CHAPTER I

Structure of the Navakailasam Temples
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The nine temples popularly known as Navakailasam for Saivites are situated on the northern and southern banks of the river Thamirabarani at Papanasam, Cheranmahadevi, Kodaganallur, Kunnathoor, Murappanadu, Srivaikuntam, Thenthirupperai, Rajapathi, and Chernthapoomangalam. These Navakailasam temples were built at different times. The inscriptions of the temples have furnished the evidences for determining the age of the temples.

PAPANASAM

Papanasam is situated, at a distance of forty-five kilometres from the southern Tirunelveli, under the foot of Pothigai hills. Tirunelveli is connected with Papanasam by two roads, one through Mukkudal and the other through Cheranmahadevi.

The Siva temple at Papanasam situated on the northern bank of the river Thamirabarani is one of the famous Navakailasams. The place where this temple is situated is noted for scenic beauty. The perennial river Thamirabarani which starts its journey from Pothigai mountain makes fertile the districts of Tirunelveli and Thoothukkudi.
It is believed that, Sage Agasthiar had performed his penance here and hence the place gained importance.\(^1\)

There are seven tiers in the *Rajagopuram*. The height of the temple-tower is 80 feet. This temple is divided into two parts. In one part, Papanasam Perumal adorns. He is known in different names such as Vairasalingam, Pazhamarainayagar, Mukkalalingar, and Paranjothi Lingar. There are three courtyards in front of the Sanctum Sanctorum of the lord. There are also *Mada veedhi, Nandavana chutru, Utchutru Mandapa, Vasantha Mandapa, Vahana Mandapa* and *Thirumana Mandapa*. The *Navagrahas* are installed in front of the *Thirumana Mandapa*.\(^2\)

The entrance is 78 feet wide. It stands on a lofty plinth built on solid stone masonry. It is a stable foundation for the superstructure built of brick and mortar. The superstructures which are pyramidal in shape, seem to be well balanced in the *Rajagopuram*. The horizontal and vertical arrangements seem to be well balanced in the *Rajagopuram*. The inner part of the first two tiers is made up of wood with well carved sculptures and royal images. The *Rajagopuram* is of 30 feet height with black stones and above it, are burnt bricks and lime mortar. On the top of the *Rajagopuram*, there are seven *Kalasams*, (pitchers) facing foursides of the *simhaladams*. The height of main door at the entrance is 16 ½ feet and its

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1. Interview with Purushothaman S, Papanasam, dt. 24 June 2008.
width is 8 ½ feet. A small wicket-door is also found in the bottom of the northern door.

The presiding deity is made up of salagram and hence the gate way that is in its front has become the principal entrance. Inside this walled enclosure, a series of concrete courtyards surround the central nucleus, on which the main sanctum of Lord Mukkalalingam is located. There are thus two courtyards in the temple and the local Saivites would add the Madaveethi or the main street around the temple as the third one.

PRAKARAMS

Prakaram is locally known as Thiruchutru. In almost all Hindu temples, there is more than one prakaram. Generally, in the outer prakaram, upadevas are established so as to enable to worship by different kinds of people.

FIRST PRAKARAM

The first prakaram of the Papanasam temple is situated encircling the sanctum sanctorum and Ardhamandapa of Mukkalalingam and Ulagamman shrines. The three sides of this prakaram walls encircle,

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leading to front portion of Mahamandapa. It has seventy feet length and
twenty feet width on all sides.

There are twenty seven stone pillars at a gap of seven feet in
between each pillar and height of 13 feet on walls between the
Thalavarisai, Karuvarai and Arthamandapa of Mukkalalingam and
Ulagamman shrines. On south, west, north and eastern side of first
prakaram Suriyan, Suradevar, sixty three Nayanmars, Sapthamathar,
Kannimula Vinayakar, Dakshinamoorthy, Urchavar, Kalyanasundareswarar, Agasthiar, Lopa Muthirai Sivan, Murugan,
Lakshmi, Saneeswarar, Kala Bairavar, Chandran and Athikaranandhi
shrines are situated.

ARDHAMANDAPA

Ardhamandapa of the Papanasam temple located in front of
Karuvarai, is in rectangular shape.\(^5\) The Ardhamandapa is considered as
the shoulder of the shrine.\(^6\) The flat roof of arthamandapa which remains
as a part and parcel of the cell rises to a height of about 13 feet from its
interior ground level. It is covered with walls on all four sides and at the
front wall, the entrance door is fixed. Another door is situated on the
southern wall. In front of karuvarai entrance, the Nandhi statue in sitting

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\(^5\) Ibid., p.10.
posture is found. In the south-west corner, bronze icons of Vinayakar, sixty-three Nayanmars, Murugan, Valli and Deivanai are kept on a platform.

In the middle of northern wall of ardhamandapa, the Nataraja shrine is situated. From head to foot, it is seven feet high. Three-foot bronze icons of Nataraja and Sivagami Amman are also installed.

MAHAMANDAPA

Mahamandapa of the temple is situated in front of the ardhamandapa of Mukkalalingam and Ulagamman. This mandapa is supported by 49 pillars. It is of 50 feet in length and 40 feet in width. Sandikeswarar shrine is located in the northern side of the first prakara, in between northern wall of Mukkalalingam shrine and southern outer wall of Ulagamman shrine.

The Nandhi statue which is in sitting posture is situated in front of the mahamandapa and the balipida is behind the Nandi. Balipida or altar became a notable feature in the temple architecture from the time of Cholas. Altar became the sculptural formula for the temple as a whole. Puduga, Jagathi, Kumuda, Kala Kumbha, Kabotha and Padma are the salient features of the balipida. According to the Agamas, the balipida is raised to the level of mulasthana. On the balipida, the portion of offering
of the lords' Neivedya articles is placed before pujas. The Kodimaram Esakki Amman stone statue is also placed in front of the balipida.

**DWAJASTHAMPA**

The installation of kodimaram or dwajasthampa was in practice from the second century A.D. In temple structure, kodimaram is called as sookshumalingam. Kodimaram is erected behind the balipida. It has some salient features in its construction. They are pitha, thalam, palaha, virutha kumuda, kantha upapitha and padma. Kodimaram is installed on a platform which is 11 feet in length and 13 feet in width. The teakwood flag-staff has been covered with gold coated sheets in this temple. The total height of kodimaram is of 42 feet, like the height of Mukkalalinga vimanas. On the flag-staff, Nandi in a sitting pose is engraved and it faces the main deity. In this flag-staff, flag is hoisted during the Chithrai festival to the Mukkalalingam. At the time of flag hoisting, special abisekham with oil, milk, curd and turmeric powder is conducted to moolavar.

**ULAGAMMAN SHRINE**

Ulagamman shrine is found in the northern side of the Mukkalalingar shrine. The Amman statue is of five feet in standing

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posture, lifting right hand to bless the devotees and left hand placed downwards.

The *vimana* is square shaped up to griva and tower storeys. The golden *kalasam* is placed on the top of the tower. The Amman shrine is 36 feet long, 36 feet wide and 12 feet high. Above its terrace, the *vimana* is situated. It stands to a height of 27 feet. In the eastern and western grivaniches, the *suthai* sculptures of Ulagamman are decorated with twelve women toys. The northern and southern sides of *vimana* are adorned with *simhaladams* and *suthai* sculptures of Ulagamman.

SECOND PRAKARAM

The second *prakaram* of the temple is in between the compound wall and Thalavarisai *prakara* outerwall. *Rajagopuram, Mukamandapa,* Navagraha shrine, Vinayakar shrine, *Thirumadaipalli* and *Kilamaram* are situated.\textsuperscript{10} Second Prakara *Rajagopuram* rises from the middle of Eastern wall of *mukamandapa*. In the compound wall, 17 feet high is made up of granite stones and above it, is a layer of three feet of burnt bricks. The width of wall is 4 feet. The eastern and western walls are 340 feet length. The length of northern and southern side walls are each 323 feet. Nandhi *suthai* sculptures in sitting posture are situated on the four corners of the temple wall.

\textsuperscript{10} Field Study, dt. 30 June 2008.
RAJA GOPURAM

Papanasam, the first among the Navakailasam, has an imposing tower called Rajagopuram which was constructed on Dravidian style of architecture. The temple tower has seven tiers. The height of the gopuram is 80 feet. The temple deities made up of suthai are depicted in the Rajagopuram.

PANTHAL MANDAPA

Panthalmandapa is found in front of eastern entrance facing east. It has sixty eight stone pillars. This mandapa is of 208 feet length, 52 feet width and its height is 12 feet. Suthai sculptures of Mukkalalingam and Ulagamman sitting on the Nandi, the worshipping posture of Agasthiar who raises his hand over the head to worship the lord and the goddess are located on the top of the entrance of the Panthalmandapa.

TEMPLE CAR

The temple cars are used as vahana and vehicle for Gods in festivals. There is a mandapa known as car-mandapa which is situated at north mada street. This car relates to 20th century’s polygonal shape. Its height is 20 feet standing over the plinth. The temple car’s total height is

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30 feet. The axle length is 19 feet. The car reveals a wonderful craftsmanship.

_Urchavar_, the festival deity is placed on the chariot on festival days and it is drawn by the public through the four car streets with the rope tied to the chariot. The temple car streets are in four directions in front of the _Mukkalalingam_ temple. After the close of the festival, the portable upper structures of the chariot are removed and kept safely in the temple. The bottom portion including the big wheels is stationed at north mada street. In the month of July every year, a grand car festival is celebrated with pomp and pleasure.

THEPPAKULAM – TEMPLE-TANK

The huge temple-tank is situated on the north of temple at a distance of 300 feet. The term _theppam_ means float, a wooden plank on which _Urchavar_, the festival deity, is placed and this raft goes around in the water tank. In its centre, a _nirali mandapa_ is situated for the Urchavar and _pujas_ are offered.
Theppakulam is also known as terkkulam (car tank), Thirukkulam (holy tank), Thirthakulam (ablution tank), Puskarani (water reservoir), konard (square tank) and sunai (spring). It is of 200 feet in length and breadth. In the centre, the Nirali Mandapa is of 18 feet height, which is situated on a 3 feet high platform and contains four stone pillars on each side.

A gopuram with a height of 8 feet is over the mandapa. A kalasam is fixed on the top of the gopuram on all four sides in this tank and outside this tank, a mandapa of 45 feet length and 30 feet width is found. The mandapa has twenty pillars, (five pillars on each side). The mandapa is encircled by walls on three sides except on the eastern side.

CHERANMAHADEVI

The Cheranmahadevi is the mid-way between Tirunelveli and Papanasam on a highway road. It is also on the Tirunelveli and Shenkottai railway line. This town is 16 kilometres away from Tirunelveli on the southern bank of river Thamirabarani. Ammainathar alias Kailasanathar

17. P.S I. No.12.
temple is situated in the north eastern side of Cheranmahadevi and is 2.40 kilometres away from the town.

Cheranmahadevi is the well-known sacred place both for Saivist and Vaishnavist sects. Indeed there is a history behind the name of the town Cheranmahadevi. It is one of the holy centres in Tamilnadu. The temples of Cheranmahadevi have made a unique contribution in constructing the religious, social and political life of the past and present people. These temples of Cheranmahadevi also supply the various valuable inscriptions which serve as authentic evidences to construct the history of later Cholas, later Pandyas and Nayaks, who were the ruling class of medieval period of South India.

Ammainatharsamy temple was built around 1009 A.D by Raja Raja and named after his title Cholendra Simha Iswara Mudiya Mahadevar.\textsuperscript{18} The other names of the temple are Kailayattalvar temple,\textsuperscript{19} Cholendra Singaiswaran temple,\textsuperscript{20} Rajathi Raja temple and Ammainathar temple.\textsuperscript{21} It contains more than 38 inscriptions. The presiding deities of this temple are Sri Ammainathar alias Kailasanathar and Goddess Avudainayaki.\textsuperscript{22} There are two big gates. A small Raja gopuram is on the Eastern side. Lord

\textsuperscript{18} Balasubramanian S.R., Middle Chola Temples, Haryana, 1905, pp.174-175.
\textsuperscript{19} A.R.I.E., 1916-1917, No .626 .
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 1895, No.192 ; S.I.I., Vol.V, No.756.
\textsuperscript{22} Interview with Swamykannu S., Cheranmahadevi, dt. 03 July 2008.
Ammainathar is consecrated on the northern side and Goddess Avudainayaki on the southern side of the temple.

Four inscriptions of Raja Raja Chola (1008-1012), one inscription of Rajendra Chola, six inscriptions of Jatavarma Sundara Chola Pandya, five inscriptions of Sundara Chola Pandya Deva, six inscriptions of Udayar Vikrama Chola Pandya Deva, one inscription of Maravarman Parakrama Chola Pandya, one inscription of Kulasekara Pandya (1194-1207 AD), one inscription of Vikrama Pandya Deva (1291 AD) and three inscriptions of Koneri Meikondan are found on the walls of Ammainatharsamy temple.

Lord Ammainathar is suyambulingam, not man made. In this temple, Nandi and Kodimaram are found. Inside the temple Mandapa, Dwarapalakas and Nandi have been consecrated. On the South, Lord Nataraja with Goddess Sivagami and Goddess Karaikal Ammai are enshrined.

Idols of surya and chandra are found facing west in the temple. There is a gate facing south and a mandapa in the east. This mandapa is in a dilapidated condition with damaged pillars. The sculpture of sage Romasa, who worshipped lord Siva here, is seen on a pillar inside the temple. The devotees worship saint Romasa in this temple.

The scenes of two ladies who crush paddy with thredy are seen on the southern side. On the western side of the temple, Lord Kasiviswanathar and Goddess Visalakshi are seen and on the northwestern side, Lord Subramanyar, Valli, Deivanai, Gajalakshmi, Saneeswarar and Chandikeswarar are seen.

The inscriptions belonging to Pandya period are also found in this temple. There is a belief that the Chera King’s daughter was Madevi and hence, the King named this place after his daughter’s name. Thus, it is called Cheranmahadevi. In the southern and western walls of the temple, there are three stone inscriptions. Lord Perumal is called as Kailasa Alwar and Kailamudaiyar in these inscriptions. The period of king Kotchadaiya Varman Sundara Chola Pandian and the period of king Rasakesari Varman Raja Raja Devar are inscribed on the stones. The Baktha Vatsalar temple is found near this temple.

There is a yasa theertha near this temple. It is said that God who bestowed moksha to Yasama Munivar appeared here only. The Rana Vimochana rock lies between the yasa theertha and the temple. If anyone takes bath here for 41 days, he will be relieved from any incurable disease.

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24. Interview with Maharaja Pattar K., Cheranmahadevi, dt. 05 July 2008.
Moreover, one should not take bath here with bad thoughts or without sanctity. The festival known as Mahavidhibagam, which is also known as Vyasa Theertham is celebrated during the month of Margazhi (December - January).

Ammainatharsamy temple was constructed by the early Pandya rulers. Inside the sanctum sanctorum, the principal deity Ammainathar is in Suyambulinga form. Inside this walled enclosure, series of concentric courtyards are noticed around the central nucleus on which the main sanctum of Lord Ammainathar is located. There are two courtyards in the temple. The length of garbhagraha is 24 feet, width is of 12 feet and height is of 10 feet. Two dwarapalaka statues are kept one on each side before the karuvarai wall. The antarala is 5.7 feet in length and this is followed by Ardhamandapa.

FIRST PRAKARAM OF THE TEMPLE

First prakaram encircles the sanctum sanctorum and Ardhamandapa of Ammainatharsamy shrine. The three sides of the prakaram walls encircle, leading to front portion of mahamandapa. It is seventy six feet long and thirty four feet wide on all sides.
There are thirty stone pillars at a gap of seven feet in between the 
Thalavarisai, Karuvarai and Arthamandapa. On south, west and northern 
side of first prakara, Adhikara Nandhi, Four Saiva Saints, Surya, Nalvar,
Suradevar, Sapthamathar, Virabhadran, Ganapathi, Kannimula Vinayakar,
Dakshinamoorthy, Somaskandar, Kasiviswanathar, Subramanyar,
Gajalakshmi, Chandikeswarar, Saneeswarar (Saturn) and Chandra are
installed in that order.

ARDHAMANDAPA

Ardhamandapa is also known as Shapanamandapa. Ardhamandapa
of the Cheranmahadevi temple is located in front of Karuvarai, which is
square in shape. It is of 29 feet length, 23 feet width and 16 feet height.
There are sixteen stone pillars in four rows in Ardhamandapa. The height
of the pillar is 10 feet and width is 1½ feet. The pillars have a gap of 6 feet
between one another. It is covered with walls on all four sides and the
front wall has the entrance door. In front of the karuvarai entrance, Nandi
in sitting pose is seen. In the middle of the northern wall of
ardhamandapa, Nataraja shrine is found. Inside the ardhamandapa, there
are a number of fine bronze statues of Nataraja and Sivakami Amman,
brought and kept here from the Deyvisvarsvam temple. The other bronze

statues in the temple are *Adhikara Nandhi, Chandra Sekarar, Cheraman Perumal, Nalvar, Agasthiar* and *Kankalanathar*.

MAHAMANDAPA

*Mahamandapa* is situated in front of the *Ardhamandapa*. This *mandapa* is supported by 24 pillars. It is of 54 feet length and 25 feet width. Two feet height *Nandi* statue in sitting posture is erected on the platform of five feet height. *Balipida* is erected behind the *Nandi*. *Balipida* is of 6 feet long, 6 feet wide and 5 feet high. *Dwajastampa* or flagmast is situated in front of the *balipida*. *Kodimaram* is situated on a platform of five feet height, six feet length and six feet width.

SECOND PRAKARAM

The second *prakaram* of the temple is situated in between the compound wall and the first *prakaram*. The *Rajagopuram* is situated in the middle of eastern wall of *mahamandapa*. The entire outer courtyard is enclosed by a high boundary wall on all sides with only one opening.²⁷ It is the principal gateway in this temple and is the only one on the east. *Rajagopuram* has five storeys with total height of sixty-one feet. The entrance door is of nine feet length and six feet width. It stands on a lofty pillar built of solid stone masonry, which forms a stable foundation for the

super structure built of brick and mortar. The superstructures are pyramidal in shape.

The horizontal and vertical arrangements seem to be well balanced in the *Rajagopuram*. The inner part of the first two storeys is made up of wood with well carved sculptures and images of royal people. *Rajagopuram* is of 30 feet height with black stones and above it, with burnt bricks and lime mortar. In the top of the *Rajagopuram*, there are five *kalasams* or pitchers. *Simhaladams* are facing foursides. A small entrance door with a height of 20 feet and 6 feet width is at the entrance to the temple. Fish, the Pandya symbol is engraved on the northern wall of the inner entrance of *Rajagopuram*. Third prakaram represents the outer space of the temple. Touching the *Rajagopuram* on all four sides, the compound wall is made up of blackstones and above it, is a layer of burnt bricks. The width of the wall is one foot. The length of the walls on northern and southern sides is 137 feet each. The length of the eastern and western walls is 90 feet each.

**KATCHI MANDAPA**

*Katchi Mandapa*, is a hall, situated in front of the *Rajagopuram*. This is of 27 feet length, 27 feet width and 20 feet height. The rows of ten

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pillars hold this mandapa. Vinayakar shrine is situated in the north-eastern side of Ammainatharsamy temple.

GODDESS AVUDAINAYAKI SHRINE

To the south of this temple, the shrine of Goddess Avudainayaki is seen. This shrine was probably in the form of Siva linga in the days of Raja Raja I or his son Rajendra I. It was later converted into Goddess Amman shrine during the days of Kulottunga I. Sri Avudainayaki shrine is to the south of the Ammainathar shrine 54 feet away. Amman statue is of five feet height in standing posture lifting right hand as if blessing devotees and left hand placed downwards.  

The vimana of Amman shrine is square shaped up to storeys and the tower of vimana is Thunkanaimada shaped. Three Kalasams are placed on the top of Thunkanaimadam. Two simhaladams are decorated on the northern and southern side of Thunkanaimadam. The length of Amman karuvarai is 34 feet, width is of 20 feet and height is of 12 feet. In the eastern and western grivaniches, the suthai sculptures of Amman are decorated with twelve women toys. Eleven pilasters and three Devahostas decorate the northern and southern wall of Amman shrine. Six pilasters and one devahosta decorate the western wall of Amman shrine. Ardhamandapa is situated in front of the Amman sannathi. Six rows of

forty two pillars support this mandapa. It is of 30 feet width, 40 feet length and 10 feet height.

Five feet length, five feet width and 10 feet height palliyarai is situated in the middle of northern wall of Ardhamandapa. Dwarapalakar, Hanuman, Sivanadiyars, Vishnu, Elephant and Vinayakar pudai sculptures are erected on the pillars of Ardhamandapa in the third row. Arulmigu Alaivantha Nair Sastha temple is situated in the south-eastern side of the outer wall of Amman shrine.

KODAGANALLUR - SRI KAILASANATHAR AND SIVAKAMI AMMAN TEMPLE

Kodaganallur is the third temple in the serial of Navakailasam. It is located at a distance of one kilometer from the south of Nadukallur which is in Cheranmahadevi- Mukkudal route in Tirunelveli District. Lord Siva reigns here as Lord Sevvai and blesses people.30

The earlier name of Kodaganallur village was Karkodaka kshetra and Kodanur. There is a historical evidence for the name Kodaganallur. Several years ago, a sage was doing penance in the forest. The son of the saint went to collect fuel for performing the penance. The son of the emperor Parishad came that way for hunting. The saint’s son was returning

with the things necessary for the penance. He was shocked to see a snake on the neck of his father. He wondered who had placed the snake on his father’s neck. He was sure that the king’s son must have done this. He got angry and cursed the king’s son thus: - “Since you put a dead snake on my father, your father would be bitten by a snake”. After a few days, the astrologers who studied the emperor’s horoscope said that he had *Sarpa Dosham*. So king Parishad crossed seven mountains and seven seas. He had built a *mandapa* in a ship and started living there to save himself from the snake. The snake known as *Kargodakan* transformed itself into a worm and entered the fruit to be served to the king. Then the snake *Kargodakan* was caught in the wild-fire of the forest. At that time, King Nalan who had lost his kingdom and wealth was walking slowly in that route. He was very much depressed.

When king Nalan saw the snake struggling in the fire, he saved it after a strong fight. To show his gratitude, the snake bit king Nalan, sucked the venom and transformed him to his old position. By then, Nalan’s wife Damayanthi’s uncle Vimaraja had arranged for her second *Suyamvara*, thinking that Nalan had gone away after he lost his kingdom.

At that time, Nalan who was an expert in driving a chariot joined Vimaraja as his chariot driver. Eventhough Damayanthi was not able to recognize Nalan, she was able to realize that he was Nalan when she saw
his efficiency in driving the chariot. Then she sent her children to play with Nalan. Also Nalan tasted the food cooked by Damayanthi and realized that it was prepared by her. Then both Nalan and Damayanthi conversed. When Vimaraja came to know about this, he arranged the marriage of Nalan with Damayanthi. After seven and half years, Nalan was crowned as the king. The snake Kargodagan bit Nalan and transformed him to previous form.

The snake Kargodagan repented for having bitten king Parishad and Nalan and so it prayed to Lord Mahavishnu to pardon it. Lord Mahavishnu appeared before the snake Kargodagan and said “Come to Kodaganur. I would give you mukthi there.” Snake Kargodagan went to Kodaganur and prayed to Mahavishnu. Mahavishnu appeared before Kargodagan and blessed him with mukthi. From that day, this place was called as Kargodakanallur and Kargodaka kshetram. Now Kargodaganallur is known as Kodaganallur.

Kodaganallur Kailasanathar temple is situated one kilometre from the south of Nadukallur on Tirunelveli-Cheranmahadevi road. Inside the sanctum sanctorum, the principal deity Kailasanathar is in Suyambulinga form with two and half feet height. The length of garbhagraha is 22 feet,

32. Ibid., p.11.
width is of seven feet and height is of ten feet. Four pilasters and one
Devahosta decorated the western wall of karuvarai. Nine pilasters and
four devahostas decorated the northern and southern wall of karuvarai.

ARDHAMANDAPA

_Ardhamandapa_ of the temple is located before the karuvarai and is
square in shape. It is of 17 feet length, 17 feet width and its height is of 10
feet. There are six stone pillars in two rows in _ardhamandapa_ and the
height of each pillar is 10 feet. The pillars have a gap of five -and –a-half
feet between one another. The pillar has five parts. First footing part is
square in shape. Second part is a cylindrical part. Third part is square
shaped; Fourth part is cylindrical and fifth part is square shaped. Stone
Palakal kept on the square part Vinayakar, Murugan and Nataraja statutes
are kept respectively in the south-west corner, north-east corner and middle
of the northern inner wall of _Ardhamandapa_. Half a foot height and two
feet length of a sitting pose of _Nandi_ statue is kept in front of the
Karuvarai.33 Fifteen feet height _Vimana_ is kept over the 10 feet height roof
of _Kailasanathar Karuvarai_. Total height of _Vimana_ is 25 feet. The
sculptures of _Brahma_, Abaya Hastha Vishnu, and Dakshinamoorthry are
decorated on the grivaniche in north-west, south and east respectively.

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**MAHAMANDAPA**

*Mahamandapa* is situated in front of the *Ardhamandapa*. Total length of *Mahamandapa* is 30 feet and width is of six feet. Three feet height, three feet length and two feet width of a sitting pose of *Nandi* is kept on the 9 feet length and nine feet width platform before the *Mahamandapa*.

**ARULMIGU KOTHAI PARAMESWARAR - SIVAKAMI AMBAL TEMPLE KUNNATHOOR**

The temple of Kothai Parameswarar blesses a person with the boon of a child. The saying is: “No wealth is as precious as a child. The society respects the birth of a child as a pride of manliness and feminine quality”. A child and God are considered equal. There are popular songs in praise of child as “The *Raja* who gave birth to me, a child who has come to retain my name and a child got after a lot of prayers.”

We respect a lady as “a great woman who has given birth to a child”, because she has carried it for 10 months in her womb. A woman who has not given birth to a child, undergoes unbearable sufferings. “There is a lot of property but there is no descendent to have it. I have seen lot of doctors without any benefit”. When people are depressed like this, they should go

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34. Interview with Chandru R., Kunnathoor, dt. 15 July 2008.
to Kunnathoor, which is the *Rahu Sthalam* in *Nava Kailasam*. According to astrology, when the *Rahu Dasai* prevails in the horoscope of a person, there will be changes in his life.

If *Rahu* wishes, he can do good things as well as bad things. *Rahu* reigns for 18 years in a person's life. So when a person with *Rahu Dasai* goes to Kunnathoor for worship, he will be blessed with good things.

Kunnathoor, which is the first in middle *Kailasam* and fourth in *Nava Kailasam*, is 9 km from Tirunelveli. In ancient days, kunnathoor which was *Keelvembanattu chenkani* was called *Navani Narayana Chadurvedhi Mangalam*. There are small hills in this place and because of this, it is said that this place was called Kunrathur. Later on, this place came to be known as Chenkani. Chenkani means red soil. ‘*kani*’ means ‘land’. *Chenkani* means a land of red-soil. Now the word *chenkani* has become *chankani*. This is divided into two areas; lower Thiruvenkatanathapuram and upper Thiruvenkatanathapuram.

The ruling deity of this temple is lord *Kailasanathar* alias *Kothai Parameswarar*. The Goddess is *Sivakami Ambal*. This temple is east-facing. The temple has three divisions-Front *Mandapa*, *Ardhamandapa* and *Nadu Mandapa*. In the front mandapa, the Goddess is south-facing.

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The vimana is on the top of the sanctum. There are sculptures of two monkeys hugging each other in front of the sanctum.

There is Vinayaka on the left side of the sanctum, Sivalinga on the right side and Nandhi in the front. There is a snake encircling the neck of Kothai Parameswarar in sanctum. Lord Arumuga Nainar with 12 hands blesses from outer Prakara of the temple. This statue is carved out of a single-stone. The statue was first consecrated and later the mandapa was built.

The stone inscriptions found in this temple belong to the 13th century. It is found in these inscriptions that king Veerapandiyan gave 4200 coins for performing pujas in this temple. There is a land-measuring equipment in this temple.

Kothai Parameswarar stands on a four feet high platform. Inside the sanctum sanctorum, the principal deity Kothai Parameswarar is one-and-a-half feet high in suyambulinga form. The garbhagraha is of 15 feet length, 15 feet width and 10 feet height. One Devahosta, two kumba pancharas and four pilasters decorate the western wall of karuvarai. Five pilasters and three kumba pancharas decorate the north and south outer walls of karuvarai respectively. A three-storey Vimana of 20 feet is erected on the karuvarai. The total height of vimana is 30 feet.

ARDHAMANDAPA

*Ardhamandapa* is located before the *karuvarai* and is square in shape. It is of 15 feet length, 17 feet width and 10 feet height. Five pilasters, two Devahostas and four kumba pancharas decorate the north and south outer walls of the *Ardhamandapa*. Four-and-a-half feet length and 15 feet width passage connects the *Ardhamandapa* with *Mahamandapa*.

MAHAMANDAPA

*Mahamandapa* is situated in front of the *Ardhamandapa* and is in square shape. It is of 24 feet length and 24 feet width. There are six pillars in two rows in *Mahamandapa* with a height of 10 feet. The pillars have a gap of six feet between one another.

MUKAMANDAPA

*Mukamandapa* is situated in front of the *mahamandapa*. It is of 24 feet width and 10 feet height. Four footsteps are there in the southern side of *mukamandapa*. There are four pillars in front of the *mahamandapa*. *Kamadhenu*, monkey, cobra and dancing girl pudai sculptures have been chiselled on the pillars.37 Four feet length and two feet width of a sitting

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pose of Nandi statue is erected in front of the mukamandapa. A mandapa having four pillars is erected over the statue of Nandhi.

BALIPIDA

Balisida is situated behind the Nandhi. It is of four- and a- half feet length, four- and –a- half feet width and five feet height.

VIMANA OF SRIKAILASANATHAR SHRINE

Thirty feet height vimana of Kailasanathar temple is situated over the eleven feet height karuvarai. The total height of the vimana is forty-one feet. Ten pilasters and seven devahostas decorate the northern and southern walls of karuvarai. Six pilasters and three devahostas decorate the western wall of karuvarai. Siva, Parvathi, Muruga, Vinayakar and panel sculptures, Dakshinamoorthy, Brahma, Saraswathi and Pallikondaperumal are in the grivaniche on east, south, north and west respectively.  

SIVAKAMI AMBAL SHRINE

Sivakami Ambal shrine is found in the northern side of mukamandapa. It is of fourteen feet length and twelve feet width. Sixteen pilasters and ten feet height of eight karnakudus and one devahosta decorate the eastern and western walls of Sivakami Amman shrine. Four

pilasters decorate the northern wall of Amman shrine. Thirteen feet height Vimana is kept over ten feet height roof of the Amman shrine. Goddesses Saraswathi, Kamachi Amman, Kali and Sivakami Amman Suthai (lime) sculptures decorated the grivaniche of Ambal Vimana on west, north, east and south respectively. The total length of Kailasanathar shrine is 127 feet and width is 110 feet.

KAILASANATHAR TEMPLE- MURAPPANADU

The lord Kailasanathar temple at Murappanadu is the fifth in Nava kailasam, seventh in Navagraha and one in Nadu-Kailasam. No other temple in Navakailasam is as famous as the one in Murappanadu, where lord Siva manifests as lord Guru. The Thamirabarani river flows from north to south like Ganges in Benares. So this place is called ‘Dhakshina Gangai’. A dip in this river is considered as holy as a dip in Gangai at Kasi.39 The road from Kailasanathar temple to the river bank is known as Dhakshina Gangai road. Apart from this, there is the famous Dasavathara Theertha Kattam, where we can see ten sculptures depicting Dasavathara.

Murappanadu is 17 k.m. from Tirunelveli along the Tirunelveli-Tuticorin road. The highland containing jalli stones is called murambu. Since this land contains murambu, it is known as Murappanadu. It is also said that this place is called Murappanadu because the sages were not able

to stand against the tyranny of the Asuras led by *Sura Padman* and they prayed to the Lord standing in order. Lord Siva took pity on the sages and saved them. So the name Muraipadu nadu came into use and later it was known as Muraippanadu and Murappanadu.

The temple of Murambeeswarar is also located in Murappanadu. In ancient days, an important festival had taken place in this temple. So it was called Muraippadeeswarar Nadu and later it was called Muraippa Nadu. This place became famous because the descendants of Markandeya offered *puja* here. The river Thamirabarani is usually flowing east. It flows from North to South in Murappanadu. As the river flows like the river Ganga, this part is called *Dakshina Ganga*. The belief is if we take bath in the holy river in the Tamil months of *Aadi, Thai Amavasai* days, the last Friday of every month and on Saturdays and worship lord Kailasanathar, we can get prosperity in life.

THE LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE

This temple is situated on the western banks of the Thamirabarani river. Here lord *Kailasanathar* and the goddess *Sivakami* bless people. The idol of lord Surya is kept on the south-east of the temple and the *Adhikara Nandi* is on the north. On the outside of the temple, the statues of *Suradeva, Ashtalakshmis* and sixty-three *nayanmars* are found. Near the

mulasthanam is the panchalingam and near the south-west corner, the Kanni Vinayaka is seen, on the north-west, lord Subramanya with statues of Valli and Deivanai are found. In the outer prakara, Saneeswarar, Chandeswarar and Kala Bhairavar are found. The Vimana is on the top of Kailasanathar’s sanctum.

The temple at Murappanadu was built by Vallala Maharaja who ruled over it. This place is holy because Mirukanda Munivar sanctified this place with his holy feet. The feet of lord Rama touched this place and this is the place where the Kanchana Hills attained moksha. In common parlance, a Chola king felt sad because he got a daughter with a horse-face. He prayed to lord Siva to change his daughter’s horse-face. Then lord Siva appeared before him and told him to go to Murappanadu at the banks of Thamirabarani and take a bath there. As per the direction of lord Siva, the Chola king and his daughter took bath in this holy river. According to tradition, only after this incident a Chola king built this temple for lord Siva.41

Achyuda Deva Raya and his successors ruled southern parts of Tamilnadu. They contributed much to the development of the temples in Tamilnadu. Kailasanathar temple has four mandapas and ten pillars. There are unjal (swing) mandapa and Manimandapa. There is a beautiful Kodi

41. Interview with Ganesan S., Murappanadu, dt. 21 July 2008.
Maram (flag staff). Sculptures in the temple during Maravarman Sundarapandian period and Veera Pandian I period are found in the temple prakaras. At present, pujas are performed five times daily.

Murappanadu is famous for the temple dedicated to lord Siva known as Kailasanathar. It is situated one-and-a-half miles north of Murappanadu bus-stop in Tuticorin District. It is situated in the north-eastern corner of Murappanadu. This temple is dedicated to lord Kailasanathar and Sivakami Ambal. Kailasanathar temple measures 80 feet from east to west and one hundred and twenty four feet from south to north, roughly occupying an area of twenty one cents.

In Murappanadu temple, the idol of lord Kailasanathar Lingam in sanctum sanctorum is one-and-a-half feet height. It faces east lonely as primary idol. Inside this walled enclosure, a series of concentric courtyards are noticed around the central nucleus on which the main statue of lord Kailasanathar is sanctified. There are thus three prakarams in the temple and the local Saivites would add the main street touching closely around the temple as the fourth one.\(^{42}\) There is a narrow closed passage immediately around Thalavarisai prakaram. Second is Sivilimandapa prakaram, the third is Nandavana prakaram and the fourth is known as Veliprakaram. The four prakarams signify the four elements of nature,

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42. Interview with Kandhasamy S., Murappanadu, dt. 21 July 2008.
viz; water, fire, sky and air. The first prakaram is Thalavarisai prakaram, which is a platform enclosing sanctum sanctorum, Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa. Karuvarai, Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa are situated in the same Adhistanam.⁴³

*Karuvarai* is covered with walls on north, south, west and east. On the middle of the eastern side, double half door is found. This temple represents God Guru. Lord is far away from the entrance to the temple in the sanctum sanctorum with *Vimana* of twenty feet. The length of *garbhagraha* is twenty five feet, width is of twelve feet and height is of fifteen feet. Above this, fifteen feet height *Vimana* is seen. Thalavarisai prakaram is of sixty four feet length and fifty five feet width on all sides.

A narrow Antarala of five feet length and twenty-five feet width connects the sanctum to the close of Ardhamandapa. Vinayakar, Murugan, Valli and Deivanai statues are kept before each side of the eastern entrance of karuvarai.

*Ardhamandapa* is of twenty five feet length, twenty five feet width and its height is of fifteen feet. This *mandapa* is supported by sixteen pillars in four rows and a height of pillar is fifteen feet and width is of one-and-a-half feet. This pillar has a gap of seven-and-a-half feet between each other. In this Ardhamandapa, devotees stand and worship lord

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Kailasanathar. It is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall and southern wall, the eastern entrance and southern entrance are situated respectively. Sitting posture of Nandi statue is erected before the Antarala between the first and second pillars of second and third row. Nataraja statue is kept on the two-and-a-half feet platform situated in between the second and third pillars on the northern wall of Ardhamandapa.

Before this, there is a Mukamandapa with walls on northern and western sides only. It is thirty feet wide and nine feet long. This mandapa is supported by four pillars and the walls on the western side. Two feet high platform surrounds the outer wall of Ardhamandapa and Karuvarai. Southern side of the platform has twenty four pillars in two rows. Eight pillars in one row are situated with a gap of five feet between each pillar. In the western side of the platform, there are nine pillars in three rows. In the northern side of the platform, we see eight pillars up to the Sandikeswarar shrine.44

Two Devahostas and seven pillars decorate the southern side bitti of Karuvarai. Western side bitti of karuvarai is decorated by one Devahosta and four pilasters.

44. Field study, dt. 22 July 2008.
Northern side of the bitti is decorated by two devahostas and seven pilasters. The total height of the vimana of Kailasanathar shrine is thirty five feet. The Vimana of Kailasanathar rises from twenty feet height terrace. It has two storeys with Griva, Sikara and Stupi. The Vimana is of circular shape.

In the eastern side of grivaniche, sitting pose of lord Siva’s sculpture is engraved. In the western side of grivaniche, there are two suthai sculptures of Siva. In the northern side of grivaniche, sculptures of Siva and Brahma are seen. In the southern side of grivaniche, Dakshinamoorthy, Parvathi, Rishi and two women sculptures are depicted. Simhaladams, four nandhis and eight dikpalas are also engraved on the Vimana of garbhagraha.

Sikaram is the Vimana’s top. It is provided with kalasams on which water is poured from the pots, to sanctify at Kumbabhiseka celebration. Circular shaped vimana is seen in the temple of Sri Kailasanathar in Murappanadu. Kalasam on the sikara is gold plated and placed on inverted lotus on the top of Sri Kailasanathar Vimana. Dakshinamoorthy shrine is situated in the southern outer wall of karuvarai and Sandikeswarar shrine is located at 8 feet from the northern outer wall of Karuvarai.

45. Field study, dt. 22 July 2008.
SIVAKAMI AMMAN SHRINE

Sivakami Amman shrine is situated in the northern side of mahamandapa. This deity is in standing pose. Amman statue is of five feet high in standing posture, lifting right hand as if to bless the devotees and left hand placed downwards.

The Vimana is square shaped up to storeys. Griva and tower are spherical. It has two storeys. The golden kalasam is placed on the top of the tower. The Amman shrine is of thirteen feet length, 11 feet width and twenty feet height. Above this terrace, fifteen feet height vimana is situated. Total height of the vimana is thirty five feet. The eastern and western grivaniches are decorated by the suthai sculptures of Sivakami Ambal and twelve women toys. Northern and southern sides of vimana are decorated with simhaladams and suthai sculpture of Sivakami Amman. Statue of Pillayar (Ganapathy) is situated in the eastern side of Sivagami Ambal shrine. It is of seven-and-a-half feet length, seven-and-a-half feet width and seven-and-a-half feet height. Thalavarisai prakaram runs around the garbhagraha, Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa. It is an open courtyard. It lies between seevili Mandapa and outer wall of Karuvarai, Ardhamandapa and Mahamandapa. It is of nine feet width.

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46. Interview with Ramalingam S., Murappanadu, dt. 23 July 2008.
SEEVILI MANDAPA PRAKARAM

It is situated in between the Thalavarisaiprakaram and Thirumathil. It is of one hundred and twenty four feet length in the northern and southern sides respectively and seventy feet length in east and west respectively. *Suryan, Chandran* shrines, *Madappalli, Sapthamathar* shrines, sixty three *Nayanmars’* shrines, *Siva, Nandi, Kannimula Vinayakar* shrine, *Vahanamandapa, Murugan* shrine, *Saneeswarar* shrine and *Kala Bhairavar* shrine are situated in the south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, north middle and north-east respectively.

KODIMARA MANDAPA

*Kodimaramandapa* is situated in front of the *mahamandapa*. This *mandapa* is supported by forty five pillars in rows. Main entrance, the altar, *Nandi* and flagstaff are situated in between the fourth and fifth row pillars. The kodimaramandapa is of forty three feet length, seventy feet width and twenty feet height.

Two feet length, two feet width and two feet height altar or *balipida* is situated near the main entrance of *Mukamandapa*. Sitting pose of *Nandi* is erected behind the *balipida*. Horse faced *Nandi* is erected on a balipida of two-and-a-half feet length, two-and-a-half feet width and two-and-a-half
feet height. The Nandi is also of two-and-a-half feet length, two-and-a-half feet width and two-and-a-half feet height.

Flagstaff or kodimaram is erected behind the Nandi statue. Kodimaram is installed on a pida of four feet height, four feet width and four feet length. The height of kodimaram is of thirty five feet. On the flag-staff, a small statue of Nandi in sitting pose is engraved and faces the main deity.

The gap between Kodimaram and Panthal Mandapa is ten feet. Nandavana Prakaram or third prakaram is situated in between the compound wall and Thirumathil. The gap between the compound wall and Thirumathil are ten, seventeen, seventeen and seventeen feet in the east, south, west and north directions respectively. The total length of compound wall is one hundred and forty one feet. Suthai sculptures of Dakshinamoorthy and four Sivanadiyars are erected in the middle of south Thirumathil. Kannimula Vinayakar shrine vimana is of ten feet height. Subramanyar shrine Vimana is decorated by Murugan and peacock in four sides of the Vimana. Fourth Thirunal Mandapa is situated in the northeast corner. Therettu Mandapa is situated in the southern side of panthal Mandapa.

47. Malaimurasu, Tamil daily, dt. 07 June 2000.
PANTHAL MANDAPA

*Panthalmanadapa* is situated in front of the *mukamandapa*. It is of twenty one feet length, twenty one feet width and twelve feet height. This *mandapa* is kept on the two feet height platform. It is supported by sixteen pillars in four rows. The pillars of this *mandapas* are decorated with the floral designs, Hanuman, Sivan, Vinayakar, Ramar, snake, horse and Rangoli. Two steps are situated in front of the *Pandalmandapa*. Suthai sculptures of *Nandi, Sivaganam, Vinayakar, Kailasanathar, Sivakami Amman, Murugan* and *Nandi* are kept on the top of the *Panthalmandapa*.

FOURTH PRAKARAM

Fourth *Prakaram* of Murappanadu Sri Kailasanathar temple represents the outer space of the temple. In the north-west, *Vinayakar* shrine is situated. *Thiruvavaduthurai Esana Madam* and *Mandakappadi mandapa* are situated in the northern side outer of Kailasanathar temple. River Thamirabarani runs in front of the Kailasanathar temple.

SRI KAILASANATHAR TEMPLE- SRIVAIKUNTAM

Srvaiikuntam is thirty kilometers from Tirunelveli and lies on the northern bank of Thamirabarani on the Tirunelveli-Thiruchendur highway and is famous for the temple dedicated to lord Siva known as Kailasanathar. Srvaiikuntam Sri Kailasanathar temple is one of the nine
temples dedicated to lord Siva. It was the birthplace of Saiva saint and poet laureate Sri Kumaraguruparar.

Sri Kailasanathar temple is one of the biggest temples in Thoothukudi District. It is situated in the north-eastern corner of Srivaikuntam. The place around the temple is also known as Kailayapuram. This temple is dedicated to Kailasanathar and Sivakami Ambal. Kumaraguruparar, the born poet recited *Kailaikalambagam* on Kailasanathar of this temple.

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

Sri Kailasanathar temple as it stands today is a vast and impressive complex of structures, enclosed by high and massive compound walls all around, thus, occupying a rectangular plot of land. The temple measures three hundred and forty feet from east to west and three hundred and twenty three feet from south to north, roughly occupying an area of two-

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The dimensions of the Kailasanathar temple are large and well proportioned with a compound *Thirumathil* and modest *gopurams*. Dravidian style of architecture was followed in the construction of this temple. It has some structures like central shrine, *Ardhamandapa* and *Mahamandapa*.

The *Vimana, Mandapas, Gopurams* and flag-staff are excellently moulded by sculptures. There is a big tower at the eastern entrance which is not in use. A new entrance at the southern side was made some hundred years ago and now the southern side is used by devotees. The eastern side is closed permanently. The north-eastern side is covered with black soil and tank. Casting of images in bronze by the last wax process was increasingly practised from later Pallava period. So this temple was constructed before fifth century A.D. Sri Kailasanathar temple has a grand structure with lofty mandapas through which the main entrance leads into the inner precincts.

In Srivaikuntam temple, Lord Kailasanathar *Lingam* in Sanctum Sanctorum in *karuvarai* is facing east lonely as a primary idol and presiding deity. Inside this walled enclosure, a series of concentric

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53. Field study, dt. 06 August 2008.
54. Field study, dt. 06 August 2008.
courtyards are noticed around the central nucleus on which is located the main sanctorum of Lord Kailasanathar.

There are thus three courtyards or prakarams in the temple and the local Saivaites would add the main street around and touching closely the temple as the fourth one. The narrow closed passage immediately around the third mandapa is thalavarisai prakaram. The fourth is known as veliprakaram. The four prakarams are representing the four elements of nature, viz; water, fire, sky and air.

The first prakaram is karuvarai prakaram which is a platform encircling sanctum sanctorum and ardhamandapa. The sides of this prakara walls encircle, thus, leaving front portion of ardhamandapa in which three doors are fixed. To enter just before and opposite to ardhamandapa, a door leading westwards and doors at north and south are provided, touching the backside of the Mahamandapa.

Karuvarai is covered with walls on north, south, west and east. On the walls between Thalavarisai prakaram and Karuvarai prakaram, the shrines of Suradhevar, sixty-three Nayanmars, Dakshinamoorthy, Kanni Vinayakar, Kasilingam, Neruppulingam, Kattrulingam, Neerlingam, Nelalingam, lord Subramanyar, Saneeswarar and Sandikeswarar are situated on the south -west and north respectively.
In karuvarai, lord Kailasanathar is in Suyambu Linga pose. Thiruvachi decorated on the back side of Kailasanathar. The principal deity of the temple was called as Vaikuntha Kailasar by saint Kumara Gurupurar. Urchavar named Vaikunta Kailasar in copper metal idol stands at two- and- a- half feet height platform in a golden palanquin with Sivakami ambal.

The temple represents God Saneeswarar. Lord is far away from the entry to the temple in the sanctum sanctorum with vimana of two feet height on its top facing eastern sanctum sanctorum. The length of garbhagraha is twenty five feet and the width is twenty five feet and the height is fourteen feet.

In all the temples of both Siva and Vishnu, before entering sanctum sanctorum, there are two statues in stone called as Dwarapalakar. Further on each side before the karuvarai, there are statues of the security, gate keeper and watchman. They are pleased to receive devotees, extend welcome and they report to God about the presence of devotees. Such two dwarapalakas stand on each side of the entrance to karuvarai before lord Kailasanathar. The vimana and mandapas were constructed by the kings of Madurai Chandrakula Pandiyar and the central shrine of this temple was reconstructed by Sadaiyavarma Veerapandiya I (1253 to 1283 A.D) during

13th century. One inscription of this king is found on the wall of the central shrine.

Veerappa Nayak I built (1572-1595) Velvichalai and Sandhana Sabapathi mandapa. Flag-staff was erected during the rule of Muthuveerappanayaka II (1609-1623). Eastern gopuram was constructed by Thirumalai Nayak, during 1653 to 1659 A.D. The entire building of lord Kailasanathar temple was completely built with black stones only.

Temples are exclusively constructed with black stones, each stone is placed on the top of each stone to fix both stones, the lower stone over its top provided a pit or hole and stone to be placed in it will have a reg. So that the portion of reg of the upper stone is fixed on the pit of lower stone. Besides, to have them clinched and to make them join, a medicine is applied in between the two stones. It is called as astabandhana marunthu. The stone inscriptions are found in the walls of temple and its parts. These inscriptions were traced under the Ancient Monument Preservation Act of 1895.

59. Kothanda Raman B., India kalaikal (T), Madras, 1987, pp.91-93.
The following Tamil inscriptions 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177 and 178 of 1895 vividly describe the various grants of Veerapandiyan alias Tirunelveli Pandiyan to Sri Kailasanathar temple in Thiruvaluthinadu. 60

*The ardhamandapa* of Sri Kailasanathar temple at Srivaikuntam is of forty feet length, thirty feet width and thirteen feet height. *Ardhamandapa* is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall, the entrance door is situated. There are stone pillars in four rows, sixteen pillars in *ardhamandapa* and height of a pillar is twelve feet and width is of one foot. The pillars have a gap of nine feet between each other.

In front of the *karuvarai* entrance, *Nandi* statue is situated in the south-western corner on a platform. Stone statue of *Vinayakar* is also found. In the north-western side of *Arthamandapa*, sixty-three bronze statues of Nayanmars, Arumugam, Valli, Deivanai, Kailasanathar and Sivagami Ambal are situated. In the north-eastern corner of *arthamandapa*, Nataraja shrine is situated. The bronze image of Nataraja from top to bottom is of one hundred and twelve cm. The breadth is ninety nine cm. From forehead to foot, it measures seven feet and the left feet is raised. The lord Sri Kailasanathar tramples *muyalakan*.

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At Srivaikuntam Sri Kailasanathar temple, before the Ardhamandapa, Mahamandapa is situated. It is of fifty feet height and forty feet width. Forty nine pillars bear this Mahamandapa. Ten feet height of Boothathar statue made up of sandalwood is erected near the northern karuvarai door.

Every year in the month of Chithrai, anusha star, a special puja is performed to Sri Kailasanathar at Srivaikuntam. Sivakami amman shrine is situated in the northern side of Mahamandapa. The length of Amman shrine is thirty six feet, width is of thirty six feet and height is of twelve feet. Above this terrace, the vimana is situated. The length of Amman prakara in east and west is forty two feet, width is of forty eight feet and height is of twelve feet. Sivagami Ambal stands facing south.

On the eastern inner entry of Mahamandapa and on the southern side of the door entry, there are sculptured figures of sun, adhikara Nandi and moon. It is of eighty feet length, forty feet width and thirteen feet height. Sixty pillars are found in this mandapa. Before the Mahamandapa, Mukamandapa and Dwajastampa mandapa, Vinayakar and Subramanyar shrines are situated on the left and right sides of the western wall of this mandapa. Alangaramandapa, Balipida, Kodimaram and Nandi are situated in front of the entrance of Mahamandapa. Kasiviswanathar and

Vishalakshi Amman shrines are situated in the northern side of dwajastampa mandapa. Kasiviswanathar and Visalakshi Amman shrines are situated, facing east and south respectively. On the southern side entry of Mahamandapa, a small mandapa with eight pillars is situated. On the western side of this mandapa, vinayakar statue is erected. Six pudai sculptures of Nayak kings and dwara palakars are erected on the pillars.

Second prakara is known as Thalavarisai prakara. There is an open courtyard which runs around the garbhagraha, Sivakami Amman shrine, Mukamandapa, Ardhamandapa, Mahamandapa, Dwajastampa mandapa, Kasi Viswanathar and Visalakshi Amman shrine and hence it is known as Thalavarisai prakaram. Third prakaram is known as Nandavana prakaram. Eastern Gopuram is situated before the entry to third prakaram. It situates separately inside from outer fourth prakaram, touching the walls on the side in between outer and inner walls. The inner walls enclose Karuvarai, Ardhamandapa, Mahamandapa, and Mukamandapa. Eastern gopuram facing east situates with dilapidated super structure in the middle of eastern compound wall constructed by Thirumalai Nayak. Now the southern entrance is used by the devotees. The eastern side is closed permanently.

Thus, a very long and broad courtyard consisting of Sevilimandapa, Santhanasabapathi mandapa, yali mandapa north-east corner mandapa and gardens give a magnificent appearance. Sevilimandapa is adjoined with southern, western and eastern compound walls bearing forty pillars, thirty eight pillars and thirty four pillars respectively with a gap of seven-and-a-half feet between each other.

In the north-east of Sri Kailasanathar temple, there is Velvichalai and Santhana Sabapathi mandapa. These mandapas were built by the Veerappa nayak I (1572-1595) of Madurai. Velvichalai mandapa is supported by six pillars in two rows. Sitting pose of lion statue is engraved on the top of the pillars. This mandapa is of sixty feet length, twenty feet width and thirteen feet height. Four and a half feet height pudai sculptures of two women are engraved on the bottom of the northern pillars of Velvichalai mandapa.

A pillared hall known as Santhana Sabapathi mandapa is found in front of Kasi Viswanathar shrine and is seen in the north-east corner of this complex. Lord Nataraja is in standing posture as well as dancing. It is made in monolythic style. This hall is supported by eight beautiful lofty sculptured yali pillars. This mandapa is of sixty feet length, thirty feet width and thirteen feet height facing south.

63. Interview with Vedanayagam Pillai K., Srivaikuntam, dt. 08 August 2008.
FOURTH PRAKARAM

Outer courtyard of Sri Kailasanathar temple at Srivaikuntam is enclosed by a high boundary wall on all sides with only one opening which forms the principal gateway in this temple on the east. So necessarily the principal deity and all the important structures like dwaja stampa, balipida and main entrance are facing east. The fourth prakaram represents the outer space of the temple. In the centre of it, Rajagopuram is situated.

Touching this gopuram on all the four sides, the compound wall situates with a height of seventeen feet made up of granite stones and above it, three feet is of burnt bricks. The width of wall is four feet respectively. The eastern and western walls’ length is three hundred and forty feet each. The length of walls on northern and southern side is three hundred and twenty three feet respectively. Two nandi statues in sitting posture is fixed on the four corners of Thirumathil.  

PANTHAL MANDAPA

It is before the Rajagopuram and placed over sixty eight stone pillars with length of two hundred and eight feet and width of fifty two feet. This mandapa’s height is of seventeen feet. At present, the Panthal Mandapa and eastern gopuram are not in use. Eastern entrance is closed

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64. Field study, dt. 17 August 2008.
permanently. Goddess Sivakami Ambal stands facing south. Now the southern entrance is used by the devotees.

SOUTHERN ENTRANCE

It is situated in the middle of southern compound wall. Ten feet height and six feet width double doors are fixed with the stone door frame. A small wicket gate of two feet height and three feet width is situated in the middle of right side door. A small mandapa is situated in front of the southern entrance door with twelve pillars. This mandapa is of thirty feet height, fifty feet width and twelve feet height. On the west of this mandapa, temple office of the executive officer is situated.

SOUTHERN ENTRANCE PANTHAL MANDAPA

Southern entrance Panthal Mandapa is in front of southern entrance mandapa facing south. This mandapa is of seventy three feet length, fifty one feet width and twelve feet height. Four rows of ten pillars are also seen. Suthai sculptures of Siva and Sakthi, sitting on the Nandi in worshipping posture are also found. Sculptures of Kumaraguruparar and Romasa Maharishi worshipping the Goddess by raising two hands over the head are situated on the top entrance of the mandapa. A full size statue of Nayaka official is engraved on the bottom of the second pillar. A new marriage hall is situated in the western side of Panthal Mandapa.
KAILASANATHAR AND ALAGIA PONNAMMAL TEMPLE - THENTHIRUPPERAI

Thenthirupperai is located thirty-eight kilometres away from Tirunelveli in the Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur National highways and is at a distance of four kilometers from Alwarthirunagari railway station and five kilometers from Nazareth railway station. This is one among the nine Sivalayams of the erstwhile Tirunelveli district. Fifteen feet height, thirty feet length, and thirty feet width Panthal Mandapa is situated in the southern side compound wall of Alagia Ponnammal shrine. Twenty seven-and-a-half feet passage leads to the Mahamandapa of Amman shrine. In the Mahamandapa of Amman shrine, eighteen feet length passage leads to the Arthamandapa of Kailasanathar shrine.

KARUVARAI OR SANCTUM SANCTORUM

Inside the sanctum sanctorum, the principal deity lord Kailasanathar is in linga form. It is of thirty five feet length, eighteen feet width and ten feet height. Dwarapalakas, lord Vinayakar and lord Murugan statues are kept in front of the Ardhamandapa.

Ardhamandapa is located in front of the sanctum sanctorum. It is of twenty four feet length, twenty four feet width and ten feet height. There are sixteen pillars in four rows in Ardhamandapa and height of a pillar is of ten feet length and one-and-a-half feet width. The pillars have a gap of six feet between each other. Nataraja shrine is situated in the middle of the northern wall of Ardhamandapa. Ardhamandapa is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall, the entrance door is fixed. In front entrance of karuvarai, balipida and Nandi are erected. Eastern and southern entrances are situated respectively in the middle of eastern and southern wall. Southern entrance of Ardhamandapa leads to the southern main entrance of Amman shrine.66 Mahamandapa is situated in front of the Ardhamandapa. This mandapa is supported by twenty pillars. It is of thirty feet length and thirty feet width.

Nandi and flagstaff are situated in between the second and third rows of Mahamandapa. Pudai sculpture of Vinayakar is engraved in the first pillars of second and third rows. Kodimaram is situated on the five-and-a-half feet platform. Balipida is in front of the Mahamandapa.

Mahamandapa situated before the Ardhamandapa, is in rectangular shape. It is of thirty feet length, twenty feet width and ten feet height. There are eight pillars in two rows in Mahamandapa.

Nearly twenty-eight feet south of Amman shrine, southern main entrance of Kailasanathar temple is situated. It is of thirty feet length, thirty feet width and fifteen feet height. The rows of six pillars are kept in this mandapa. Sitting pose suthai sculptures of Kailasanathar and Alagia Ponnammal are decorated on the top of the roof of this Panthal Mandapa. The total length of Amman shrine is one hundred and twenty feet and width is of sixty six feet. The shrines of Dakshinamoorthy, Kannimula Vinayakar, Murugan, Sandikeswarar, Saneeswarar and Kala Bairavar are situated in south, south-west, north, north-west, and north-east respectively. Total length of Kailasanathar shrine is one hundred and twenty feet and width is of sixty six feet.

Alagia Ponnammal shrine is situated thirty six feet south of Kailasanathar shrine. The length of Amman shrine in karuvarai is of fourteen feet, width is of twelve feet and height is of ten feet. Eight pilasters and two devahostas decorated the northern, southern and western walls of Karuvarai.

Ardhamandapa situated before the Karuvarai, is in rectangular shape. It is of eighteen feet length, twenty feet width and ten feet height. There are six pillars in two rows in Ardhamandapa and a height of each pillar is ten feet. First row pillars have a gap of six feet between each

pillar. Seven-and-a-half feet gap is in between the pillars in the second row.

Store room with six feet length and seven-and-a-half feet width is constructed on west corner of Ardhmandapa. A palliyarai with six feet length and nine feet width is also constructed.

KAILASANATHAR TEMPLE- RAJAPATHI

Lord Siva reigns as Lord Kethu in Rajapathi. The holy place of Rajapathi Sri Kailasanathar temple cannot be seen in Navakailasam. Rajapathi is one kilometre south of Manathy near Thenthirupperai in Tuticorin District. It is said that one of the flowers floated by Agasthia Munivar in Thamirabarani, halted at Rajapathy. It is also said that Sage Romasa worshipped lord Siva there. This temple is in a bad condition due to natural calamities. Now renovation work is being carried on.68

It is said that this place is called Rajapathi because there was a King’s palace here. There is also a belief that this temple was built by Chandrakula Pandiars of Madurai.

The Nandi of this temple is found in the Ulagamman temple of Ottapidaram. There is a belief that if we worship the Nandi here, the cattle would be saved from diseases. Though there is no temple in Rajapathi now,

68. Interview with Kannan A., Rajapathi, dt. 31 August 2008.
it is considered holy to worship the Dasai of this place. It is said that it is not possible to see Rajapathi. Success after success would be achieved automatically if we worship Rajapathi. Rajapathi, the eighth one, out of the Navakailasam is dedicated to lord Kailasanathar. Owing to natural calamities the temple is fully demolished. Anyhow the Nandhi, holy vehicle of lord Siva is enshrined at Ottapidaram. Other auspicious remainings of the temple are found in Poraiyur, Marukal, Vaikkalkarai and Ottapidaram.⁶⁹

A small stone is dedicated to lord Siva in this eighth temple.

The devotees of lord Siva relating to Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts installed a Siva Linga at Rajapathi so as to enable to worship lord Siva in the serial of eight. The daily pujas are being conducted regularly. The temple is being constructed by Kailash charity of Kovilpatti in an area of 1.50 acres of land to establish the name and fame of this place.

KAILASANATHAR AND SOUNDARANAYAKI TEMPLE - CHERNTHAPOOMANGALAM

The presiding deity in this temple is lord Kailasanathar and the Goddess Sivakami Ambal adorns as the beautiful Ponnammal. Kailasanathar Sannadhi is facing east while the Sivakami Ambal sannadhi is facing south. The deity Ambal, Chandra, lord Surya, Dakshinamoorthy,

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⁶⁹. Field study, dt. 31 August 2008.
Kannimula Vinayakar, Subramanyar, Valli, Deivanai, Nava Grahas, Saneeswarar in the north and Bairavar offer their blessings to the devotees. There is a flagstaff in the temple and beautiful vimanas are found on the top of the sanctum.⁷⁰

In ancient days, this place was called Kudanadu Athur Sernthamangalam and Avanibasekhara chaturvedi Mangalam. This is seen in the stone inscriptions of the temple. There is a belief that this temple was built during the period of Maravarman Sundara Pandian I and another belief that it was built during the period of Senthan alias Pandian Kulasekharan.

Inside the sanctum sanctorum, the principal deity Kailasanathar is in linga form. The length of Karuvarai is twelve feet, width is of twelve feet and height is of ten feet. Four pilasters and one devahosta are decorated on the western wall of Karuvarai.

Sculptures of sitting pose of Siva and Parvathi on the bull and Brahma, Murugan, Valli, Deivanai are decorated on the northern side of first storey. Brahma and Saraswathi sculptures are decorated on the second row of Vimana. On the first and second storey of southern side of vimana, sitting pose of Dakshinamoorthy sculptures are decorated. In the eastern side of vimana, sculptures of Dwarapalakar, Sivan, Parvathi and Vinayakar

⁷⁰ Interview with Subramanian G., Chemthapoomangalam, dt. 03 September 2008.
Indra sitting on the elephant Iravatha and two Deva Rishis are decorated on the first and second storeys respectively. In the western side of Kailasanathar vimana, Boothakana varis are decorated on the prastharam sculptures of Simhaladam, Griva, sitting pose of Lakshmi Narasimhar, Thisai Kavalar, Nandhi and Vishnu sitting on the five head cobra with Sridevi and Boomadevi. Siva, tearing the elephant with his eight arms decorated the first and second storeys respectively.

Ardhamandapa situated before the karuvarai is in rectangular shape. It is of fourteen feet length, eighteen feet width and ten feet height. There are sixteen pillars in four rows in this mandapa. Small size sitting pose of Nandi statue is kept before the karuvarai. Vinayakar, Murugan statues, and Palliyarai are situated respectively in each side before the karuvarai and north-east corner of Ardhamandapa. Mahamandapa situated before the Ardhamandapa is on a five feet height platform. It is of eight feet length and eighteen feet width. Soundara Nayaki shrine is situated in the northern side of Mahamandapa.

It is of eleven feet length and seven-and-a-half feet width. Four pilasters and one Devahosta are decorated on each side of the wall of Amman shrine. Amman shrine is situated facing the southern direction. southern entrance is situated in the southern wall of Mahamandapa.

71. Field study, dt. 17 September 2008.
KODIMARAM MANDAPA

*Kodimaram Mandapa* is situated before the *Mahamandapa*. It is of forty four feet length, sixty nine feet width and ten feet height. This *mandapa* is supported by twenty eight pillars in four rows. *Nandi*, altar and flag-staff are situated in front of the *Mahamandapa* entrance. Two-and-a-half feet length, two-and-a-half feet width and two-and-a-half feet height sitting pose *Nandi* statue is kept on the five feet height platform.

The *balipida* is kept behind the *Nandi* which is of four-and-a-half feet height, three feet length and three feet width. Fifty one feet height *kodimaram* is erected behind the altar on five feet height, six feet length and six feet width platform. On the top of flagstaff, platform is decorated by the inverted lotus and two *Karnakudus*. *Suryan* and *Chandran* statues are kept on each side of the eastern wall.72

Dakshinamoorthy shrine of twelve feet length and twelve feet width, Vinayakar shrine of five feet length and five feet width, Murugan shrine of fifteen feet length and eight feet width, *Sandikeswarar* shrine, *Navagraha*, *Vahanamandapa* and *madapalli* are situated in the south, south-west, middle-east, east, north-east corner and south-east corner respectively.

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72. Field study, dt. 18 September 2008.
EASTERN ENTRANCE PANTHAL MANDAPA

The eastern entrance is of nine feet length, eighteen feet width and ten feet height. This mandapa is divided into three parts and two feet height platform is situated in the northern and southern part. Two feet depth middle part leads to the Kodimaramandapa. Fish, the Pandya Kings’ symbol is engraved on the ceiling of this mandapa. Southern entrance is decorated by a Panthal mandapa which is of eight feet width and sixty-one feet length. The total length of Kailasanathar shrine is one hundred and twenty feet and width is of seventy feet. The four corners of Thirumathil are decorated with sitting pose of Nandhi and two devaganas.\(^{73}\)

VIMANA OF SOUNDARA NAYAKI SHRINE

The total height of Amman shrine vimana is thirty two feet. Twenty-five feet vimana is erected over the roof of Amman shrine. The northern side of vimana is decorated by the suthai sculptures of Vishnu. Sculptures of worshipping pose of women and old man, two women bringing water and sitting pose of Sivanadiyar are found. The southern side of vimana is decorated by the suthai sculptures of sitting pose of Amman, worshipping

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\(^{73}\) Interview with Kannan G., Cherthapoomangalam, dt. 19 September 2008.
Vishnu, Lakshmi, Sivan, Parvathi, Brahma, Saraswathi, Naradhar and Rishi.\textsuperscript{74}

The western side of vimana is decorated by the suthai sculptures of sitting pose of Siva, Amman, Rishi, woman beating the drum and sitting pose of Amman. The eastern side of vimana is decorated by the suthai sculptures of Vishnu, women and Nandi. In the karuvarai, Soundara Nayaki’s stone statue of five feet height is erected. The left hand of the Amman is in lifting position whereas the right hand is holding a lotus.

\textsuperscript{74} Field Study, dt. 19 September 2008.