CHAPTER III
TEMPLES AND MONUMENTS

Introduction

Tirunelveli was called in the past as "Then Pandyanagaram" (South Pandya City). The temple of Swami Nellaiappar and Sri Kanthimathi Ambal are situated in the heart of the city. The river Tambrabarani referred to by poets as 'Porunai' flows round the town. In the distant past the town was a bamboo forest; hence it was known in those days as 'venuvanam'. According to the Sthalapuranam 'Venuvanam' came to be called 'Tirunelveli' on account of miracle performed by Lord Siva by protecting the paddy of a devotee named Vadasanma from being washed away by rain, by building a hedge around it (Nelveli). With the addition of just 'Tiru' to 'Nelveli' the town came to be known as 'Tirunelveli'.¹

Nellaiappar Temple

The Siva temple, situated in the heart of this major commercial center, is dedicated to Nellaiappar Temple and his consort Kanthimathi. The temple built by a Pandya king in the 7th century, is known for beautifully sculptured mandapams and theerthams. There are two entrances - one is Swami Sannathi and the other, Amman

**Sannadhi.** Tirunelveli is one of the five places where the Lord performed His cosmic dance. It is known as *Tambra Sabha.*

The Siva-Parvati marriage is celebrated in the thousand-pillared *mandapam* in *Aippasi* (October-November). *Vasanta Utsavam* is held in April - May. The pillars in the *manimandapam* gives out unique musical sounds when struck.

**Krishnapuram**

The Venkatachalapathy temple at Krishnapuram village on the Tirunelveli Thiruchendur main road about 12 k.m. from Tirunelveli is one of few specimens depicting the architectural marvel and grandeur. It is said to be a treasure house of stone sculptures. Many rare intricately carved sculptures made of granite stone are fine exhibits of architectural skill. This is a Vaishnavite temple, depicted to Lord Venkatachalapathy with his consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi on either side. The fine idol of Venkatachalapathy is a standing posture in the sanctum.

This temple was built during the later half of the 16th century, as confirmed by an inscription in the temple. This temple is encircled by a wall of the shape of the *pranava* and surmounted by a

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3 *Idem.*
broad and lofty tower. It has a large range mandapam raised on a cluster of beautiful stone pillars and adorned with rows of rain sports. But the lofty towers and walls do not exist today. The most noteworthy being the figures clustered round nine of the pillars which support the Ranga mandapam. It is as elaborately worked mandapa raised on a central double row of nine beautiful stone columns of yali type. Each one of them depicts a lively group, the meaning of which can hardly be mistaken. The first and the last are clever representations of two danseuses with all their charm well brought at, and with a wealth of ornaments on their person. The second represents a gipsy-woman running with a prince on her shoulder and with a confederate showing the man-child a toy to keep him quiet while he brandishes a dagger.\(^5\)

On the reverse side of the same column is shown the mother at home, as consulting a kurathi - a gipsy palmist, about her troubles. Yet another facet of the pillar is represented with a horseman hard in pursuit of the kurathi and on the point of capturing the child lifter. The facial expression of all the figures given are full of life. The two next pillars represent Karna and Arjuna. The fifth one is said to be the most striking of them all. A group on the pillar represents a

**kurava** chief kidnapping a princess and carrying her off on his shoulders.\(^6\) He is closely given chase by a prince and an attendant on horse-back. The chief is even stabbed in the chest. The blood coming out of the wound is seen spreading into the tissues of his muscles round about the wound; and it is most remarkable that by some skillful art of the sculptor, a dull red indelible patch has been let into the stone to represent the spreading of the blood. It is pointed by Sri T.M. Bhaskara Thondaiman, in an article in Tamil "Kalingam in stones",\(^7\) has said a story that tells the onlooker the secret of this blood stain in the stones.

It is said that, the sculpture making the art in the pillars went to have a look around the village. He saw a big rock on the way, which had red lines spread over it, he was impressed and began to imagine about an appropriate sculpture. This resulted in the sculpture of the gipsy may carrying the girdle, chased by a group of soldiers. The soldiers threw a spear which hit the Kesavan's stomach and blood oozed out. The sculpture with appropriate imagination makes the figure of the gipsy with wound, a marvel of art. Any one who sees the

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\(^7\) T.M.Bhaskara Thondaiman, *Tirunelveli District Krishnapuram Temple - History of the Place and Sculptures in the artistic temple* (Tamil); Sri Subramanya temple publications, Thiruchendur, 1999, p.33.
sculpture is wonder struck. The tall sine way *kuravan* is shown unperturbed, and the princess on the shoulders of the depredator is seen even with the smile on her lips, on the approach of deliverance, into the country of her lover. The schematic setting of the groups in every one of these columns is worthy of close examination for wealth of the details and the imagery of their bearings. These wordy art pieces should not be missed by any one interested in art, especially those who are tourists.

After having a feast for the eyes, one enters the temple which is in no way inferior in its art work.

On entering the temple one perceives the elaborately carved, two sets of seven pillars facing each other, in the shape of *yali*. Interposed between each opposite row of pillars, the sculptures represent *Veerabhadra and Arjuna; Manmatha and Rathi; Purusha Miruga* and *Dharma* and those of a pair of dancers. Each is about eight feet high, The sanctum of Sri Venkatachalapathi, main deity, lies in the front and all around this principal *Garbagriha*, runs an elaborate aisle. Bishop R.Caldwell, in his article on "History of Tirunelveli", also talks of this sculptural wonder. He writes about a glory of the art

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8 Ibid., p.35.
9 T.M.Bhaskarathondaiman, *op.cit.*, p.46.
10 Ibid., p.47.
pieces as follows: The dramatic setting of the groups, the clever attitudes and the accuracy of detail combine to produce a most effective triumph of art. An indigenous production is bas-relief above one of the figures is representation of an elephant and a bull facing one another. It is so arranged at from the left side, the sculpture the impression of an elephant with trunk erect obscuring the head of the bull, from the right hand side, the bull appears complete with head and horns and seems to be concealing the head of the elephant whose body alone is visible.  

**Thiruchendur**

The Sri Subramanya temple, one of the six abodes (*Arupadai Veedu*) of Lord Muruga, stands majestically on the seashore. An impressive *gopuram* welcomes the visitor. It is 60 kms. from Tirunelveli town.

The origin of this rock-cut temple goes back to puranic days. Mayan, the celestial architect, had constructed a Siva shrine for Muruga's worship. Muruga had come here with Devas to annihilate Surapadman, the Asura, who had encamped in the mid-ocean fortress of Veeramahandrapuram near Thiruchendur.

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11 *Idem.*
After the victory over Surapadman, the Devas and Devaguru Brihaspati worshipped the Lord at Thiruchendur. Hence the temple is also revered as a *Navagraha Sthala* dedicated to Guru.

To commemorate the Lord's victory, *Skanda Sashti* is celebrated at Thiruchendur as well as in other shrines of Lord Muruga for six days. On the concluding day, Surasamhara is reenacted, witnessed by thousands of devotees.

In the sanctum, Lord Subramanya faces east, worshiping Siva. In one hand He holds a rosary of beads and in the other, flowers to be offered to Siva. Next to this shrine is another sanctum for Sri Arumuga with His consorts.

On the outer prakaram, there are shrines for Valli and Deivayanai. There are also shrines for Vishnu and Gajalakshmi in a rock-cut niche.

About 60 meters north of the temple alongside the seashore, there is an image cut inside natural sandstone rock facing east. There are two images, one dedicated to Valli and the other to Dattatreya.

It is customary for pilgrims to have a holy dip at the sea followed by a bath in a fresh water spring on the shores, known as *Naazhi Kinaru*, before worshipping at the temple.
Adi Sankara had worshipped in this shrine and sung in praise of the Lord in his Subramanya Bhujangam.\textsuperscript{12}

**Alwar Thirunagari**

The Vishnu temple is dedicated to Adhinathaswamy. There are nine sacred Vaishnavite centers on the banks of river Thambraparni, known as *Nava Tirupatis*, also called Thirukarugur, is one among them. The other places are Srivaikuntam, Thiruvaragunamangai, Thirukulanthai, Thirupulingudi, Thirukolur, Thiruperai and the two shrines of Thirutholaivillimangalam, together called Twin Tirupatis. In Alwar Thirunagari, the worship of Bhudha is considered holy. It is the birthplace of Saint Nammalwar, said to be incarnation of Vishnu. He was mediating under a holy tamarind tree in the temple for 16 years. Nammalvar was the author of more than a thousand verses of *Divya Prabhandam*.\textsuperscript{13}

**Srivaikuntam**

A unique feature at the Srivaikuntanatha temple is that the Lord is in standing posture with Adi Sesha providing the shelter. Milk *abhisheka* is considered very sacred. This is one of the 108 *Tirupatis*

\textsuperscript{12} *Thiruchendur Murugan Tala Varalaru*, Devasthanam Veliyeedu, Thiruchendur, 2002, pp.10-12.

sung by Alwars. Srivaikuntam is also one of the Nava Tirupatis. It is considered a place of importance to Shukra.\textsuperscript{14}

**Nanguneri**

The Vishnu temple here is commonly known as Todadri Mutt. The deity is known as Vaannamaamalai Perumal, who is seated on Adi Sesha with His consorts Sridevi and Bhoodevi. The seer commands wide respect among a sect of Vaishnavites. Nanguneri is one of the eight Swayamuyakta Kshetras, where God is believed to have appeared of His own accord. At Thirukurungudi 10 kms away, there is another Vishnu temple dedicated to Azhagianambi.\textsuperscript{15}

**Papanasam**

It is situated at the foot of Pothigai mountain range from where the Tambraparni river flows down. The temple, dedicated to Papavinasar, is known for absolution of sins.

According to the legend, when Lord Siva married Parvati at Mount Kailash, the weight in the North increased because of the large congregation, tilting the South up. In order to make it even, Siva asked sage Agastya to go to the South, promising to give him *darshan* at his place. Agastya chose the Pothigai range and did penance there. As promised, in due course of time, the Divine Couple blessed Agastya in

\footnote{\textit{Idem.}}
\footnote{K.S.K.Velmani, (ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, p.1407.}
their *Kalyana Thirukolam* at Papanasam and remained there ever after. A *lingam* sprouted beneath a kala tree, which is revered as Mukkala Nathar. The deities of Somaskandar, Rishabaroodar with Agastya and Lopamudra by his side are noteworthy.

*Papanasa Theertham* is located near the shrine. A few kilometer up the mountain range are the falls, known as *Agastya Theertham* and *Kalyani Theertham* or *Paana Theertham*. Situated near these falls is a shrine dedicated to Agastya.

The processional deity of Agastiya is brought to Papanasam every year from his shrine to witness the celestial wedding of Siva-Parvathi.\(^\text{16}\)

**Tenkasi**

King Parakrama Pandyan once went to Kashi along with his queen and worshipped Lord Viswanatha. On his way back he had *darshan* of Lord Sundareswarar at Madurai. The Lord appeared in his dream that night and ordered him build another Kasi temple in the south. The king built the shrine and installed the presiding deity, Kasi Viswanatha, and His consort Lokambika in two shrines. The holy Ganga is believed to have appeared at the *Kashi Kinaru* at the bidding

of the Lord. At the entrance of the main shrine, there are excellent pieces of sculptures.\textsuperscript{17}

**Courtallam**

This popular health resort is situated on the western ghats near the Kerala border. There are several water falls here and a bath in these falls is said to be very good for both mind and body. The main fall is adjoining the temple of Sri Kutralanathar (Siva) and Kuzhalvai Mozhi Amman on the right side and goddess Parasakthi on the left.\textsuperscript{18} This is one of the oldest temples and is one among the fourteen Sivasathalams (Abodes of Lord Siva) of the Pandya kingdom. The name Courtallam was derived from "Kutral" the name of the forest tree under the refreshing shade of which God was said to have seated himself in the company of his spouse. The *sthala viruksha* of this temple is jack tree.\textsuperscript{19} This conch shaped temple stand unique example portraying the engineering marvel and sculptural extravaganza for which Tamilnadu temples are famous.

Shenbaga Devi Amman temple is situated a little further away near Shenbaga Devi falls. Parasakthi temple which is also popularly known as Dharanipeedam is one of the sixty four *Sakthipeedams*.

\textsuperscript{17} *Ibid.*, p.1405.


\textsuperscript{19} *Idem.*
Saints Thirunavukkarasar, Gnanasambandar and Manikavasakar have versified this temple. There are three major festivals spread over ten days each,

1. *Chitra Visu* (during April)

2. *Aipasi Visu* (in October)

3. *Arathana festival* (Dec - Jan.)

4. *The Thandava Deepa*

   *Arathanai* is performed during these period is unique. This *deeparathana* represents the cosmic dance of Lord Nataraja.

**Ilanchi**

It is two km. from Courtallam where the famous the Kumaran temple is situated. The term "Ilanchi" means the mahilam tree, which is the *Sthala Virutcham* of the temple. "Ilanchi" also refers to lakes which are plenty in this place. Kumaran, Iruvalugannagal and his consorts Iruvaluga sarkiniyal are the presiding deities in the temple. This temple is said to have exhibited from 15th century A.D. A special features of this temple is that no *abishegam* is performed to the deity and only Shenbaga flowers are used for *archana*.

Season: June - September is the best time to visit Courtallam when the water falls will be at their best during the south west monsoon. The resort is 6 kms. from Tenkasi. There is a hill temple of

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Sri Subramanya at Thirumalai, which is 16 kms away from Courtalam.  

**Srivilliputhur**  

This is the birth place of Sri Andal, the divine child brought up by Vishnu Chittar (Periya Alwar). The girl, by her insatiable love for and true devotion to Lord Ranganatha, decided that she would marry only the Lord. At the biddings of Lord Ranganatha, Andal was taken to Srirangam in a palanquin in bridal pomp and glory. She was led into sanctum, where she merged with Lord.  

Hence the main attraction at Srivilliputhur is the shrine of Lord Ranganatha and Andal where their images are installed in bridal attire. Garuda Alwar is enshrined by the side of Sri Ranganatha.  

'Andal's devotional Tamil songs known as *Thiruppavai*, are as popular as Meera bhajans.  

The shrines of Vatapatrasayee (Vishnu reclining on Adi Sesha), Navaneetha Krishna and Srinivasa Perumal in Srivilliputhur are noteworthy.  

Festivals: The fifth day of *Adi* festival (July - August) and sixth day of *Margazhi* festival (December - January) attract thousands of pilgrims.  

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Sankarancoil

According to the legend, Devi Parvati once wished to see Siva and Vishnu in one form. Siva bode her to go to the Earth and perform penance. On the full moon day in Adi (July - August), Lord Siva gave her darshan as Sankaranarayana - half Siva and half Vishnu. The famous Adi Tapas (meditations performed in Adi month) festival celebrated here is in commemoration of this penance.

There are three separate shrines in the temple. The first enshrines Gomathi Amman, the second Sankaranarayana and the third Swayambu Lingam found in an ant-hill.

The sand obtained from the ant-hill has healing powers. Pilgrims offer silver and copper cobras in the belief that cobras and scorpions will go away from their residential areas.

The Sri Charka Peetam in front of the Devi shrine is specially worshipped. People suffering from mental afflictions perform penance here. The sacred Theertham (holy water) is known as Naga Sunai.23

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The Nellaiappar Temple

In South India, temple worship has been a glorious tradition. Over the years there have been built many temples, built with different styles called Dravidian, Chalukya, Chola, Pallava, Pandya and the Hoysala. The art and its transition from temporary structures of wood and mortar are the more enduring edifices. The temples were constructed according to Agama and Silpasastra. These temples were the seat of learning and hub of social and cultural activities.

In this the Pallava rulers of the 7th century were said to be the pioneers. In Tamilnadu the temples of Kanchipuram, the Shrines of Cholas in Tanjore district. (9th and 13th centuries) and those, in the state of Tamilnadu there are more than 10,000 temples which are of historical and cultural interest, a powerful attraction for many. Since many centuries there have had a profound influence on the traveler. Many countries which are developing tourist industries, are using largely of their historical past as their major tourist attractions.

Origin of South Indian temples are a mystery. It is difficult to give the date of origin of temples. Kshatravenppa mentions that there are a number of Siva temples Thevaram of Navukkarasar says that there were 78 Siva temples.
Origin of the Nellaiappar Temple

The time of the temple could be traced from the literary and inscriptive evidences and the architectural style of the temple. It is not easy to fix the date of the origin of the Nellaiappar Temple. It is evident that it was in existence during the 7th century A.D. and it gradually grew into a big complex during the ages. Since 7th century A.D. the temple is a double temple dedicated to Shiva and his consort Parvati. It is divided into two equal portions, two whole occupying a rectangle 850 by 756.24

This is the main shrine with the garbagraha, arthamantapa, mahamantapa and manimantapa. There are nine pillars with padamandapam and pillars in the southern, western, and eastern prakaras round the sanctuary belong to Pandya period. There are round pillars on the Padamandapa and the lofters (Potigai) are cut like pearl oyster. The pillars with the inscriptions of Kulotunga I and Rajendra I, bear testimony that these pillars were built before the medieval Pandyas. Therefore it is believed that these pillars were in existence during the period of early Cholas. The walls of this first prakara bear the epigraphs of Maravarma Sundara Pandya I and II and Sundara Pandya I.

It is common feature in the Pandya regions that the temples do not have the statues of gods and goddesses in the niches and hence the niches are plain. The walls of the *mahamantapa* bear a number of Pandya inscriptions though the *mandapam* has a number of pillars of Naick period. So it could be assumed that the Swami Nellaiappar and Sri Kanthimathi Ambal temple would have been in existence in the 9th century A.D. The western *prakara* known as Sivalokapathi is named as Vikrama Pandy Thirumadomaligai. Dr K.V.Raman says that his *prakara* was constructed by Maravarman Kulasekara I and in the second *prakara* are situated Kuberalinga shrine whole walls have the inscriptions of Kulottunga and Pollapillayar shrine. There are inscriptions of Maravarman Sundara Pandya I and II, Jatavarman Kulasekara I on the same walls of the second *prakara*. Therefore it can be said that the third *prakara* was constructed by Maravarman Kulasekara I.25

The inscriptions of Maravarma Sundara Pandya refer to the Lord of temple as "woodayar" and "wodey anaylanar" and the Goddess as 'Nachiar". From the inscriptions we learn that Kulasekara Pandyan defeated the Chera, Chola and Hoysala kings and with the war booty built the outer walls of the temple.26

26 *Swamy Nellaiappar and Sri Kanthimathi Ambal Temple Short History,*
Thirugnana Sambandar's song and *Kanthimathi Pillai Tamil* are the oft-repeated devotional songs of our temple.

**Moola Mahalingar**

The deity is in the small shrine with a *vimana* and *arthamandapa* like that of Pallava temple, which shows the antiquity of the temple. The pillars and the walls are half buried and there are "*Vatteluthu*" inscriptions on the walls of the temple. Till the Pallava period the temples had only the *sanctum sanctorum* and the "*ardhamandapa*". No *mandapas* were constructed around the temple. Hence this stands as an excellent example of Pandyan temple in the 7th century.

The Pandyas neither renewed the temples nor made the temples bigger. The Cholas gave importance to the *Vimanas* for which *Periakoil* is an excellent example. But the Pandyas were keen on constructing small temples, *mandapas*, and gateways in the *prakaras*. The gateways were beautified with beautiful sculptures and they were built in such a way to attract the devotees. The first and second storey of the gateways were built with stones and these grew into a larger sizes through the ages thus diminishing the size of *vimanas*.  

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27 Temple's Publication, Tirunelveli, p.25.
Pollapillayar

The inscription mentioned name of the deity as Pollapillayar (i.e. to say hewn out-emerged, *Swayambu*). Many endowments were made to the deity of this small shrine during the region of Maravarman Kulasekara I, Vikrama Pandya and Jatavarman Veera Pandya. *Arthamandapa* was also constructed by a devotee called Narayana Maththikottu Veeramalagiya Pandyathevar. This shrine was very popular in the 13th century.

The *arthamandapa* has only four plain pillars east facing and the entrance is in the southern side. The deity is facing the east and there is window cut out of stone, known as 'Pillathondu'. It is believed that if a person enters the temple through this, he gains *punya* and if people worship this deity for 41 days and do *archana* they will get issues. Therefore the deity is known as Adaikalam Kuduththa Perumal. The other name is Pillaithondu Pillayar. The shrine is situated in the southern side of the second *prakara* and the deity facing east.\(^{28}\)

Illaya Pillaiyar

This temple is situated in the south western side of the *Tahambrasabha* with a small sanctum sanctorum and *arthamandapa* with four plain round pillars. The deity in the standing form facing

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the east is a beautiful sculpture of 12th century A.D. style. The abhaya has slightly inclined and this type of deity is called Sikhivahane. On either sides of the deity are his consorts Valli Devasena with Neelatpala and lotus in their hands respectively.

Inscription of Jatavarman Kulasekara's 26th regnal year mentions this deity as Subramanya Pillayar and this inscription of Jatavarma Veera Pandya's 7th regnal year records the endowments made to this temple. Therefore it is clear that this shrine was in existence in the 12th century A.D. A dancing girl by name Nakkm Nakkam Urimai Alagiya Perumal Thalaikolli who was perhaps a devotee of this lord made endowments and arrangements for Veethii Ula.²⁹

Kuberalingam

This is another small sanctum and an arthamandapam lying on the northern side of the main shrine. This temple adhistanam bears the inscriptions of Kulottunga I proving that this was in existence during the Chola period itself.

Coming out of the Swami Nellaiappar temple one can see in the eastern corridor, Kuberalingam and Sailappar. It is interesting to find in the corridor a small temple built for Kanthimathi Ambal by a Muslim Anwarster Khan. Mauphiz Khan was the commander-in-chief of the Nawab of Carnatic and his wife suffered from a serious ailment.

²⁹ Ibid., p.1415.
It is said that on account of Kanthimathi Ambal's grace Mauphiz Khan's wife was cured of the illness and he in gratitude to the goddess built a small temple in her honour known as "Anwarnathan" after Anwar Mauphiz Khan.

Two inscriptions, one belonging to the 4th regnal year of Jataveera Pandya Thevar and the other 4th regnal year of Maravarman Sundara Pandya II mention the endowments to the lord Jathatharisvaramudayar and Thadariesraamudayar. So this temple in the name of Kuberalingam today, in the time of Cholas was known as mentioned in the inscriptions and was enjoying popularity and patronage.

The extent of Swami Nellaiappar temple described above is 850 feet long and 756 feet broad. Sri Kanthimathi Ambal temple is also of the same extent. Both the temples are adorned at their entrances by gopurams.\textsuperscript{30}

**Suyambulingam**

South of the Suyambulingam is the place where Lord Govinda is in a reclining posture. At the entrance to the Suyambulingam sanctuary, are the images of Valampuri Pillaiyar and Chadrasekarar and round the sanctuary are the images of Dakshinamoorthy, Lord Siva in the guise of Bhiksatanar and Chandikeswarar. Then there is a

\textsuperscript{30} P.B.Uma Maheswari, *op.cit.*, p.18.
Lingam at a lower level called the 'Pit Lingam' and it is believed that this was in existence even before the appearance of Suyambulingam or Vanuvanathar. The *Sthalapuranam* refers to the 'Pit Lingam' as Thirumoolanathar. This must have been the original temple.

Round the Venuvanathar temple there are corridors. In the Southern corridor there are the images of the four Saivite Saints, Santhanachariar, seven *kannikas*, 63 Nayanmars, Polla Pillayar and Kailasaparvatham being held by Ravana.

In the western corridor there is the *Tambara Sabha* which is one of five *sabhas* where Lord Nataraja had his cosmic dance. It is in this *tambara sabha* that is in the month of *Margali*, Lord Nataraja's dance of the *Thiruvathirai* day takes place every year. Behind the *Tambara sabha* is the sandal paste Sabapathi and to the west of it is the image of saivite devotee, Multhukonda Rama Kone.

In the Northern corridor are the images of Ashtalakshmi, God Saturn, thousand eyed Lingam and the temple of Lord Nataraja. The special feature of this temple is that the image of Lord Nataraja which is one of the biggest in Tamil Nadu with Nataraja in a dancing pose before his devotee, Karaikal Ammaiayar.\(^{31}\)

Sri Kanthimathi Ambal Temple

As soon as one enters the Ambal temple from the road, one is struck with the beautiful *Unjal Mandapam* with its mosaic flooring and many pillars explaining the Saivite philosophic concepts. This *Mandapam* is used for teaching plait *kolattam* to girls for religious discourses and for teaching *Tirumurai* to devotees.

In the month of *Ippasi* soon after the *Tirukkalyanam* of Swami Nellaiappar and Sri Kanthimathi Ambal, the *Unjal* festival takes places every year. During the *Lakshadeepam* and *bhadradeepam* festivals also the *mandapam* is used for the decorated Kanthimathi Ambal to give *dharsan* to millions of her devotees. This *mandapam* was built by Serakulam Piraviperumal Pillaiyan, the same devotee and philanthropist who built the *Thaipoosa mandapam* in the Tambaravarani river near Sulachana Mudaliar Bridge.

Another important feature of the Ambal temple is the *Tirukkalyana mandapam* also known as thousand pillared *mandapam* which is 520 feet long and 63 feet wide. It is in this *mandapam* that the *thirukkalyanam* of Swami and Ambal in the month of *Ippasi* and the *Sengol* festival on *Panguni Uttaram* takes place every year.
Yet another attractive feature for the Ambal temple is the sacred tank situated on the north of *Unjal mandapam*. This sacred tank has a flight of steps on its four sides and a *mandapam* which were built by the Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam, the Southern by the Dharmapuram Adheenam, the western by Thiru Venkatakrishna Mudaliar agent of the Nawab and the Northern by Thiru Dhanappa Mudaliar. Twenty years ago the steps of the tank were re-laid thanks to the efforts of *Thiru Sivasurya Paradesiar*.

The Ambal temple where Sri Kanthimathi Ambal idol is situated blessing all those who go to worship her was built owing to the efforts of Thiru Sundaratholar Pilliyan. The *prakarams* round the temple were built partly by Thiru Davavo Alagappa Mudaliar and partly by Thiru Thirumalaiappa Pillaiyan. Behind the temple is another tank known as 'Karumari'.

**Art and Architecture of the Temples in the Tirunelveli District**

Architecture is the art and the technique of the building, employed to fulfill the practical and expressive requirements of civilized people. Almost every settled society that possesses the techniques for building produces architecture.

Michael Angelo believes that art is the truth of any matter set in nature. It is the job of the artist to seek the truth and it is in his art. In

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32 *Idem.*
general art is a record of mankind and a nation, of the ideas concerned with men's mind, on reflections and society, stage by stage.

In each of the major historical developments of architecture, there is one basic principle underlining its conception and one which is supremely distinctive. The outstanding quality of the architecture of India, is its spiritual content. Indian architecture mainly deals with temples. It is mind materialized in terms of rock, brick and stone.

It is evident that there are mainly three types of architecture in India. It is generally held that *nagara* denotes the types of temple in North India and the *Dravida* that in the extreme south while *Vesara* represents that, in the region between the Vindhyas and the river Krishna.

South India is dotted with thousands of temples. Many of them old and some in ruins. Visiting the great temples one is struck by the massiveness of proportion and the excellence of craftsmanship found in their pillars, figures, sculptures, ceilings, towers and frieze. As a visible emblem of the religious philosophy and ethics of the people, the temple played a role for more vital than any other institution. It become a symbol of 'dharma' for all kings, nobles and laymen alike. To provide for its construction and maintenance became an act of merit here and in the hereafter. The builders did not conceive of art as
secular and religious. All art was one, basically religious and symbolic.\(^{33}\)

Even from at a distance from the town, Swami Nellaiappar temple *gopuram* is visible, appearing to welcome all those who come into the town. A little to south of Swami Nellaiappar Temple *gopuram* stands the *gopuram* of Sri Kanthimathi Ambal. Both the *gopurams* were built, according to the rules laid down in the *puranas* by Muluthukandaa Ramapandyan and the other important parts of the temple were constructed by Nindraseer Nedumaran who reigned in the seventh century A.D.

**Somavara Mandapam**

On the north eastern side of the third *prakara* lies the *mandapam* which has 78 pillars where two are hewn in the form of *gopurams* (gateways) which attract the tourists. The stone and wooden lofts are beautifully carved. Some pillars have portrait sculptures of gods. The two old pillars with inscriptions at the entrance of the *mandapam* should have been brought from elsewhere.

This *mandapam*, also called 'navarathri mandapam" for it is here that the *navarathiri* festival in *purattasi* month and *somavara festival* in the month of *karthigai* are celebrated every year. The attractive feature of this *mandapam* are stone rafters and stone

\(^{33}\) V.Meena, *op.cit.*, p.76.
replicas of Swami Nellaiappar gopuram, at the entrance to the mandapam. To the west of the mandapam are the images of Vanniadi Sattanar and Bairavar and sacrificial altar and to the north of this is the navagraha mandapam.

Rishabamandapam

The southern side of the same prakara is called rishabamandapam and this was constructed by Sivathiappa Naik in 1654 A.D. There are four beautiful portrait sculptures of Kuravan Kurathi, Rati and Manmatha. The entrance to the second prakara is called Saravanalvadya mandapam which has the portrait sculptures of Pagadai Raja, Veerabhadran, Karna and Arjuna.

Nandi Mandapam

After rounding the corridors, before one enters the Swami Nellaiappar temple one can see the Nandi in white and the big flag stand in front of it. The flag stand was set up in 1155 A.D. As soon as one enters the Swami temple one can see the sculpture of Veerabhadra, Arjuna and Karna and the images of God Vinayagas and Lord Murugan. At the southern side of the entrance is the Nandimandapam where there are the images of Nayanar and Saint Sekkilar. This Nandimandapam is said to have been built by
Sivanthiappa Nayak in 1654 A.D. After the Nandimandapam there are a small flag stand and the image of Suryadevan.\textsuperscript{34}

**Manimandapam**

This is the entrance to Mahamandapam. There are musical pillars of which two have dwarabalagas also. This is constructed according to the definition given in Mallapuram, says Dr.Nagaswamy.\textsuperscript{35}

The best feature of the Swami Nellaiappar Temple is the manimandapam. It is in this mandapam that there are the famous musical pillars. Each pillar contains a big pillar in middle surrounded by 48 smaller pillars and the whole lot has been made cut out of a single stone. Each pillar when tapped produces a musical sound. This manimandapam with its famous musical pillar was built by Nindaraseer Nedumaran in the 7th century A.D. Right in-front of the manimandapam is the sanctuary of Venuvanathar who is said to have blessed Rama Kone. In this place there are 21 platforms. As a result of the devotional worship of Rama Kone, all the 21 platforms grew up as a Suyambulingam.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} P.B.Uma Maheswari, \textit{op.cit.}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{36} V.Meena, \textit{op.cit.}, p.77.
Musical Pillars

Musical pillar is an excellent offering of the Naik rulers. They are seen from Lapakshi till Suchindram and these pillars can produce all the seven *surams*. The sculptors who came to the south made these pillars on their southward journey. These pillars are found in Meenakshi temple, Alwar Tirunagari, Suchindram temple and Padmabhaswami temple at Tiruvandrum. Musical pillars are a real marvel of art, more ornamental pieces. They are found in many sizes, cylindrical, square, octagonal. They have maintained a perfect pitch relationship with one pillar to another pillar to provide melodious harmony. The pillars in Padmanabhaswamy temple have the sculptures of gods and goddesses and produce musical sounds of various instruments. The pillars in the Swami Nellaiappar temple have lost the capacity of producing the *Swarams* and a few pillars only produce "*sa, ri, ga, ma, pa*". Thiru K.Sankaranar, a versatile scholar has proved that with these *Pancha Swarams Harikambodhi* and *Karakarapiya* could be played and he produced notes on the pillars for a *sloka* from *samagana* and some other songs which were broadcasted by the Tirunelveli A.I.R.

An inscription records that in Kollam 721, Certain additions were made to the *Mandapam* in front of the central shrine by Sangili
Veeramartandan Muthavar. It assumed that these were the pillars added by the Kerala king then; these are older than the pillars of the Suchindrum. These pillars like other pillars support the roof but at the same time bear testimony for the beauty of architecture and musical notes. The Padamandapam, kalanam, tadi, kutam, palagai, kandam pothigai and the yalis on the top of the pillars are beautifully carved.\footnote{K.S.K. Velmani, \textit{op.cit.}, p.1415.}

\textbf{Sankilimandapam or chain Mandapam}

The two temples of Siva and his consort are connected by the corridor known as Sankilimandapam, which was constructed in 1674 A.D. by Vadamalaiyappa Pillai. This begins from the southern gateway of southern side of the outer prakara and ends at the temple of the goddess. This is 30 feet wide and 300 feet long. On either side of this passage are beautiful pillars and sculptures of Pachivadivel, Kasiviswanathar, Sattar, Hanuman, Arjuna and Bheema. There are small shrines of goddess Manjanavadiyambal and Sastha. To the west of the chain mandapam is the much admired Kumaran temple where kanda sasti festival is celebrated for six days every year.

The central gateway is in the northern side and this mandapa in the southern side of the central gateway was constructed by the brothers of Vadamalaiyappa Pillai and the place except the northern
prakara was built by brothers-in-law of Vadamalaiyappa Pillai and public. This prakara is called seepalimandapam and the stone pillars support the mandapa and the flooring of stone.

**Thousand Pillar Mandapam in Kanthimathi Temple**

This mandapam in the temple of Kanthimathi has many beautiful pillars with the sculptures of Ganesh and Rat. As Ferguesson says this is a forest of pillars and it would have added charm in the number was lessened and arranged in the style of Chalukya of Jain temple. The length of this mandapam is 520 feet and breadth is 63 feet.

Thalavoi Alagappa Mudaliar constructed the northern and three fourth of western side besides thousand pillar mandapam and the rest of the portion and northern side was the contribution of Thirumalayappa Pillai. The four sides of the tank were constructed by Venkata Krishna Mudaliar in 1756 A.D. Alayam Thanappa Mudaliar, Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam and Dharmapuram Adheenam and the steps were renewed recently by devotee Kerupuram Panividai Siva Surya Paradesi.

**Vasantha Mandapam**

The Vasantha mandapam has been rendered beautiful by the images of Lord Siva, Sage Agasthya and other Sages and water
dipping from the head of the image of Lord Siva. It is in this mandapam with lovely natural settings, that lecturers and discourses on Saivism and the devotional songs of the nayanmars are arranged every now and then.\(^{38}\)

**Arumuga Nainar Temple**

This temple is situated in the third prakara in the southern side and was built by Vadamalaiyappa Pillai in 1642 A.D. This shrine has a sanctum sanctorum, arthamandapam and mahamandapam with the pillars of yalis. The deity and the temple became popular by the service of the devotee called Amavasi Paradesi and all the pujas and festivals are performed to this deity and *kandashasthi* is an important festival celebrated and this comes to an end with the marriage of Devasena on the 7th day. The deity with his consorts Valli Devasena is hewn beautifully of the same stone. The bronze statue of this deity is in small shrine in the temple of Kanthimathi and the statue of Alagappa Mudaliar is at the back of this shrine. The features of this temple is that from the out of a single stone the peacock vahnam, Valli and Deivanai have been carved out magnificently and Pilliyan built this temple.

\(^{38}\) H.R. Pate, *op.cit.*, p.398.
**Bas Relief on the Walls**

Sculptures are useful, though at times indirectly to shed new light on obscure periods of social, religious, political or general history of the nation. It would also help to find out the development of civilization in its stages. Michael Angelo described sculptures as 'the art of liberating the figure from the marble that imprisons it'. This shows that marbles are used sculptures.

Sculpture is also very important as architecture, as illustration of the progress of the art. It is tied down to the reproduction of the immutable human figures. Besides, the multifarious aspirations of the human mind are also expressed through sculptures.

A study of these sculptures reveals the great spiritual and religious sentiments that inspired this art as well as a conscious attempt on the part of the artists to capture the essence and the spirit of the concepts of the time. Their art was the true reflection of the inspired belief, sentiments and traditions. As in temple architecture so is sculpture art as well, the Pandyas have left behind a rich heritage that remains a perennial source of beauty, grace and spiritualism.
Sculpture

The Pandyas like their Pallava contemporaries encouraged rock cut sculpture for which the bas relief at Thiruparankundram, Anaimalai and Tiruchirappalli are examples. There are a few bas relief images on the walls of the first prakara.

Lingodbhava

There is a small base-relief of lindhbava seen on the western wall of the sanctum between the makrathorans. It is a beautiful relief with Brahma and Vishnu worshipping the Lord Shiva with folded hands.

Pandya King and Queen

There are a bas-relief of a Pandya king and queen with a maid and goat on the wall in the first prakara behind the sanctuary. The face of the king and the queen is rounded and knee cap is visible. Yagnopavida is thick and no ornament around the neck of the queen. There is no veil covering the upper portion of the body of the queen.

The Pallava sculptures of gods and goddesses and the people look alike. But the Chola sculptures differentiate between the gods and people. Therefore the bas-relief of Nellaiappar temple could be assigned to the Chola period.
Kalarimoorthy

This is found on the same wall in the same prakara. It is believed to be related with the legend of sweethakethy mentioned in the Sthalapurana. But it is shown out with a man embracing the linga and a man lying on the floor and lord Shiva emerging from the linga which could be attributed to the legend of Markandeya. It is an unfortunate that this relief is almost ruined.

There is another bas-relief of Appar and Sambandar in the same prakara near the base relief of the Pandya king and queen which also belongs to the Chola period.

Yogabogiswara

Lord Shiva is in the Yogasana form with his consort Parvati on his left and Nandigeswara is seen with folded hands and the sages and their wives worshipping the Lord and Ganapathi. There is a small sculpture of hunter Kannappa trying to remove his eye with the arrow.

Ravana Lifting Mount Kailaya

The most beautiful bas-relief is that of Ravana lifting the Mount Kailaya which could be assigned to 8th century A.D. This is on the right side of the entrance to Mahamantapa, Parvati sitting on the lap
of Lord Siva, her face showing the fear and Ravana's hand lifting the mountain with an expression of pain.\(^{39}\)

**Portrait Sculptures**

The development of the art of pillars under the Naiks is very remarkable. They took over some of the features of the Cholas and introduced their style. The shifts of the pillars in the Nellaiappar temple have life size statues portraying the kings of the Nayak dynasty, legendary heroes and the Gods which are notable for their beauty. Rati's ornament of the head proves that *Chakkiya Koothu* was in existence in the 17th century.

The shafts of the pillars in the southern side of outer *prakaras* consist of beautiful figures of *kuravan, kurati, rati* and *manmatha*. The pillars near the *Somavara mandapam* have Alli Arjuna and opposite to this life size statue of a queen with her chain which is believed to be that of Pavalakodi. The sculpture of women are seen without upper garment and heavily ornamented. There is a sculpture consisting of 3 hands, 3 legs, 2 heads and 2 bodies in the *somavara mandapam*. At the entrance to the second *prakara*, there are four statues of Pagadai, Raja, Veerabhadra, Karna and Arjuna. The change in the calf muscle of Veerabhadra's twisted leg is beautifully shown.

As one of the statues is seen with a cobra, it is said to be Karna's statue and the other holding a bow and an arrow is believed to be Arjuna. Some believed that this is the sculpture of Thirupurantaka which is not made according to the puranas. In the southern side of the first prakara are the portrait sculpture of Naik rulers, with folded hands, the standing example for Naik style.\(^{40}\)

**Structures**

The temples is situated in the heart of town and around the temple run the four main streets, from these, run the other streets at right angles, set to west or north to south. Even at a distance from the town, Swami Nellaiappar temple gopuram is visible appearing to welcome all those who come into the town. A little to south of Swami Nellaiappar temple gopuram stands the gopuram of Sri Kandhimathi Ambal. Both the gopurams were built, according to the rules laid down in the puranas by Muluthukonda Rama Pandyan and other important parts of the temple were constructed by Nindraseer Nedumaran who reigned in the seventh century A.D.

There are three gateways (gopurams) to each half of the temple and origin the wall dividing the two temples. The principle gateway faces the east, the entrance to the temple. Fergusson says that this temple will serve to give general idea of the arrangement of the

\(^{40}\) P.B.Uma Maheswari, *op.cit.*, p.80.
edifices. The double temple in the great square is divided into equal portions of which one is dedicated to the God Siva and the south half to his consort Parvathi, with the tanks, corridors, thousand pillared *mandapams* and the orchard between the two. This temple with the big corridors stands next to Rameswaram and is appreciated for its beauty next to Meenakshi temple.

Religious tradition, the Agamas and the *pujas* and festivals encouraged the growth of the temple architecture. Number of Shiva and Vishnu temples arose in Tamil Nadu. Devotees did service to the temples and endowed the riches to them. The *Saiva acharias* and the Alwars contributed a lot to the awakening of the people and the religious renaissance also led to the growth of the temples everywhere. Pallavas were the founders of stone temples called *karrali* and their contemporary Pandyas followed their footsteps and brought in the beautiful monuments of the Thirupparankundram, Narashima temple at Anaimalai and Tiruchi cave temple and Malayidaikurichi temple.

The inscriptions of the Swami Nellaiappar Temple show the gradual growth and development of the temple from the 7th century A.D. The name of Moola Mahalingar, the present name of one of the deities is not found in the inscriptions, but it is recorded that *pujas* were performed in the Anavardaadana and Vrithivirheswara lord of
paddy hedge. The name Venuvanesara lord of bamboo forest is the name of the god who sprang up from the bamboo and also named Tirunelveli Udaya Nayanar in the inscriptions and this deity is known as Nellaiappar today, who is the presiding deity. Therefore the name Tirunelveli Urai Selvar found in Gnanasambandan's *Thevaram* denotes Moola Mahalinghar and the shrine which is a replica of Malayadi Kurichi temple, was constructed or in existence in the 7th century A.D.

**Ambasamudram**

It is 35 km from Tirunelveli, There are four ancient temples in this town, dedicated to lord Siva, Kasibarnathar temple in the south, Thirumalananathar temple in the west, Veeramarthandar temple in the East and Ammaiappar temple in the north. There are other small temples devoted to the other Gods and Goddesses.

**Kasibarnathar temple**

The Kasibarnathar temple is said to be 1000 years old. The length and breadth of this temple is 440' x 260'. There are two *Prakarams*, the divine consort is known as Maruthavalli. The temple has six *Vimanams*, the two huge doors of the main entrance have carvings describing the scenes from the epic *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*. *Pujas* are performed seven times a day. The ten days
Brahmodhsavam in the Tamil month of Pankuni (March-April) is the important festival of the temple.\textsuperscript{41}

Thirumoolanathar Temple

This temple is also said to be 1000 years old. It measures about 195' x 234'. The presiding deity is Swayambulingam; it is called Thirumoolanathar. The divine consort is Ulagammai. The pillars exhibit beautiful workmanship. In this temple pujas are performed seven times a day. The biggest festival of this shrine takes places in the month of ani (June-July).\textsuperscript{42}

Veeramarthandeswarar Temple

Though small, it is an ancient temple, the divine consort is Nithiyakalyani. The theertham in the temple tank is called, Harikara Theertham. Pujas are performed two times a day.\textsuperscript{43}

Ammaiappan temple

The area of the temple is 199' x 206'. The divine consort of the main deity is Sakunthakunthalamban. The pujas are performed daily. Vinayakasadurthi festival is celebrated here on a grand scale.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.1375.
\textsuperscript{43} Idem.
Krishnaswami Temple

It is a beautiful temple measuring about 200' x 107. It is said to be five hundred years old.

Cheran-Madevi

The famous temple here is the Pepper Pillar. When there is scarcity of water, the people of this area make a part of pepper and apply it on the Pillaiyar and its is believed the temple is filled with water. When the block is removed, both water and pepper paste mingling together flow into the Ayacut. It is believed that the very next day the Ayacut will have plenty of water.

Brahmadesam

This is a village gifted by the King Raja Raja Chola to the Vedic scholars for chanting four Vedas. Hence this village was named Chaturvedi Mangalam or Brahmadheyam. It is believed that the original deity in this temple was Badhari Vaneswara Romasa Maharishi who worshipped here. He was the grandson of Lord Brahma hence this place is known as Brahmaresam. The original builder of this temple was king Raja Raja Chola and the Pandya and Hoysala kings later added Manu buildings. The credit of building the front Rajakopuram with 7 storeys and the back gopuram with 5

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44 Ibid., p.1378
storeys goes to king Viswanatha Naik, the then ruler of Tirunelveli. Another glory of this temple is that it is the first of Navakailasha temple in the Tirunelveli District. This temple is a treasure-house of sculptural wealth. There are five sivalingas with separate sanctum sanctorum in this temple. They are: (i) Sri Kailasanathar; (ii) Sri Badari Vaneswarar; (iii) Sri Viswanathar with Sri Visalakshi; (iv) Sri Arunachaleswarar with Unnamalai; and (v) Sri Sundareswarar with Sri Meenakshi.

There are a few more iconographic treasures in this temple, such as Sri Nadikeswara, Sri Nataraja known as Purukku sabapathi, Sri Athma Vyakya Dhakshinamoorthy with chin-mudra facing His own self and Jwaraha Deva. The other places to see are, the Pradhoshamoorthy in the Pradhosha Sabhai, Ashta Dik balakas with their respective vahanas, Siva Boothaganas and Apsara women are very rare specimens of deities. Another place which should not be mused by any tourist is the Arudra mandapam which is an example of architectural excellence. The Dharma Nandhi, a big signed sculpture carved out of a single stone is magnificent. It is said that the big doors of the main entrance with wooden carvings and wood sculptures inside the temple are the handwork of the artisans of

\[46\] *Idem.*

\[47\] Personal visit to the temple by the researcher, dated: 17 April 2008.
Kerala.\textsuperscript{48} Any one who visits the place would be stunned by the intricate, minute carvings which are bubbling with life. The wooden doors look like carved out of stone. Another marvel in this temple is the bell in front of one of deities is carved out of stone. Even the central piece which is pulled with strings to produce the bell sound, also is made out of stone.

**Mohamed Nainar Mosque, Tirunelveli**

Though there are many mosques in the town of Tirunelveli, the Mohamed Nainar Mosque in the area known as *pettai* is said to be the grandest example of the mosque constructed in the Dravidian style.\textsuperscript{49} It is a granite structure. It can accommodate about 500 persons for prayer. The prayer hall is supported by 16 pillars which are very high. The specialty of these pillars, is that, they are square at the base and hexagonal in the middle and again square at the top. The *mihrab* is semi-circular and arched inside and protrudes as a square outside. A spacious *verandah* runs round the prayer hall and the author says that, it gives the appearance of a temple corridor.\textsuperscript{50} From the eastern *verandah* four entrances lead into the prayer hall and they are decorated with arches in Mughal style. From the inscriptions on the

\textsuperscript{48} wiki pedia, *op.cit.*, p.1.
\textsuperscript{50} Idem.
foundation it is known that the construction of the mosque was started in the year 1888 A.D. and completed in 1892. It is also interesting to note that the whole construction of this mosque is Dravidian in conception with Islamic form and influence.

**Athangarai Pallivasal, Tirunelveli District**

Athangarai Pallivasal is a famous *dargha* in Tirunelveli district. It houses the tombs of the *sufi* saints couple Hazarath Sheik Mohamed Aulia and his wife Bibi Sysdali Fathima known as Fathima Bibi. It is situated on the bank of river Nambiyar in Tirunelveli district. It is considered to be a symbol of communal harmony. People of southern districts irrespective of religion, caste and creed, come to the *dargha* to be blessed. The *sufi* saints are a special class of spiritual teachers. Hazrath Sheik Mohamed Aulia and Bivi Syed Ali Fathima, along with a few other Islamic missionaries from a place called Bajjal in Arabia, came to India about five centuries ago to spread Islam.\(^5\) An important feature of the *dargha* is that every day many poor people are fed in this *dargha*, through the offerings of people who had fulfilled their vow. Here Thursdays are special days of worship. The annual festival is *Urs* festival on June 19th and 20th.\(^6\) The highlight of the *Urs* festival is the procession of pots

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containing sandal paste taken art from Pulimankulam to the *dargha* and applied on the tombs of the saints. This *dargha* is considered to be a shining example of communal harmony, since it is visited by people of all communities.

**Navaneethakrishnan Temple**

The Navaneethakrishnan Temple in the Melacheval village in Tirunelveli district is special because it is the only temple for Krishna where the child deity is in the standing position with butter in both hands becomes the devotees. Melacheval village is an important panchayat of the Ambasamudram taluk. It is 17 kms. from Tirunelveli and situated on the banks of the river Tamiraparani. In this rural setting there are 3 ancient temples devoted to Megalingeswarar, Venugopalaswamy and Navaneetha krishnan. The Navaneethakrishnan temple is nearly 700 years old. This temple was constructed by the Maharaja of Travancore. The granite edifice is structured in the Vaishnava *agama* style. Daily two *pujas* are performed. A large number of devotees visit this temple everyday. The main festival is *mahasamprokhanam*, which was performed on 21st January in 2000. The people of the village and those who had migrated to other places in search of work, believe that it is on this day

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53 www. the free library.com.
the child deity Navaneethakrishnan opens his eyes and blesses the devotees. So they throng to the village for this festival.\textsuperscript{55}

**Nava Tirupathies**

Nava Thirupathies are near Tirunelveli and they are maintained by "the Indian Cultural and Heritage Trust" of the TVS Group.\textsuperscript{56} But these are in the Tuticorin District, about 40 km. from Tirunelveli. The tourist who is enjoying the cultural Heritage of Tirunelveli will surely enjoy a visit to these Nine Vaishnava temples. These 9 shrines are Sri Vaikundam, Tiru Perai, Thiru Puliangudi, Alwar TiruNagari, Thiru Kulandai (Perungulam) Thiru Kolu, Thiru Thulai Mangalam (Erathai Thirupathi) and Thiru Varaguna Mangai (Nathar). It is heartening to note that one of the private sector industries T.V.S. is taking steps to renovate the nine shrines which helps in preserving the heritage of the place.

The Hindu temples and monuments as also mosques of yore in and around Tirunelveli are finest examples of finest art besides providing a spiritual satisfaction to those who visit those places. The additional appeal these places of worship and treasure-house of art have is its attraction to tourists who will have their money's worth.

\textsuperscript{56} *The Hindu*, dated 11 July. 2008.