Thiruppathirippuliur is one of the ancient Saivite shrine, in Tamilnadu. The former part of the name of this sacred place indicates the sthalavriksha (the tree of the temple) pathiri tree and the later part puliyur indicates the tiger saint Vyakrapadar who penanced in this place. The Thirupathiripuliyur temple is in the middle of the Cuddalore. The town is 50 kms from Villupuram, 22 kms from Pondicherry and 50 kms from Chidamabaram. The temple is 1300 years old. The sacred town is also called as Rajendhirapuram, Chadhurvedhimangalam, Vadakarai, Chozhavalanadu, and Thirubhuvanam. The temple has been famous and popular among the devotees even before the period of Thirugnanasambandar. This is the only temple where Thirunavukkarasrar is portrayed in a sitting posture.

(Fig. 1: Thiruppathiripuliyur Temple)

The presiding deity of the temple Paadaleeswarar is also known as Kannivananathan, Thondar thunainathan. Kadaignazhaludayaperuman, Sivakozhundeesan, Utharesan, Patalanathan and Karaiyettrumpiran while the goddess is known as Periyanayagai, Bramhanayagai (goddess of the world), Arunthova nayagai and Thogaiambigai. All the four saivite saints, Appar, Sundharar, Thirunavukkarasar and Thirugnanasambandar\(^1\) had sung in praise of the Lord in their hymns. Arunagirinathar had praised Lord Muruga in this temple in his Thirupugazh. The Goddess Parvathi is said to have performed penance here in an invisible (arupa) manner and wedded the Lord. Vyagrapathar, after having witnessed the

anadhathandava of Lord Nataraja, is supposed to have attained salvation here. It is also said that Saint Thirunavukkarasar, when thrown into the sea by the king Mahendravarman (AD 600-630) binding him with a stone, the hard rock turned into a boat and brought him to the shore near Karaieravittakuppam as he chanted hymns on Lord Paadaleeswarar.

The temple has been constructed on the basis of Vasthu Sasthra. This temple has got two prakaras, an inner and outer. The inner prakara encircles the Sanctum in which the Moolavar Padaleeswarar, in the Linga form, is enshrined. The ardhamandapa(28) is in front of the sanctum and the Mukhamantapa(27). Adjoining to the outer wall of the Mukhamandapa is sheltered a Narthana Vinayaka(30) and Dhakshinamoorthy(32) on the south wall, Arunachaleswararar(33) and Arundhavanayagi peeta(34), attached to in the back wall and Chandikeswarar and Durgai shrines in the western wall. The padhiri tree (35) and a well (38) are also seen in the western side of the sanctum. At the entrance of the Mahamandapa are two Dwarapalakas one on each side. Besides them, there are Vinayaka (South) and Muruga (North) sides. Adjoining to the inner side of the Inner Prakara, there is a raised Platform extending on all sides. In the front platform, there are shrines for Chandhran(10), Moolavar Appar(11) and Uthchavar Appar(12)
on south-eastern side. On the north-eastern side there is a shrine for Bhairavar(26) and a peeta containing the Navagraha Murthies(25). On the southern side, in the east end, there is a Palliyarai(13) and the statues of 63 Nayanmars. On the western side, a row of shrines of Valampuri Vinayagar (15), Somaskanthar(16), Chandhrasekarar (18), Sivalingam (19), Shanmuga(20) and Lakshmi(21) are placed in an order from south to North. The Northern platform is mainly allotted for Vahanas, except for a shrine for Lord Nataraja at the east end. All the above said structures are completely covered by the outer prakara. In front of the entrance, to the inner prakara is the Nandhi Mandapa (44) on which is placed Nandhi (4). The Dwajasthamba(3) and the Balipeeta (2), all in a line, facing the sanctum. The outer prakara is surrounded by a compound wall (Mathil). There is a garden (8) on the southern and western side adjoining the wall. In front of the Rajagopura is a twenty four pillared mandapa (45) and a temple tank (46). There is a gateway in the middle of the north wall which leads to the Amman Periya Nayagi Sannathi.

Amman Temple is similar to that of the main deity but is much smaller in size. The temple contains a Garbagraha (sanctum) for Periyanayagi(20), Ardha mandapa(19), Muhamandapa(11) and Nandhi mandapa (10) with Nandhi(4), dwajasthamba(3) and (Fig. 3: Amman Temple Sketch – Courtesy: Census of India 1961)
Balipeeta(2) etc. In the inner prakara(14) there are two statues for Lord Vinayaka(15) and Visweswara(15) and a shrine for Parasakthi(18). The outer prakara is empty except for an Pappal tree (Arasamaram)(5) and a well. On the way to the entrance, there is a gaja mandapa(22) on the south side, and a shrine for Pidariyamman(21) on the north side.

The Thiruppathirippuliyur temple car is a new one and was rebuilt about 5 years ago after a period of 100 years. The original car is said to have set ablaze during a communal clash. Since then, the car festival is being conducted every year. The car is a nagara-dravida type, having a square base (aadhara) with an octagonal upa-peeta. The car has got four iron wheels and hence can be classified under Kantha type. Literally it has no porticos except the narasana. The diameter of the wheel is 6 feet and its thickness is 15 inches. The wheels are attached to two axles at the nave points. Each axle is 7 feet in length and the axle band is approximately 2 feet in length on each side. The thickness or girth of the axle is 15 inches. The wheel is 6 inches away from the axle. The wheels are secured with the insertion of kadaiyanis on both sides.

---

3 Ibid.
Boothappar is a square based anga, and has seven longitudinal crossbars, fixed above the axle. These are strengthened by several transverse crossbars, evenly placed, across the main bars. The cut ends of the longitudinal bars are decorated with boothaganas. At the sides, the transverse bars are covered with moulds, engraved with floral designs.

Achchuppar I is placed above the boothappar and is formed by criss-cross arrangement of wooden logs and is covered with mouldings, designed with hanging poomunais from which are bell shaped and are fixed on all the four sides.

Vigrahappar, is also a collection of wooden logs arranged one above the other. The sides are covered with wooden panels, containing various images. Achchuppar II is above the vigrahappar and is called as Vistharam as it expands into octagonal structure here. All the eight sides are equal in size, measuring approximately 6 feet. The width of the car at this level is 14 feet. It is covered with mouldings, designed with poomunais, from which bells are hanging. Instead of thongs, they carry electric bulbs.

Aswabandhana is also an octagonal shaped structure, with two niches in the corners. At the end of the main panel, a horse with a rider on it, is noticed. Achchuppar III is above aswabandhana and is covered with mouldings with poomunais. Simhabandhana is the third thala studded with images. At the corners, they carry lions in standing postures. Achchuppar

\[\text{Fig. 6: Achchuppar (Vistharam)}\]

\[\text{Fig. 7: Devasanam Sketch}\]

4 Sketches obtained from temple office, Thiruppathirippuliyur.
IV is another logs of woods, covered again by moulding and poomunais. Adhisthana is fourth thala, the fourth, at the top of the upa-peeta. It is also is octagonal in shape with two niches at the corners. It carries the important images like Siva, Sakthi, Vinayaga and sthalapurana etc. and is cornered with elephant images. Narasana surrounds the peeta wherein a space is left for the priests and others who organize the car festival to be seated at the time of procession.

Peeta comprises devasana and simhasana.

Devasana is square shaped and is 9 feet on each side. The Simhasana is also square in shape and is 4 feet on each side. The height of the peeta is three feet approximately. Pillars rise from the floor of the narasana, surrounding the peeta. There are 32 pillars which vary in size as they extend into the kodungai.

The Vimana is octagonal in shape and comprises of the usual parts like kodungai (they are five in number), greeva (neck), sikhara, kalasa (stupi) and a flag. Kodungais are constructed during the festival time, and are covered with thiraiseelai and other decorations. The car is also decorated with flower garlands, thoranas of vegetables and fruits etc.
The images in Thiruppathirippuliyur car, unlike Srimushnam and Chidhambaram, are very sharp and neat. The images are fairly new, being recently carved. The images are well set on the *adhisthana*, *aswabndhana* and *vigrahappar*. In addition, there is one more thala, *Simhabandhanappar*. They are sculptured and fixed to the panels by screws and nails. The images are mostly related to the *Padaleeswarar* temple, drawn from *sthalapurana*. There are also scenes related to the *Pathiri tree*. Almost all the Hindu gods, goddesses, demigods and the boothaganas are depicted here. Some are repeated at other panels.

At the top panel, the adhisthana, there are five images seen. At the ends, two elephants, one on each side are seen bordering the main panel. Next to the elephants is a niche having one image and beside is seen a *dwarapalaka*.

(Fig. 11: Adhisthana Sketch)

(Fig: 12: Simhabandhana Sketch)

In the Simhabhandana, there are five images seen, guarded by a *Simhayali*, next to which is a niche. In the Aswabhadhana, there are seven figures at the middle panel guarded by two
dwarapalagas, one on each, and then a horse rider. In the Vigrahappar, there are five images again. Below this vigrahappar are a row of bhootaganas, with their hands raised as if bearing the weight of the car.

(Fig. 13: Aswabhadhana Sketch)

(Fig. 14: Vigrahappar Sketch)

Some images in the car beautifully explain the Sthalapurana\(^5\) of Thiruppathirippuliyur Temple. Lord Shiva thought of playing a game for the benefit of the beings of the world. He played dice with the Goddess and successively lost. But the Lord claimed that he was the winner. Devi covered Lord’s eyes with her hands and the whole world became dark. Realizing her mistake, she begged the pardon

(Fig. 15: Sthalapurana

of the Lord. The Lord asked her to go to Earth and perform penance and assured that he would join her in a place where she feels a twinkling in her left eye and the shoulder. After having the darshan in various Shiva shrines, when the Goddess came to Thirupathiripuliyur, she experienced the feeling in her left eye and the shoulder. Invisible to others, she performed penance here and got the Lord back. In the first one, Lord Siva is seated in sukhasana on a seat, with his hands in abhaya-varadha mudras. Goddess Parvathi is standing behind him and her both hands close Siva’s eyes. On the right side is depicted a Sivalinga (Pataleeswarar) placed up on a peeta. The Linga is decorated with a viputhi patta and a garland. Towering over the linga is a five hooded serpent. On the other side, Goddess Parvathi is standing straight in samabhanghi pose, she has four hands. She has four hands, the front hands are in abhaya and varadha poses, her back right hand carries pasa and her back left hand carries ankusa. She is wearing a madi-seelai (in Brahmin style), heavy ornaments cover her chest and she also wears a kritamakuta. A floral garland adorns her. In between the Linga and Parvathi, is a depiction of a shrine indicating the place. She had taken her penance invisibly in arupa form and hence she is named as Arunthavanayagi.
Yet, another panel depicts the Sthalapurana of the temple wherein Arunthavanayagi is shown doing penance beside the Sivalinga. Besides, there is a Shivalinga and three other figures. The extreme right is Vyagrapather, the second from left is Dhurchadi guru in sitting pose and his disciple Brahmasanman in standing pose. According to the sthalapurana, Lord Siva, with the intention that the people of Thiruppathirippuliyur people should know about the reputation of this place, sent Dhurchadi guru and his disciple Brahmasanman to the spot where Parvathi is doing her penance to narrate the greatness of that place.

Apart from the sthalapurana panels, there are panels describing some puranic tales. In the Anandhathandava Panel, Lord Siva is seen dancing the Anadhathandava, witnessed by Goddess Parvathi on the right side and Pathanjali on the left side. In the extreme left, is seen Nandhi (Nandheeswara), playing mrithangam.

Many years ago, there was a war between the devas (gods) and the demons. Vishnu wanted to save devas and wished to give them amirtha which had to be churn from the ocean.

---

6 Interview with Vembu Gurukkal, Head Priest, Thiruppathiripuliyur temple, 14 – 4 -2012.
The devas and the demons got ready to churn the ocean. The mountain Mandara was used as a churning rod and great snake Vasuki as the rope for churning. But as the churning began, the mountain Mandara which had no base, started to get immersed in the ocean. Lord Vishnu adopted the form of a turtle and the peak was balanced on the turtle’s back, until the amirtha came out.

(Fig. 18: Samudramathanam)

In the Samudhramathana panel, the middle of the panel depicts the churning rod, the mountain Mandhara which is roped with the snake Vasuki. Under the rod, the head of the tortoise (kurma avatar of Lord Vishnu) and its body is visible. On the left side are depicted the asuras, stand in a line pulling the head side of the snake. On the right side, the devas hold Vasuki, pulling its tail side.

Apart from these narrative panels, there are many individual figures of more than 200, are seen. Almost all the gods with their various manifestations are seen on this car. Shiva and his various manifestations, Parvathi and her manifestations, also the figures of Vishnu, Brahma, Ganapathi, and Muruga are all brought onto this car. Appar and Thirunavukkarasar are also seen. Almost all images have a story behind them.

Lord Ganesha is the deity in a humn form with an head of an elephant. It represents the power of the supreme being that removes obstacles and ensures success in human endeavours. For this reason, people worship Ganesha first before beginning any religious, spiritual or worldly activity. Lord Ganesha is the first son of Lord Shiva and the divine mother Parvathi. He is usually seen seated under a Banyan tree. Parvathi had made a boy out of the dirt of her body and made to guard the way while she takes the bath. When Shiva came to visit her, the boy did not allow him. Shiva became angry and cut off the head of the boy. Then the head of an elephant was fixed. The boy is named Ganesha and he is also called in

---

8 Tagore G.V: Kandha Purana Part I, Ch. IX, pp 64 – 96.
the name of Gajanana, Lambodhara, Vigneshwara and Yekadantha. There are at least six Ganapathis seen executed on the ratha. Among the six Ganapathies, three are Valampuri Vinayakars and the other three are Idampuri Vinayakars. Two Vinayakars are in standing posture in Samabhanga pose. Two Ganapathis, in seated postures, are on mooshika vahana and other one is seated on a lotus (padmasana) yet another figure is a Nrithya Ganapathi.

The Valampuri Vinayaka or Ganapathi (Fig.19) is in standing posture, in samabhanga pose. His proboscis is turned towards his right and carries nothing. He has four hands and the right upper hand is carrying an ankusa while his left upper hand is carrying a pasa. His right lower hand is holding a dhanta (elephant tusk) and his lower left is holding a laddu. He is well ornamented with a karandamakuta on his head, a hara (necklace), a keyura around his arms, an udharabandha around his abdomen, a katibandha around his waist, a kankana (bracelet) around his wrist an anklet. His vahana, the rat (mooshika), is sitting on its tail with its fore
hands in anjali pose. The Prasanna Ganapathi\(^9\), as seen in figure (20) have features similar to that of the Valampuri Vinayaka except that he is having his proboscis in his left side (Idampuri Vinayaka).

There are four figures of Lord Muruga on this car. Two are in standing postures propably known as Kumara\(^10\) and two are sitting on peacock vahana and are called Sikivahana\(^11\) (Mayilvahana). Besides the figures of Kumara are seen his vehicle the peacock (siki). The image of both Murugas have four hands, the upper two hands carry vajra in the right and sakthi in the left. The two lower hands are in abhaya-varadha mudras. (Fig. 25, 26: Kumara I & II) The Sakthi ayudha (vel) is held by all the four figures. He is wearing a kritamakuta. He is well adorned with haras, keyuras, udharabandha, katibandha, anklets and bracelets.

Lord Muruga or Subramanya\(^12\) is a rare born of the divine conciousness of lord Siva. Valli and Deivayanai are his two wives, who represent the power of action and the power of knowledge. Karthikeya carries a spear on his hand and his left hand is

---

\(^9\) Dubois J.A. Abbe: Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies,(1906,Acient Education Services Madras), pp-607-608

\(^10\) Rao Gopinatha, T.A: Elements of Hindu Iconography, P 437,


\(^12\) Nagaswamy, R: South Indian Historical Studies, Vol. 2 (1979, Society for Archeological Epigraphical, Reasearch, Madras) pp12 -14
always blessing devotees. His vehicle is a Peacock, a pious bird that grips in its feet, a serpent which symbolizes the ego and desires of people. The symbolism of Muruga thus points to the ways and means of reaching perfection in life. There are four figures of Lord Muruga on this car. Two are in standing postures probably known as Kumara\(^{13}\) and two are sitting on peacock vahana and are called Sikivahana (Mayilvahana). Besides the figures of Kumara are seen his vehicle the peacock (siki). The image of both Murugas have four hands, the upper two hands carry vajra in the right and sakthi in the left. The two lower hands are in abhaya-varadh mudras. The Sakthi ayudha (vel) is held by all the four figures. He is wearing a kritamakuta. He is well adorned with haras, keyuras, udharabandha, katibandha, anklets and bracelets.

There are more than a dozen figures of Lord Shiva and his manifestations. Vrishabha, the bull, is the Vahana of lord Shiva. He is also called as Nandi. Lord Shiva is called Vrishabhamurthi when Shiva and Parvathi are seated on Nandhi. Vrishabamurthy\(^{14}\), a famous manifestation, is seen almost in all temple cars and here in Thiruppathiripuliyur car, there are five carved, at different places. There is one relief in which Vrishabamurthy is seen all alone. In the other four, figures have his consort Parvathi. In Fig. 29, both Siva and Parvathi are in standing posture along with Nandhi. Siva is standing in dvibhanga pose. His righ back hand holds parasu, his front right hand is in abhaya pose and his back left hand encircle the goddess. A trident tied with a damaru is seen on his right shoulder. Parvathi is in tribhanga pose, her right hand is holding a lotus while her left hand is simply hanging down.

\(^{13}\) OP.CIT.-P 437.
\(^{14}\) Raju Kalidas, Temple cars of Medieval Tamilaham, p 86.
(katyavalambitha hasha). Both are wearing kritamakutas and are well ornamented. Nandhi is standing behind them and his head is turned up as though looking towards the Lord.

In Fig. 30, the features of both Siva and Parvathi are almost same, except that Siva is not embracing Parvathi. In Fig. 31, Siva stands along with his Nandhi. His upper hands hold the ankusa and a deer (antelope). His right lower limb simply rests on the hump of the nandhi and his left hand holds the trident. In Fig. 32 and 33, both Siva and Parvathi are seated on the Nandhi vahana. Siva is sitting in sukhasana and Parvathi is sitting on his left thigh, with her legs hanging down loosely. One of Siva’s hands holds Parvathi, while his other
hands carry the *ankusa* and *antelope* and one other in *abhaya* mudra. Parvathi’s right hand holds the lotus and her left hand hangs down in *katyavalambitha hasta*.

Somaskandamurthi is always represented as the figures of Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvathi and their son, Lord Skanda seated together. Somaskanda in simpler terms, is the result of the union of Shiva and Parvathi, the two potent opposite forces giving birth to the aspirant as an evolved being. There are two Somaskandhamurthis in this car. In one panel, (Fig. 34), Shiva and Parvathi are sitting with Balamurugan inbetween them. Both Siva and Parvathi are in *sukhasana* pose, Murugan is in *samabhanga* pose. Siva carries his usual ayudhas, ankusa and antelope, and shows *abhaya* and *varadha* mudras, while Parvathi holds the *lotus* in her right hand and her left hand rests on her left lap. Murugan is seen holding his *vel* in his right hand. In the other panel (Fig. 35), Ganapathi is seen sitting on his father’s lap and Balamurugan is seated on his mother’s lap.

Once the gods and sages had gathered at Siva's abode, they prayed their respects to Siva and Parvati. However, the sage **Bhringi**, who had vowed to worship only one deity, Siva, ignored Parvati. Agitated, Parvati cursed Bhringi, to lose all his flesh and blood, reducing him to a skeleton. In this form Bhringi could not stand erect, so Siva blessed the sage with a third leg for support. As her attempt to humiliate the sage had failed, Parvati punished herself with penance that pleased Siva and led him to grant her the boon of uniting with him, thereby

---

compelling Bhringi to worship her as well as himself in the form of Ardhanarishvara\textsuperscript{16}.

(Figs. 36 & 37: Ardhanarishvara I & II)

There are two images of ardhanarishvara. In Fig. 36, \textit{Ardhanarishvara} stands in \textit{dvibhanga}. The right half is formed with features of Siva while left half with features of Parvathi. Siva is two handed and holds an \textit{ankusa} in his upper hand while his lower hand is in \textit{abhaya} mudra. He has his third eye on his forehead and a half-mustache above his upper lip. He is wearing a \textit{kritamauta} with a crescent on it. He is wearing a \textit{yajnapavitha} and a hara on his chest and an anklet on his leg. His leg is covered till the knee like a half pant. Nandhi is seated near his right leg. The other half, that of Parvathi, is beautifully carved. She is wearing a \textit{karandamakuta}, a hara on her neck, a \textit{katibangha} in her waist, a \textit{kheyura} on her arm and an anklet on her leg. She is single handed and holds a gadha on her hip. She is covered from waist down. Beside her is a figure of a seated lion. In the other image of Ardhanarishvara (Fig. 34), the features are almost similar, except that Siva holds a \textit{damaru} in his right hand instead of an \textit{ankusa}. Parvathi has two hands. In one hand, she holds a \textit{parrot} and in the other she holds a \textit{gadha} which is held down. The Nandhi and lion figures are missing.

When Siva first began his Anandathandava, his dance of bliss, in Chidambaram, Kali was filled with pride and challenged the Lord to a dance contest. Siva wished to eliminate her arrogance. While the gods and sages watched, Kali and Siva began to dance. When Siva performed a difficult maneuver called Urdbhvathandava, also called as Lalitha Karna, one leg thrusting vertically up towards the sky, Kali conceded defeat because she was unable to execute that particular step.

Siva, as *Urdhvathandava*\(^{17}\), is seen uplifting his right leg vertically high up, with the foot of the leg facing the sky. His left leg stands on the demon, *Muyalaka*. Shiva has eight hands; his three right hands carry the *damaru*, *ankusa* and the *trident* respectively and the fourth is in *abhaya* mudra. The left upper hand is in *gajahastha* mudra and the other three hands carry the *antelope*, a fire pot and an elephant tusk (*dantha*). He is wearing a *kritamakuta* and is ornamented with *haras* and *yajnopavitha*. Two *sivaganas* (devotees of Siva) are seen, in worshipping posture.

Lord Shiva as Dhakshinamurthi who is the meaning of the pranava Om, is the teacher for the entire world. Sanaka, Sananandha, Sanadhana and Sanath Kumara who were the sons of Lord Brahma. When Brahma ordered them to procreate, the rejected the order of Brahma. They were not interested in the material things. They think about the reason for Creation and Existence. They wander from one place to other, but could not find any answer, till they become old. Lord Shiva decided to enlighten them. He himself appeared as a young youth under a Banyan tree and gave apt replies to each of their questions. They have become Jnanis. There are two *Dhakshinamurthi* figures carved on this car. Both of them are known as *Jnanadhakshinamurthy*. In Fig. 39, Dhakshinamurthy is seated on a rock in *virasana* pose. He is wearing a *jatamakuta*. He has four hands. His right hands carry *aksharamala* and a *firepot* while his left hands hold an *antelope* and a *book*. A flagged trident is kept leaning on his right shoulder. His right leg is hanging down and is kept on a demon. In Fig. 40, the

Dhakshinamurthi\textsuperscript{18} is sitting on a rock seat, with his right leg hanging down and kept upon the demon. His left leg is kept bent in utkutikasana posture. He has four hands and his upper hand carry a lotus flower while the other hand rests on the seat. His upper left hand carries a firepot and the other left hand is hanging down and resting on his knee. It carries a kamandalu. He is wearing a jatamakuta and his head is towered by a seven hooded snake.

Once an asura called as Gajasura did a severe penance and got a powerful boon. His wicked mind started to kill and loot people with the power he had got out of the penance. He made even the divines afraid of him. The supreme protector, Lord Shiva, destroyed the asura, ripping him out. Shiva used the elephant’s skin like a sheathe covering his body.

Gajasurasamharamurthy\textsuperscript{19} or Siva is found with eight arms; three out of four hands carry the trisula, the damaru and a pasa and the fourth hand holds the skin of an elephant. One of the left hand hold the vismaya pose, another catching hold of the skin of the elephant and the two remaining hands carry the tusk and an antelope respectively. The left leg of Siva is planted firmly on the head of an elephant, while the right one is bent and lifted up above the thigh of the other leg. The skin (Fig. 41: Gajasurasamharamurthy)
of the elephant is so arranged as to hang over the image of Siva. The image of Siva is adorned with all ornaments. The garment is made up of tiger’s skin. He is wearing a jatamakuta. He is adorned with haras, yajnopavithra, udharabandha and katiba.

\textsuperscript{18}Srinivasan K.R: Temple India, p 57.
\textsuperscript{19}Sivaramamurthi, C: Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature, (1974, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), p10
Bikshadana\textsuperscript{20} is a form of Bairava that Shiva assumes to expiate his sin of severing Brahma’s fifth head. He wanders the universe in the form of a naked mendicant, begging for alms with Brahma’s kapala as his begging bowl. \textit{Bikshadana} or \textit{Pitchandi} is one of Siva’s manifestation. In this image, he is depicted as a \textit{mendicant} and is standing in a \textit{dvībhanga} pose. He has four hands; (Fig. 42: Bikshadana)

his left upper hands carry an \textit{antelope} and his lower left hand carries a \textit{kapala}. His right upper hand carries a \textit{vajra} and his lower hand carries a bunch of \textit{grass} which a \textit{deer} in rearing pose is trying to eat. He wears a \textit{jatabahra} and necklaces, bracelets and anklets. He is also wearing a \textit{nagabandha (sarpabandha)} in his waist. He is in a nude pose.

Lord Kalabairava is also called as Kshethrapalaka, the guardian of the temple. In honour of this, keys to the temple are ceremonially submitted to Lord Bairava at the closing time and are receiving time. The vahana of kalabairava is a dog. \textit{Kalabairava}\textsuperscript{21} is another manifestation of Siva. Here, the Lord is portrayed as \textit{Satvika kalabairava}, having four hands. His right hands carry a \textit{damaru} and a \textit{trident} and a left hand carries a \textit{kapala}. He is wearing a \textit{jatabhara} and ornaments like haras, bracelets, anklets and \textit{nagabandha} on his waist. He is nude and behind him is Bairava, his vahana. (Fig. 43: Kalabairava)

\textsuperscript{20} Sivaramamurthi, C: Some Aspects of Indian Culture(1969, Ministry of Broadcasting, Government of India, Delhi) p.44.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{OP.CIT.}, p 102.
There are three Vishnu images in this car, namely Adhinarauana, Laksminarayana and Venugopala, all being the various forms of Vishnu As Adhinarayana\textsuperscript{22}, Vishnu is in \textit{sukhasana} pose, seated on the coiled bed of the snake Adhisesha. He is wearing a \textit{kritamakuta} on his head. He has four hands. His upper right hand carries the \textit{chakra} and his upper left hand carries the \textit{conch}. His lower right hand is in \textit{abhaya} pose while his lower left hand carries the \textit{gadha} which is leant down touching the peeta. His right leg is hanging down loosely touching the peeta while his left leg is folded and kept on the seat. He is well ornamented. As Laksminarayana\textsuperscript{23}, Vishnu along with Lakshmi, is seated on a \textit{lotus}. He is in \textit{sukhasana} and Lakshmi is seated on his left thigh, with both of her legs hanging down. Both are wearing kritamakuta on their heads. Vishnu has four hands, his left hands carrying \textit{chakra} and a nilotpal flower. One of his left hand holds Lakshmi and the other hand is not visible. The right hand of Lakshmi carries a \textit{lotus} and her left hand hangs down loosely.

Venugopala\textsuperscript{24} is in tribangha pose. He is adorned with a karandamakuta. He is four handed, his front two hands holds the flute which he is keeping it in his mouth and blowing music. His back hands carry shanka and chakra. His is standing with his legs

\textsuperscript{23} Dorris Smith: Vishnu, Hinduism’s Blue Skinned Saviour (2011, Mapin Publicatios, Ahamadabad0, pp148 – 149.
crossed in kunchithapatha pose.

Lord Bramha symbolises the aspect of the supreme reality that brings forth the creation. For this reason, people called Bramha, (Fig. 46: Venugopala) the creator of the universe. His divine wife is Saraswathi, the god of learning and knowledge. Bramha usually is depicted as a four armed, four faced and a bearded deity. The four faces represents the sacred knowledge of the four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva). The four arms represent the four directions. Bramha uses Swan as his Vehicle. Though Bramha is the first god in the Trimurthy, he is rarely worshipped. He created a woman called (Fig. 47: Brahma) Shatharupa, she was so beautiful, but Bramha became infatuated, he started troubling her. Shiva warned Bramha for the behavior, but Bramha did not listen to Shiva. Hence Shiva chopped of his fifth head for the unholy behavior, and Shiva gave a curse that people should not worship him. There are two reliefs of Brahma25.

(Fig. 48: Brahma and Lakshmi)

In one, he is seated alone and in the other, he is seen with his consort. Brahma26 is depicted with Chathurmukha or four-faced, though three faces are visible. He is sitting on a swan, his vahana, in sukhasana pose. He has four hands. The front left hand is in varada and the right hand a book. Back two hands hold


conch and chakra. He is adorned with ornaments. All the heads are shown wearing karandamakutas. In the other image, Fig. 48, Brahma is seated on a lotus. Here too, he has three heads, all wearing the karandamakutas. He is sitting in sukasana and has four hands. The upper right hand holds an aksharamala and upper left hand holds a kamandala, his lower right hand is in abhaya mudra and his lower left hand holds Saraswathi. Saraswathi’s right hand holds the lotus and her left hand simply hangs down. Her both legs hang down loosely. She is with a kritamakuta. Both of them are well adorned with various ornaments.

Equally interesting are the images of the Goddesses. Parvathi is depicted in various places on the ratha.

Goddess Parvathi is the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Parvathi is also considered as a representation of Shakthi or Durga, but the gentle aspect of the Goddess is not a fierce one. She is the mother of Ganesha and Muruga. Parvathi is believed to be one of the many forms of Shakthi. The word Parvathi has been derived from a Sanskrit word Parval, meaning Mountain. (Fig. 49: Parvathi Amman) She is the daughter of Himavath. She is also called as Kali, Himavathi, Amba, Gowri, Durga, etc. Parvathi is the source of all the power in the Universe and Lord Shiva gets all his power from her. This one Parvathi, as seen in the Fig (49), is a rare specimen. It is rarely seen in temples and temple cars. Parvathi27 as a loving mother is depicted here with her two children. She is standing in tribangha pose, with her legs strongly fixed on the ground. She is wearing a kritamakuta, kundalas, haras, kheyuras, bracelets and anklets. She is dressed in a saree. On her left hip, she carries Ganesha, with her left front hand holding him. Her right front hand holds Muruga tightly. Ganesha is

---

sitting on his mother’s hip, fondling her breast. He is wearing a kritamakuta and holds a laddu in his left hand. Muruga, peeping from behind his mother, is in kunjitha pose. He is wearing a karandamakuta. In his right hand, he holds a sakthi ayudha (vel). He is also fully adorned.

Rajarajeswari is seated on a lotus designed pedestal, in sukhasana pose. She is wearing a kritamakuta. She has four hands. The back right and left hands carry ankusa and khataka respectively. The front right hand holds a (waterlily) nilotpal and her left hand holds a sugarcane. She is fully adorned and she has a peaceful and smiling face.

In this image of Durga\textsuperscript{28}, the Devi stands in tribhanga pose. She wears a jatamakuta and is also adorned with kundalas in the ears, haras in the neck, kheyuras bracelets on the hands, anklets on the ankles and katibandha around her waist. She has three pairs of hands. Her back two right hands hold, from above, an ankusa and a sword and her third right hand is in abhaya pose. On her left hand, she holds a pasa and a khetaka (shield) and her front left hand is lowered down in katyavalambita hastha. She is standing on the head of a buffalo. There are two female attendants standing on either side of the goddess.

\textsuperscript{28}op.	extit{cit} pp 341 – 344.
Simhavahini is Parvathi, is seated on a lion. She is sitting in *sukhasana*, with her right leg hanging down and her left leg kept bent on the seat. She has six hands. Her right side hands carry, from above, a *damaru*, an *ankusa* and in *abhaya* mudra. Her left hands carry a *trident*, a *khetaka* (shield) and in *varadha* mudra. She is wearing a *jatamakuta* and various ornaments around her neck, arms, hip and ankles. Kali is seen sitting on a standing tiger. She wears *jatamakuta* and has four hands. Her upper two hands hold *damaru* and *ankusa*. Her middle two hands carry a sword and *Khetaka*. Her lower right hand is in *abhaya* mudra and lower left hand carries a *danta* (tusk). She is well adorned.

Lakshmi\(^\text{29}\) is the godess of wealth, the word Lakshmi is derived from the Sanskrit word Laksme, meaning goal. She is the divine spouse of Lord Vishnu. She is also called as Mahalakshmi, Thirumagal, Sri, etc. According to Bhagavatha Purana, Godess Lakshmi emerged from the Churning of the Ocean (Samudra Mathana). Mount Manthara stand as the Churning rod, the king of Serpants, Vasugi used as the churning rope, Lord Vishnu has taken the form of Tortoise to support the rod. The Halala Visha (poison), the sacred cow Kamadhenu, the Jewel Kausthubha, the Elephant Airavatha, the sacred tree, Kalpavriksha, and also godess Lakshmi emerged. The demons and the Sages wanted to posses her, but

Laksmi married Lord Vishnu. Lakshmi, Lord Vishnu’s spouse, is seen alone, in only this relief. She is sitting on a lotus flower in *sukhasana* pose. She is wearing a *kritamakuta* and holds lotus flowers in both of her upper hands. Her lower hands are in *abhaya* and *varadha* mudras. She is wearing *kundalas, haras, kheyuras*, bracelets, *udharabandha* and anklets.

Saraswathi means the one who gives the essence (Sara) of our self (swa), she is also known as goddess of learning and is the consort of the god Bramha. Saraswathi generally is depicted with four arms, wearing white Saree and seated on a white Lotus. She holds a book and a *roasary* the other hand is engaged in playing Veena. She uses a Swan as her vehicle. She is also called as Vagiswari, Sarada, Bramhi and Kalaivani.  

There are several Saraswathi images in this temple car and only a few are worth mentioning. This Saraswathi (Fig. 55) is seated on a Lotus, in *sukhasana* pose, with her right leg hanging down and her left leg bent and kept on the seat. She is seen in a *kritamakuta* and is adorned with *kudalas, haras, kheyuras*, bracelets, *katibandha* and anklets. She has four hands, her right upper hand holds an *aksharamala* (rosary) and her lower left hand holds a *book*. With the other two hands, she holds a *veena* and is strumming it. In another image (Fig.56), Saraswathi is seen in *sukhasana* pose with her left leg hanging down.

---

In this figure, she has six hands; two of her right upper hands carry *aksharamala* and *ankusa* and two of her left lower hands hold a bundle of *palm* leaves and a *fruit*. Sarawathi (Fig. 57) in a standing posture, is seen with the *peacock*. She wears a *jatabandhana*. She has four hands. Her right hand holds a and her left lower hand a *book*. With Her other two hands she holds a *veena*, and plays on it. She is adorned with several ornaments. Yet, another one (Fig. 55), she stands in *samabangha* pose and has four hands, each of the right hands carry an *aksharamala* and *tambura fruit* held vertically. Her left hands carry a *vajra* and a *book*. She is also adorned with many ornaments.

Very interesting is that of Gangadevi is beautifully and nicely depicted on this car. She stands in *tribangha* pose. Her right leg is kept strongly on the ground and her left leg is bent and kept on the back of a *parrot*. Her hair is tied in *jatabandha*. She has two hands. Her right hand hangs down and her left hand holds a *flower*. She is fully ornamented with *kundalas, haras* etc.

Besides, there are several other portrayals on the panels. In one, Lord Shiva as *linga* is sculptured on a *padmpeeta*. A cow is hovering over the linga and is offering milk to it. *Pathanjali, Vyagrapathar* and *Parvathi* are depicted

---

in standing postures. The sages are in *samabangha* while Parvathi is in *tribangha* pose. This scene is depicted as if they are the spectators of *Ananthathandava* of Lord Siva.

*Upamanyu*\(^{34}\), son of Vyagrapather, is also seen worshipping the *Sivalinga* under the *Pathiri* tree after being relieved from his curse. On one of the branches on the left side can also be seen *Upamanyu* in the form of a wounded hare.

The Dwarapalakas are the guards who protect the presiding deity of the temple and chariots.

According to Vasthushastra, every temple and chariot will have the figure of Dwarapalakas. Dwarapalakas, always placed in pairs, one on each side, at the entrance to the temple and at the doorway to the Sanctum. Usually they will give a frightening look. Each god or goddess has his or her own set of Dwarapalakas. The Dwarapalakas of the Vishnu temple are called as Jaya, Vijaya, they are seen with emblems of Vaishnavism, like Nama on their forehead, chest, and arms, and they carry Shanku, Chakra and Gadha. The Dwarapalakas of the female deities carry trident, bow, arrow and other weapons. They resemble in appearance the auspicious form of the mother goddess. They are called as *Dakini* and *Varini*.

---

\(^{33}\) Sivaramamurthy, C., Nataraja in Art, p 75.

The Ganapathi temple Dwarapalakas are called as Astapathi and Harisi, having cruel looks, carrying fearsome weapons. The Dwarapalakas of Skanda are called as Sudheha and Sumukha. In Shiva temples Veerabhudas act as the Dwarapalakas. They wear emblems of Shiva, stripes of ash and carry trident. Dwarapalakas who may be seen as doorkeepers in the temples are found in this temple car. They are at the ends of the panels of aswabandhana. They are eight in number, two of them guarding each panel. The dwarapalga in the left will be the mirror image of the right dwarapaliga or vice versa. They stand in dvibanga pose or in the kunjithapatha pose. They have two or four hands. In this car, the dwarapalakas carry an ankusa and pasa in their upper hands.

(Big. 63: Dwarapalagas)

Boothaganas are weight bearers and hence are usually found below the vigrahappar. In this car, Boothaganas are also noticed below the aswabandhanapar. The middle parts of the second and fourth side of the first tier are reserved for them. Usually they are present in groups of three, five or seven. They are short and stout, often multi-armed, standing on the lion, blowing horns or lifting two hands above as if supporting the base of the car. They carry musical instruments like horns, conches, matthalams and parais. They also hold some weapons like clubs, draggers, and swords.

(Fig. 64: Boothaganas)
Apart from these images, there are other minor images also. There are twelve elephants at the extreme corners of the adhistana, eight reliefs of simhas (lions) at the corners of simhabandhanappar, eight horse-riders at the corners of aswabandhana and eight gajayalis in the aswabandhana, separating it into three sections.

Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar, both together visited several temples in Tamilnadu, especially Chidhambaram. They were deeply involved in Bakthi Movement, written several padhikams and verses on Lord Shiva. After reaching Thiruppathirippuliyr stayed back in Thiruppathirippuliyr and attained moksha here. The images of Apparswamigal and Thirugnanasambanthar are also seen in this car. Fig. 65 shows Apparswamigal in samabangha pose with his two hands in anjali mudra. He carries a staff with a triangular metallic blade with which he is supposed to have used to removed the grass in the temples.

---

He is bald headed and wears a *rudrakshamala* on his forehead and on the neck. He wears a half *dothi*. In another image (Fig. 69), Thirugnanasambanthar is seen in *samabangha* pose. He has a *karandamakuta* on his head and *rudrakshamala* on his neck. His right hand shows *chinmaya* mudra and his left hand carries a *book*.

The *Uthsavamurthis* in Thiruppathirippuliyur temple are *Somasakandhamurthi, Parvathi* and *Balamurugan*, where as the *moolavar* is a *Sivalinga*. During the car festival, all the three are brought out with elaborate and beautiful decorations. Parvathi is place on the left side of Shiva while *Skandha* (Balamurugan) is seated in between them. All are decorated with golden *kiritamakutas* on their heads. Siva and Parvathi are dressed with beautiful and colorful silk *sarees*. They are adorned with *rathnaharas, diamond haras, and golden kundalas*. On his forehead, Siva is decorated with a *viputhi patta* and both have *kunkuma thilaka*. Siva has *four* hands. His right upper hand has an *ankusa*, his left upper hand has an *antelope*, his lower hand is in *abhaya* mudra and his lower left hand is in *chinmaya* mudra. Parvathi has *two* hands. Her right hand is in *chinmaya* mudra and her left hand is *varadha* mudra. Skandha has two hands carrying *lotus* flowers, one in each hand. All are seated on a *peeta* with a well designed, gold *prabhavali* plated above all, is an umbrella, towering over the figures.

(Fig. 70: Somasakandha, Balamuruga, Parvathi)
Thiruppathirippuliyur car is a unique one. Usually, the images, in the temple cars, would be sculptured pertaining to the main deity of the temple. For instance, the temple car of Srimushnam contains almost 99% of images of Vishnu and his avatars. But, here in Thiruppathirippuliyur car, though the main deity is Shiva, the images related to him and the Padaleeswarar temple alone not to be found here. Infact almost all the Hindu gods, including Vishnu, goddesses like Parvathi, Lakshmi and Saraswthi (Malaimagal, Alaimagal and Kalaimagal) and their manifestations, demigods and the boothaganas are depicted, though some are repeated at different places or panels. Intereting are the images of saints like Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar in the car. The images are fresh and sharp, though dust ridden due to poor maintenance.