The temples of South India, especially of Tamilnadu, are known for the grandeur in size, architectural styles and iconographical features. The temples portray the rich past of the region in terms of the history and culture. Temple towns which are a major characteristic of the Tamil provinces, housed temples of massive proportions. These again, a significantly large number of temples found in towns and villages are being venerated since the ancient past. Belonging to the Dravidian style of architecture, the temples of Tamilnadu ranged from modest sized temples to very large ones of high artistic merit. The temples have gone through a long process of evolution from the Sangam age to late medieval times. The Sangam age saw much encouragement being extended to several forms of art. Initially, the works of art and architecture were made of perishable materials, but, in course of time, stone came in for extensive applications. In fact, in as far as Indian architecture is concerned, the shift to stone, a more lasting material has been a significant step in the evolution of architecture in India.

Temples were patronised by the royalty, nobility, landlords, wealthy merchants, guilds as well as lay devotees, including those of lower castes and classes. Such act of patronage contributed to the expansion of temple complexes with its series of pillared halls, (mandapams), enclosures (praharas) and gateways (gopuras), and a horizontal expansion of the temples, creating physical and religious space for the complex society and economy that developed during the medieval centuries, especially under Vijayanagara patronage as well as construction of temples were looked upon as not only a sacred but also an act of merit. Architects were even honoured by the State. Kings who appreciated art encouraged it and many of them were themselves connoisseurs of art. The Pallava king Mahendravarman I is said to have been learned in the art of painting, sculpture, literature and engineering, and was
known as a tiger among artists. As a mark of encouragement, besides the rulers, several grants were made by members of the royal family including queens and princesses. Royal patronage was important in the case of specific shrines and reflected the close relationship that the kings sought to establish with certain deities and temples. A large number of inscriptions point to donations made to temples in the form of land, ornaments, constructions, pujas, fairs, festivals and other forms of grants. Guilds, both craft and merchants, had much to contribute to the constructions, maintenance of temple as well as festivals. Inscriptions giving details of donations were issued by kings in temples which fell within their own territory or sometimes located in the regions of other kingdoms. While this indicated an invasion into the territory of the enemy, it could scarcely have intended any meaningful incorporation of the temple that received the donation or locality into the kings own domain. With large number of donations pouring in, temples became rich institutions and nuclei of religious, social and economic activities. Temples provided employment to large number who included priests, dancing girls, artisans and other functionaries. Besides, it also functioned as banks and educational institutions as in most instances. Patashalas were attached to several of the temples. Festivals and fairs of the temples, which were a feature of a large number of temples, had a socio-religious and economic significance attracting people from far and wide.

The era of temple building activity commenced with the rise of Pallavas to power in the later half of sixth century AD. Southern or Dravidian architecture was initiated by the Pallavas who held sway till the ninth century AD over an extension region in the South. An intense architectural activity, both rock-cut and structural, was witnessed. The free standing monolithic rathas, the rock-cut mandapams and construction of temples in majestic

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proportion, located within large Praharas are the best representations of the Pallava style at Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram. The foundations of the Dravidian School laid by the Pallavas flowered under the Cholas. They considered prolific temple builders, the age of the Cholas, is called the golden age of Dravidian architecture. Remarkable has also been Chola contribution to metal sculptures as seen in the bronze sculptures of Siva Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer and of Vishnu and Lakshmi. The temples were also embellished with captivating iconography which has been said to have provided to the architecture an embellishment that gave rhythm and harmony^4.

A new trend in Dravidian architecture took shape under the Pandiyas who rose to power with the decline of the Chola power. Additional structures to the existing temples, tall Praharas and towering gopuras, came to be added which saw the expansion of the temple complexes. Under Vijayanagara with the extension of Imperial rule over vast tracts of the south, architectural activity was undertaken an extensive scale. Architectural traditions of the earlier periods provided the necessary back drop for a further growth of the Dravidian Style of architecture. With the extension of temple complex with tall praharas and gopuras, popularly known as Rayagopurams as well as several additional structures like the Amman Koil, and a number of open pillared mandapams came into being, all indicative of increased ecclesiastical activities during the period. Characteristic of the style was also the variety of pillars as well as the human, animal and mythical yali were chiselled out of solid stone and fixed to the shafts of the pillars. Vijayanagara characteristics were also added to the existing temples as well as temples that got renovated during the period. The emergence of the Nayakas, as the eclipse of Vijayanagara, royal patronage continued. In the Tamil provinces, the contribution of the Nayakas of Madurai has been most significant. The lavish growth of architecture could be seen in the buildings of several shrines and structures within the vast temple complexes

imposing mahadwaras and gopurams. This phase also saw increasing number of uthsavams and ceremonies celebrated in the temples.

In many of the large temples of South India, will be seen a wooden chariot located in an isolated corner of the temple complex. The chariot or ratha, a miniature model of the temple shrine is used for parading the processional idols or uthsavamurtis. The wooden chariots are richly decorated with figures of divine and semi-divine beings, narrative friezes, floral designs, animal figures as well as mythical animals. The ceremonial procession is usually carried through the car streets or rathaveedhis during the temple festivals. On the day of the rathotsava, the idols of the deities are given a holy bath or Thirumanjanam and adorned with silk garments, ornaments and flowers.

Architectural Historians subdivide the period of Dravidian Architectural growth into Pallava, Chola, Pandiya, Vijayanagara and Nayakkar Periods. The thousand years (from 600 to 1600 A.D.), during their reign, witnessed a phenomenal growth in the temple architecture. The first in the series of southern or Dravidian architecture was initiated by the Pallavas (600-900 A.D.). The rock-cut temples (of the ratha type) and the structural temples like the shore temples at Mahabalipuram and the Kailasanatha and Vaikuntha Perumal temples in Kancheepuram (700-800 A.D.) are the best representations of the Pallava style. The Vaikuntha Perumal (mid-8th century) has an interesting arrangement of three sanctums, one above the other, encased within the body of the superstructure\(^5\). The Pallavas laid the foundations of the Dravidian school which blossomed during the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Vijayanagar kings and the Nayaks\(^6\).

The period of Chola domination was the golden age for Dravidian Architecture. The Cholas are the prolific temple builders from the time of the King Vijayalaya Chola and his son Adhithya Chola. They built the Chidhambaram Nataraja and Srirangam


\(^6\) Ibid.
the Chidhambaram Nataraja and Srirangam Ranganatha

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

temples and many other temples in and around
Kanchipuram and Kumbakonam. Rajaraja Chola I (985-
1014AD) and Rajendra Chola I (1012 -
1044AD) built the Brighadheeswara temple in Tanjavur and
Gangaikonda Cholapuram (around 1009 – 1030AD)
respectively. Rajaraja Chola II (1146 – 1175AD) constructed
the chariot shaped Airavatheswara temple in Darasuram.
Cholas were also known for the remarkable Bronze
sculptures. The sculptures of Shiva in various forms, especially
the cosmic dancer statue and Vishnu with Lakshmi are the best examples of Chola bronzes.

The Rashtrakutas who ruled the Deccan from ManyakhetaGulbarga district, Karnataka
in the period AD 753 – 973 constructed some of the finest Dravidian monuments at Ellora
(the Kailasanatha temple), in the rock cut architecture. Some other fine monuments are the
It is said that they altogether constructed 34 rock-cut shrines, but most extensive and
sumptuous of them all is the Kailasanatha temple at Ellora. The temple is a splendid
achievement of Dravidian art. The walls of the temple have marvellous sculptures from Hindu
mythology including Ravana, Shiva and Parvathi while the ceilings have paintings.

The Hoysalas (1100-1300A.D.) who ruled the Kannada country improved on the
Chalukyan style by building extremely ornate, finely chiselled, intricately sculptured temples
mounted on star shaped pedestals. The Hoysala temples are noted for the delicately carved
sculptures in the walls, depressed ceilings, lathe-turned pillars in a variety of fanciful shapes;
and fully sculptured vimanas. Among the more famous of these temples, which are classified
under the Vesara style, are the twin Hoysalesvvara temple at Halebid, the Chenna Kesava

temple at Belur (1117), the Amrtesvara temple at Amritpur (1196), and the Kesava temple at Somnathpur (1268).

In 1336 – 1565AD, during the period of the Vijayagara Empire in Karnataka, later, incorporated Dravidain type gopuras. Their stylistic landmarks were the pillared Kalyanamandapas, open pillared Vasantha mandapas and the Rayagopuras. At Hampi, the Vitthala temple is the best example of pillared Kalyanamandapa style. Another element of Vijayanagara style is the carving of large monoliths such as Sasivekalu(mustard) Ganesha and Kadalekalu (ground nut) Ganesha at Hampi, the Gomateswara Bahubali at Karkala and Nandhi (bull) in Lepakshi. Vijayanagara art includes wall paintings of Dhasavathara and Girija Kalyana in Virupaksha temple.\footnote{Vijayanagara Empire. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.}

The growth of the Dravidian temple complex acquired momentum since the days of Mahendra Varman I (600 to 630 AD). The peeta and vimana show stages of development under the subsequent phases of art history under the Cholas, The Pandiys and the Nayakas. They not only improved the already existing features but also introduced innovations in the temple complex. Thus the gopuras which just present a peep in the Kailasanatha temple at Kancheepuram and the shore temple at Mahabalipuram find a leap in the Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur and reach the acme under the Pandiyas. The theppakulams, mandapas, vahanas and temple cars were improved by the Vijayanagar emperors and their successors. More cars were added to the expanding temples, each additional car meant for different deities or festivals conducted in different months. Thus Shiva temples came to possess as many as five cars, which were intended for different gods like Lord Shiva, Amman, Ganapathi, Subrahmanya and Chandikeswara. In Vishnu and Subramanya temples, the additional cars were used for festivals in different months. The vahanas were also increased to add the pomp and pageantry of the temple. All the Hindu gods had a characteristic vahana of
their own, such as, the lotus for Bramha, bull (nandhi) for Shiva, Garuda for Vishnu, Mooshika for Ganapathi, and peacock for Subahramanya and so on.

Cuddalore district, with Cudalore town as its head quarters, has historical and religious significance. It consisted of Chola naadu and Nadu naadu. Nadu naadu is located between Chola Manadalam and Thondai Mandalam or between Chola Kingdom and Pallava Kingdom. Cuddalore was once called Koodalur where the rivers Kedilam, Pennaiyar and Paravanar join. Cuddalore has been subjected to many invasions from foreigners.

In 1600, the British and the French came to India for trade and business. The British or English established a settlement in Cuddalore where as the French settled in Pondicherry. They not only did the business but were engaged in an indecisive battle between themselves. The battle of Cuddalore ended in 1758. From 1789 to 1794, there was further unrest in Cuddalore due to the war of American Independence and the Second Anglo-Mysore war, followed by a siege of Cuddalore after which the British regained Cuddalore. Even today, some streets and roads like Clive street, Wellington street, Lawrence road and Imperial road retain their British names. Religiously, Cuddalore has both Saivite and Vaishnavaite temples. The temples dedicated to Siva are the Nataraja temple at Chidhambaram, Padaleeshwarar temple at Thiruppathirupuliyur, Thiruvadhigai Veerattaneswarar temple at Panruti, Vriddhagiriswarar temple at Vriddhachalam, Thirunavalur and Thirumanikuzhi Siva temples.

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in and around Cuddalore. The Vaishnavaite temples located in Cuddalore are the Bhuvaraha temple at Srimushnam and the Thiruvaninthipuram Perumal temple at Thirupadripuliyur. Saivatite pathmakers Thirunavukkarasar and Sundharar were born in this district. Vallalar Ramalingar has born in Vadalur, a town in Cuddalore district. Avvaiyar, the great Tamil poetess, gave in marriage Angavai and Sangavai, the daughters of the king Paari Vallal, in Thirukoilur.

Cuddalore is also known for many interesting places for sightseeing. The Pitchavaram Mangrove forest, formerly known as Tharukavanam, is habitated by many rare species of plants and birds like watersnips, egrets, herons, storks, spoonbills and pelicans. Peak population of birds in Pitchavaram is from November to January. The other important places include Devanampattinam Beach, Fort St. David, Satyagnana Sabha at Vadalur, Jamiya Pallivasal and Thoweeth Mosque at Cuddalore. Neyveli Lignite Corporation, located in Neyveli, is another important place to be noted.

The Chidhambaram temple is historically significant. The worship of Lord Nataraja is known to be existing as early as Sangam period. The Chola kings considered the Lord as their guardian god and made several endowments. They had gold plated the roof of the temple. The Vijayanagara emperor Krishnadevaraya had also made several endowments and his stone statue is sculptured in the northern Gopuram. Lord Siva is worshipped in Chidhambaram in the dancing pose of Anandathandava. He is also worshipped in the formless form (Arupa form) which constitute the Chidhambara Rahasya. Chidhambaram is also considered one of the panchabutha sthalas, that of Akasha. Here at Chidhambaram, Lord Siva had granted Pathanjali and Vyagrapathar their desire to witness his cosmic dance. Lord Vishnu had also witnessed the dance and a shrine was built for Lord Govindharaja to commemorate this. The Saivaite Saints, Appar, Sundharar, Sambandhar and Manickavasakar had worshipped the Lord at Chidhambaram.
Besides Chidhambaram, Srimushnam is one of the most important historical places. It is one of the eight Swayam Vyuktha Sthalam (came into existent by itself) and is made up of Saligramam stone. The greatness of Srimushnam is well explained in various Puranas like Varahapurana, Naradhapurana and Brahmapurana. In the centre of Srimushnam are located two temples, one Saivaite and the other Vaishnavaite. They are situated back to back; the Vishnu temple faces West and the Siva temple faces east. Traditionally, it is said that Vishnu resides here in three forms, as Lord Bhuvaraha, as the sacred tree Ashwatha and as the sacred pond Nithyapushkarani. The moolavar or the presiding deity is Varahaswamy or Vishnu in Boar Avatar, his third incarnation of the Lord. He is here in Nindra Thirukkolam (Akimbo) pose, with his hands kept on his hip and his head slightly turned towards left. His weapons Shanka and Chakra are inserted in his hip. But, the uthsavar or processional deity is the fourhanded, human faced Yajnavaraha with his consorts Lakshmi and Bhudevi. One of the specialities of this temple is the offering of Korai Kizhangu prasadam (a mixture of Korai Kizangu, Mango, Sugar, Cow Ghee, Pacchai Karpooram, and Elaichi powder) to the Lord, as Varaha, likes to eat korai kizhangu. Srimushnam Bhoo Varaha Swamy is the only temple that brings together unity between Muslims and Hindus (discussed in detail in Chapter IV) and this practice continues to take place to this day.

Next in important is Thiruppathirippuliyr which is the 18th out of 22 Siva shrines in Nadunaadu region and is 1300 years old. The temple was notorious even before the period of Sambhandhar and Thirunavukkarasar. The presiding deity is Paadaleeswarar and the goddess is Periyanayagi. The sthalaviruksha of this temple is the Pathiri tree from which the sthala attained the name Thiruppathirippuliyr. Devotees, especially, childless throng here seeking remedy and cradles are placed in the temple by them, after having a bath in the Sivakarani kulam. Apart from the four Saivite Saints who had praised the Lord, Arunagirinathar had sung eulogy of the Lord Muruga in this temple in his Thiruppugazh. As per the Sthalapurana,
Goddess Parvathi, after having completed her penance in an arupa form, is said to have wedded the Lord here. Vyagrapadhar, after having witnessed the dance of Bliss of Lord Nataraja in Chidhambaram, had come here and attained his salvation. Saint Thirunavukkarasar, a great devotee of Nataraja is said to have angered Pallava Mahendhiravarman I who was a Jain by birth. The king is said to have ordered that Thirunavukkarasar be tied to a rock and thrown into the sea. The saint supposedly chanted the hymns on the Lord and the hard rock changed into a float and brought him to the shore safely at a place called Karaiyeravitta Kuppam or Karaiyeria Kuppam.

In Chidhambaram, there are five Temple cars, each one for Nataraja, Sivakamasundhari, Ganesha, Subramanya and Chandikesvara which are paraded during the rathothsavam day. In Srimushnam, there is only one car which is taken out with Lord Yajnavaraha with his consorts Lakshmi and Bhudevi. The Thiruppathiripuliyur there is a newly built one (five years old) and carries Somaskandhamurthi.

OBJECTIVES:

Scholars like Raju Kalidos, George Michell, Kandan and few others have done some spade works on temple cars. Raju Kalidos set the model for this kind of program in his Temple Cars of Medieval Thamizhagam. A detailed account of the cars and the iconographical idols of many temples in Tamilnadu have been provided in the study. George Michell has written many books about South Indian Temples. In his Hindu Art and Architecture, Michell outlines the development of Hinduism and the principle iconic forms of its pantheon. In his Chidhambaram - Home of Nataraja, he had described the ritual life of Nataraja Temple. Kandan has restricted himself to Thanjavur district in his Temple cars of Thanjavur District. Eva Rudy Jansen in her book, The Book of Hindu Imagery, the Gods and Their Symbols describes various postures, mudras and aayudhas in detail. T.A.Gopinath Rao,

Many of the scholars had done their work in the general area of the temple, temple cars and car festivals. Nobody has done a study on a specific temple car of a particular temple in detail. Hence I have attempted a micro study by selecting three temples and their cars in Cuddalore District, namely Chidhambaram, Srimushnam and Thiruppathirippuliyur which have not received an exclusive attention. I have taken a special care to select the chariots of Lord Siva and Goddess Sivakamasundhari from Chidhambaram, Lord Vishnu from Srimushnam and a newly constructed Sivan car from Thiruppathirippuliyur.

Historically, Chidhambaram in Cuddalore District is a very renowned place, because of the Lord Nataraja Temple. Srimushnam Bhuvarahamurthi Temple and Paadaleeswarar Temple at Thiruppathirippuliyur are also very popular temples. The temple chariots and the
sculptures are extraordinarily marvellous and the Rathotsava festivals draw out a large crowd for procession. The Cuddalore had been ruled by the Pallavas and Cholas and many feudal lords. The district had been credited by the birth of many Alwars and Nayanmars. Both Siva and Vishnu shrines are present in Chidhambaram in the same campus and Srimushnam in the same area, back to back.

SCOPE:

Though the range of this study is mainly about the *Structural styles and Iconographic features of the temple cars*, of Cuddalore District, we have expanded the limits a little bit extra, adding the historical, traditional and local significant aspects of each temple, in the third, fourth and fifth chapters. The observance of the festivals is described in short, before giving the specific aspects of the festivals that are conducted in each temple. The historical and traditional aspects of the festivals conducted in some other temples like Puri Jagannathar temple, Thiruvarur, Srivilliputhur and Thiruvannamalai temples are given in short. A short description of how a temple car is built and various types of cars is given in the evolution chapter. The existence of stone, golden and silver temple cars is added to make the study a little more interesting.

SOURCES:

The study is based mainly upon the primary sources, but has also taken into account the available secondary materials. The study is limited to four important select cars; two Saivaites cars from Chidhambaram (Sivan and Amman cars), one Vaishnavaite from Srimushnam and the other from Thiruppathiripuliyur. Both Chidhambaram and Srimushnam cars are ancient chariots but the Thiruppathiripuliyur chariot is a fairly new one as the old ratha of the temple got destroyed and the car was rebuilt as per the tradition.
The study has involved extensive field work as well as consultation with Sthapathis, Dhihkshidhars and other experts in the area. I am indebted to Ganapathi Sthapathi of Mahabalipuram who provided a detailed account on Vasthu Shasthra of temple and temple cars, to Dhihkshidhar Thillai Natarajan Gurukkal and Dhihkshidhar Pattu of Chidambaram, Vembu Gurukkal and Vembunathan of Thiruppattiripulyar temple and to Kesavan Gurukkal of Srimushnam who were of immense help in understanding the temple puranas and the observances of rituals and festivals of the temple. Sthapathi Arul and few others and Rajendhiran, Government College of Sculpture and Architecture, at Mahabalipuram provided significant information pertaining to the construction, architecture and iconographs of the Rathas. Visits to various repositories in Tamilnadu, Pondicherry and Karnataka, Connimara Library, Madras University Library, Tamil Universal Library (Tharamani), A.S.I. Library (Saint George Fort) in Chennai, French Institute of Indology in Pondicherry, Mythic Society Library, I. C. H. R. Library and Chitrakala Parishath in Bangalore, Annamalai University Library in Annamalai Nagar, Saraswathi Mahal Library in Tanjore and Central Library in Vellore have been beneficial.

Epigraphical sources like Annual Epigraphical Reports, South Indian Inscriptions, South Indian Temple Inscriptions, Inscriptions of Pudhukottai State, Census of India 1961, Thiruppathi Thirumala Devasthanam Epigraphical Series, Travancore Archaeological Series, Epigraphica Carnatica and Epigraphica India and Indian Antiquary have been valuable in the study of temple cars.

Epics and Hymns of Bhakthi saints have been useful in tracing the history of the temple cars. The Aagamas such as Kumarathanthra, Silpa Rathna Samhitha, Anirudha Samhitha, the Puranas like Bhagavatha Purana, Bramhanandha Purana, have been consulted for an understanding of the history and significance of the rathas and their sculptures.
Tamil Literary works such as Chekkizhar’s Periyapuranam, Perumbatrapuliyur Nambi’s Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam and Katchiyappar’s Perur Puranam, throw immense light on the car festivals.

Sanskrit literary works which were translated in English, such as Silpa Shasthra, The Skandha Purana (Part I, III & IV), The Bhagavata Purana (Part I & III), The Vayu Purana (Part I), The Vishnu Purana, The Varaha Purana (Part I & II), Sritattvanidhi (Vol. III) Kashyapa Shilpa, Rathna, Brahmanandha Purana, Padmamahapurana, Devi Bhagavatham, Vishwa Karma Vasthusastram, Brahmia, Chithrakarma, Sthuthvanithi and Aagamas have given an idea of an iconography while the Kumaratantra, Manasara, Mayamata, Vishnutattva Samhita and Eswara Samhitha have provided necessary clues regarding sculptures on the cars. Mahapuранanas and Sthala Puranas have been consulted extensively for an understanding of the history and significance of the rathas and their sculptures.

METHODOLOGY

To start with, a simple background history and importance of each temple of the Cuddalore District is given in the beginning of each of the chapters. The architectural and designing of each temple cars is described with sketches then and there. The description of the wheels, the aadhara part of the car, namely the axles and boothappars are given a brief and concised explanation. The placement of reliefs, the descriptions of them in detail as far as possible with suitable footnotes are given. The reliefs are arranged in three major thalas, namely, Vigrahappar, Ashvabhandhana and Adhistana in each car. They are separated by three or four Achchuppars. Apart from the reliefs of gods and goddesses, each cars is decorated with imaginative, supernatural images like yali, galloping horses, elephants, lions, demigods and gandharvas in the corners of each car.
In Chidhambaram Natarajar and Sivakamasundhari cars, the reliefs are mainly of the Lord Nataraja and his manifestations, and of Sivakamasundhari and her manifestations. The description of the placements of the reliefs starts from the Vigrahappar. After having finished the features in the front side of the car, the description is continued to the next side in a clockwise direction, followed by the backside and the fourth side. The descriptions of the reliefs in the panels start from the left side, proceeding to the right. A short introduction or a brief story about the relief in question is also given. Short descriptions of almost all friezes are given, highlighting only the important reliefs in detail. In the same manner, the placements and description of the friezes in the Ashvabhandhana and Adhistana are explained, followed by the description about the Simhabandhana and Devasana and the descriptions about the moolavars and the Uthsavamoorthies of the cars are given.

On the contrary, in Srimushnam car, the placement and description of the friezes starts in the front side. Sculptures of all the three thalas, namely, Vigrahappar, Ashvabhandhana and Adhistana in the front side are explained in detail, followed by the descriptions of the reliefs in the other sides, in the clockwise order.

The description of the friezes in Thiruppathiripuliyur is quite different. Almost all the gods including Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Ganesha, Subramanya, goddesses Parvathi, Lakshmi, Saraswathi and their manifestations, Tamil devotees like Appar and Gnanasambandhar are present. Hence, the reliefs are categorised into groups and explained. The Simhasana and Devasana, (Padmasana in Srimushnam), and the Processional deities (Uthsavamurthis) are also given much importance and explained.

In general, Methodology adopted in this thesis is descriptive and analytical.

ORGANISATION:

The chapterisation is as follows:
CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

1) Introduction.
2) Evolution of the Temple Cars.
3) Structural styles and iconography of the Chidhambaram cars.
4) Structural styles and iconography of Srimushnam car.
5) Structural styles and iconography of the Thiruppathirippuliyur car.
6) Rathas: A Socio-Economic Study.
7) Conclusion.

The introductory chapter presents a brief history of the Cuddalore District and Temple chariots especially of Chidhambaram, Thiruppathiripuliyur and Srimushnam, taking into due account the literary and epigraphical data. An introduction of each of the temple cars is made in the context of its evolution, structure, iconography and socio-economic aspect.

The second chapter will trace the evolution of the temple cars from the ancient days to the present day. The origin of chariots, from the wheel free palanquins, the onset of making chariots with two to multiple wheels following the invention of wheels, various types of rathas, the excavation of ancient rathas, the construction and types of rathas, a brief history of existence of rathas in ancient periods, the bronze statues and their making etc. are explained in the second chapter.

The third chapter explains the structural style of Lord Nataraja and Goddess Sivakamasundhari cars, the sketch of the ther, the sthalapurana of the temple, the arrangement and special features of reliefs in the Chidhambaram temple cars.

Similarly, the fourth and fifth chapters describes the above said features in Srimushnam and Thiruppathiripuliyur temple cars.

The sixth chapter explains the socio-economic aspects of the temples, the procedures of the processions and an elaborate description of the festivals.