' are placed in the 'adhisthana' portion of this gōpura. Cornice is adorned with 'Kūs'. 'Yāli' frieze is seen on the top of the cornice. Above 'Yāli' frieze the super structure is placed. It is made up of bricks and mortar. The niche of the first tier is guarded by two as seen in the five tier gōpuras.

Each tier has a small niche. The size of the niche is gradually decreases form the bottom to top, small 'Dvārapālakṣa' guard every niche, more over a lot of minor stucco figures are found in every tier. On the to of the above tier a rectangular 'sikhara' is found. Both the north and south sides of the 'sikhara' are decorated with simhamkha' (lion face). The sikhara is voered with barreled roof. Five copper kalasās are found at the top of the gōpura.
Second Prakāra:

From east to south in the second prakāra, one can see the way to 'Saraswathi 'thīrthā'. It covers three acres of land. The surrounding edge and steps are constructed with stones and bricks.

On the north western corner of second prakāra, a rectangular mandapā is located. It popularly known as Vasaṇḍa mandapā and it measures 46' and 30'. There are eighteen pillars in the Mandapā. They are arranged in six rows. There are no decoration on the pillars. The walls of this mandapā are simple and plain.

In front of this mandapā, a portico is found. It barrel vaulted roof with galley ends. At the top of the roof a fine lotus is carved. The barrel vaulted roof system was introduced by Nāyaks. So on stylistic ground this mandapa may be assigned to the Nāyaks period.

A square yāgasālai is found, on the north east corner of the second prakāra and it measures 21' in each side. The walls of Yagāsālai are simple and plain.

Kalāsthiranāthar Shrine:

A rectangular Kalāstināthar shrine is placed next to the Yāgasalai, in the northern part of the second prakāra and it measures 26' and 15'. It consists of garbhagrahā and an ardha mandapā. A cylindrical 'linga' is placed on a round lotus pitha. A small Nandhi and 'Palipitha' are found at the centre of ardhamandapā. On the south
side of this mandapa, sculptures of snake with five and single hoods are placed. The outer walls of the sanctum have three empty niches.

**Bhōgamartha Pōōnmulai Amman Shrine:**

Amman shrine in this temple is located at the eastern side of the second prakara. This south facing shrine consists of a sanctum, an ardhamandapā, Mukhāmandaṇḍaṇa and a mandapā.

The sanctum of this shrine is square in size and it measure 10' in each side. Inside of the sanctum goddess Bhōgamartha Pōōnmulār Amman, consort of Lord Darparāṇyēswara is seen in a sitter posture.

The outer walls of sanctum, contain three dēva-kosthas. But three are no images in them. Eighteen pilasters are seen on the three sides of the walls. The prastāra portion is not decorated. Around the sanctum modern structure. It is supported by twenty pillars. The pillars are having square base, rectangular shaft and a capital.

A small mandapa is found in front of the Ardhamandapā. It is popularly known as Mukha Mandapā. Its entrance is flanked with four pilasters. A small bull and palipitha are found at the entrance of this mandapa.

There are two dvārapālikas, 8' in height made up of stucco guard the entrance of this mandapā. A fine stucco figure of goddess Gajalakshmi is placed at the top of the door way, leading to the Amman shrine.
**Urchva Mandapa:**

A rectangular mandapa is found in front of the pōõnmulai amman shrine. It is called Urchava Mandapa, and it measures 60’ X 40’. This mandapa is supported by fifteen pillars in three rows. They are beautifully designed. There are a lot of modern paintings portrayed on the ceiling of the mandapa, which exhibit may yogis, Natarāja, plan of this temple, marriage of Meenakshi and some other mythological stories.

A few images of fishes are inscribed here and there, in the roof of this mandapa. The fish was royal emblem of Pāndiyas. One may presume that the Urchava mandapa might have been constructed during the period of Pāndiyas.

**Sanēśswara Shrine:**

In all the south India temples, Saturn is found as one, among the Navagrahās and it is rare and unusual to find Him alone form the company other planets. At Sōōriyanar Kōil (Tanjore district) there is a separate temple for Saturn similar to konak in orissa. And at Thirunallaru Lord Sanēśswara is separately housed on the left side niche of Kattaigōpura. The Lord Sanēśswara is seen in graceful standing posture, with His vehicle crow, facing the five tier gopura.

**Five Tier Gōpura:**

A rectangular basement of this five tier gōpura is found at the entrance. It is measuring 37’ from north to south and 28’ form east to
west. The height of the gopura is 95'. The basement of the gopura is made up of stone. Padmavāri and sixteen edged kumuta are found in the adhīsthāna portion of the gopura. The wall portion of the gopura is decorated with ten pilasters. The pratara portion contains a massive cornice, which is decorated with kudus. Yāli frieze is found at the top of the cornice.

This five tier gopura is made up of stones and bricks. The first tier's niche is measuring two and half feet length, flanked with two ‘dvārapālakas’. A small barrel vaulted roof with rectangular ‘Panjāra’ is placed on the corner of the tier. Every tier has a small niche in the centre.

Small ‘Dvārapālaks’, made up of stucco are standing on either side of every niche. Lot of minor stucco figure adorn each tier. A rectangular ‘sikhara’ is found on the top tier. It is ornamental with ‘Simhamuga’ (lion face), on the north and south sides sever copper kalasā are found above the sikhara.

**Prakāra:**

The second prakāra wall (madil) is measuring 13’ height with 8’ thickness and 468’ form east to west and 227’ from north to south. Bull and lion images are placed in all corners of this wall and they make this wall highly decorative. On stylistic ground and prakāra wall may be assigned to the imperial Chōlas.
Many rooms and Mandapaś are seen on the outer side of the gopura. Pasumadam, Vahānamandapā and administrative office are found on the left side. Besides Edaiyan Sannithi pilgrims resting hall and Muthupallāku Mandapa are located on the right side.

The pilgrims resting hall covers a large area, measuring 112’ form east to west and 50’ form north to south. The above said constructions are recent origin.

Pūjas and Festivals:

The timing of the daily pūjas of the temple are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.no</th>
<th>Name of the poojas</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Naivethiams offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Uṣṭhakālam (Early morning)</td>
<td>5.30 A.m</td>
<td>White rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Kālasaṇḍī (morning)</td>
<td>9.00 A.m</td>
<td>Sutha Annam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Uṭṭhikkālam (Noon)</td>
<td>12.00 Noon</td>
<td>Curd Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sayaratchai (evening)</td>
<td>5.00 P.M</td>
<td>Pongal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ḣraṇḍāmkālam (early night)</td>
<td>8.00 P.M</td>
<td>White Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Arthajām (night)</td>
<td>9.00 P.M</td>
<td>Samba Sātham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Festivals:

Festivals are part and parcel of every Hindu temple. Many colourful festivals are being celebrated in the temple of Darpāraṇyēśwara, Thirunallaru. Throughout the year, there are colourful festivals, which are celebrated by the Hindus very enthusiastically. From the Tamil month Chittirai to last month Panguni, there are festivals which have been celebrated in the temple.

Sanipeyarchi Festival:

Lord Darpāraṇyēśwara temple at Thirunallaru has been very familiarly noted for its “Sanipeyarchi Festival”. The transit of the planet Saturn from one zodiacal sign to another is called as “Sanipeyarchi” in Tamil, which has been observed in a very grand manner in this temple. According to legends, Saturn is the son of sun, the chief of the Solar system. Saturn was ordered by his father to take his place among the planets and engage himself in meeting out joys and sorrows to mortals in proportion of the merits and demerits earned by them in their past lives. In the Solar system, Saturn is the biggest plant and its only next to Jupiter in size and magnitude. It is 886 million miles away from the sun, the planet taken two and half years to transit from one zodiacal sign to another and it taken thirty years to complete his full round. His transit from one zodiacal sign to another is looked up with great significance in the Sivā temples in general and in Thirunallaru temple in particular. This day is called “Sanipeyarchi” and on that particular day, around five lakhs of people
gather at Thirunallaru from all over India. On that day Lord Saninēeswarā has been offered continuously with Pōojas, abishēkas, archanās and Naivēthiyas and devotees.

**Astrological Aspects of Sani (Saturn)**:

**Sani Dasai**:

The Navagrahā Sani used to stay in a rasi for about two years. Since he used to stay in a rasi or house for a longer period, the fortunes and misfortunes that he may cause also last longer. If the result is of good fortune, it period. Sani Bhagavān, as per the series of the Pañccha Pōothas (five elements), he bongs to the “Āgaya grahā”. In the pulses of the human beings, he stays in the “Vātha Nādi”. The parts of a human being such as thighs, toe, foot are under his control. Among the Navagrahās, he belongs to the type of the “Eunuch”, neither male nor female. Both Maharam and Kumbam (Capricorn and Aquarius) are the rāsis which are under his control, but still, when he enters into the Tula rāsi (Libra) he gains super power. When he moves into Mēṣha rāsi (Aries), he is seen declined in power. His friendly houses are both Rishabam and Mithunam (Taurus and Gemini) and his enemy houses are Kadakam, Simam and Viruĉhika (cancer, Leo and Scorpio). Staying at a particular house, he can look at the houses of 3, 7 and 10. Among them, his look will be powerful on the 3rd and 10th houses, Sani dasai lasts for nineteen years. When he about to move from one rasi to another. He used to indicate the results that
may happen to the next house that he is going to occupy well in advance, say even before six months.

**Sani and its results:**

In a person’s horoscope, if Sani is present in that person’s rāsi, he causes bad health, enmity, change of place, loss of mental peace etc., when he enters into the Second rāsi, there will loss of money, a chance to go abroad so that he may have to leave his family. There also will be lost of properties and the family relationship may detoriate. But, when he enters into the third rāsi, he may grant good fortunes like success in activities, improvement of facilities, good health and free flow of money. When he enters into the fourth house, there will disorder in the family due to unnecessary expenses, the family income may decline, and also there may be bad health among the family members. When he moves in to the fifth house, the results will not be good. There will be less peace of mind, mental fortune, and even there may be the separation of husband and wife. But, when he moves on to the sixth house, there will be good health, success and good spirit in the life.

When Saturn enters into the seventh house, there will be loss of money to others, there will be transfer of places. When he moves on to the eights house, one has to be very cautious, since all the efforts will result in failure. The same results may happen when he moves to the ninth house. There will be an increase in the enemies, all planned efforts will be blocked. When he is present in the tenth house, there
will be a decline in position and status and there will be much delay in all efforts. But, when he enters into the eleventh house, he grants good fortunes such as an increase in money power, acquirement of new things, happiness in the family, success in every thing, things will happen according to plans and the status and position will improve. When he enters into the twelfth house, there will be loss of money and property, but when looked over by other “Suba grahās”, there may be a change and as a result, the purchase of Lands, vehicles may happen.

**Astrological details about Yeḻharai nāṭtu sani (7 ½ Year Sani):**

The 7 ½ year dwelling period of Sani has been calculated as per astrology in the following manner. It is so calculated in such a way taking into account of the 2 ½ year dwelling period of Sani in one’s own rāsi or “Janma rāsi” plus 2 ½ years of its period dwelt in the previous rāsi and another 2 ½ years of its dwelling period next to its janma rāsi all put together 7 ½ years.

Saint Pulipāṇi, speaks vividly about the good and bad results of the “Yeḻharai Sani”. This may happen in every one’s life for three times as 2 ½ + 2 ½ + 2 ½ years. There three rounds are called as “Maṅgu Sani”, “Pōṅgu Sani” and “Maranach Sani”.

The 2 ½ year period of Mangu Sani causes much trouble and dangerous. The second 2 ½ year period of Pōṅgu Sani causes very
good fortunes. The third round of 2 ½ year period of Maranach Sani causes fear of death.

Generally speaking, the 7 ½ years of Sani’s presence in the jenma rasi, previous to that and next to that can be a period of disaster, trials and tribulations which can be solved only through doing pariharas.

**The 7 ½ Year Period of Jañma Sani:**

The first round of the 2 ½ years of Jañma Sani begins from one’s own jañma rāsi first house. During this period, a variety of problems pertaining to health money, family relationship, external relationship, unwarranted trouble will happen. This period will be a period of trials and tribulations.

When Jañma Sani is present is Jañma rāsi itself, the second round of 2 ½ years, which is called the “Mathima Kāla”, also will be a period of troubles and misfortunes of different nature.

When Sani moves to the next rāsi from the jañma rāsi, it is the third round of 2 ½ years which brings about happiness, all other related fortunes.

**Ashtamathu Sani:**

When Sani dwells in the eighths house of one’s jañma rāsi, it is called the “Ashtamathu Sani”. This period also lasts for 2 ½ years which will be a period of troubles and misfortunes.
Kandach Sani:

When Sani is present in the seventh house of Jaṅma rāsi, it is called the period of Kandach Sani. If the seventh house is Meena rāsi (Pisces) and if Sani is present is that, the period will be calculated as Kandach Sani Period for the persons of Kanni rāsi (Virgo). This period also will not be a favourable period and there will be lot of troubles.

Arthāshta Sani:

When Sani is present in the fourth house of one's Jaṅma rāsi, this period is called Arthāshta Sani period. “Ashtam” means eighth and “Artham” means “half”, that is half of eight, hence four. This period also will not be a period of good fortunes.

Mathima Sani Period:

If Sani is present in one's Jaṅma rasi in 5, 9 and 10th houses this period is called Mathima Sani period.

Parihārā for Sani Thōsha:

The favourite day for Sani is Saturday. Those who undergo the various afflictions of Sani can appease him only through Pūjjas, archanās and abhishekas as per the āgamic rites and rituals as prescribed for Sani. On any Saturday Sani Bhagavān should be dressed in black colour, adorned with blue stone and Nilothpalam (karun Kuvalai) flower. The fire pit should be filled with the leaves and wooden parts of Vanni tree and the Yāgā fire should be lit. for naivēthiya, sesame, sesame powder mixed rice should be prepared.
and offered. With gingili oil, lamps would be lit and dipārathanā should be shown using camphor. Sani Bhagavān’s hymns shall be sung in Yathukula Kāmpōthi rāga. Black colour cow can be given as “dhāna”. Apart form these, there are other offerings to appease Sani so as to get relieved from its afflictions.

**Sani : Navagraha Stōthiram :**

Sani Thiyāna Slogam :

I pray Lord Sanēśwara who is as black as dye, son of Sōōriya, brother of Yamā, born to Sāya dēvi and Sōōriya, I pray you.

Sri Sani Sthuthi :
The world is created by Brahmā. Vishnu protects it. At the end Rudra destroys it. Sadā Siva Brahman recreates it only with your grace.

**Sani : Navagraha Gāyathiri :**

- 1. Gothira
- 2. Supreme Lord
- 3. Prathyathi Devada
- 4. Worshipping Lord
- 5. Authority
- 6. Direction
- 7. Language
- 8. Caste
- 9. Dress
- 10. Consort
- 11. Son
- 12. Vehicle

**Astrological association of Sani :**

1. Gōthira  
   Kāshiya bar
2. Supreme Lord  
   Yamā
3. Prathyathi Devada  
   Prajāpathy
4. Worshipping Lord  
   Durgā and Sāstha
5. Authority  
   Maharam and Kumbam  
   (Capricorn and Aquarius)
6. Direction  
   West
7. Language  
   Alien language
8. Caste  
   Sūdra
9. Dress  
   Black
10. Consort  
   Nēēla
11. Son  
   Kulikan
12. Vehicle  
   Crow
13. Flower  
14. Tree  
15. Grain  
16. Food  
17. Metal  
18. Gem  
19. Dwelling period in a rasi 2 ½ years  
20. Dasai  
21. Properties  
22. Fortunes  
23. Sthala  

Karṇguvalai  
Vaṇṇi  
Sesame  
Sesame rice  
Iron  
Blue  
Āyulkāran, death  
in 3 and b-good fortunes  
Thirunallar
Foot Notes


2. ibid., P.53


7. A.R.E. 435 of 1965/66

8. ibid., 436 of 1965 / 66


10. ibid., P. 55.

11. ibid., P. 56.


15. ibid., P. 54

16. ibid., P. 58

17. ibid., P. 62


19. ibid., P. 74


22. ibid., P. 166.

23. ibid., P. 164.

24. ibid., P. 169.

25. ibid., P. 169.

26. ibid., P. 170

27. ibid., P. 170

28. ibid., P. 170