Indian temples and their chariots (rathas) have been a source of attraction, not only as a place of worship for the devotees, but also as an architectural marvels. The Indian temples with their imposing towers, intricate carvings and of massive sizes were the results of a gradual evolution over time. Etymologically, the term temple is derived from the Latin word *Tempulum*\(^1\) which in its original sense means a square or a rectangular place marked off as a sacred place to a God, in which the house of God may be erected. The shrine, the sanctum or the abode of the God is also referred as *Devagraha, Devalaya, Devakula, Vimana* etc. The term *Mandhir* for the first time occurs in Banabhatta's *Kadambari*, a text of 7th century AD\(^2\).

There are no evidences to construction of temples in the Vedic period, instead information may be gleaned about performance of Yagna to forces of nature. As natural phenomena were considered divinities, people turned to them with pleas and requests and sacrifices are offered\(^3\). Despite visualising the gods in human form, no form or physical attributes in the form of an image was enunciated. Being gregarious by nature sharing equal rights and living as a community, these early Aryans also performed yagnas as a community. It was commonly believed that Agni had bestowed them the wealth that was to be enjoyed commonly and equally (Samaanam Dhanam) and that India was the protector of the wealth\(^4\). With the origin of temples, the earliest structures were made of timber and clay and in course of time, they were replaced by stone, a very significant step taken in the evolution of architecture.

The evolution of temples in the South has seen a continuous development ranging from unostentatious to the most massive and elaborates structures. It is in many of the larger

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\(^2\) Ibid, p 55.

\(^3\) Brodov. V: Indian Philosophy in Modern Times (Translated from Russian by Sergie Zevisev), (1984, Progress Publishers, USSR.), p42

temples that Rathas have been a characteristic feature. Chariots or Rathas have occupied an
important place in the religious and social life in India since ancient times. Chariots have been
a feature in several of the civilisation. The word chariot is derived from the word Carrus\(^5\). In
the English usage, a chariot is a horse drawn two wheeled car, used mainly during wars in the
ancient times.

The temple car was a replica of the garbaghraha in an architectural design; the
constituent parts of garbhagraha viz, plinth, peeta and vimana were brought out in the various
types of temple cars. The garbhagragha or karuvarai (sanctum santctorum) is a dark room
enshrining the principal deity and is the most sacred part of the temple. It is usually a square
acellular which consists of architectural parts like plinth, peeta, vimana. The plinth consists of
broad divisions like Upapeeta and adhisthana, each has many more secondary mouldings like
kanda, kabodha, vyalavari, palaki, padmam etc. The peeta where the deity is seated consists
of devasana and simhasana in the temple car. The vimana is a domical super structure which
stands above the peeta. The parts of the vimana are the kodungai, greeva, sikhara and stupi in
the ascending angles, as seen in a temple car. The doorway of the karuvarai is known as
karuvaraivayil (threshold of the sanctum). It opens into the mukhamandapa (Narasana in the
temple car) through a narrow corridor called antrala\(^6\). It can be correctly said that the temple
is an immovable or stationary car and that the temple car is a mobile or movable temple.

The chariot is a type of carriage using animals, always horses, when speed of
tavel was desired. Ox carts, proto-chariots, were built by the Proto-Indo-Europeans and in
Mesopotamia as early as 3000 BC. The original chariot was a fast, light, open, two-wheeled
conveyance drawn by two or more horses that were hitched side by side. In ancient Rome and
other ancient Mediterranean countries, a biga chariot required two horses, a triga, three, and a

\(^5\) Chariot: Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia,
\(^6\) Symbology of the Hindu Temples, India – Indianetzone,
quadriga required four horses abreast\(^7\). The vehicle, driven by a charioteer, was used for travel, in processions, games, and races and for military purposes. The earliest spoke-wheeled chariots have been dated to 2000 BC and their uses were peaked around 1300 BC\(^8\). Chariots ceased to have military importance in the 4th century BC, but chariot races\(^9\) continued to be popular until the 6th century AD.

Chariots figure prominently in the Rigveda, evidencing their presence in India in the 2nd millennium BC. Among Rigvedic deities, notably Ushas (the dawn) rode in a chariot, as well as Agni in his function as a messenger between gods and men. References to rathas and the makers of chariots called ratha-karas are found in the Vedas and other literary works. The Aryans transported their images of gods and goddesses in chariots while moving from place to place. It seems to be the earliest evidence of the procession of gods in chariots. The earliest historical note of a temple car procession is found in the Silapathikaram. The Manimegalai, another Tamil epic credits Murugan with a car festival during the Indhravizha (festival of Indra) a grand festival of Indra at Poom-puhar, the capital of Cholas. The Nayanmars refer to car streets and car festivals. The important places noted by them are Thiruvaiyaru, Thiruvedavanam, Thriunallaru, Thiruvarur, and Thillai (Chidambaram), all belonging to Chola country. In Tamil, the street in which the temple car moves during the festival are called Therar veethi (Devaram), Ther kovil veethi, Therarum nedu veethi, Ther-ula-nedu veethi. Ther means temple cars, veethi means street, nedu veethi means long street, vizha means festival and ula means procession\(^10\).

The popularity of car festivals dedicated to Siva and Vishnu during seventh and ninth AD was mainly due to the bhakthi cult adumbrated by the Nayanmars and Alvars, the former devotees of Siva and the latter, the worshippers of Vishnu, the two sects of Saivism and Vaishnavism. The

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\(^10\) Kalidas Raju: Temple Cars of Medieval Tamilaham, P19.
bhakti is the loving adoration and is the deep, affectionate and mystic devotion towards a personal deity who is the principal object of his worship. Dr. Grierson\textsuperscript{11} says that it is simply and solely an affection, devoted to a person, and not a belief in a system. The Bhakti Movement which started in Tamilnadu in the 6\textsuperscript{th} century C.E. was one of the radical socio-religious movements challenging the caste system. Romila Thapar notes that the Bhakti sects....arose at various times over a span of a thousand years in various parts of the subcontinent. They were specific in time, place and teacher but were limited by the language which they used. They did not evolve out of some original teaching or spread through conversion. During the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, the South Indian religious scene was diverse with various kinds of religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. There was a fear among the Hindu religious leaders with the popularity of Buddhism and Jainism which incited a large Hindu renaissance that reached its peak in the 7\textsuperscript{th} century. Between the seventh and ninth centuries, a forceful Saiva bhakti movement arose. The saint-poets, Nayanmars and Alwars, engaged in public debates with the Buddhist and Jain monks which included the performance of miracles. They started travelling from temple to temple, singing and dancing with their devotees. And slowly it became a mass movement and the activities of Alwars and of Nayanmars is identified as the Bhakti movement. Tamil, a vernacular language, was used in the bhakti poems in order to speak to the lay man instead of Sanskrit. Manavalan observes that it was only during the period of the later Cholas it came to be known as Bhakti movement.

With the aggression of Kalabhras in the ancient period of Sangam Age, a rigid caste system was implanted and women were regarded as worthless. Poetry, music, drama and other arts were looked down upon as something evil. The bakthi movement successfully ousted the antisocial perspectives of human life, and this strong political and social movement cut across barriers of caste and creeds. One of the important gospels of the Nayanmars and Alwars is the meaninglessness of caste in the eyes of the lord. The leaders of such a mass movement included people from kings, chieftains, ministers, military-generals, farmers,

merchants, potters, weavers and so on. The poet-saints wrote poem in Tamil so that the lay man can comprehend it and understand. In fact, Manickavasakar’s verses are sung while bathing in the tank in the morning, while picking flowers, while preparing medicinal mixtures in mortar and pestle and even while playing village games.\(^\text{12}\)

The bhakti literature produced in Tamilnadu comprises of many important books, such as Thevaram, Nalayira Divya Prabandham, Srimat Bhagavata and so on. Nambiyandar Nambi compiled the first seven volumes by Appar, Sampandhar and Sundarar as Thevaram. Manikkavacakar's heart-melting verses, called Thiruvacakam, are full of visionary experience, divine love and urgent striving for truth. The songs of these four saints are part of the compendium known as Thirumurai. Thirumurai (meaning the holy division) is a twelve volume compendium of songs or hymns in the praise of Shiva in the Tamil language from 6th century to 11th century. The first three Thirumurais of Thevaram are composed by Sambanthar, the next three by Appar and the seventh one is composed by Sundharar. Thiruvachakam and Thirukovaiyar by Manickavasagar is included as eighth, Thiruvisaippa and Thiruppallandu written by Sendhanar, Gandarathiyar and several others are compiled as ninth Tirumurai out of which most are unknown. Thirumandiram by Thirumular, the famous Siddhar, is compiled as the tenth. The eleventh Thirumurai is Nalayira Dhivya Prabandham, which is an anthology of all the twelve Alwars, is compiled by Nathamuni or Ranganatha Muni. Sekkizhar's Periya Puranam, composed a century later, contains the life depiction of all the 63 Nayanmars and was included as the 12th Thirumurai by Kulothunga Chola I. Thirumurai, along with the Vedas, Shaiva Agamas, and the Meykanda Shastras, are now considered to form the scriptural basis of the Śaiva Siddhāntha in Tamil Nadu.

Appar (aka Tirunavukkarasar) was born in the middle of 7th century in Thiruvamur, Tamil Nadu, and his childhood name was Marulneekiar. Appar was very much interested in

Jainism and went away from home and stayed in their monastery in Patalipura and was renamed as Darmasena. Details of Appar's life are found in his own hymns and in Sekkizhar's Periya Puranam. Later, he was reconverted to Saivism mainly through the efforts of his elder sister, Thilakavathi. She herself is counted as one among the 63 Nayanmar saints of Saivism. Appar has an extraordinary humility which prompts him to regard God as his master and he himself being one of His humblest servants. This master-servant relationship forms the main motifs of his hymns (pathikams).

Sambandar was born in the first half of the seventh century when the worship of Shiva was gone to obscurity. As happens with all the legends, he is also associated with lore of myths. The most well known one is that he, as a child, was suckled by Parvati, Siva’s wife and immediately, he sang fifteen stanzas of poems. The poet-saints used to travel from temple to temple with a large number of devotees. He defeated vast number of Jains in the presence of the King Madhwa, who renounced Jainism and became a devotee of Shiva.

Sundarar together with Appar and Sambandhar are regarded as the three powerful leaders of Bhakti movement. As the name suggests he was beautiful and he was a most lovable character. Legend goes that Siva appeared in the guise of an ascetic and prevented his marriage to a Brahmin girl. Sundarar abused the ascetic. But Siva came in his dream and revealed his identity and from that instance Sundarar submitted himself to the god. His hymns pulsate with intense emotion of total surrender to god, expressed in a simple style.

Manikkavasakar's real name is not known but we know that he was born into a Brahmin family near Tiruvadhavur near Madurai. In appreciation of his devotion to Lord Shiva, King Arimardana Pandian appointed him as his minister and honoured him with the title Thennavan Brahmmarayan. He gave adequate money to him to buy high-breed horses for his cavalry. When the saint reached Thiruperundurai (now Avudayarkoil), he met Lord Shiva under a Kurundha tree and became his disciple. With the money given by the king, he built a Shiva temple in Thiruperundurai.

Manickavasagar returned to the kingdom. Lord Shiva changed the jackals in the forest as

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horses and brought them to the king. They became jackals at night. Suspecting Manickavasagar of a foul play, the king punished him. Lord Shiva appeared and made public the greatness of Manickavasagar who is the presiding deity of the temple. As the hymns sung by Vadavoorar were like gems – Manickam in Tamil, Lord named him Manickavasagar. He spent the rest of his life wandering from temple to temple confronting Buddhists and Jains and singing and composing devotional songs. Throughout his work, Manikkavasagar discusses how important it is to forego attachments and cultivate dispassionate, devoted, sincere and simple hearted love to lord Shiva in order to attain his beatitude and also that the five letters of na ma si va ya alone give one mukti. Finally, he settled in Chidambaram. Andal was the voice of the women during bhakti period. Andal was the adopted daughter of Periyalwar. The Dhivyaprabandham includes Andal’s 173 poems, and among them 30 verses are famously known as Thiruppavai in which she depicts herself as Krishna’s lover. Her poems are filled with love and desire to unite with Krishna. She is depicted in the sculpture, as a beautiful young woman holding a parrot or a lotus in her hand. Her hairstyle, the knot placed to one side of her head, is typical of her iconography\textsuperscript{16}. Her bronze image is installed within the shrine of Srivilliputtur temple.

Chidhambaram is always referred as the first of Thevara Paadal Petra Sthalam and is also regarded as the first of the Thevara Sthalangal located on the Northern bank of the river Kaveri in the Chola region of Tamilnadu. The Chidhambaram Nataraja temple and the deity were immortalized in Tamil poetry in the works of Thevaram by three poet saints, Thirugnanasambanthar, Thirunavukkarasar and Sundaramoorthy Nayanar. Thirugnanasambanthar has composed two songs in praise of the temple, Thirunavukkarasar (Appar) eight songs in praise of Nataraja and Sundarar ten songs in praise of Nataraja. Sundarar commences his Thiruthondar Thogai (the sacred list of Lord Shiva's 63 Nayanmars)

paying his respects to the priests of the Thillai temple; "To the devotees of the priests at Thillai, I am a devotee".

Rajaraja Chola I was credited with recovering the vast and rich treasures of the Thevaram Hymns. He sought the help of Nambiyandar Nambi who was a priest in the temple. Guided by Lord Ganapathi, Nambi discovered the presence of Thevaram scripts, written in the cadijam (palm) leaves, half eaten by white ants in a chamber inside the second precinct in Thillai Nataraja Temple, Chidhambaram. The king thus became to be known as Thirumurai Kanda Cholan (one who saved Thevaram). Thereafter, the images of the Nayanar saints were also placed inside the temple. After the recovery of Thevaram, Rajaraja I arranged for the ritual sensing of the Thevaram hymns, known as Thiruppadiyam in temples. The singers were called Pidarars or Thiruppadiyam Vinnappam Seyvar (now known as odhuvars). This custom of singing Thevaram hymns was followed in other temples also, a practice which has come down to modern times. Manickavasagar’s Thiruvembavai was sung on special occasions in the temple. The Thiruvembavai is a collection of twenty hymns in which he has imagined himself as a woman following the Paavai Nonbu and praising Shiva. The twenty songs of Thiruvembavai and ten songs of Thiruppalliezhuhi on the Lord of Thirupperunthurai temple are sung all over Tamil Nadu in the holy month of Margazhi (December and January). Manikavasakar’s Thiruvasagam is placed near the idol of Shiva there. Several verses of Thiruvasagam including the accho pathikam, after singing of which he attained his Mukti, at Thillai Nataraja's feet, were engraved in the walls of the Chidhambaram temple. The Thiruchazhal hymn after singing which the communal Buddhists were exposed is, also, engraved in one of the prakarams. The work of Thiruchitrambalakkovaiyar was sung entirely

in Thillai Chidhambaram temple. Sculptures illustrating his life are also found in the
Minakshi-Sundaresvara temple at Maduraiⁱ⁹.

Bhakti movement is responsible for many rites and rituals associated with the worship
of God by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Indian subcontinent. For example, Kirtan at a
Hindu Temple, Qawwali at a Dargah (by Muslims), and singing of Gurbani at a Gurdwara are
all derived from the Bhakti movement of medieval India (800-1700)²⁰. It advocated
communal harmony among various religious groups in medieval India through the teachings
of saints like Kabir. It was a time when several people became great devotees of Shiva or
Vishnu. For example, Mangayarkarasi, a Chola princess married the Pandian King and
Sambandar converted him from Jainism to Saivism. Sundarmurty Nayanar was chosen to be
king and had succeeded the Kalabhra dynasty. Even some people rose as Muslim voluntarily
became great Vaishnava devotees and went on to be saints such as Kabir, Dadu, and Haridas.
Together with the contemporary sixty three Nayanars and the twelve Alwars, they are
accounted as South India's 75 Apostles of Bhakti because of their importance in the rise of the
Hindu Bhakti movement.

Processions and festivals feature in Tamil Bhakthi literatures, such as Appar's
description of the Thiruvathirai festival in Margazhi at Thiruvarur. He (Bikshadana) goes on
his begging rounds amid the glitter of a pearl canopy ..... Such is the splendour of Athirai Day
in Arur, our father's town (Appar IV. 21, verse 1)²¹. During the Pallava period, Alwars and
Nayanmars preached the cult of Bhakthi among the people. There was no caste disparity in
the Bhakthi Movement. Even those who belonged to low-caste had also become Bhakthi
Saints. For example, Nandhanaar, Kaalaththi Nayanar and Thiruppaanazhalvar belonged to

²⁰ Singh Darjeet: Sikhism; its Philosophy and History (1997, Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigar)
lower castes. Yet, they were treated and respected as saints. Therefore, all castes and communities had equally followed Bhakthi or devotion to God. The bhakthi cult in Tamilnadu had an impact on South Indian temple art this was the main reason for the emergence of large number of temples and wooden cars in Tamilnadu.

In the Vindhya range may be seen depiction of chariots in rock carvings or petroglyphs. Two depictions of chariots are found in Morhana Pahar, Mirzapur district. One depicts a biga and the head of the driver. The second depicts a quadriga, with six-spoked wheels, and a driver standing up in a large chariot box.

The scythed chariot was supposed to have been invented by the King of Magadha, Ajatashatru around 475 BC. The scythed war chariots had a sharp, sickle-shaped blade or blades mounted on each end of the axle. The blades, used as weapons, extended horizontally for a meter on the sides of the chariot. A very interesting scythed chariot is on display at the AP State Archaeology Museum, Hyderabad. Pancha Rathas, also known as Pandava Rathas, are a complex of monolithic rathas at Mahabalipuram, dating from the late 7th century, it is attributed to the reign of King Mahendravarman I and his son Narasimhavarman I. (Mamallan - 630–665 AD). Each of the rathas resembles a chariot (ratha), and each is carved over a single stone of granite which slopes in north-south direction with a slight incline. These structures are named after the Pancha Pandavas (Arjuna, Bhima, Dharma, Nakula and Sahadeva) and Dhroupathi.

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structural design and elevation, theyn stand unrivalled. The pyramidal in elevation, the rathas range from single (ekathala) to triple (trithala) towers, which present a unique exhibition of South Indian Dravidian architecture. The rock cut mandapams of the Pallavas on other hand are found at various places of Tamil Nadu. The most important among them are temples of Pallavaram, Mamandur, Mahendravadi, Vallam and Thalavanur.

In the Henan province of China, archeologicals discovered almost 3,000-year-old remains of horses and wooden chariots in a tomb of a Zhou Dynasty. In Luoyang, in China, wherein, even skeletal remains of the King and the charioteer have been found. The completed excavation unearthed four horse- and-chariot pits, dating back as far as 770BC\(^2\). The pits have well-preserved evidence of bronze ware and ceramics belonging to the early Western Zhou dynasty. Apart from artefacts themselves, the tomb throws light on the funerary customs prevalent in the early Western Zhou dynasty. The unearthed tomb is a vertical earthen pit tomb common during the period. Very interesting and valuable has been the complete set of chariots and

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horses, of all shapes and sizes.

The earliest chariot remains in India have been found at Atranjikhera which is dated to between 350 and 50 BC. There is evidence of wheeled carts in miniature models in the Indus Valley Civilization. The invention of the spoked wheels saw the emergence of the chariots enabled mainly by the advances in metallurgy during the bronze age. It served as the primary means of transport for all civilizations from 2500BC onwards. Historically, the spoked wheel and the chariot seem to have been avoided at several places in a short period of time. It is said that the first true chariots are likely to have developed on the Eurasian steppes, along the borders of Russia and Kazakhstan. Chariot races also came into being in course of time in the name of religion, becoming a part of religious festivals. Different types of chariots, such as Pushpa rathas, Soma rathaas, Vidhyadhara rathas, Vimana rathas, Scanda (Skanda) rathas, Gandharva rathas and Surapushpaka rathas, were used in races. On the chariot races becoming a commercial enterprise, the best chariots, the best fastest, the best teams and the most skilled charioteers were on display. Special rathas were used for the gods, kings and Brahmans. Emperor Nero drove his own ten horse chariot in the Roman games of 67 AD, falling out of the chariot in what must have been one of history’s most embarrassing moments.

The medieval carriage was typically a four-wheeled wagon type. They were largely used by the royalty, nobility and aristocrats, especially women, and are spoken as elegantly decorated and gilded. Wood and iron were the materials used in the building of a carriage and carriages that were used by non-royalty were covered by plain leather. Another form of the carriage was the pageant wagon of the 14th century, built with pivotal axle systems. During the 15th century, carriages were made lighter, drawn by a single horse. The coaches, another form of a carriage invented in Hungary became popular as it had to have a capacity to

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accommodate holding eight men and could be towed by only a single horse. By 1550, the Hungarian coach made its appearance throughout the major cities of Europe.

The litter\textsuperscript{26} is a class of wheel-less vehicles, a type of human-powered transport, for the transport of persons. Examples of litter vehicles include sedan chair (England), palanquin (France and India), and liteira (Portugal). It is Pallakku in Tamil. Smaller palanquin may take the form of open chairs or beds carried by two or more persons, some being enclosed. Larger palanquins, for example, those of the Chinese emperors, resembled small rooms upon a platform carried on the shoulders of a dozen or more men. The \textit{dholi}, suspended at the four corners from a bamboo pole, carried by two or four persons was brought into use to carry the wounded from the battlefield and transport them. Today, they are found in large numbers, especially in pilgrim sites to carry the devotees up the steep hills. (Fig. 04: Puri Jaggannathar Cars)

Temple cars or chariots that were brought in to carry gods in the Hindu temples in procession continue to be the most popular and unique to India. It is on the days of the temple festivals that are celebrated annually that the chariots are taken in procession with the uthsavamurtis of the temples. The ratha yathras attract people from far and wide. One of the most popular attractions of the Puri is the Ratha yathra of the Jagannatha temple\textsuperscript{27} which carries the idols of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra. The Udipi Srikrishna templeis in possession of both wooden as well as silver and gold rathas brought out for procession during

\textsuperscript{26} Litter (vehicle). In \textit{Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia}.

the temple festivals. Jagannatha temple which carries the idols of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra. The Udipi Srikrishna temple is in possession of both wooden as well as silver and gold rathas brought out for procession during the temple festivals.

Tamilnadu has the largest number of rathas. As per the data available of 2004, the state is said to be having 515 wooden rathas, some in urgent need of repairs. A very large number of the cars are rather old, while many have been additions made and a few others renovated. The car festivals of some of the temple draws immense crowds from within and across the state. The festival of Thiruvarur temple finds mention in the devotional hymns of saints like Thirugnanasambandhar and Sundharar. This annual festival is organised between March and April. This is considered the biggest chariot in size measuring 96 feet in height and weighing more than 300 tonnes. Such of the massive wooden temple cars are also found in the Thiruvannamalai Annamalaiyar temple and Chidhambaram Nataraja temples. The Nataraja festival is celebrated twice a year, during summer (Aani Thirumanjanam held in June-July) and in winter (Margazhi Thiruvadhirai in December-January).

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Srivilliputhur's Sri Aandal temple (23) has a very large temple car. It is, in fact, considered the second largest in the state. A very captivating ratha made of stucco is found on the first thala of the gopuram of the temple in which Krishna, in the posture of a warrior, is seated in the ratha pulled by four horses and Lord Brahma is the sarathi. The third and fourth largest temple cars are said to be found in the temples of Sri Nellaiyappar temple at Thirunelveli and the Sri Vaidhyanathan temple at Srivaikundam. Several other renowned temples such as Sri Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple, Kumbakonam Sri Sarangapani temple, Sri Ardhanarishwara temple at Thiruchengodu, Kapaleeswarar temple at Mylapore (Chennai) are some of the very popular temples wherein the temple cars are an important feature. Besides, stone cars were also constructed as seen at Vijaya Vittala temple at Humpi and the Airavatheshwara temple at Darasuram which are considered an architectural marvels and indicative of the flowering. Use of palanquins for the ceremonial processions are found in several of the temples even today. Figures of the deities are taken for procession in palanquins regularly during the temple festivals. Several type of palanquins like the Poopallakkau, Muthu-pallakku of flowers and pearls respectively

Temple cars were meant for parading the images of the gods in ceremonial processions. The beginning of the transport medium for the deities to go on for a procession was the palanquin which is still in use in many temples during festivals. There are various types of palanquin or pallakku like Poopallakku (Pushpa-pallakku), Pearl pallakku (Muthu-pallakku) etc.. They are temporary and are built on the festival day and are dismantled the very next day after the festival was over. The next type of car is the cuckadai ther, which is actually a four wheeled car. Such cars are plain without a plinth or peeta or vimana. At the time of festival, the car is decorated with a peeta and a vahana upon which the figure of the deity is placed. Behind the deity will be a prabhamandala. Around the entire adornment, there
will be a huge circular prabha, artificially decorated with colour papers, flowers, colourful beads and the whole car is electrically illuminated.

The *Kattaither* consists of four solid beams attached to the two cross bars, placed across the axles and tied with ropes. This forms the aadhara or base of the car and the plinth consists of a small pedestal for seating the processional image. Excepting the front side, the peeta is enclosed on all the other sides with carpets. The vimana is mounted above the peeta.

In the Kattaither, the three basic elements of a Hindu temple viz., plinth, peeta and vimana were present. It has no tire and sculptures as in the case of a Vairather.

The *Go-ratha* had a square upapeeta, with an adhistana which may be in rectangular, octagonal or polygonal form. Above the peeta is the vimana, designed in various shapes such as octagonal, hexagonal, square and circular. Vimanas have all the essential features like kodungai, greeva, shikhara and kalasa. At the corners of hexagonal or octagonal tires, images of flying *vidhyadharas* were found. Two or four horses in the galloping poses were set at the plinth level on the front side of the car. *Brahma* is seated behind the horses as a charioteer with noose in one hand and whip in another. Another type of Go-ratha consists of four additional vimana called *upparigai*, set at the four corners of the square upa-peeta. Yet, another type of Go-ratha is the *Indravimana*. This car had a simple base in the model of Kattaither and has four spoked wheels. Four pillars stand at the corners of the square platform above which is a vimana.