CHAPTER IV

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Architecture, viewed historically, remains as the principal visible material record through the ages of man’s intellectual evolution. Each cultural movement has contributed to the art of building and reflecting the aspiration of the people. Temples of Tamil Nadu are the treasure houses that preserve the age long culture of the Tamil people. They stand as testimony to understand the outstanding contributions made by the Tamil society in the field of art and culture. The constant support of the royalty that had gone in accord with the dedicated involvement of the body and the spirit of the people has resulted in the creation of such fine temple structure, which has the appreciation of the world at large.

Ardhanariswara Temple at Tiruchchengodu

Tiruchchengodu is a town lying at the foot of a rock 1220 feet above the plain and 1903 feet above the sea level. In the centre of the town there is a Pagoda of great repute dedicated to Ardhanariswara. The temple can be accessed by a winding flight of more than 1200 steps. Several mandapas have been erected at varied intervals along the route and each mandapa has
its own history. West of the *taili mandapa* is a Nandhi (Bull) which is daubed with butter by devotees. This Nandhi faces the hill which is regarded as the linga representation of Lord Siva. On the rock nearby, a gigantic five hooded serpent is carved as bas relief of 60 feet in length\(^1\). Even today there is a belief among the people that offering pongal to the serpent will protect them against snake bite.

The *singa mandapa* is maintained by the descendants of Nallathambi Kangeyan, one of the Vellalas of Morur. The pillars of this mandapa are well carved with figures of lions and horses and on the western wall are some human figures which are said to represent the original builders. Between this and the next mandapa a flight of 60 steps known as the *sathiya padi* (oath steps) or *aruvatham padi* (Sixtieth step) is found. Disputes on financial transactions are often settled here by one party challenging the other to swear on each step to the justice of his claim, extinguishing a light in the usual manner. There is a mandapa called *aruvatham padi mandapa* built by Kumarasamy Kangeyan, son of Nalla Thambi Kangeyan of Morur\(^2\). Beyond this lies the main entrance to the big temple of Ardhanariswara.

The *vimana* at the entrance gateway is built of stone up to the first tier and the super structures and other tiers are built of brick and mortar. They carry a number of stucco images of religious, puranic and secular themes.
The stone portion does not carry any images whereas brick and mortar portions carry the images. It is pyramidal in shape and carries the salasikhara with two mahanasikas, one on either side and five metal kalasas (kudams) are found3.

The shrine of Ardhanarishwara within the temple complex at Tiruchchengodu faces west and is square on plan. This temple consists of the central shrine (garbhagriha) proceeded by ardha mandapa. The vimana is built of stone from upana to prastara, while the superstructure is built of brick and mortar. To offset the western entrance a jalaka has been introduced on the western wall of the mandapa with nine partitions. The usual iconographical scheme has not been followed here on account of the shrine being west facing. The adhishthana (Base) of the vimana consists of upana (Lower most moulding of the Adhishthana), jagati, tripattakumuda (three faceted torus moulding) followed by kantha with galapadas and pattika (top tier). Above the pattika there is kantha again with galapadas and the adhapadma moulding. The wall portion or bhitti consists of devakoshtha ( Niches) flanked by pilasters (pillars), one on either side, which is again followed by pilasters at the sides. Each devakoshta is surmounted by a salasikhara with kudu arches. The pilasters flanking the devakoshtha consist of kal, tamam, kalasa, tadi, phalaka with adhapadma and kantha.
Above this the kapota moulding can be seen carrying the kudu arches with
human figures in the circles. Over the kapota is the vyala frieze running all
around. Between the sala roof with kudu arches carrying the Sivalinga in the
circle and kapota mouldings, the griva (neck portion) can be noticed. The
regular pilaster adjacent to the devakoshtha consists of kal, one of which is
inscribed; the idaikattu, the tadi and the thick phalaka with the adhapadma
moulding. Above the phalaka, can be seen the virakantha decorated with
pushpabetikai (pumunai corbel) showing the incipient flower above. Above
the prastara can be seen the uttira or beam and the adhapadma moulding.
The kapota with kudu arches is plain and devoid of images\(^4\).

Since most of the records on this hillock refer to their location as
Ardhanarishvara shrine and popularly worshipped or called so, the record
engraved to the west of the steps may be taken for consideration. This
temple is mentioned in the inscriptions of Parantaka I from 935 A.D. as
Tiruchchengottup-perumanadigal. The deity Tiruchchengottu Alvar referred
to in a record of Rajakesarivarman (Raja Raja I) dated in his 14\(^{th}\) year (998
A.D.) can be identified with the deity i.e., the Ardhanarishvara enshrined
here. On a record of Rajendra I dated in his 20\(^{th}\) year (1032 A.D.) the deity
here is referred to Tirumalaiyil Elundarulia Udaiyar at Tiruchchengodu
indicating the deity of Ardhanarishvara enshrined on the hill\(^5\). This also
attests the image in the form of *Sthanakamurti* (standing image). The image of Ardhanarishwara is enshrined in the Garbhagriha as a standing figure.

The temples of Ardhanarishwara and Subrahmanya on the hill at Tiruchchengodu have received gifts during the reign period of Vijayanagara king, Narasimha Raya in the 15th century A.D. This gives an idea about the existence of these temples and the receipt of the patronage from the then ruling kings. There are altogether three inscriptions found engraved, one on the central shrine; west and south walls of the mandapa in the front of the main shrine. Of these three, the record on the west wall of the mandapa dated 1599 A.D. mentions that Tirumalai Ettappa Nallathambi Kangeyan belonging to the group called Vellala Kannan from Morur in Kilkari Pundurai Nadu erected the pillars called *sitakaragandankal* close to the *nritta mandapa*.

Another interesting inscription found engraved on the south wall of the mandapa in front of the central shrine of the Ardhanarishwara dated 1627 A.D., traces three generation of the members of Tirumalai Ettappa. This record mentions that Kumaraswamy Kangeyan, brother of Attappa Immadi Nallathambi Kangeyan who was the brother of Tirumali Ettappa Nallatambi Kangeyan belonging to the Vellala Kannan from Morur in Kilkari Pundurai Nadu constructed the *Ganapadhiyar Mahamandapa*, the entrance door way
to the south of this mandapa, the *Vilasa Mandapa*, the 12 lion pillars, *sitakaragandankal*, 8 pillars and paved the floor with the soap stone slabs. This record falls in the reign period of Vijayanagara king Vengatapati Raya II. At the time he was ruling from Penugonda in Andhra Pradesh\(^7\).

**Architecture of Sengottuvelan or Subrahmanya Shrine**

The shrine to the north of Ardhanarishwara is dedicated to *Sengottuvelan* i.e., *Subrahmanya*. This shrine consists of the *garbhagriha* preceded by an *ardha mandapa*. The portion of the *vimana* from *upana* to *prastara* is built of stone, while the superstructure is built of brick and mortar. The *vimana* has received renovations at frequent intervals. There is an inscription of Krishnadevaraya on the southern side of *tripatta kumuda* of this shrine. The other inscriptions are completely worn out. These Vijayanagar inscriptions refer to the grant made for conducting the festivals in the month of Karthigai. It may be assumed that during his reign period or earlier the base of the *vimana* was rebuilt.

The central shrine housing the image of Subrahmanya in the standing posture is confirmed by a record of Chadayavarman Sundarapandya dated in his 10\(^{th}\) year (1260 A.D.) engraved on the boulder to the west of the steps. The *vimana* of the Sengottuvelan shrine consists of the *adhishthana*, *bhatti* and *prastara*. In the case of base, the *upana* cannot be seen as it is covered
by the modern flooring. Only the portion of the jagati followed by tripatta kumuda, then kantha with galapadas, the prati and the kampa above it can be seen. The wall portion does not carry any devakoshthas. The pilasters decorating the wall consist of kal, tamam, idaikattu, kalasa, tadi and adhapadma moulding and above the phalaka the crowning member of the pillar can be seen. Above the virakantha and over the phalaka the incipient pumunai corbel can be seen. Above the wall portion and over the prastara, uttira can be seen followed by vajana which has received damages. The frieze shows the diminishing features. Then the kapota which is the crowning member of the prastara carry the kudu arches which are very simple and plain. There are no friezes above the kapota in the case of cornice and above the cornice the super structure has been built of brick and mortar.

The Ganapadiyar Mahamandapa and the Vilasa Mandapa are the two structures that have been raised in the early part of the 17th century. The earliest record of the Subrahmanya shrine dates back to the reigning period of Krishnadeva Maharaya. This record dated 1522 A.D. is found engraved on the tripatta kumuda of the mandapa of the Subrahmanya shrine. This somewhat defaced record suggests that the structure of the Subrahmanya shrine was renovated during Krishnadevaraya time. Unfortunately all other
records on the base and wall of the shrine are lost due to the periodical renovation work and negligence. Three other records on the north wall of mandapa in front of the Subrahmanya shrine are dated 1659 A.D., 1666 A.D. and 18th century respectively. The one dated during the reigning period of Tirumalainayaka reveals a gift made to the merit of Kumaramuthu Tirumalainayaka. Another record refers to Chokanatha Nayaka, Tirumalai Nayaka and Muthuveerappanayaka9.

**Architecture of Nageswara Shrine**

The Nageswara shrine within the temple complex of Ardhanarishwara is also facing east. This shrine consists of the *vimana* square on plan preceded by an *antarala* in an axial line. The *vimana* is built of stone from *upapitha* to *prastra*. The super structure is built of brick and mortar. The *upapitha* is highly raised on a plinth of simple type platform. It has the scroll design with replica of the *vimana*. The floral design encircles the swan motif. The ornamental structure for the *upapitha* in some portion is not visible on account of the modern structure covering it. Over and above the *upana*, the *adhishtana* portion consists of *upapitha* which is decorated with *padma moulding*. The eyes are in for a visual treat when the *kumbhapanjara* is noticed in between the *niche*, the *snake charmer* with his serpent and the *flute* in action in different poses. The *jagati* segment contains human figures.
The adhishthana is of the pratibandha type. The lower moulding of the adhishthana varies. Padmadala occurs on the Karna edges of the bhadra portion. This is effectively seen through the ornamental leaf design, then the scroll design with human figures. The jagati carries an urdha padma motif and above this there is a slim or sharp kantha with galapadas. The urdha padma moulding carries divinities of Sivalinga with worshipers, relief of Garuda, Rama, Hanuman, dancing girls etc. Above the kantha, katakavritta type of kumuda, that is the serrated kumuda and the tripatta type in between can be seen. In the temples like Uttaramerur similar motifs can be seen where the kumuda is also of the katakavritta type. In the case of the Kambahareswara temple at Tiribhuvanam near Kumbakonam in Tanjore district, a similar type of kumuda can be noticed. This temple lays precursor of katakavritta type kumuda.

Above the katakavritta kumuda, there is a narrow kantha with galapadas showing the diminishing features and above it the decorated kapota moulding with kudu arches surmounted by simhamukha finial is present. Above the kapota there is a kantha with the urdhva padma and kampa. On the bhitti, devakoshthas are seen the north, south and west sides. They are plain, simple and deep, without housing any images. Empty niches are the specific features found in later Pandya temples. The antarala on the
northern side cuts across the portion below the *padma jagati* moulding. The water chute (*pranala*) is well ornamented and designed such that it sprouts from the mouth of the *makara*. The wall portion consists of the *devakoshthas* flanked by pilasters one on either side. There are adjacent pilasters on either side contain a number of figures of religious themes. The decorative pilaster motif which is essentially a pilaster carries a shrine motif. The top adorned the recess of the *vimana, mandapas* with *purana kumbha* base, simulating as though the pilaster emerges out of a full pot or pitcher signified by foliage flowing out of its mouth. This type of *kumbha panjara* motif can be seen in a number of Vijayanagar and later temples. The wall portion depicts the different aspects of Siva, devotees in *anjalihasta*, a lady playing on veena (Veena Vahini), the figure of *Hanuman* in Anjali pose, the relief of *Rama, Lakshmana*, the dancing girls etc. These figures are exquisitely carved and belong to the 14th century A.D. The *devakoshthas* are surmounted by *salasikhara* or wagon-topped roof. Each of these pilasters carries the *kal* with square base having the *nagapadma* moulding in the corners, the *tamam*, the *kalasa* and the *tadi*. On top of the circular portion of the *tadi* is the *adhapadma* moulding with a slim *phalaka* and above the *phalaka* is the *virakantha*10 (Figure 1).
The salasikhara above the kapota moulding of these devakoshthas carry the kudu arches with the miniature figures in their circles. The other pilasters are both circular and octagonal in shape. They consists of the kal, the square base with the nagapadma moulding, idaikattu, tamam, kalasa, tadi, adhapadma moulding, phalaka followed by virakantha. Above the virakantha the capital carries the incipient corbels. Above the pumunai corbels can be seen the uttira or beam. The prastara portion consists of the plain beam, and then the adhapadma moulding with ganas and the dancing figures called Bhutavari. Over and above it, the kapota moulding with pumunai pendants and circular drops on all the sides and then the kudu arches with scroll designs carrying the figures in the centre can be observed. 

**Architecture of the Adikesava Perumal Temple**

The shrine of Adikesava Perumal consists of the vimana preceded by an antarala in an axial line. The vimana and antarala are built of stone from upana to prastara portion while the super structure is built of brick and mortar. The vimana consists of the base, of which the upana and jagati are covered by the pavement of modern flooring. The tripatta kumuda is followed by kantha with galapadas and pattika, kampa and again the kantha with galapadas. The adhishthana portion on the north is intercepted at the
pattika level by the pranala. The bhitti contains three devakoshthas on the western, southern and northern sides. All these devakoshthas are deep, tall and empty. They do not house any images. These devakoshta are surmounted by salasikharas. The usual characteristic features of the pilasters - the kal, the tamam, the kalasa, the tadi, the phalaka, the adhapadma moulding and the virakantha are seen. The kapota moulding below the salasikara is reminiscent of this shrine. The kapota carry kudu arches with number of figures in the central circles. Each of these pilasters carries the corbel of pumunai type. Above the virakantha the prastara consists of the uttira or the beam, the vajana, then the decorated padma moulding and then the kampa, and then kapota moulding carrying the kudu arches which are shallow and empty in the central circles. Above the kapota there is a row of vyala frieze which runs all around the shrine.

The cloister hall of the western side houses the images of various lingas like Kuntesvar, Ramanathar, and Panchalinga including Prithvi Linga, Appu Linga, Vayu Linga, Teyu Linga, and Akasha Linga. The image of Manonmani can be seen at the end of this cloister hall. On the southern side of the cloister hall the Saptamatrika images and the sixty-three Nayanmars can be found. On the northern side of the cloister hall the image of Jyesthadevi, the village deity and then Adisesha can be seen.
Front Mandapa

There is a cloistered hall. The two shrines namely the *Ardhanariswara* shrine and the *Sengottuvelan* shrine is supported by pillars. The front mandapa is supported by the huge pillars. They have the relief figures of horse riders with *yali*. Each of these pillars carries octagonal medallions showing features of secular and religious figures. The *yali* as well as the horse riders are reminiscent of the similar type of decorated pillars, found in the thousand pillared mandapas in the *Varadarajaswami* temple at Kancheepuram and the *Meenakshi* temple at Madurai. These pillars are surmounted by capitals containing composite corbels. Two or the three *corbels* are united and tied together by a band called *idaikattu*\(^{13}\). There are a number of relief sculptures in the medallions of the pillars dating back to the *Nayaks*.

Nritta Mandapa

The western side of the shrines of *Ardhanariswara* and *Subrahmanya* are joined together by a common mandapa called the *nritta mandapa* which is supported by 108 pillars. All these pillars carry various reliefs depicting the religious and secular themes. From these reliefs mention may be made of *Rati, Manmatha* and *Aghorvirabhadra* etc. In the *nritta mandapa* the central row of pillars differ from the peripheral pillars. Each of the central rows of
pillars is a huge monolithic pillar whose component is of composite character reminiscent of the Vijayanagar temples. Again each pillar has a thick massive central shaft in the front, which is carved out as a huge rearing vyala mounted over a crouching elephant. The proboscis of both is intertwined. The vyala bear on its head the upper compound or corbelled brackets. These brackets show projections carrying typical pushpa podhikai corbels of an evolved type normally seen in the pillars of the Pandya and the Vijayanagara periods. The feat of the sculptor or craftsman in the dexterous carving of the images which are typical features of the Vijayanagar type of pillars is noteworthy.

The pillars of the nritta mandapa resemble those built by the Vijayanagar rulers as well as by their contemporaries. The huge pillars seen here show their shaft as central code for the attachment of an evolved group of statues often of heroic type and chiseled fully in the round having the most conspicuous element as a furiously rearing horse rampant with hippocryph. On the basis of inscriptive evidence this beautiful front mandapa can be dated back to 1598 A.D. The other shrines such as Ardhanariswara shrine, Sengottuvelan shrine etc have undergone reconstruction at different intervals. This is evident from the way in which the inscribed slabs have been built into the base walls and as well due to the
fragmentary nature of records. One can find the changes in the arrangement of the *adhishthana* moulding and the wall portion. The total absence of *devakoshtha* or niches on the walls of the above two shrines can be taken as a supportive evidence for the changes that have been introduced. The shaft of the pillars of the mandapa here is divided into several cubical medallions separated by bands, chambered into eight or sixteen sides. Pillars of different varieties found in this mandapa contain ornamental brackets forming their capitals below, each of which has a pendant terminating into inverted lotus buds.

In the middle of the *nritta mandapa*, a mandapa which is built over the tortoise base can be noticed. This mandapa is supported by decorated pillars with the square base containing *nagapadma* moulding. The base of this tortoise mandapa contains the relief figures of bhutaganas, elephants, and nagas all-round. Over and above the relief figures *urdhva padma* moulding and the *kantha* with *galapadas* can be seen. In the *kantha* portion the relief figures of human and animal divinities can be seen. Above this *kantha*, the *kapota* moulding carries the *kudu* arches. The *shaft* of the *pillars* is octagonal carrying the *kalasa*, *tadi*, *virakantha*, *thama*, *kumba*, *idaikattu* and above it the usual corbels.
This mandapa is noted for the fine and intricately carved columnades in hard black stone. Some of the pillars show series of small column cut out round the main central shaft carrying the large animal sculptures or the statues in a monolithic type. The corbels evolved into pushpabotikai type, a characteristic of the Vijayanagar period with double flexed arm extending and projected from the main stone; scalloped at the free end as upturned petals with the incipient conical bud at the centre. The downwardly flexed arms have a horizontal connecting bar below it joining with the main block. In the medallions are seen a number of relief figures depicting the secular and religious themes. These features can be seen in the temples of 17th and 18th century A.D.

Sculptures of the Tiruchchengodu Temple

1. Ardhanariswara

The shrine housing the deity Ardhanariswara is an important one in the entire temple complex on the hill at Tiruchchengodu. Before reviewing the concept of Ardhanariswara, the form of Ardhanariswara at Tiruchchengodu needs a detailed study. The form of Ardhanariswara comprises of a half male and half female figure that represents Lord Siva and Goddess Parvati (Uma), respectively. This standing image shows the characteristic features such as Lord Siva in Samabhanga pose on the right
side and Goddess Uma in *Tribhanga* pose on the left side. The image of Ardhanari is made out of white *navapashana* stone\textsuperscript{15}.

The deity Ardhanari enshrined in the hill at Chengunrur has been sung by the Saiva saint Tirugnanasambandar. The concept of Ardhanariswara can be dated back to the early Pallava period. This can be seen from the relief of Ardhanari carved in the Dharmarajaratha at Mahabalipuram dating back to the 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. The standing image in the *devakoshta* of Kodumbalur temple raised by Bhutivikrama Kesari comes next in the chronological order. The iconic worship of Ardhanari can also be dated back to the Pandya period. This is evidenced by a relief of Ardhanari aspect of *Siva* noticed on the rear wall of the shrine of the *Umaiyanandar* cave temple at *Tirupparankunram*.

The concept of Ardhanariswara stated in the *Sivapurana* and in agamic texts such as *Kamikagama, Karanagama, Silparatnakara, Amsumadbhedagama* and *Supramadbhedagama\textsuperscript{16}* account for this form of Lord Siva. In all these agamic texts the composite form of the image with half male and half female i.e., Siva and Parvati, respectively can be seen. The whole of the right side is adorned with the ornaments which characterizes Lord Siva, while the left side is decked with the ornaments as prescribed to Goddess Uma in the *Agama* texts. The representation found at
Tiruchchengodu can be compared with the features available in a similar form in the case of the stone image found in the Nageswara temple at Kumbakonam. The only difference that is seen in the image at Tiruchchengodu is the absence of bull. The image at Tiruchchengodu has the right hand with Danda and the left arm held *khadihasta* posture. It may be noted that the Cholas followed the earlier tradition with respect to the depiction of Ardhanariswara aspect of Lord Siva. The sculpture at the Nageswara temple at Kumbakonam and the one that is found at Tiruchchengkattankudi in Tanjore district stands witness to the Chola tradition and they can be classified under the finest examples of the Chola period.

**Iconography of Ardhanariswara**

The two armed standing Ardhanariswara here is shown wearing *jata makuta, makara kundala* on the right side, while the right hand holding a long *danda*. He is shown wearing the garment up to thigh level (*Vastra*). The anklets are seen on the feet. The facial expression shows the serene features. To his left, Uma is shown crowned with simple *karanda makuta*. The ear ornament exhibit the *patra kundala*, the arms decked with *bahuvalayas* and *kankanas*. Her left hand is shown held in *katyavalambita* posture. The anklets adorn her feet. The facial expression shows a calm and sober look.
The form shows well defined articulation and organization of features\textsuperscript{18}. This is similar to the iconographical features of Ardhanari seen at the Muvar Kovil at Kodumbalur which is reminiscent of the Chola tradition. Here too the elements are in accordance with the iconographic norms. Viewed against this background the image of Ardhanari at Tiruchchengodu temple can be dated back to 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. The inscriptive evidences available from the temple do not militate against this date. It is on account of the availability of the inscriptions of Chola king Rajakesarivarman (Raja Raja I); this interpretation has to be adjudged. The sculptor has exhibited his artistic skill in drawing a comparison between the male and female features. By giving the diametrically opposite variations, the united form of Siva and Sakthi can be witnessed. The artistic features are shown while depicting the male and female contours in an effortless way. A depiction reveals the graceful lines, the shoulders and the arms etc as a result there is firmness on the right side representation and softness in the left side.

\textbf{Aghoravirabhadra}

This image is seen mounted on a pedestal planted against a pillar in the circumambulatory passage. \textit{Aghoravirabhadra} is seen both in full form and as a relief figure. The one set on the northern side of the prakara is a standing figure with the right foot raised upto the level of \textit{jvala makuta} in the
urdhvamukha posture. The left foot of this image is placed on the head of an asura. This eight armed sculpture carries attributes like deer, sula, damaru and dagger in the left arms, while the attributes on the right arms are khetaka, ankusa and vajra. The lower left and right hands are shown as playing on the damaru. He wears the jvala makuta carrying the flowing Ganga on the left side of the makuta. The raised right foot is across the front right hand. He wears makara kundalas on the ear lobes, haras, yajnopavita and a garland of skulls. He wears udara bandha. There is an attendant deity on the left side of the image. His eye-lids are raised. The third eye is seen on the fore head. The absence of protruding teeth is a characteristics feature.

Another relief of Aghoravirabhadra is seen as a bas-relief of one of the pillars of the mandapa. This standing four armed image is pressing the body of the asura with his legs. The legs are shown in stance position with his body turn towards the side. The left foot is shown in a crossed position. His lower right arm is placed over the thigh. His left hand carries the bow and the lower left hand carries khetaka. The upper right hand carries an arrow. He is shown wearing the jata makuta decked with neck ornaments and with a long hara (garland) of skulls. The forehead carries a banded cloth (Parivattam).
Manmatha and Rati

Another relief figure of the mandapa is the representation of Manmatha, whose consort is Rati. He is standing with two arms, carrying the sugar cane bow in his left hand and an arrow of flowers in his right hand. He wears ornamental makuta, makara kundalas in the ear lobes, a number of neck ornaments bahuvalayas, keyuras etc. The intricately designed garment and the folds of the same are the excellent characteristics features typical of the late Vijayanagara period. He wears the anklets in his legs. He is showed in stance position as if wielding the bow. Below the pedestal of the image, there is a parrot and an unidentifiable bird. The relief of Rati has been exquisitely carved showing the intricate workmanship. She is seen in a stance position, with her left foot shown sideways, while the right foot is bent and placed ahead. This two-armed figure carries the flower bow (Pushpabana) in her left hand and a flower arrow in her right hand. She is bedecked with a number of ornaments flowing over her body. The folds of her garment have been intricately carved. She wears the anklets in her legs. Below the pedestal can be seen, the relief features of birds like swan and parrot\textsuperscript{20}. 
Kali

Another relief figure is the representation of Kali (Durga) who is shown standing as a four-armed figure. She is holding sula in the upper right arm and damaru in the upper left arm, while the lower right arm carries a dagger and the lower left arm holds a khetaka. She wears jvala makuta, patra Kundalas in the ear lobes; neck ornaments kucha bandha, udara bandha, bahuvalayas, keyuras and anklets in her legs. She is shown with a fierce look. Her dress folds are beautiful with flowing hip cloth which is delicately carved. Below the pedestal of this image can be seen the standing bhutaganas.

Temple Women

In one of the pillar there is a relief of temple woman as chowri bearer. She is shown standing as a two-armed image carrying a fly-whisk, while her left hand is held in katyavalambita pose. Her head dress recalls the head gear seen in the Ajanta paintings. She wears makara kundalas in the earlobes, haras and other ornaments, bahuvalayas and keyuras. Her dress fold depicts the fine workmanship. This relief shows the involvement of the temple women in the service of God as a chowri bearer. These temple women are mentioned in the inscriptions of the early period as Taliyilar, Talaikkoli,
Nakkan and Devaradiyars etc. Their dedicated service to the temple is not only reflected through inscriptions, but also through sculptures. The sculpture of the chowri bearer is seen from the representation in the Chola temples and in the succeeding periods\textsuperscript{21}. Therefore, Kongu country is not an exception to this and this is evident from the inscriptions of the Kongu rulers.

The mandapas also carry portrait figures of the builders. They may be dated back to the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} century. They can be identified through the head gears and from their position as a devotee to God. They are seen in anjali pose. One of the relief figures of the mandapa depicts a hero riding on a horse after killing a tiger with his long dagger to relieve a man attacked by the tiger. Similar types of sculptures are also seen in the mandapas of the temple at Srirangam, Kancheepuram and Perur. The warriors are shown with a very dauntless mood. On the southern side of the cloister hall the panel of Saptamatrika figures of Brahmi, Maheswari, Kaumari, Vaisnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamundi are seen. These sculptures are shown as seated with the one leg on the seat and the other hanging down. The earliest known sculptures of the seven mothers in the Tamil country belong to the Pallava period. In the same hall another panel of 63 Nayanmars is seen\textsuperscript{22}.  

167
On the northern side of the cloister hall the image of Jyesthadevi the village deity is enshrined. The image of Jyesthadevi is represented with a flabby belly, thick thighs and raised nose. Her legs are hanging down in front of the bhadrasana on which she is seated. In her right hand she holds a nilotpala flower and her left hand rests on the top of the female figure seated to her left. On the right of the Devi, there is an image of bull faced human being with two arms. The image belongs to the 8th century A.D.

2. Tirumuruganpundi

Muruganadiswara Temple at Tirumuruganpundi

The temple of Muruganadiswara at Tirumuruganpundi is square on plan facing east. This temple consists of the vimana, preceded by an ardha mandapa and a maha mandapa, all in an axial line. The central shrine houses the image of Lord Siva in the form of linga. The ardha mandapa is supported by four pillars crowned by tenon corbels. There are inscriptions found engraved on the walls of the garbhagriha, ardha mandapa and maha mandapa.

There are 58 inscriptions and 4 copper plates (Figure 2) that belong to Muruganatha temple at Tirumuruganpundi. Out of the 58 inscriptions found engraved in the Muruganatha temple, the earliest inscription belongs to the
period of Parakesari Abihimana Chola dated in his 12th regnal year which equals to 1100 A.D, the contemporary of the Imperial Chola king Kulottunga I. The deity is referred to as Tirumuruganpundi Mahadevar. On the basis of the inscriptions found on the west and south wall of the mandapa in front of the central shrine, it maybe suggested that this temple might have come into existence as early as the beginning of the 12th century A.D. The architecture followed here resembles Dravidian style. The dravida sikhara seen in this temple confirms that the construction of the temple is in line with the temples of the Kongu region.

The main vimana consists of adhishthana, bhitti, prastara and other segments of super structure. The adhishthana in turn consists of the upana which is concealed by the modern flooring. Over and above the upana can be seen the jagati, tripatta kumuda, kantha, galapadas, pattika again with kantha and galapadas followed by prati. The entire adhishthana of the vimana is covered with inscriptions. The bhitti portion contains the devakoshtha flanked by pilasters. The devakoshthas are surmounted by makara arches.

The prastara over the wall consists of the beam (uttiram), then a frieze of ganas followed by kapota carrying the kudu arches. The kudu arches are decorated with the divinities in the scroll design in a circle while
the simhamukha finials over these arches are not seen. The kapota is decorated with the kodikarukku design at the corners. Above the kapota here is a vyala frieze in a row facing each other in pair. In the super structure the sala panjara, koshtha panjara and in between the nasika can be seen in a row looking like a hara. Above this hara elements can be noticed the griva, decorated with nandi at the four cardinal directions. The griva devatas in the niches are made of stucco.

The griva niches are surmounted by alpa nasika decorations. The square sikhara above the griva carry the padma decorations carrying the finial. The sikhara portion is shown supported by two human figures one on either side. The vimana is found intact and a good number of inscriptions are found engraved on the walls. They belong to various Kongu rulers, referring to various gifts made to the deity enshrined here and to the deity at Avinasi. The earliest reference to the construction of the temple of Tirumuruganpundi Nayanar is found engraved in a record of Kongu Chola king Vira Rajendra dated in his 32nd year (1238 A.D.) and it refers to the setting up of the pillar on which the record is engraved by a merchant from Karaiyan Adikiltalam.

Another record of the same king dated in his 34th year (1240 A.D.) refers to the setting up of the pillar by Kiran Devangudaiyan Pirai Suduvan Kunram Erindan alias Chuttiyan and Solamuvenda Velan. Subsequently in
the late 13th century repairs had been carried out temple for which provision of money was made by an individual. In 14 inscriptions of this temple the deity is referred as Tirumuruganpundi Nayanar. In all other inscriptions the deity is variedly referred to as Aludiya Tirumuruganpundi Nayanar, Tirumuruganpundi Aludaiya Nayanar, Tirumuruganpundi Aludaiyar, Tirumuruganpundi Mahadevar, Muruga Udaiya-tambiranar, Tirumuruganpundi Udaiyar etc. In few other records the deity is referred as Atkondanayanar, Aludaiya Tirukurakkurtalaiaandar and Kuthadu Devar. No doubt the name Kuthadu Devar suggests the image of Nataraja, probably the bronze image that is under worship.

**Architecture of Goddess Shrine**

The goddess shrine called tirukamakottam lies on the southern side of Muruganatha Swami shrine. This shrine consists of the vimana preceded by an ardha mandapa and a maha mandapa. They all lie in same axis. The ardha mandapa and maha mandapa are supported by square pillars with tenon like projections at the top surmounting the corbel. The medallions of the pillars do not carry any images except the floral designs. These stambhas support the mandapas carrying the nagapadma moulding at the four corners. The goddess is shown in a standing posture in samabhanga pose four armed carrying nilotpala in the two upper arms, while the lower right hand in
abhayamudra and the lower left hand held in varadahasta position. The adhishthana of the vimana consists of usual segments. Over and above the adhishthana the wall portion contains the devakoshthas on the north east and southern sides. These niches are empty, shallow and long wherein the images are absent. The devakoshthas are flanked by the pilasters one on either side in the recessed portion of the walls. Above the capital the prastara contains the uttira or the beam and the vajana below with a frieze representing human figures. The kapota mouldings carry the kudu arches containing heads of human figures. There is a frieze of yali all around the portion above prastara. The super structure is built of brick and mortar and carries the sala, koshtha and nasika panjaras with devakoshtha housing the images. The square sikhara above the griva is surmounted by finial30.

The ardha mandapa preceding the vimana contains the base with similar parts. The wall portion contains conventional devakoshthas with pilasters on either side of the kosthas and the cantoning pilasters. Additions like the paving of the floor to this mandapa have been made during the Pandya period. The period of Jatavarman Sundarapandya specifically refers to this work. The maha mandapa consists of the base where the upana is not to be seen. The other parts are similar to those found in the vimana. The wall portion contains pilasters on either side of empty niches. The prastara does
not bear any relief images. Out of the four records from this temple referring to the Goddess the earliest one that refers to the deity as Tirukamakotta Nacchiyar or Annadaimangaiyar is found mentioned in the inscriptions of the Kongu Chola king Vira Rajendra dated in his 16th year (1222 A.D.)\textsuperscript{31}. This record specifically mentions the repairs carried out during his period.

Thirty two years later (1254 A.D.) during the reign period of the Pandya king Jatavarman Sundara Pandya the paving of the floor of the ardha mandapa of the goddess shrine called Irungu Nunnidai Mangaiyar in the temple was carried out by an individual named Udaiyan Mayileru Vanvalattan Tirupani Kangeyan of Adippuliyur in the Chola country\textsuperscript{32}.

There is a reference to the setting up of Goddess Tirukamakotta Nachiyar in the temple of Tirumuruganpundi Aludaiyar by Andakkan Jayankonda Solai Alviyar. This Andakkan seems to be a person of high rank who did service to the temple during the period of Kongu king Vira Rajendra. The practice of worshipping Palliyarai Nacchiyar was very much in vogue during the 12th and 13th century A.D\textsuperscript{33}. A record from this temple dated in the period of Konerimaikondan refers to the setting up of the image of Goddess Tirupalliarai Nacchiyar and the provisions made for the offering to the Goddess. It may be suggested from the term Parakesari used for a measure that this record may be assigned to the Kongu Chola period. The
exact period cannot be set with certainty in the absence of any internal evidence. The *Pallyarai Nacchiyar* would normally refer to the bronze image kept in the main shrine\textsuperscript{34}.

The Nandi or bull is set up in the south western corner of the cloister mandapa. Usually the image of nandi is seen on the eastern side of the temple. Since the temple faces east, the nandi has been enshrined in an axial line of the main vimana of the Siva temple. But the exclusive and special characteristic feature is that the nandi has been set up in the south western corner of the temple, the reason for which is not known. Close to the *Bhairava* shrine there is a big pit like portion which was once upon a time used for storing the jewels and ornaments which is called *Vedupari*.

**Sculptures**

In the main shrine of the *maha mandapa* the entrance is flanked by *dvarapalas* one on either side. These *dvarapalas* are set up over the square base supported by the *bhutagana*. The *dvarapala* on the northern side is standing four-armed, carrying the *ankusa* in the upper right arm and *mirga* (deer) on the upper left hand, while the lower right hand is placed over the *gadha* and the lower left hand is held in *suchihasta*. The right leg is placed across and rests on the *gadha* while the left leg rests on the floor. The *dvarapalas* carry the *makuta*, *makarakundalas* on the ear lobes, *haras*,

174
bahuvalayas, keyuras, kankanias, udara bandha, yajnopavita on the body and the anklets on the leg. The dvarapala on the southern side is standing four armed carrying the sula on the upper right arm and damaru on the upper left arm. While the lower right arm rests on the gadha and the lower left arm is held in suchihasta. He wears the usual ornaments as mentioned above. There is a sitting image of a Saiva saint whose hand is in anjali mudra. Bhutagana is seen at the foot of the pedestal.

In the main shrine the devakoshtha on the western wall of the vimana is found empty but Lingodbhava is housed on the eastern devakoshtha of the vimana. This is a rare feature. In the southern devakoshtha there is a Dakshinamurti image, whereas on the northern devakoshtha the image of the Brahma is missing instead of it the image of the standing Durga is seen. This Durga image is not proportionate to the devakoshtha space. It is quite likely that the original Brahma was missing and during the subsequent period a disproportionate Durga had been set up. This four armed Durga is shown standing in samabhanga pose, carrying the conch and chakra in upper arms, while the lower right arm is held in abhayamudra and the lower left arm is kept in khadihasta posture. She wears the karandamakuta crowning the head, makarakundalas in the ear lobes, bahuvalayas, kuchabandha, udarabandha and vastra.
The *Lingodhbhava* is also disproportionate to *devakoshtha* space found on the eastern side. Lord Siva in the form of *Lingodhbhava* is shown standing with four arms carrying *parasu* in the upper right arm, while the lower right arm is held in *abhayahasta*. The upper left arm carries the *deer*, while the lower left arm is held in *khadihasta*. The *swan* occupies the position at the top of the image of Lingodhbhava. In the lower portion of the stambha can be seen the standing *Brahma* and standing *Mahavishnu*, both four armed shown with *anjalihasta*. The *varaha* seen burrowing the ground, is shown at the bottom of the *stambha*. The disproportionateness might have been caused because the *Lingodhbhava* image was brought from some other place and installed here in the available space\(^{36}\).

In the cloister of the shrine the *panchalingas* are seen as in the case of *Tiruchchengodu* and *Venjamankudalur* and on the north east, a shrine dedicated to *Bhairava*, an eight armed statue in the *samabhanga* pose carrying the usual attributes which are prescribed to him is noticed. Behind the image of the *Bhairava* a howling dog is found standing to his right. This image is very old and can be attributed to the 12\(^{th}\) century on the basis of the stylistic grounds\(^{37}\).
3. Tiruvenjamankudalur

Vikritiswara Temple

The etymology of the place suggests that this place was a meeting point of several battles. The terms *ven* means the fierce, *samra* indicates the battle and *kudal* denotes the meeting place. Venjamankudalur is located near Karur. According to tradition the place was named after the king Venjaman. The suffix of the place name *kudal* indicates the meeting place of the two rivers. Here the *Sirraru* and the *Kudaganaru* meet to the west of the temple of this place.

A record of the 13th century seen on the west wall of the central shrine mentions the name of the deity as *Vikidakku* which is Tamil translation to the Sanskrit word *Vikrita*. The deity in this temple is referred to variously as *Vikrithiswarar*, *Venjamankudal Aludaiyar*, *Venjamankudal Nayanar*, *Venjamankudal Udaiya Nayanar* etc. The name *Vikrita* has been attributed to Lord Siva of this temple38. (Figure 3) In a record dated 1247 A.D. there is a reference to the provision made for the worship of the deity *Vikrithiswarar*.

The temple faces east and is square on plan. It consists of the central shrine, the *antarala* preceded by the *maha mandapa*. The entire complex is
surrounded by a cloistered hall housing the images of Ganesa, Panchalinga
and sixty three Nayanmars. There is an entrance gate way, built of stone
with flight of steps approachable from the inner side of the temple. On the
eastern side of the prakara in an axial line can be seen the bull, the balipitha
(altar), the dhvajastambha and the nandimandapa\(^{39}\). The three tiered vimana
of the central shrine consists of the adhishtana, bhitti and prastara all in
stone, while the superstructure is in brick and mortar. The adhishtana
consists of its usual segments. The wall contains the devakoshthas on the
south, west and the north sides. The devakoshthas are flanked by pilasters
one on either side besides the cantoning pilasters.

The devakoshthas are surmounted by makara toranas along with
floral designs and the central kudus in it do not contain any images in their
circles. Instead it shows the scroll design around the sun motif along with
central circle. The pilaster on either side of the devakoshthas contains similar
components. Above the virakantha can be seen the tenon corbels of the
capitals, characteristic of the Chola pillars. Above the pilasters the prastara
portion consists of the uttira, kampa and bhutagana frieze. The cornice
carries the kudu arches surmounted by simhamukha finial. The kudu arches
contain the floral design in the inner circles\(^{40}\).
The superstructure consists of the *hara* elements namely the *sala panjara* in the centre, the *kutapanjara* at the corners and in between the *nasika panjaras* can be noticed. Above the *hara* elements the square *sikhara* crowns the *vimana*. In between *sikhara* and the *hara* the *griva* can be seen surmounted on its four sides. The finial is the crowning member of the *sikhara*.

**Architecture of the Goddess shrine**

Interestingly an inscription found on the south wall of the Goddess shrine gives is a detailed record that enables to date the structure. This record belongs to the Kongu Pandya king Parakesari Virapandya dated in his 3rd year (1268 A.D). It states that Sundara Pandya alias Kandiyadevan made additions to the *ardha mandapa* of this shrine. The shrine of Goddess Ponnamoliyar, the Nambirattiyar in the temple of Venjamankudal Aludaiya Nayanar received the additions from the chief of Sundara Pandya. The additions made in the ardha mandapa were *uttiram, eluttagam, kapotam, vyalam* etc. It also records the paving of the floor with *pakkal* (slab stone), *tiruvandipa* (meeting place of the roof), *tattodu* (tiles) and *talam* (the roofing) by this donor\(^4\).  

The goddess shrine has a *vimana* square on plan preceded by an *antarala* and a *maha mandapa*. The *vimana* consists of *adhishthana, bhitti*,
prastara and the superstructure. The central shrine (garbhagriha) is built of stone from upana to prastara, while the superstructure is built of brick and mortar. The bhitti of the vimana contains the devakoshthas on the south, north and western sides. The devakoshthas are flanked by pilasters one on either side of the niche surmounted by sala sikhara, decorated with the floral arches and kudu arches with central figures and with sun motif.

The prastara consists of the uttira, vajana, adhapadma moulding, bhutaganas and kapota moulding with kudu arches. Over and above the prastara there is a vyala frieze. The superstructure carries the hara elements i.e., sala in the centre and kutapanjaras on the sides with the absence of nasika panjaras in between them. Above the grīva the domical and circular sikhara is surmounted by the stupi or the finial. The grivakoshthas have provision for images to be kept in the schematic manner. All the devakoshthas are empty and shallow. The inscriptions are seen on all the four directions of the base of adhishthana. There are inscriptions of Vikarama Chola and his predecessors on the wall of the western and northern sides of the vimana.

Sculptures

The devakoshthas on the bhitti of the main entrance contain images of a seated Dakshinamurti on the south, a standing Lingodhbhava on the west
and a standing *Brahma* on the north. This iconographical scheme has been followed in the case of *stucco* images of the superstructure on all the sides. The *devakoshtha* on the southern side of the *antarala* contains the image of a standing *Ganesa*, while the northern side niche houses the image of a standing *Durga*. *Ganesa* is shown standing four armed, carrying *ankusa* in his upper right arm, *pasa* in his upper left arm, while his lower right arm holds *danda* and the lower left arm holds the *ladduka* (*motaka*) over which the trunk turns towards the left and rests. He wears *karanda makuta*, *yajnopavita*, *udara bandha* over the belly and neck ornaments the anklets on the legs. The *padma pitha* is significant to note. The niche images can be dated back to 11\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D. representing of the later Chola style\textsuperscript{43}.

*Dakshinamurti* is shown seated with four arms. The upper right arm carries the *akshamala*, while the upper left arm holds *agni*. The lower right arm is held in *vyakhyana mudra*, while the lower left hand holds a *pustaka*. The right leg rests on a lying asura, while the left leg is seen resting on the thigh of the right leg. At the foot of *Dakshinamurti* two rishis on each side are shown seated with their hands in *anjali* mudra. They are shown listening to the preaching of the *Guru* i.e., *Dakshinamurti*. Lord Siva as *Dakshinamurti* is shown seated below the banyan tree. He has the flowing *jatamakuta* but tied at the top with knot. He wears the *makara kundala* on
the right ear lobe while the left ear lobe has *patra kundala*. He is shown wearing the haras on the neck, *bahuvalayas* on the two arms and the *anklets* on the legs. The *asura* on whose body the foot of Lord Siva rests is shown lying with cruel face, protruding teeth and sunken eye lids and fierce outlook\(^{44}\).

The *devakoshtha* on the western side houses the image of Lord Siva in the form of *Lingodhbhava*\(^{45}\) coming out the *stambha*. He is standing four armed carrying the *ankusa* in the upper right arm and *deer* in the upper left arm. The lower right arm is held in the *abhayamudra* pose, while the lower left arm is kept in the *khadihasta* pose. Lord Siva is shown wearing *jatamakuta* on the head and the *makara kundala* on the right ear lobe, while the left ear carries the *patra kundala*. He is shown wearing the *haras*, *yajnopavita*, *udara bandha*, *naga bahuvalayas* and *kankananas* on the arms. Lord Vishnu is shown in the form of *varaha* burrowing the earth. There is a flower motif at the top of the *stambha* called *ketaki* flower.

The *devakoshtha* on the northern side houses the image of four armed standing *Brahma*\(^{46}\) crowned by an umbrella. *Brahma* in his four arms carries an *akshamala* in the upper right hand, *kalasa* in the upper left arm, the lower right arm is held in *abhayahasta* and the lower left arm is in *khadihasta*. The image of *Brahma* is four headed of which only three are visible. He wears
the jatamakuta on the head, makara kundalas on the ear lobes, haras on the neck, yajnopavita, bahuvalayas, kankanas on the arms and udara bandha on the waist and the anklets on the legs. The frills of the vastra worn by him are shown in an exquisitely carved fashion. The padma pitha over which he stands is interesting to note.

The devakoshtha on the northern side of the antarala houses the image of standing Vishnu Durga. She is shown resting on the head of the mahisha in the form of buffalo. The image of Durga is shown in tribhanga pose\textsuperscript{47}. Her waist is shown bent in an ornamental fashion. She is four armed carrying the chakra in the upper right arm and sankha in the upper left arm. The lower right arm is held in abhayahasta, while the lower left arm is held in katyavalambita pose. She wears karandamakuta, makara kundalas on the ears, haras on the neck, and kucha bandha on the breast, udarabandha on the waist and the frilled vastra on the legs. She wears the bahuvalayas and kankanas on the arm.

The Goddess enshrined in this temple is called Ponnamoliyar presently known as Pannirmoliyar or Pannirmoliyammai. She is shown standing four armed in samabhanga pose. The upper arms carry the nilotpala, while the lower right arm is held abhayahasta and the lower left arm is held in varadahasta. The prabhavali is seen around the image. The
entrance to the antarala is flanked by the dvarasakti images shown four armed in the standing posture. The dvarasakti on the southern side carries the ankusa in the upper right arm and the pasa in the upper left arm. The lower right arm is held in lolahasta and rests on the gada, while the lower left arm is held in khadihasta. The dvarasakti on the northern side carries the ankusa in the upper right arm, the upper left arm holds the pasa, the lower right arm is shown holding khadga and the lower left arm is held in the lolahasta.

On the western cloistered hall of the temple there is a shrine dedicated to Subrahmanya seated on the peacock. The six faced Subrahmanya is a twelve armed image flanked by his consorts Valli and Devasena in the standing posture. The arms carry the attributes that are the characteristic of the Subrahmanya images prescribed in the silpa sastra. The lowermost right arm is held in abhaya mudra, while the lowermost left arm is shown in the varadahasta. The peacock is shown with the serpent at its beak. The image is shown resting on the padma pitha. The right leg is shown bent and resting on the pedestal, while the left leg is shown folded and resting on the right thigh. The six faced Subrahmanya wears jatamakuta on the head, patra kundalas on the ear lobes, haras on the neck, keyuras and kankanas on the arms. He is shown wearing udarabandha in the waist.
Devasena and Valli are two armed standing figures in the tribhanga pose carrying nilotpala in the upper right and left arms, while the other arms are shown in lolahasta. These two deities who are the consorts of Lord Subrahmanya are shown with the square bhadra pitha. The antarala of the shrine houses the figure of peacock facing Lord Subrahmanya and a standing two armed maharishi on the northern side. The western side cloister houses the Sivalinga images representing the panchalingas like prithvi, vayu, appu, teyu and akashalinga, expect for one linga which is shown in the hexagonal shape (Tara linga) and the other images are cylindrical in shape. There is a standing image of Sundarar on the south western side held with the arms in the anjalimudra posture and also carrying the usual attributes.

Sixty three nayanmars are housed in the cloistered hall on the southern side. To the south of the panchalinga there is a separate shrine for the image of Ganesa shown in a seated posture. The image of Chandikeswara is housed to the north of the inner prakara. He is shown in a standing posture with two arms carrying the usual attributes. The devakoshtha images of the central shrine and antarala can be dated back to 11th century A.D. on the stylistic grounds.

The features seen in all these images are no doubt replete with the features seen in the case of Chola sculptures. It may be said that the rulers of
Kongu country, the *Muttaraiyars* and the *Irungovel* chieftains have introduced their own regional idiom with regard to temple construction and sculptural representation. It may be noted that the influence of the Chola style is distinctly seen in this temple\(^{49}\). This is with reference to the ornamentation shown in the case of images also. The proportionate features and the beautiful facial expressions, the attributes worn by the images are according to the iconographic scheme. Besides these characteristics features, the images have been sculptured according to the proportions prescribed in the *silpa sastra* and suitability to the niche proportions. The date of the sculptures are coeval (contemporary) with the date of the structure which is fixed with the help of the inscriptions of the rulers of Kongu found engraved on the base and walls in this temple.

4. Tiruppandikkodumudi

*Makuteswarar Temple*

Kodumudi in Kongu Nadu also called Pandi Kodumudi has a temple dedicated to Lord Siva. The place is referred to in the inscriptions as Karaiyur included in Kaveri Nadu in Adhiraja Raja Mandalam. The deity is referred to as *Tiruppandi Kodumudi Mahadeva* in the 27\(^{th}\) regnal year\(^{50}\) (1165 A.D.) of Kongu Chola king Vira Narayana. An inscription of Kongu king Sundara Pandya belonging to 12\(^{th}\) century mentions several gift of
villages including Karaiyur (Kodumudi) to Aludaiya Nayanar and Periya Tiruvadinayananar of Tiruppandikkodumudi. In a record of Sundara Pandya of the imperial line dated in his 2nd year (1252 A.D.), the deity is referred to by the same name.

Thirunavukkarasar, Tirugnanasambandar and Sundarar, the famous Saiva saints have sung in praise of the deity here in their Tevaram hymns. The river Kaveri, on the banks of which this temple is located changes its course in front of this temple from its southward direction to the eastward direction. A special feature of this shrine is the expounding of the doctrine of trinity by the presence of Trimurtis i.e., Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva together in the same place. A sanctum sanctorum for Lord Brahma is under a vanni tree (which bears no fruits) behind the Amman temple. The union of Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu in all processions signifies the union of Saivism and Vaishnavism in harmonious unity. The direct penetration of the sun rays on the images of Swamy and Amman for four days during the month of Avani and Panguni indicates the offerings of pujas to the deity by the Sun God which is known as Surya puja.

The main deity Makuteswaraswamy is called in common parlance as Kodumudinathar, Kodumudiswarar and Kodumudilingam. In the stone inscriptions there is reference to the Lord as Kodumudi Mahadeva and
Kodumudialudaiya Nayanar. His consort is known by the names Sri Soundarambigai, Vadivudaiyanayagi and Panmoliammai. Lord Perumal is known as Viranarayana Perumal and his consort is known as Tirumangai-nachiyar and as Mahalakshmi. The Vinayagar of this temple is known as Sri Kaveri Kanda Vinayagar.

In front of the Makuteswara shrine which faces east, two dvarapalas can be seen flanking the entrance. There are the representation of Nandi and Mahakala shown with usual attributes. The vimana of the Makuteswara shrine is preceded by an ardha mandapa square on plan. This vimana is built of stone from the upapitha to prastara, while the super structure is built of brick and mortar. Over the adhishthana raises the bhitti. The bhitti consists of devakoshtas on the south, west and north sides of the vimana which are housed with images of Dakshinamurti, Vishnu and Brahma respectively. All these images are disproportionate to the space available in the devakoshtas. It may be said that all these images are not original and suitably carved to fit in to the proportion of the niches. The niches are flanked by pilasters one on either side.

From the availability of the earliest inscription dated in 1165 A.D. found engraved on the wall of the central shrine, it may be suggested that the
central shrine dedicated to Kodumudi Mahadeva was been built prior to this date. A record on the back of the ardha mandapa in the Amman shrine belonging to king Konerimaikondan dated in his 3rd year refers to the setting up of the images of Ilayapillaiyar (Subrahmany) and Periyatiruvadi in the temples of Tiruppandikkodumudi Aludaiyanayanar and Pallikonda Perumal respectively.

Vishnu Temple

The Lord Vishnu shrine called Viranarayana Perumal temple has been named after Kongu Chola king Viranarayana. There is an inscription on the northern wall of the central shrine referring to Viranarayana which furnish the date 1165 A.D. Lord Vishnu enshrined in reclining posture is called Viranarayana Perumal. The vimana of this shrine is square on plan preceded by an antarala, all in an axial line. It is enclosed by a pillared cloistered mandapa. The vimana is built of stone from upana to prastara, while the super structure is built of brick and mortar.

The vimana has the upapitha with upana and a high jagati followed by the adhishthana segments consisting of an upana and urdhva padma jagati. It is then followed by kampa, vrittakumuda, above it the kantha with galapadas surmounted by the kapota moulding with kudu arches containing an inner circle with no figures. The niches are empty surmounted by makara
toranas encircling the human figures in the middle. The devakoshthas are flanked by pilasters with a nagapadma base also called kal and above it the idaikattu, kalasa, tadi, phalaka with adhapadma moulding can be seen. Over and above, the crowning member contains the sala base^54.

The prastara above the bhitti contains uttira, vajana; adhapadma moulding followed by kapota with kudu arches. The central circles of the kudu are empty and above the kapota no moulding can be seen. There is lion pillar on the northern side of the cloistered hall reminiscent of the Pallava tradition. The Saneeswara shrine faces west with the crow as the vehicle. The mukha mandapa is a later construction which is supported by 28 pillars.

**Sculptures**

The images of the four Saiva saints Sambandar, Thirunavukkarasar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar are shown standing on the south east of the cloistered mandapas of the Makuteswararar temple. Sambandar is shown playing cymbals. Thirunavukkarasar is shown holding two hands in the anjalimudra and carrying the agricultural implement resting on the left shoulder. Sundaramurti Nayanar is shown with his hands in anjalimudra and Manickavasagar is shown with his right hand holding the akshamala with the arm kept in vyakyana mudra, while the left hand is shown holding a
pushthaga. Sixty-three Nayanmars are hosted in the southern cloistered mandapa of the shrine.

The devakoshthas of the central shrine and the ardha mandapa do not contain any images but are decorated with sala sikharas. They are shallow and were meant for housing the images. These niches are reminiscent of the Pandya tradition. Eighteen pillars with medallion support the cloistered mandapa. The compound corbel of these pillars contains divine figures. The corbels show the highly developed pumunai or pushpa podigai features. The medallions in addition to the divine figures contain secular features like the animal motifs and floral designs. The features of the pillars can be compared to the Nayak period on the stylistic grounds.

The images of the Alwars like Tirumangai Alwar, Tondaradippodi Alwar and Tirumalisai Alwar besides the Garuda and Lord Venkateswara are set up in the cloistered mandapa on the eastern side. Other eight alwars and the images of Ramanuja and Vaikunthanathar are shown seated. The image of Vaikunthanathar is a four armed figure carrying chakra in right upper hand and sankha in the upper left hand. The lower right hand is held in abhayahasta while the lower left hand is held in varadahasta. The left leg is seen folded and kept on the right thigh and the right leg rests on the pedestal.
He wears the *kirita makuta*, the *haras* on the neck, *yajnopavita* on the *shoulder*, arm and neck ornaments etc.

The entrance to the *ardha mandapa* is flanked by *dvarapalas* one on either side called *Jaya* and *Vijaya* facing east. The image of *Jaya* to the south of the entrance of the *ardha mandapa* is shown standing four armed with *sankha* in the upper right hand and *charka* in the upper left hand. The lower right hand rests on *nagagadha* while the lower left hand is held in *suchihasta*. The image of *Vijaya* at the north of the entrance of the *ardha mandapa* carries *chakra* in the upper right hand and *sankha* in upper left hand. The lower right arm is held in *suchihasta*, while the lower left arm rests on *nagagadha*. Both the images are shown wearing *kirita makuta*, *makara kundalas*, *tulasi malai*, *yajnopavita*, *bahuvalayas* and *kankanasa*. Folded *vastra* is very significantly seen and a big *pushpamala* is shown as a distinct decorative element over the body of the *dvarapalas*.

The deity *Anantasayi* also called *Viranarayana Perumal* is depicted with two arms, fully reclined with half eyes opened with his right arm stretched backward, while his left arm rests on the thigh. The god who is represented here is a stucco figure of huge size for which only oil coating is applied periodically. The sages *Agastiyar* and *Kapilar* are shown worshiping. On the upper part of rear wall can be seen the images of
Narada, Brahma, Paravasudeva and Vibhishanar. The image Anjaneya is seen near the north wall close to his foot. Near the head of the Anantasayana Murti the image of Periya Tiruvadi is shown. Sri Devi touching God with one of her hands carrying nilotpala and Bhudevi near God's right foot carrying nilotpala in her left hand is well represented here. This stucco image resembles the one at Tiruppullani (Ramanad District) of 8th century A.D. Lord Hanuman is shown standing at the God's feet with Vibhishana at the north-western corner. In all probability the presence of Hanuman at God’s feet and the image of Vibhishana found in the garbhagriha of this particular shrine help us to fix the date of the image to the medieval period.

Bronzes of Kodumudi Temple

The temple of Kodumudi Mahadeva at Kodumudi is known for its early bronzes. The images of Lord Vishnu, Lord Nataraja and Lord Tripurantaka, with his consort; and his devotee Kannappa Nayanar is also seen. They belong to different periods. This is evident from the way in which they have been cast, the decorations exhibited in them and the workmanship etc.
1. Vishnu

It is an outstanding image belonging to the middle of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. This typical Chola bronze is an attempt of the artist to exhibit his skilled workmanship and the bronze reveals exuberant treatment and decorative features. The image is four armed standing representation shown in \textit{samabhanga} pose. He wears a fine \textit{kiritamakuta} with \textit{patta} around the head, \textit{makara kundalas} of exquisite workmanship hanging on the shoulders, the tresses of hair falling on the shoulders, broad \textit{kanthi}, a \textit{pearl yajnopavita} with a \textit{hanging knot}, the neck ornaments, the \textit{udara bandha} with fine \textit{tassels}, ornate \textit{keyura} tied at the back, bangles on the wrist etc. Some of these ornaments show artistic exuberance. The upper right arm holds \textit{chakra}, while the upper left arm holds a \textit{sankha}. The lower right hand is held in \textit{abhaya mudra}, while the lower left hand is in the posture of holding the \textit{gadha}, but the gadha is missing. The chakra held by him is shown facing us like \textit{prayoga chakra}. The workmanship of these two attributes is realistic and exquisitely carved. The garment worn by him suggests the flowing \textit{uttiriya} which is tied round the waist with two courses. They are shown heavily but with full of flow with the waistband showing intricate workmanship. No \textit{simhamukha} design can be noticed. The two long strings are shown with their tips divided into three parts hanging one on each thigh,
the ribbon like ends of a band hanging one over the other between the legs. The festoons carry a long tassel in it hanging low, one on each thigh. The details seen on the back of this image are the *siras chakra* with lotus petals delineated well, the twisted strands of hair, the knots of the *keyuras* of the arms, charmingly frilled cloth, the tassels on the thigh, the *uttiriya* etc exhibit the beauty of workmanship\(^57\) (Figure 4). The base of the image is *bhadrasana* type with petal moulding.

2. Tripurantaka

The bronze image of *Tripurantaka* and his consort *Tripurasundari* from this place can be classified under the group to which the Lord Vishnu image belongs. This group shows the features that are assigned to the *Kongu School* of art. Lord Siva is shown as *Tripurantaka* form, standing in *alidha* and *dvi-bhanga* poses with the head and torso slightly bent backwards, with his left legs slightly bent at the knee position and bent forward, while the right leg placed firmly on the asana which suggests a forward march. The two lower arms designed by the artist suggest the act of the destruction of the demons of the three puras (cities). The depiction suggests the mode of gestures and poses. The way in which the crescent moon and the *datura* are shown indicates the prominences given by the *sthapati*. 

195
The pendants shown are noteworthy. He wears *jatamakuta* and *yajnopavita* running over the right arm. The beautiful *simhamukha* clasp of the waist band and the *nagavalaya* type of keyuras on the crown suggests an early date. The ear ornaments are absent. The details like *kanthis, makuta* and *bahuvalayas* enables to take the figure to 10\textsuperscript{th}-11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Apart from the excellent workmanship in showing the attributes on the hands, the armlets are shown to posses different designs on front and back. The upper left arm is meant for holding the bow, while the lower right arm is meant for holding the arrow. The lower left hand is shown folded with the thumb and the third finger in the raised posture. The effect of the *bhanga* is clearly seen on the back side of the image\textsuperscript{58}. The image of *Tripurasundari* is shown standing in *tribhanga* pose exhibiting charm and majesty. This figure is accompanied by a small maid, distinguished easily from the other two. She wears *karanda makuta* of a stunted type. No ear ornaments can be seen. The way in which the armlets and elbow ornaments are shown is distinct and peculiar. The body features exhibit the artistic skill. The *simhamukha* clasp is significant to note. The lower garment reveals the elegance in workmanship. The folds, the changing nature of the cloth in between the legs are peculiar to this bronze. The pendant on the left thigh is noteworthy. More than the modeling of the breasts and of the arms, the portion below the waist and the flexion of the left side give elegance and beauty to the entire figure.
The sensitive lip, the prominent nose and the facial expression are worthy to observe. She has a serene look. The uplifted arm with the palm facing up shows the *kataka mudra*, while the left hand is in *lola* pose resting on the head of the maid. The decoration of the *makuta* and *sras chakra* is the examples of high workmanship of the artists\textsuperscript{59} (Figure 5).

The bronze image of a maid shown to her left is a small two armed figure held in the posture of adoration, while a cup is being held in her left hand. The garments and the pendants resemble the ones shown in the case of *Tripurasundari*. Her head dress on the backside shows *dhammilla* type with a ribbon across it. The images of *Tripurasundari* and her maid stand on an oblong *padmasana* over a *bhadrasana*. This *asana* shows special features. Iconographic canons have been followed in depicting the features of these images.

### 3. Lord Nataraja

The image of *Lord Nataraja* is an excellent specimen for *chaturasra-tandava* of dance. The image can be dated to 10\textsuperscript{th} - 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. This four armed bronze image holds *damaru* in the upper left arm and *agni* in a receptacle in the upper left hand, while the lower right arm is shown in *bhujan tarasa mudra*. The features of the face and the head decoration support the date of the bronze. Lord Siva wears the *jatamakuta* with
emblems, the long beaded *hara* along with *kanthis*, the *naga-valaya* type of armlets, the typical *vaji bandha* tied rather low on the elbow, the waist band with *simhamukha* motif, the stiff sash in two courses of which the lower one forms a short constricted loop after emerging out from eye holes on either side and *padasaras* of kinkinis. The *Ganga* and *Chandra* are depicted on the left side of the makuta while the *Sun* is on the right side. He wears *bahuvalayas* and *keyuras, patra kundalas* on the earlobes (Figure 6).

The hood of a serpent comes out of the right side shoulders. The *sras chakra* show simple strands of hair falling on the back of the head in a natural fashion. The figure is shown dancing on a simple circular *padmasana* of artistic workmanship. Probably this is an important feature of the Kongu style of Nataraja images which also represents the influence of the *Karnataka* style. The body and the torso show proportionate features, while the part below the waist is rather disproportionate.

4. **Kannappa Nayanar**

The bronze image of *Kannappa Nayanar* holds his right arm bent at right side towards the torso and the left arm bent and kept at a higher level. The image wears the rosary beads on the neck hanging beautifully on the chest and the simple armlets. The fine elbow ornament and the hair do add beauty to it. The anklets are seen one on each ankle. There is a suggestion
that from these beautifully worked ornaments and drapery, this figure may be taken to represent not the hunter saint Kannappa Nayanar but with the poses of the hand and the cymbals, and the peculiar manner of dressing up of the hair may be set to show that the person represented here is Sundaramurti Nayanar. Thus it is a rare example of art and it may be dated to the middle of the 12th century A.D. A study of this bronze throws invaluable light on the artistic features, and the local idioms followed in exhibiting the artistic features.

5. Avinasi

Avinasiswara Temple at Avinasi

The place Avinasi is referred to in the inscriptions of 12th, 13th and 15th centuries as Avinasi only. Subsequently, during the reigning period of Umattur chiefs Vira Nanjaraja Udaiyar and Vira Chikaraya Udaiyar dated 1498 A.D. -1499 A.D. and 1508 A.D. respectively; the place was called Dakshina Varanasi⁶². The reference to the Kasitirta and the Ganges well has gained currency on account of the sanctity and the importance they have attained as second to the original Varanasi which is also called Kasi in the north. On account of the location of the place to the south of Uttarakasi, the name Dakshinakasi has been coined to the present place called Avinasi. This
information is known from the inscriptions of the Umattur chiefs found engraved on the loose slabs set up in the north of the Goddess shrine.

The temple of Avinasialudaiya Nayanar located at Avinasi faces east. The vimana of this temple belongs to the pushpa vimana type. The river that flows near the temple is called Nallaru. The tirtha is called as Tamarai kulam. For the worship of the temple Karana agama is followed. The Goddess here is known as Karunambiga. The deity in the temple at Avinasi is variedly refers to as Avinasi Aludaiyar, Avinasialudaiya Nayanar, Avinasi limgam and Avinasi Eswara and so on. The earliest reference to the name of the deity is found mentioned in a record of Kongu king Vira Rajendra in the year 1140 A.D. - 1141 A.D.

Outside the temple complex there is a high-standing pillar known as Deepastambha where the panel of Mudalaivai Pillai is seen (Figure 7). The temple complex consists of the central shrine, preceded by an antarala, a maha mandapa and a mukha mandapa. The vimana of the central shrine is square on plan, consisting of the adhishtana, the bhitti and the prastara, the hara containing the panjaras, griva, sikhara and the finial. The portion from the base up to prastara is built of stone, while the super structure is built of brick and mortar. As far as adhishtana is concerned the portion of the inscribed jagati and the upana below are concealed by the granite flooring.
Over and above the \textit{jagati} which is plain, the \textit{tripattakumuda} which is also inscribed can be seen. It is followed by the \textit{kantha} with \textit{galapadas} and above it the \textit{bhitti} can be seen. The \textit{jagati}, \textit{kumuda} and the \textit{bhitti} portions are also inscribed but defaced here and there.

The \textit{bhitti} portion contains \textit{devakoshthas} which are very shallow and stunted. These \textit{devakoshthas} are flanked by pilasters one on either side. Even the recessed portion contains \textit{devakoshthas} with pilasters. Besides these pilasters there are two cantoning pilasters, one on either side. Several inscriptions of the Kongu king Vira Rajendra can be seen in the northern side \textit{kumuda} which refers to the grant of money to the offerings of \textit{Aludaiyanayanar} at Avinasi.

The \textit{vimana} of the main shrine is three tiered with figures like \textit{Dakshinamurti}, \textit{Narasimha}, \textit{Vaikuntanathar}, \textit{Mahavishnu}, \textit{Nataraja}, \textit{Brahma} and \textit{Subrahmanya} in the seated form which are beautifully portrayed. The circumambulatory path encloses the verandah supported by pillars\textsuperscript{64}. A few inscriptions from this temple refer to the construction of the various segments of the temple and the repairs carried out in the temple. A record dated in the period of Hoysala king Vira Ballala Deva dated 1282 A.D. refers to the gift made for the coating of the deity, to meet the various expenses of the services in the temple and for doing repairs in the temple\textsuperscript{65}. 

201
Ten years later i.e., 1292 A.D. during the period of Kongu Pandya king Sundara Pandya provisions were made to meet the expenses to install the *door-jamb*\(^6^6\). Additions have been made in this temple during the period of Krishnaraja Udaiyar of the Udaiyar family of Mysore, 1756 A.D. Dalavay Devaraya, an agent of the above king who was governing this part of the country is stated to have carried out the renovations of the temple at Avinasi including the *mandapas, gopura, prakara* wall and paving the floor\(^6^7\).

**The Goddess Shrine**

The goddess shrine faces east and the image of the Goddess enshrined here is called as *Brihat Karunambigai*. There are inscriptions on the walls and the *adhishthana* of the Goddess shrine. The earliest reference to the Goddess *Perungkarunai Chelviyar* in the *Tirukkamakottam* in the temple of *Avinasialudaiyar* is found mentioned in the record of Kongu Chola king Vira Narayana dated 1140 A.D. - 1141 A.D\(^6^8\).

In the records of the Kongu Chola kings Kulottunga and Vira Rajendra dated respectively in 1160 and 1235 A.D. and 1339 A.D. also refer to the provision of the gifts and food offerings. The Goddess shrine is found to the south of the shrine of Lord Shiva. The reference to its existence in the record of Vira Narayana clearly indicates that the Goddess shrine might have come into existence prior to this date probably in the period of the early
Kongu rulers. The concept of raising a separate shrine for the Goddess called *Tirukamakottam* can be dated back to the period of Rajendra Chola (1024 A.D. to 1044 A.D). From the temple at Kuranganimuttam near Vandivashi in North Arcot district and in the temple at Darasuram near Kumbakonam, we can find the Goddess shrine built to the south of the main shrine dating back to the period of Raja Raja II. It is evident from the record at Avinasi that the Kongu rulers followed the principles of the imperial Cholas as far as the temple building activities were concerned.

The *vimana* of the goddess shrine is square on plan, preceded by *ardha mandapa* and *maha mandapa* which are engraved with number of inscriptions. The *jagati*, the *upana* of the central shrine, *ardha mandapa* and *maha mandapa* are concealed by the granite flooring. There are niches on the south west and northern side of the central shrine and *ardha mandapa* carrying the Goddess image representing the Sakthi form known as *Icha Sakthi*, *Gnana Sakthi* and *Kriya Sakthi*. There are three stone inscriptions to the north of the goddess shrine, two of which belong to Vira Nanjaraja Udayiar and one that belongs to Vira Chikaraya Udayiar. These inscriptions mention the name of the deity as *Avinasilinga* and the place as *Dakshina Varanasi* and can be dated back to 16th-17th centuries A.D.
The *sabha mandapa* on the north eastern side of the inner prakara houses the bronze image of *Lord Nataraja* called *Kuthadudevar* which is mentioned in the inscriptions. This is a well ornamented mandapa which is supported by highly decorative pillars with exquisite carvings and with ornamental capitals. This mandapa is approached by flight of steps on the southern and western sides.

The *mukha mandapa* is supported by pillars with the composite corbels. The bas-relief portraits of the *Nayak* chiefs are seen in this mandapa. They are shown in the *anjali mudra*, worshipping god. In one of the pillars in this mandapa an inscription dated 1648 A.D. is seen. This is a new record which belonged to the reigning period of king Tiurumalai Nayaka\(^70\).

On the western side of the corridor of the main shrine are enshrined Lord Siva in the form of *linga* called *Sahasralinga* and *Panchalinga* which includes *Appu, Teyu, Vayu, Prithvi* and *Akasha* lingas. It is mentioned in a record of Krishnaraja Udaiyar dated 1756 A.D, that his agent called Devarajaya set up the *panchalingas* in the south east corner of the prakara of *Avinasiswara* temple\(^71\). It is not exactly known as to when this has been shifted to the western corridor of the prakara in the same temple. However the concept of pancha linga worship had been introduced in this region probably prior to the 17\(^{th}\) century A.D.
The Chandikeswara shrine is seen on the northern side between the central shrine and antarala. The entrance gateway has the gopura which consists of pitha and upapitha with usual attributes like upana, padma, jagati, vritta kumuda, kantha and galapadas with miniature shrines decorated with pilasters kapota with kudu arches. Over and above the base the upana, jagati, vritta kumuda, kantha and galapadas are seen. The walls are decorated with niches crowned with sala sikharas and kumbha panjaras. The entrance gate is decorated with medallions containing ornamental relief and sala panjara figures.

**Sculptures of the Temple**

*Lord Dakshinamurti* is enshrined in the southern side niche is a four armed seated image holding aksha mala on the upper right hand, sarpa on the upper left hand, where s the lower right hand in vyakarna mudra and the lower left hand in varada mudra. The ascetics or the rishis are shown seated by his side listening to the preaching of Dakshinamurti. Lord Siva is shown wearing jatamakuta and seated in dyana pose. He wears makara kundalas on the ear lobes, haras on the neck etc. The disproportionate image clearly indicates that the original has been replaced during the later period of Kongu king Vira Narayana whose inscriptions are dated 1140 A.D.
The *devakoshthas* on the western side carries the image of *Lingodhbhava*, the concept of which was well known in Tamil country. Lord Siva is shown coming out of the stambha or pillar and hence the name *Lingodhbhava*. He is shown standing four armed with *malu* on the upper right hand, *mirga* on the upper left hand, the lower right hand is held in *abhaya mudra*, while the lower left hand is held in *varada* pose. Below the *stambha* on the right side can be seen a four armed standing *Brahma* (three headed). He is shown in *anjali mudra* with the lower clasping hands. The attribute of arms are visible properly. Another devotee is seen on the left of the stambha who is shown with both the hands in *anjali mudra*. *Lord Vishnu* in the form of *Varaha Murti* burrowing the soil is also seen. Above the stambha portions the *lanchana* and the *hamsa* has been beautifully depicted.

The image of *Lord Brahma* enshrined on the northern side of the devakoshtha is a four armed standing figure with the upper two arms showing the usual attributes like *kumbha* and *akshamala* while the lower right hand is held in *abhayahasta* and the left hand is shown holding a *pustaka*. The *pranala* or the water chute seen protruding from the northern side jagati, below the image of Brahma is of later construction. The image of *Durga* is also of later addition. There is a shrine of *Kalabhairava* in the north east of the temple, facing south. *Bhairava* housed here is a four armed standing image with *trisula* in the lower right hand and *kapala* in the lower.
left hand. The upper right hand holds the bell or ghanta. The dog is shown below the foot of the images.

The Goddess shrine houses the image of Goddess Brihat Karunambigai. She is standing with four arms holding nilotpala in the upper arms, while the lower right hand is in abhaya mudra, while the lower left hand is in khadihasta pose. She wears karanda makuta, patra kundalas in the ear lobes and haras in the neck, bahuvalayas in the shoulders and kankanas in the arms. In the north western corner of the main shrine there is a shrine for Lord Subrahmanya or Senthil Muruga whose mandapa is supported by pillars. Both the stone figures of Subrahmanya and Kalabairava belong to the Kongu Chola period of the 12th and 13th centuries A.D. The shrine of Sundaramurti Nayanar seen outside the main temple complex was originally constructed on the bank of the tank at Pukkoliyur by a merchant called Alagiyanayan alias Alagiyapandya Devar of Arenaiyur alias Sivallapuram in Karaivali Nadu. This tank is now seen in front of the temple is traditionally called Tamaarakulam or Lotus tank where the religious festivals takes place. 72
6. Karuvur

**Pasupatiswara Temple at Karuvur**

Karuvur is referred to as *Vanji or Vanji Manaharam* alias *Mudikonda Cholapuram*. It was included in Vengala Nadu in Virachola Mandalam in the inscriptions of the Chola rulers. The deity here is mentioned as *Tiruanilai Mahadeva* as early as the period of Parakesarivarman Rajendra Choladeva dated in his 24th year (1036 A.D.)\(^{73}\). In a record of his successor Rajendra Chola II, the deity is mentioned as Mahadeva in the temple of *Tiruanilai*. Subsequently in the record dated in the 24th year of Raja Raja II 1170 A.D, the deity is mentioned *Tiruanilai Mahadeva Aludaiya Nayanar* of Karuvur. The Tamil expression *Tiruanilai Mahadeva* is mentioned in Sanskrit as *Pasupatiswara*\(^{74}\).

The temple of *Pasupatiswara* is square on plan consisting of the *vimana* preceded by an *antarala* and a *maha mandapa* where a gigantic Nandhi can be seen (Figure 8). There is a circumambulatory path in the corridor housing the images of *Nayanmars*, *Gajalakshmi*, *Subrahmanya*, and *Panchalinga*. The corridor is supported by pillars. The two tiered *vimana* consists of *upapitha* which is half concealed followed by the *urdhva padma upana*, plain *jagati*, *vritta kumuda* and then *kantha* with *galapadas*. 

---

208
The wall of the garbhagriha consists of the devakoshthas enshrining the images of Lord Ganesa and Dakshinamurti on the southern side; Lord Ardhanarishwara on the west and Lord Brahma and Durga on the northern side. The devakoshthas are surmounted by makara toranas with the kudu circles with the four armed Lord Ganesa and with four armed seated figure of Lord Siva are enshrined in the kudu arches on the southern sides. The makara torana on the western side contains the seated figure of Vallapa Ganapathi and on the makara torana on the northern side contains the Ardhanarishwara image. The super structure consists of the hara elements with koshta, sala panjaras, semi circular nasika type panjaras and karna kudus.

The earliest inscriptions referring to this temple indicate provisions made to meet the expenses of the repairs in the temple. The repairs had also been carried out of the income from the village of Nelvayppalli in the 9th year of the Rajendra II. In order to carry out the repairs in this temple, a tax free Devadana village Adichanallur was granted by the king Kulottunga III. This inscription dated in his 24th year dated 1202 A.D. is engraved on the wall of the Goddess shrine. The inscriptions referring to the repairs are all found engraved on the wall of the Amman shrine. It may be suggested that from the availability of the earliest inscriptions from the wall of the Goddess
shrine and to the reference of the repairs in the temple of Tiruanilai Mahadeva, the main shrine and the Goddess shrine must have come out into existence prior to the first half of the 11th century.

**Architecture of the Goddess Shrine**

The Amman shrine which faces east, consists of vimana preceded by ardha mandapa and maha mandapa. There is a common mandapa connecting the Alangara Amman and Soundarya Amman shrine. The vimana consists of the base with upana, high jagati, tripatta kumuda followed by kanta with galapadas, pattika and above it with kanthas and galapadas. The devakoshthas found on the bhitti are narrow and shallow housing no images. There is a water chute intercepting the kanta on the northern side of the vimana of the goddess shrine. All the other features seen above are followed in the ardha mandapa and maha mandapa. In the southern side of the temple the image of Karuvur in a panch loga is seen in sitting posture doing tapas. There is an image of Kalabairavar on the north eastern side of the main shrine.

**Sculptures of the temple**

In the southern niche of the main shrine one can see the image of standing Ganesa with four arms carrying the pasa and angusa in the upper
right and left arms, while the lower right hand holds the broken tusk and the lower left hand holds the motaka. The four armed seated Dakshinamurti holds the sula on the upper right hand, damaru in the upper left hand; the lower right hand in vyakyana mudra and the lower left hand hold the aksha mala.

The image of Ardhanarishwara on the western niche is shown with the right half Lord Siva while the left half represents the Uma, consort of Lord Siva. Lord Siva wears the jata makuta and makara kundalas. He holds the malu in the upper right arm, while the lower right arm is shown resting on the bull. The ornaments that are usually found in the images of Lord Siva are seen. The left half represented by Uma wears karanta makuta, patra kundala and nilotpala in the upper hand and shows the khadihasta posture in the left lower hand and she wears the usual attributes and ornaments. Lord Brahma seen in the northern niche is a four armed standing image carrying the kalasa and aksha mala in the upper arms, while the lower right arm is held in abhaya mudra and the lower left arm is in varada mudra posture. The standing image of Durga in the northern niche is holding sankha and chakra in the upper arms, the lower right hand held in abhaya and lower left hand in the khadihasta pose. The images of Alangaravalli and Soundarya Nayaki are
standing four armed figures with nilotpala in the upper arms and the lower right arm in abhayahasta and the lower left arm in seen in khadihasta\(^7\).

7. Bhavani

**Sangameswara Temple at Bhavani**

The temple of Sangameswara is situated at the confluence of the rivers Kaveri and Bhavani. The Sthalapurānam states that a stream sprang out of the amudha tirtha which joins at this place of confluence. The spring is believed to be invisible and is therefore called antharvahini. The confluence of the three rivers is known as Triveni Sangamam. This is called Dhakshina Prayaga similar to the Prayaga (Triveni Sangamam) at Allahabad. On the bank of this river the temple of Lord Siva has been built. A number of sacred tirthas like Surya tirtha, Savithri tirtha and Gayathri tirtha are believed to have existed at the Kudal Sangamam. The temple was sung by the Saiva saint Tirugnanasambandar. In his hymns the place is referred to as Nana and the deity as Nana Udayar.

Of the seven inscriptions except the one in the Amman shrine which is datable to 1803 A.D., all others belong to 17\(^{th}\) century A.D. The temple of Sangameswara one of the seven Saivaites centres in Kongu region has assumed importance on account of the contribution of the Kongu rulers from
time to time. The *vimana* of the *Sangameswara* shrine is square on plan facing east. The *vimana* from base to *prastara* is built of stone while the super structure is built of brick and mortar. It consists of *upapitha* and then *adhishthana* which carries the *upana*, highly decorated *jagati*, both serrated and plain *kumuda* alternating each other, serrated *kantha*, *vrita kumuda* as well as the *tripatta kumuda*, the *kantha* with *galapadas*, *kampa* which is surmounted by *kapota* moulding near the *devakoshthas*\(^78\). Whereas in the other portions the *pattika* with *kantha* above it, containing *galapadas*, small *kampa* with *adhapadma* moulding and above it the *prati* are seen.

The *devakoshtha* of the bhitti is flanked by pilasters one on either . The pilasters are cylindrical in shape containing the *kal*, *idaikattu*, *tadi*, *adhapadma* moulding and above it the *phalaka*. The *devakoshthas* are surmounted by *salasikhara*\(^79\).

The earliest reference to the temple of *Sangameswara* as *Tiruvanikudal* is mentioned in the inscriptions of the 17\(^{th}\) century A.D. It seems to state that the compound wall or madil was caused to be constructed by Tiruvalanandar Magan Arulaladasan, son of Menchennarasen. Yet another record of the same period refers to the deity as *Nannaudiaswamy*. *Nanna* is the name of the place and the deity enshrined in this place. In the inscription the existence of the procession path around the central shrine
(Tirunadaimalaigai), the front nṛṛita mandapa and the sikhara as well as the garbhagriha, the ardha mandapa and maha mandapa of the Goddess Pannarmoliyammai are mentioned. This inscription gives a clue that the shrine of Nannaudaiyar and Pannarmoliyammai must have come into existence prior to the 17th century A.D\(^80\). The chief Immudi Getti Mudaliyar was also responsible for the construction of the shrine of Pannamoliamman at Tiruvanikudal and for the renovation work carried out by the acharis.

In a record of Krishnaraja Udaiyar, there is a reference to the addition made under his instruction to his Dalavay. While Krishnaraja Udaiyar was ruling from Sri Rangapattna, the northern mandapa (Vadamaligai mandapa) of the Pannarmoliyamman shrine was constructed by Kudaliseshayan at the instance of Dalavay Devarayan and Nanjaraja Udaiyar\(^81\). The construction of this mandapa was carried out by Seshachari, younger brother of Viraragavaa Chari.

In a record 1689 A.D. there is reference to the installation of the peacock pedestal and laying of the pavement around the Subrahmanya shrine by a resident of Avani Perur named Kandappan\(^82\). The contribution of Getti Mudaliyar to the temple of Sangameswara is also confirmed through a record of 17th century. This record engraved on the ceiling of the maha mandapa in front of the central shrine of the Sangameswara temple states
that he constructed the shrine of Kumara (Subrahmanya), a yaga salai, a 
vasantha mandapa, gopura and he consecrated a linga in it. This and other 
records discussed above clearly suggest that the ruler of Mysore and Immudi 
Getti Mudaliyar and his wife Chinnammal have contributed to the growth 
and development of temple complex at Bhavani.

**Vedanayagi Amman Shrine**

The shrine of Vedanayaki Amman was raised during the period of 
Krishnaraja Udaiyar (17th century A.D). The vimana is square on plan and 
built of stone from upana and prastara, while the superstructure is built of 
brick and mortar. The ardha mandapa has been built of stone up to prastara 
portion. The ardha mandapa and the maha mandapa in front of it was 
constructed during 17th century by Immudi Getti Mudaliyar. The vimana and 
the ardha mandapa walls contain the devakoshas with images enshrined in 
them. The devakoshta on the south side houses the images of Mahaeswari, 
the Kaumari on the west side, and the image of the Brahmi on the north side. 
The devakoshta of the ardha mandapa on the north side has the image of 
Vaishnavi. Of the Saptamatrika representations, the images of Brahmi, 
Mahaeswari, Kaumari and Vaishnavi alone are seen in the niches. There is a 
cloistered mandapa supported by pillars. The pillars are shown with vyala
and elephant base and crowned by *pumunai* corbel with *idaikattu* or band connecting the corbels.

The Goddess *Vedanayagi* housed in a separate shrine is shown standing and four armed. She carries *nilotpala* in her upper right and left arms, while the lower right arm is shown in *abhayahasta* and the lower left arm is held in *varadahasta*. She wears *karanda makuta* on her head.

The *adhishthana* of the *vimana* of the Goddess shrine consists of the *upana*, the *jagati*, the *adhapadma* moulding, the *kampa* above and below the *tripatta kumuda*, and the *kantha* with galapadas. The *pattika* is followed by *kantha* with galapadas, the *adhapadma* moulding and finally the *prati*. The pilasters are shown flanking the *devakoshthas* one on either side. The *devakoshthas* carry *salasikhara*. The *devakoshtha* houses the image of goddess in various forms flanked by the pilasters. The *mukha mandapa* of this shrine is supported by 16 pillars with frieze of *vyala* and horse riders. The compound capitals are decorated with *pumunai corbels*.

The *medallions* depict the relief figures representing the religious and secular themes, like the images of Saiva saints and the munificent donors. The donors are shown in *anjalimudra* attitude. The lotus flower ceiling adorned with parrots also exhibits the dancing figures and the divinities like *Brahma*,
Narada, Tumburu, Muruga, Latabhanjika, Urdhvataandava Siva, Vinadharamurti etc (Figure 9).

**Adikesava Perumal Shrine**

The shrine of Adikesava Perumal is an *abhimanasthala*. The shrine consists of the vimana, the antarala and the maha mandapa. The Adikesava Perumal shrine facing east consists of vimana square in plan, preceded by an *ardha mandapa* which in turn is preceded by a cloistered mandapa. The vimana is built of stone from *upana to prastra*. The base consists of *upana, jagati, adhapadma* moulding, and *kampa* on either side of the *tripatta kumuda*. It is then followed by the *kantha* with *galapadas*. The *pattika* above is again followed by *kantha, galapadas*, *padma* moulding and finally the *pratibandha*. Above the base the wall portion contains niches crowned by *salasikharas*. The pilasters contain usual component parts with characteristics features seen in the pilasters of the later period. The pilasters on the wall carry the *kal, idaikattu, kalasa, tadi, adhapadma* and *phalaka*. Above the *phalaka* is the *virakantha* over which corbel of *pushpa bodhika* variety is seen decorated. The Goddess *Soundaravalli* is shown seated with *nilotpala* in upper arms, while the lower right and left arm are held in *abhaya* and *varada mudra* respectively.\(^{84}\)
Sculptures of Sangameswara Shrine

The devakoshthas of the vimana of this Sangameswarar shrine houses the image of Dakshinamurti on the south, Lingodhbhava on the west and Brahma on the north. The devakoshtha of the ardha mandapa houses the image of Ganesa on the south and Vishnu Durga on the north. The image of Dakshinamurti is shown seated under the banyan tree four armed holding naga in the upper right arm and agni in the upper left arm, while the lower right arm is held in vyakhyana mudra and the lower left hand holds the pustaka. The right leg is shown resting on the head of an asura, while the left leg is folded and kept on his right thigh. He wears the jata makuta which is tied. The facial expression exhibits the calm dhyana pose.

Lingodhbhava on the west is shown standing with four arms holding malu in the upper right arm and deer in the upper left arm, while the lower right arm is held in abhayahasta pose and the lower left arm is held in varadahasta mudra. A big flower garland decorates the body. He wears jata makuta, makara kundalas, and neck ornaments (haras). The image of Ganesa in dancing pose is shown standing with his trunk twisted towards the right. The upper arms carry the usual features, while the lower left arm holds the broken danda. He wears karanta makuta on the head yajnopavita and haras on the neck. There is a panel of saptamatrika representing the seated
images of Brahmi, Mahaeswari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamundi. All these are four armed images carrying the attributes that are specific to the concerned figure. There is an image of Aghoravirabhadra by the side of the Saptamatrika panel. He is shown holding bow and arrow in the upper arms, while the lower right arm carries khadga and left arm carries khetaka. The mundamala (garland of skulls) is seen flowing across the body. The face of Virabhadra is shown with fierce attitude and protruding teeth and the raised eye lids. The makara kundalas are seen on the ear lobes. The attendants like Nandi are shown on the pedestal. The image of Brahma is shown standing with three heads and is four armed. The upper right hand carries an akshamala, while the upper left arm is shown with kumbha. The lower right is held in abhayahasta, while the lower left arm is kept in khadihasta. The karanda makuta and the neck ornaments are clearly seen. The image of Vishnu Durga is shown standing four armed in the samabanga pose. The upper right arm carries the chakra and the upper left arm holds Sankha. The lower right arm is held abhayahasta, while the lower left arm is held katyavalambita hasta. The three headed Jvrahareswara with three arms and three legs enshrined in a shrine faces east. The dvarapalas of this shrine are also shown with three heads and three legs. The image of Arumuga or Subrahmanya with his consorts of Valli and Devayanai are enshrined separated.
Sculpture of the Vishnu temple

This shrine was constructed during 17th century A.D. by Getti Mudaliyar. The standing image of Adikesava Perumal in samabhanga position shown with four arms carrying conch and discus in the upper arms, while the lower right hand is held in abhaya mudra and the lower left hand is kept in varada hasta posture. He is shown with Sri Devi and Bhudevi with two arms carrying nilotpala in one hand and the other arm held in lolohasta. The image of four armed standing Santanagopala with his consorts Rukmini and Sathiyabhama are seen on the right and left sides respectively. The image of Venugopala is shown standing with four arms carrying discus and conch in the upper right and left arm, respectively, while the lower two arms are shown playing on the flute. The image of Rukmini is shown standing two armed with right arm in lolohasta and left arm carrying nilotpala. Sathiyabhama is shown standing carrying the nilotpala in the right hand while in the left hand is held in lolohasta. The image of Lakshmi Narasimha is shown seated embracing Lakshmi seated to his left on the lap of Narasimha. The Narasimha image is shown with four arms holding discus in the upper right arm and conch in the upper left arm, while the lower right arm is held in abhaya hasta and the lower left arm is shown embracing her. The man-lion face of Narasimha and the kirita makuta worn by him are the
characteristic features. The *Lakshmi* is shown seated as a two armed image carrying *nilotpala* in her right hand and the left hand held in *lolohasta*).

To sum up, a detailed study of art and architecture is made in this chapter. Among the seven temples taken for the research each temple is elaborately studied by both its architecture and sculpture. As Kongu Nadu was situated in a strategic point, it had the influence of so many dynasties like Chera, Chola Pandya, Vijayanagara and Madurai Nayaks. In spite of all such different rulers, the structural pattern of the temples have not been changed and altered. All these seven temples have the same components like adhishthana, bhitti, prastara, griva, shikara and stupi etc. In these seven temples the Dravidian architectural style reached its supreme expression.

All these temples are very significant in their own way. Ardhanarishwara temple located on the hill top of Tiruchchendodu is unique in its presiding deity, Ardhanariswara in its central shrine. No such examples are found elsewhere in Tamil Nadu. More over it has some folk elements like naga worship which might have been an ancient tradition that later on assimilated with the Vedic tradition. The belief of pledge making (Sathiya padi) at the step of this hill has still some impact in the minds of the people of this region and hence the temple is flourishing well even today. The
temples at Tirumuruganpundi and Venjamankudalur are unique with the inscriptions seen on the walls of the temple even today.

The Bronze images of Kodumudi temple like Thiripurantaka, Vishnu are very unique and they are included one among the master pieces of South Indian architecture.

Avinasi temple has a background of miracles made by Sundarar. Getting back the swallowed child from the crocodile and the early inhabitants of hunters, their role in the development of the temples is very interesting.

The temples at Karur and Bhavani are noted for their beautiful architecture and sculpture.
CHAPTER IV

References

1. Personal Survey on 02.03.2008.

2. Personal Survey on 02.03.2008.

3. Personal Survey on 02.03.2008.


8. Personal Survey on 02.03.2008.


10. Personal Survey on 05.03.2008.

11. Personal Survey on 05.03.2008.


13. Personal Survey on 09.03.2008.


18. Discussion with Dr.M.D.Sampath on 12.03.2008.


21. Discussion with Dr.R.Santhalingam on 18.08.2008.


35. Personal Survey on 30.05.2008.


37. Ibid., p.25.

38. A.R.E, Nos.143, 144, 147, 150 of 1905.


40. Ibid., p.48.

41. A.R.E, No.150 of 1905.

42. Personal Survey on 01.06.2008.


44. Ibid., p.278.

45. Ibid., p.107.


52. Personal Survey on 15.06.2008.

53. Discussion with Dr.M.D.Sampath on 15.06.2008.


56. Personal Survey on 15.06.2008.


58. *Ibid.*, Plate XLV.

59. *Ibid.*, Plate XLVII.

60. *Ibid.*, Plate XLVIII.


64. Personal Survey on 30.06.2008.


69. Discussion with Dr.M.D.Sampath on 30.06.2008.


75. Personal Survey on 08.08.2008.

76. Personal Survey on 08.08.2008.

77. Personal Survey on 08.08.2008.
78. Discussion with Pulavar Rasu, S., on 30.08.2008.


