CHAPTER-IV

TEMPLES OF ERṆĀKULAM DISTRICT

Erṇākulam district is located between latitudes $9^\circ 42' 30''$ and $10^\circ 18' 00''$ N and longitudes $76^\circ 9' 30''$ E. The district is bounded on the north by Trissūr district, on the east by Idukki district and on the south by Kottayam and Alappuzha districts. All along the western boundary the Arabian Sea is stretched. The district is 78 kilometres long on east-west and 52 kilometres at its widest point on north-south. The total area of the district is 2,373.27 sq. kilometres, distributed in seven taluks, Kunnathunadu, Aluva, Paravur, Kochi, Kanayannur, Muvattupuzha and Kothamangalam. Physiographically, the district has ridges of Western Ghats at the eastern side while the Arabian Sea washes the western side. The district has two important west-flowing rivers, Periyar and Muvattupuzha.

The Erṇākulam district was constituted on 1st April 1958, comprised of territories which once belonged to the princely States of Cochin and Travancore and Malabar districts of Madras presidency.

4.1 Geographical Background

The district is divided into three well defined parts-highland, midland and the lowland consisting of hills and forests, plains and the seaboard respectively.
The hilly or eastern portion is formed by a section of the Western Ghats. Muvattupuzha, Kothamangalam and Aluva can be called the hilly taluks. The midland consists mainly of plain land having natural facilities of drainage via backwaters and canals. Cochin taluk is divided into two blocks by the Cochin Azhi, viz., Vaipinkara Island on the northern side and the southern portion from Fort Cochin to Chellanam surrounded on three sides by water. The western portion and part of the southern side of the Kanayannur taluk are divided by backwaters. The Paravur taluk lies in the flat delta region of the Periyar River and cut by several canals, which have resulted in the formation of many islands.

**Rivers**

Periyar and Muvattupuzha are the main rivers of the district of which the former flows through Thodupuzha, Muvattupuzha, Aluva, Kunnathunadu and Parur taluks. The Chalakudi river which flows through north of Alwaye also joins Periyar at Alanthikara. The rivers Thodupuzha, Kallai and Kothamangalam join together to form Muvattupuzha River. During rainy season these rivers are full and the low-lying areas on the banks are flooded, but in the summer season they generally go dry and narrow.

The sea coast in this district falls entirely in Cochin taluk, Cochin harbour which is a major natural harbour is also situated in this taluk. Malippuram and Njarakkal in Vypeen Island are open road stead. The mud bank at Njarakkal extends about 4.5 km. along the shore and 6 km. out to the sea which helped ships to ride safely and unload cargo in all seasons. But with the rise of the
Cochin harbour the importance of Njarakkal and Malippuram became lesser. Many islands can be seen scattered in the backwaters in Cochin and Kanayannur taluks. The main islands are Willingdon Island, Vypeen, Ramanthuruth, Cheriyakadamakkudi, Bolgatty Island (Ponjikara), Vallarpadom, Valiyakadamakkudi, Kumbalam, Panangad, Chellanam, Nettur, Pizhala, Kankattuthuruth, Korampadam, Cherannelur and Chathannur. Most of these islands are very small in size extending from less that a sq. km. to 4 sq. km. There are transport facilities to all these islands.

A portion of the Vembanad Lake falls within the Cochin taluk. The Kodungalloor Kayal and Varappuzha Kayal are also in this district.

The list of temples studied from Erṇākuḷam district are the following

4.2 CAVE TEMPLE

- **Kallil Bhagavati Cave Temple, Perumbavur:**

  This famous cave temple is located in the Methala village near Perumbavur in Erṇākuḷam District. The temple is dated prior to 8\textsuperscript{th} century AD. Various evidences on the structure suggest that the temple was first used by Jains and later converted to Hinduism\textsuperscript{1}.

  
  The temple is the cave formed in the gap of three huge rocks. The base is a rock, the second rock forms the structure and the third rock supports on the northern side. The cave’s entrance is in less than 6 feet height. The chief deity
of the temple is Bhagavati and there are sub-shrines of Gaṇapati, Śāsta, Vishnu and Siva. All the deities are installed inside the same sanctum. On the rock above the entrance is carved a human figure in sitting posture which is presently worshipped as Brahma (pl.4.2). On the left side, outside, the cave’s entrance is nāga pratiṣṭha and a yakṣī pratiṣṭha. There is a circumambulatory around the rock containing the sanctum. The namaskāra-maṇḍapa, in the front could be a very later addition. There is a railing around the circumambulatory, which is opened on the South which also leads to a path around the base rock which also functions as a circumambulatory path. On the rear side are steps to climb up the base rock (pl.4.3). The surrounding area is a cluster of rocks. On the north of the cave the base rock has evidences of engravings of conch shapes, svastika and other floral decorations as well as some vague writings. One of the rocks among these cluster, contains a two feet high human figure carving in sitting posture. Regular worship is offered to this image also.

On iconographical grounds both the figures are clear evidences of Jainism. According to the opinion of the scholar these figures are that of Parsvanatha Tirthankara. On another rock on a lower level next to the cave, contains engravings of the human in sitting posture (very similar to the other figures) and conch shell. In this same level is the Nāga pratiṣṭha facing west. On a further lower level is the ūṭṭupura along with a well and the temple tank. The temple tank is a noteworthy part. Its walls are made of brick and in the corner is a pillar
with its top ruined. There are evidence of still more pillars which could have been there at an earlier time.

The temple was the private property of a Pishram family for many generations. Recently owing to mismanagement and improper administration, the temple has been taken up by the government and it is declared as a protected monument under the Archaeology department.

4.3 TEMPLES WITH CIRCULAR SHRINES

- Śrī Vāmanamūrti temple, Trikkakkara

The temple is situated at Trikkakkara in the Kalamasseri municipal town of Kanayannur taluk. The temple is significant for its antiquity and historical significance along with remarkable cultural practices. The inscriptions dating to the Kulaśēkhara period are testimonial to its significance in the period. The temple is relevant from architectural point of view.

**Historical background:**

The temple is historically significant. There are 13 inscriptions found from various parts of this temple structure. These inscriptions are assigned to different periods from past associated to Cēra king Bhāskara Ravivarman, later Cochin ruler Kēraḷa Kēsari and other local nāṭuvāḷis (chieftains). Thus the inscriptions range from a period of mid 10th to 15th century AD. Earliest among these records is dated to 10th century. The information derived from various
inscriptions is related to the land grants (Kārāṇmai), donation of gold to the temple etc. There are mentions about the popular assemblies of Munnūṟruvar (300 members) and Arunnūṟruvar (six hundred members). The words like Köyiladhikārikal, Paḍavāram, Köppaḍavāram and Paḍipaḍavāram etc are important as they give some hints into the temple administrative structure, the ways of economic transactions and taxes of the contemporary period.

The temple was visited by celebrated Vaisnava saint of eighth century AD, Nammālvār and a description of the temple is given in his Divya Prabandham, which mentions the place as Tirukkālkarainādu. Based on inscriptional evidences, the earliest date of the temple can be placed not later than 10th century AD. In the post-Kulaśekhara period the temple was owned by Itappilly Tampuran and Cochin rulers. In the 16th century AD the temple was attacked by Portuguese. In 1825 AD the principality was transferred to Travancore. The temple was renovated in 1948.

**Structural details:** The temple is built in Kērala style architecture. The complex contains two major shrines viz., Vāmanamūrti and of Lord Śiva both separated by a compound wall. The major portion is dedicated and associated with Vāmanamūrti shrine.

**Vāmanamūrti shrine:** The main temple with śrīkōvil, curṟambalam and sub shrines in the bāhya hāra enclosed in the Maryāda is dedicated to lord Vāmanamūrti (pl.4.4). The śrīkōvil, measuring 14.45 m in diameter, is sāndhāra
type consisting of square garbhagṛha encircled by circular wall and roof with a covered ambulatory path around sanctum. The garbhagṛha is elevated on granite stone blocks and approached by five steps from the antarāḷa. There are huge stone pillars on the inner pradakṣiṇa-patha. The adhiśṭhāna is also of granite and it has the mouldings of pādukam, jagati, tripaṭṭa kumuda, kumuda-paṭi, gaḷam with flower motifs, uttaram, kampa, gaḷam, gaḷa-paṭi, vaḷaru and paṭi. There is no upapīṭha. The mukha- maṇḍapa in the front is an open porch supported by two pillars. It is not projected from the śrīkōvil rather it is recessed and incorporated within the circle. The sōpānam is aligned directly to the mukha-maṇḍapa with five steps. The banister has vyāḷi mukha carving on top and ghanadvāra and floral designs on the sides. The wall is built of granite stone. It has one prāśāda dvāra and three ghanadwāras. The wall is devoid of any carvings and paintings. The eaves are supported by wooden vyāḷi bracket figures with animal figure pedestals. These pedestals are fixed to the wall at a very low level. The praṇāḷam has common makara simha base and multi sided tube ending with vyāḷi mukha. The roof of śrīkōvil is covered with copper sheets; this conical super structure culminates in the finial on top. The antar-maṇḍalam is marked with balipīṭhas and there are no sub-shrines within this maṇḍalam. The saptamāṭṛkkal represented in balipīṭhas are on the south.

The namaskāra- maṇḍapa is on the east. There are four inner and twelve peripheral stone pillars in this maṇḍapa. It is open on sides. There is no idol of
vāhana of the deity here, but there is a shrine of Yakṣi is installed on south east within the maṇḍapa. The roof is tiled and is pyramidal in shape.

The well is located on the northeast corner within the nālambalam. The muḷayara and the tiṭappalḷi are in the curṟambalam itself. The sub-shrine of Bhagavati is on southwest corner of curṟambalam facing east. Another sub shrine of Śāsta is on the northwest corner facing east. Entrance into nālambalam is provided on all the four sides.

Even though there is viḷakkumāṭam, it is not a separate structure. Metal lamps on wooden frame work have been fixed on the outer wall of the nālambalam to form Madhya-hāra.

The agra- maṇḍapa on the east is open on three sides. The principal balipīṭha of laterite stone is installed within this maṇḍapa. Presently this massive balipīṭha is given metal covering (pl.4.5). The ceiling has simple wooden panel. The dhvajam is a recent addition. It is placed in the bāhya hāra. The bāhya hāra contains the outer pradakṣiṇa patha, stone dīpastambham and the sub shrine of Brahmaraṇkas. The kūttambalam is beyond the pradakṣiṇa patha on the southeast. It is built in a simple pattern. There are two gōpurams, one each at east and west. But they are simple and small in size. The whole area is enclosed by a laterite wall. The temple tanks are named Kapila tīrtham and dānōda poyka are situated on the north east. Great sanctity is ascribed to these tanks.

The sculptures in the temple are that of stone idol of principal deity as Lord Mahā Viṣṇu in the sankalpa of Vāmanamūrti. This is in standing pose with
conch, disc and lotus on three arms and the fourth one in kaṭibandha. Other remarkable carvings are the bracket figures on the outer wall of the śrīkōvil. The ceiling of namaskāra- maṇḍapa also displays some beautiful wooden carvings of navakhaṇḍa depicting aşṭa dīkpālas with Brahma in the centre. The various materials used in the constructions are the granite and laterite stones, lime plaster, tiles, wood and copper. There are no paintings in this temple.

Śiva shrine: The Śiva śrīkōvil is located on the south outside the maryāda of Vāmanamūrti temple. The Śiva shrine has śrīkōvil with mukha- maṇḍapa, valiyambalam and cuṟuḷmatil. There are sub shrines of goddess Pārvati, Durga and Lord Gaṇapati and Subrahmanya.

The legends associated with the temple have provided way for many elaborate rituals and cultural activities. The legend says that Māhabali of Purāṇa lived and ruled from this part of the country. Viṣṇu in his Vamana avatar met Mahābali here. Hence, the temple has Vāmana as the principal deity. The most important festival of Kēraḷa, Ōṇam, had more or less its origin from this temple. The festival is the celebration of Mahābali’s annual visit. This festival was an occasion of great celebration, participated by 56 chieftains, the heads of 64 grāmas and the Perumāḷ (king). This festival lasted for a month. Presently the festival is celebrated with same glory and pride, but in new ways. The procession from Pūṛṇatrayiśa temple to the Vāmana temple led by the heirs of Cochin royal family is a great event. A number of performing artists also take part in this ten day festival.
Over all, the temple is important from architectural, historical and cultural point of view. The architecture of the Vāmanamūrti Śrīkōvil is simple, precise and compact. Its extension of the eaves down to almost half of the wall and the shorter dimensions of the wall are pointers to the antiquity of the structure which is attested by the inscriptions. The inscriptions also highlight the fact that the temple was a significant social institution during the Cēra Kulaśēkhera period and it played a decisive role in various social activities including the administration of the land. The cultural relevance is equally loud, because without the Vāmana temple of Trikkakkara, the Ōṇam festival may not have got such importance in Kēraḷa society. One may conclude that the Vāmanamūrti temple at Trikkakara was a typical early medieval Kēraḷa temple which functioned as a nucleus of the society and contributed to the society’s cultural heritage and also left its foot print in the pages of history.

- **Lakṣmṇsvāmi temple, Trimuzhikkulam**

  The temple is situated in the Parakkatav village in Aluva taluk. Historically this is one of the very important temples in the region. This temple is also important for its rich wooden carvings.
**Historical background:** This temple is believed to have a great antiquity. A total of four inscriptions were found from this temple, but all in fragments. The Mūlikkuḷam kaccam mentioned in inscriptions throughout Kēraḷa during the period was the code of regulations and proceedings of administrative body meeting. However, the original inscription recotding this proceedins is lost, only its reference are found from other records. Earliest record found from this temple is dated to the regnal year of Kothai Ravi Varman (917-947 AD). The record mentions the title of the king as Manukuladityan. The legends connect it with Lord Paraśurāma. But the most popular legend is that of Vākkayil Kaimal, the local chief. According to the legend the Kaimal had a dream about the recovery of four Viṣṇu idols from sea which needed to be installed with proper rites in temple. The dream has turned into reality and surprisingly four Viṣṇu idols were found from the seashore. These four idols were consecrated at four different places, at Trprayār in the sankalpa of Lord Rāma, at Irinjalakkuta in the sankalpa of Lord Bharata another at Payammel with sankalpa of Lord Śatrughna and the one at Muzhikkulam with the sankalpa of Lord Lakṣmaṇa.

The temple has been described and eulogized by Nāmmāḷvār in Divya Prabandham in which the place is named as Tirumūlikkuḷathura. The temple was an important institution under the Kulaśēkhara rule. It was one of the Nālu-taḷi which functioned as the governing council of the Kulaśēkharas. Relevant information in this regard is obtained from the inscriptions found here. A total of nine inscriptions have been found. However, the inscriptions do not provide any
conclusive information about the date of the temple’s construction. All these inscriptions are engraved on various mouldings of adhiṣṭāna. As the adhiṣṭāna is always retained during reconstruction, the adhiṣṭāna portion undoubtedly dates back to the period of the inscription even if the super structure has underwent reconstructions and modifications from time to time. Another important incident related to this temple is Tipu sultan’s attack in which the structure is believed to have ablaze. It was after this incident that the Travancore government took up the temple and renovated it.

The temple’s position as a Taḷi during the Kulaśēkhara period is an irrefutable historical fact. The architectural details also reveal features of the early phase; especially the śrīkōvil’s sarvatōbhadra pattern itself is a pointer to its affiliation to the early phase of temple building in Kēraḷa. Thus the historical context, inscriptional details and the structural analysis together suggest a date for the temple between 8th and 10th centuries AD.

**Structural details:** The temple is built on pañca-prākāra plan. The śrīkōvil has a circular base with dvitala super structure (pl.4.6). The temple is built facing east direction. There is an inner circumambulatory path making it sāndhāra. The adhiṣṭāna is molded from granite stone. It consists of pādukam, jagati, tripāṭṭa kumuda, paṭi, gaḷam with vājana motifs, gaḷa-paṭi, uttaram, kampam, gaḷam, vaḷaru and paṭi. The adhiṣṭāna rests on an upapīṭha. In the front there is an attached mukha-maṇṭapam, aligned within the circle. The direct sōpānam has
five steps with carved side balusters. The wall is built of lateritic stone and has functional doors on four sides, thus making it a sarvatōbhādra shrine. There is no kōṣṭas, or carvings or any kind of decoration on the wall. The wooden brackets are in vyāli shape. The bracket figures are fixed in lower and upper talas supporting the eaves. The praṇālam on north has decorated tube with gō-mukha end. The two talas together form a conical shape, culminating in a stūpika on top. The roofs of both levels are covered with tiles. Within the śrīkōvil on its south is the sub shrine chamber dedicated to Lord Gaṇapati, Dakṣināmūrti and Rāma with Sīta. These shrines are represented as pīṭha without any form. The antar-manḍalam is marked with balikkals.

There is a detached square namakāra-maṇṭapam on the east of the śrīkōvil measuring 26 sq. meters. It has twelve inner and four peripheral stone pillars. The maṇṭapam is open on four sides. The roof is covered with tiles and the ceiling has navakhanḍa division with aṣṭa lakṣmi carvings. A lamp is fixed exactly facing the deity. The well is on the north east. There are two tiṭṭapaliṣis, one at south and another at northeast in the curṛambalam. The curṛambalam also contains the sub-shrines of Lord Śāsta and Bhagavati, both at the southwest. There are entrances on east and west to the curṛambalam.

The vilakkumāṭam is a separate structure detached from the curṛambalam by a passage, thus making a perfectly defined madhya hāra. It has a total of 456 poles with metal lamps fixed on three rows. The agra- maṇṭapam is incorporated in the eastern vilakkumāṭam without any projection on plan. Though there is an
agra-maṇṭapam, the principal balikkal is placed outside it, in the bāhya hāra. The vilakkumāṭam has vyāḷi bracket figures supporting the eaves (pl.4.8). These are beautiful pieces of wooden carving. The principal balikkal is another excellent piece of art work (pl.4.7). This granite balikkal measuring three meters height is placed on a high pedestal and its beauty is enhanced with the śāla, panjara and kuta carvings.

The dhvajam is in the bāhya hāra beyond the principal balikkal. The sub-shrine of Gōśāla Kṛṣṇa is in the bāhya hāra at north beyond the outer pradakṣiṇa patha. The temple has a well built kūttambalam. It is located in the bāhya hara on the south east. This structure is a wonderful architectural work built with rangamaṇṭapam and añiyara with excellent acoustic arrangements. During the times of local chieftains, there used to be 41 days of kūttu and three days kūṭiyāṭṭam performance in a year. But presently this has reduced to only once in a year.

The ūṭṭurpura is also in the bāhya hāra on the north. There are some modern mural paintings on the inner wall of the cuṟṟambalam. No ancient paintings are here. The carvings of bracket figures on the two levels of the śrīkōvil roof and on the outer wall of cuṟṟambalam are remarkable. All these bracket figures are carved as vyalis on elephant pedestal. Other noticeable sculpture is that of the dwārapalas in front of the śrīkōvil. The idol of Lord Lakṣmana is in the form of Lord Viṣṇu in standing pose with śankha, cakra, gada and padma in four arms. This is a stone idol. The idol of Lord Gaṇapatī,
Dakṣināmūrti, Rāma and Sīta do not have anthropomorphic form. The Śāsta idol is in sitting pose carved from stone and that of Bhāgavati is mirror type in pañca lōha. The Gōsālakṛṣṇa deity is installed in standing pose. The adhiṣṭāna of all the structures- śrīkōvil, maṇṭapam, and cuṟṟambalam- are made of granite stone, where as the walls are made of laterite with lime plastering. For the roofing wooden rafters, beams and architraves are used in all the sections.

- **Pūrnatrayīsa Viṣṇu Temple, Tripunithura**

  The temple is situated in the Thripunithura town in Ernakulam District.

**Historical background:** The temple has a great historical background dating back to many centuries. The antiquity of the temple is attested by an inscription of Kothai Ravi Varman (917-947 AD). From 16th century onwards this temple was exclusively used by the Cochin Royal family. The deity is Viṣṇu in the sankalpa of Santhāna Gōpālamūrti. According to the traditions the chief idol was first installed by a Brāhmin with a sālagrama given by Lord Viṣṇu through Arjuna. Inscription on the western gōpuram of the temple is in Malayalam language and script which paleographically dates to 12th Century A.D. Many literary works of the 16th Century has direct as well as indirect reference about this temple. Initially the temple was exclusively used by the Cochin Royal family.

  In Kollam Era 1096 (= 1921 AD) the temple caught fire. Originally the temple structure was made of wood. In the unfortunate incident of fire, all the
wooden parts were ruined. Only the bhitti and adhiṣṭānam of the śrīkōvil, which were built of stone and the western gōpuram could survive the fire. Further, the whole temple complex was reconstructed with concrete and bricks. But, the layout and plan of the original structure was retained. The śrīkōvil was given copper sheet covered roof. Walls of the namaskāra-maṇṭapam are made of wooden bars. The tiled roof of the cuṟṟambalam has wooden rafters. According to inscriptive evidences it possible to place the construction of the temple not later than the rule of Kothai Ravi Varman i.e. 10th century AD.

**Structural details:** The chief shrine of Viṣṇu as Santhāna Gōpālamūrti is installed in a circular ēkatala śrīkōvil facing east. It has a high kapōta-bandha adhiṣṭhāna. The garbhagṛha inside is raised from the floor level of śrīkōvil and it is approached by a flight of steps from the inner circumambulatory path. The śrīkōvil is without mukha-maṇṭapam. There are no sub shrines within the akatte balivaṭṭam. In front of the śrīkōvil is a square namaskāra- maṇḍapa. Tiṭappalḷi is on the south east side in the valiyambalam. The valiyambalam has entrances on three sides, except on the south. Agra- maṇḍapa is attached to the valiyambalam, installed with valiyabalikkal. In front of the agra- maṇḍapa is the dhvajastambha. After dhvajastambha there is a rectangular naṭapantal with eight pillars. On its ceiling are paintings from the Santhāna Gōpālamūrti story.

The sub shrine of Gaṇapati is installed in the southeastern side of valiyambalam, opening to the bāhya hāra (pl.4.11). Viḷakkumāṭam is fixed on
outer wall of curḷambalam. The temple has an outer pradakṣiṇa-patha. Main entrance is on east (pl.4.12). The maryāda of the temple has ṛṭṭupura on western and southern sides (pl.4.13) and gōpuram on three sides, except on north. Among these the western one is believed to be part of the original structure (pl.4.14). It is a marvelous piece of carving and on the ceiling has the Navagraha carvings. The kapota and niches are beautifully carved. The Eastern gōpura is a tritala one with exquisite wooden carvings (pl.4.15). On the northern side is the temple tank.

- **Ekadasi Perumtrikkovil Mahadeva temple, Udayamperur**

  The temple is located 12 kilometers south of Ernakulam at Manakunnam village in Udayamperur panchayat of Kanayannur taluk.

**Historical background:** The temple was earlier owned by a group of 28 Nambūtiri families. Two inscriptions found from this temple are helpful to fix date of the temple. One inscription found on the adhiṣṭhāna of śrīkōvil is dated to 12th century AD, it records the gift of land towards the maintenance of perpetual lamp and food-offerings. Second inscription found on adhiṣṭhāna of namaskaṛa-manḍapa records its construction under the order of King Vira Ravi Varma Kilperur of Venad, and it is dated to 13th century. On the basis of these records 12th century AD is taken as the earliest date of the temple. There is a tradition of 16th century saint Vilvamangalam swami’s visit to this temple. The sub-shrine of Kṛṣṇa is believed to be consecrated by him. The temple was taken over by
Travancore government in early 19th century and was vested with Travancore Devaswom Board in 1950.

**Structural details:** This Śiva temple has a circular ēkatala śrīkōvil facing east. It has granite adhiśṭhāna with mouldings of upāna, jagati, vṛtta kumuda, kaṇṭa and paṭṭika. Vēdi marks beginning of pāda. The wall portion is made of laterite and it is plain without any embellishment, except for the pilasters.

The śrīkōvil is built on a circular plan. This is one of the biggest circular temples in Kēraḷa. This circular śrīkōvil consists inside a square garbhagrha, surrounded by two rows of pillars arranged in circle (fig.4.1). The inner circle has 12 and outer circle has 14 pillars with alternatively square and octagonal sections. The garbhagrha, approached by six steps, is raised above the śrīkōvil floor with its independent adhiśṭhāna consisting of upāna, jagati, tripaṭṭa kumuda, kaṇṭa with dentils and paṭṭika. Above the adhiśṭhāna the plain wall has clearly made prastara with kapōta and dentil course. The wall has ghanadvāra and the grīva and śikhara are octagonal. Udayamperur temple presents a beautiful execution of synthesizing the miniature Drāviḍa vimāṇainside a Kēraḷa style śrīkōvil.

The śrīkōvil rests on granite kapota-bandha adhiśṭhāna with mouldings of upāna, jagati, vṛtta kumuda, kaṇṭa and paṭṭika (fig.4.2). The granite sōpāna is flanked by banisters having purna kumbha motifs. This sōpāna connects to the mukha maṇḍapa of śrīkōvil which created by recession the circle, not by
projection. The mukha maṇḍapa is supported by two pillars and flanked by two dvarapals. The praṇāla on the north issues from kapōta and has a makara-simha base, fluted shaft without ornamentation and lipped end, displaying early features. But a supporting bhūta figure in standing pose is placed below the curved end of praṇāla. Vēdi above adhiṣṭhāna marks beginning of the laterite wall. This outer wall of śrīkōvil is plain without any embellishment, except for pilasters. It has four functional doors on cardinal directions. Prastara above is obscured by the architrave and overhang of roof. The conical roof extends down covering major part of wall. Roof is created on a framework of 68 wooden rafters. Above this framework is the layer of wooden planks and top layer is of copper sheets. The conical roof culminates in stūpi on top. The śrīkōvil also consists of sub-shrine of goddess Pārvati on the rear of garbhagṛha facing west.

The namaskāra-maṇḍapa in front of śrīkōvil was an addition made to the temple in 13\textsuperscript{th} century AD. This maṇḍapa measures 26 sq. meters. It has 16 pillars (four inner and twelve peripheral). The inner courtyard is enclosed by the curṟambalam on four sides with entrances on every side. Tiṭappalli is a detached structure on the north east of inner courtyard. On the east, there is agra-maṇḍapa projecting from valiyambalam to bāhya hāra. This maṇḍapa houses principal balipīṭha. The temple has a madhya hāra with viḷakkumāṭam. On bāhya hāra are copper covered dhvajasthambha and bronze dipasthambha. Outer pradakṣiṇa patha is beyond the dipa and sub-shrines of Sasta (on south), Yakṣi and Nāga (on North West) and Kṛṣṇa (on north) arre on bāhya hāra. Among these sub-shrines,
śṛṅkkōvil of Krsna is a square dvitala structure with a projecting mukha-maṅḍapa in front (pl.4.22).

Maryāda of the temple is intersected by entrance gateways on four sides. Gopuram on east is an elaborate dvitala structure built in typical Kēraḷa style.

- **Sri Mahādeva temple, Uliyannur**

  This mahākṣētram is situated at Uliyannur in Katungallur village of Paravur taluk. Two branches of river Periyar flows on east and west of the temple at a distance of 500 meters. This temple is important due to the architecture and antiquity of the Māṭattilappan Śiva shrine in the temple\textsuperscript{12}.

**Historical background:** Not much information regarding the history of Mahādēva and Māṭattilappan temples of Uliyunnur is available. Like other important temples of Kēraḷa, here also the legends are associated with Lord Paraśurāma. The construction of the Mahādēva shrine is ascribed to Rāman Perum Taccan, the legendary historical architect. The perfection and precision of architecture, especially the roof of the śṛṅkkōvil is remarkable. It has been known that while reconstruction, fixing the rafters of śṛṅkkōvil roof was a huge challenge to modern architects. Same was the case with the kūttambalam of Vadakkunnātha temple of Tṛśśūr. Evidently, both these were built by the same Perum Taccan. It is said that Taccan has used his maximum skill and devotion
for constructing the Mahādēva temple of Uliyannur. Incidentally Uliyannur was the native land of Perum Taccan.

Three architectural developments are helpful for the chronological placement of the temple- the Mātattilappan shrine, enshrining the consort of a deity in the rear of the same śrīkōvil and supporting Bhūtagana beneath the praṇāḷam, are concepts developed in Kēraḷa during the Middle phase (1000-1300 AD). Thus architecture analysis makes it possible to place the temple in the time bracket of 1000 and 1300 AD. In the 18th century the temple is said to have been attacked by Tipu sultan during his Kēraḷa expedition. No inscription or any other document was found from this temple.

**Structural details:** The temple dedicated to Lord Śiva is built in traditional Kēraḷa style. There are two shrines one of Lord Mahādēva enshrined in the main temple complex and the other is Lord Śiva as Mātattilappan enshrined in a separate structure. The Mahādēva shrine is presently in good condition whereas the Mātattilappan shrine is in a ruined state.

**Mahādēva shrine:** The main temple structure is dedicated to Lord Mahādēva. The complex is built in an area of two acre land. The Śrīkōvil inside is circular on plan facing east which has a diameter of 11.51 meters (pl.4.16). The mouldings of the adhiśṭāna are pādukam, jagati, tripaṭṭa kumuda, and kumudapāṭi, gaḷam with flower motifs, gaḷa-paṭi, uttaram, vaḷaru, kapōta, kampa, kampa-paṭi, vaḷaru and paṭi. The śrīkōvil has an inner pradakṣiṇa-patha without any pillars. The super structure is ēkatala conical tiled roof culminating in the finial...
on top. The roof is fixed on 68 wooden beams, joined together in the conical end. This roof exclusively rests on the wall. There are no supporting brackets or rafters connecting to wall (pl.4.19). However, pedestals of elephant design fixed on the wall show that earlier there were brackets supporting the overhang of the roof. The mukha-maṇḍapa in the front is supported by two pillars and is incorporated within the circle of śrīkōvil. Entrance to the śrīkōvil is provided with six direct steps which have side banisters showing ghanadvāra and floral design carvings. The wall is built of laterite stone with three prāsāda dvāras and one ghanadvāra. There are no carvings or paintings or kōṣṭha on the wall. Praṇāḷam on the north is a real piece of sculpture. It has a makara simha base, plain tube and a gō-mukha end in which the end has a complete head of the cow carved. The praṇāḷam is supported from below by a sitting female bhūtagaṇa which is also unique by its size and its posture of sitting with stretched legs (pl.4.17).

On the rear within the same Śrīkōvil is the sub shrine of goddess Pārvati facing west. The antar-maṇḍalam is marked by balikkals around śrīkōvil. On the east is square namaskāra- maṇḍapa measuring 27.4 square meters. This maṇḍapa is open on four sides. The tiled roof is supported by 16 wooden pillars (4 inner and 12 peripheral). On the west side also a namaskāra- maṇḍapa is built in front of the Parvati’s shrine.

The well is on the northeast corner within the akatte balivaṭṭam. The curṟambalam exists only partially. On the north and west only wall provided
with entrance gates are there. On the east an elaborate valiyambalam structure containing the sub shrines of Goddess Durga and Lord Kṛṣṇa and other functional chambers exist. On the south side is tiṭappalī and store room. On the northwest is a shrine dedicated to Kūṭalamāṇikkaswāmy, this is without any idol but only in sankalpa. Daily regular worships are offered here. On the east, projecting from the valiyambalam is the agra- maṇḍapa. It houses the principal balipīṭha which is a massive granite stone. The maṇḍapa is open on sides having the roof supported by pillars.

Notably the temple has no viḷakkumāṭam, and no sub-shrines in the bāhya hāra. Only the pradakṣiṇa patha is in the bāhya hāra. The compound wall around is of laterite stone and is in a ruined state. There are no paintings in this temple complex. The notable sculptures are that of dwārapālas on sides of the prāśāda dwāra, the praṇālam and carvings on ceiling of namaskāra-maṇṭapam.

- **Peruvaram Mahadeva Temple, north Paravur**

The temple is located in the North Paravur town in Paravur taluk of Ernakulam District. The legends and traditions assign a great antiquity to the temple. But exact date is not available. The reconstruction of the temple after a fire ruin dates to 16th Century A.D. The temple has Lord Śiva as principal deity, goddess Pārvati, Lord Gaṇapati and Śāsta as subsidiary deities/ Parivāra dēvatas.
**Historical background:** This temple was the grāmakṣētram of Paravur during the Kulaśēkhara period and had the status of Taḷi. Its architectural features indicate that it perhaps belonged to the Middle phase. The practice of enshrining consort of presiding deity on the rear of the same garbhagṛha, having two mahādūrṇas and two functional doors, also speak about the same affinity. Hence, the temple could be assigned to a period between 1000AD and 1300 AD. Only one inscription has been found here, even that is fragmentary.

**Structural Details:** The temple is made in typical Kērala style. The circular ēkatala śrīkōvil has two chambers, one facing east and another West. On the east facing garbhagṛha is the principal deity of Śiva in linga form and on the west facing garbhagṛha is installed goddess Pārvati. There is an inner pradakšiṇa patha and antarāḷa. The kapōta-bandha adhiṣṭāna rests on granite upāpiṭha. The mukha- maṇḍapa is enclosed within the śrīkōvil circle. There are four direct steps connecting to the prasāda dvāra on mukha- maṇḍapa. Its side banisters have vyāḷa-mukha carving on top. The wall is also built with granite stone. It has two functional doors, one each on east and west and two ghanadvāras. The wall is embellished with bhadras, anurathas and karnas topped with hamsamāla carvings. Praṇāḷa on north side has makara simha base, multi faced śuṇḍu and gō-mukha. The roof is conical in shape covered with copper sheet and has finial on top. Within the same śrīkōvil, on the rear of garbhagṛha is enshrined goddess Pārvati facing west. The antar-maṇḍalam is marked with balikkals and has
saptamāṭṛkkal representation in the form of balikkal along the south. All the balikkals are covered with brass.

On the eastern side is a namaskāra- maṇḍapa. It has wooden screen on sides and the roof is supported on 16 stones pillars. This maṇḍapa has beautiful wooden carvings on ceiling. The maṇḍapa measures 26 square meters. Another namaskāra- maṇḍapa is on the west dedicated to goddess Pārvati, this measures 10.22 square meters and has four stone pillars to support the tiled roof.

There are sub shrines of Gaṇapati and Subrahmaṇya within the nalāmbalam. Muḷayara and tiṭappalḷi are found in the cuṟṟambalam. The sub shrine of Lord Gaṇapati is on southwest facing east. Entrances to the antahāra are provided on east, west and north.

There is a madhya hāra of vilakkumāṭam having metal lamps fixed on wooden frame. The total number of lamps is 3668. The agra- maṇḍapa is projected from the cuṟṟambalam on east. It has wooden trellis wall and raised base on four sides. The entrance to cuṟṟambalam from the agra-maṇṭapam is raised about 2 ft. The maṇḍapa houses the principal balipīṭha which is a beautiful carved granite block measuring 1.95 meters high. Here also the ceiling has wooden samtala-vitāna panel with beautiful intricate wooden carvings.

On the bāhya hāra is the dhvajastambha covered with copper, a stone Nandi idol and a bronze dīpastambham. Further, there is the outer pradakṣiṇa patha. A sub shrine dedicated to Lord Śāsta is at south facing north. Yet another sub shrine is dedicated to Yakṣi, located on the northwest side. It faces west. On
the east and west, there are naṭapantals supported by huge circular pillars, six on each side. These naṭapantal are connected to the mahādvwāras there. The
mahādvāras are smaller in dimensions but built in typical Kēraḷa style in dvitala. On the southeast corner a stage exist in place of the kūttambalam. Úṭṭupura, agrasāḷa and office are on the north side. The temple tank is on the western side outside the maryāda.

The remarkable sculptures are those of dwarāpālas on either sides of prasāda dwāra to Mahādēva shrine and the wooden carvings on the namaskāramaṇḍapa and agra- maṇḍapa ceilings. There are no paintings here. Major materials used for construction are granite and wood. Laterite is used for curṟambalam wall and compound wall only.

In earlier periods the temple had a regular Vēdic teaching practice which has gradually declined over time. Similarly feeding of Brāhmin was considered highly meritorious act and there were regular feasts attended by Brāhmin from far and wide places. Presently this practice also has come to a virtual end. The temple has lost its shining glory of past in this sense, but its structure is a standing testimony to that lost glory.

The position of the chief priest is hereditary who hails from a Brahmin family from Sivolli village of Tulu Nadu in Karnataka. This has been the practice as far past as the information is available. The chief priest has to be a purappaṭa śānti, i. e. he has to be celibate throughout his tenure and he shall not leave the boundaries of the temple during this period.
Perumṭkkōvil Mahādēva temple, Pazhur

The temple is located in the Piravam village on the south bank of Muvattupuzha River. The temple is very famous and significant for the beautiful wooden carvings.

**Historical background:** There are many traditions connected with this temple. The temple is believed to have been consecrated by Brāhmins who migrated from Peruvanam settlement in Trūssūr. Thus by all possibility the temple can be dated only to a period later than the Mahādēva temple at Peruvanam i.e. 9 to 10\(^{th}\) century AD. Regarding the architecture, the temple has a vast circular śrīkōvil with eaves extending down, high adhiṣṭāna and short wall. Number of dvāras and wall decoration shows affinity to later phase ranging from 1300 AD and 1600 AD.

**Structural details:** The temple is dedicated to Lord Śiva. The temple built in traditional Kērala style has five prākāras (paṇca-prākāra) (fig.4.3). The śrīkōvil is a large circle, measuring 12.99 meters diameter, with square garbhagṛha inside facing east (pl.4.24). This has inner pradakṣiṇa-patha with twelve pillars. On the front is a mukha-maṇḍapa supported on two columns. Adhiṣṭhāna and sōpānam are of granite. Seven direct steps connect to the entrance of raised śrīkōvil. The makara simha based praṇāla is supported by bhūtagaṇa figure carved in granite stone. The wall is also built of granite. Pilasters and murals embellish the outer wall of the śrīkōvil. It has śāla jālaka, hamsa māla on prastara and nāsikas on
kapota. Roof is conical in shape topped with finial. This roof is covered with copper sheets. The wall has three ghanadvāras and one prāśāda dvāra. The sub shrine of Lord Gaṇapati is attached to the outer wall of the śrīkōvil on southeast.

The square namaskāra-maṇḍapa on the east measures 68 square feet and is supported by eight wooden pillars, inner four pillars with round shaft and outer ones with square shafts. The beams in this maṇṭapam are fashioned as kapōta and are surrounded by bracket figures and valabhi with processional scenes. Cuṟṟambalam has entrances on four sides. Tiṭappalli and mulayara function in the cuṟṟambalam. The valiyambalam has a dwitala super structure Agra-maṇṭapam is on the east. It houses the principal balipiṭha, which is a beautiful carved block of stone. The outer wall has metal lamps fixed on as viḷakkumāṭam.

On the bāhya hāra are the sub shrines dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa with namaskāra- maṇḍapa, of Lord Śāsta and Goddess Bhagavati. There is an outer pradakṣīna-patha, natapantal, ānakkoṭṭil and dīpastambha also in the bāhya hāra. Another sub shrine dedicated to Nāga is at southwest. The branches of Muvattupuzha River flow on three sides of the temple marking its borders.

Very notable are the wooden carvings in this temple. The various bracket figures fixed on the śrīkōvil wall supporting the roof are excellent. The ceiling of namaskāra- maṇḍapa and agra- maṇḍapa are the other spaces used for aesthetic expression. On the agra-maṇṭapam ceiling is a unique wooden carving depicting goddess seated in the midst of a full bloom lotus (pl.4.25). This is a unique and remarkably excellent piece of art work.
Krishna temple, Okkal

The temple is situated 4 kms north of Perumbavur at Karikkot junction in the Chelamattam village of Okkal panchayat in Kunnathunad taluk.

**Historical background:** Earlier the temple belonged to local chieftains. It was subsequently owned by Taranellur family till 1985, when it was taken over by Ooranma Devaswam Board. There is an inscription on adhiṣṭhāna of the temple, datable to 15th century. Even though the temple was destroyed partly due to fire and underwent renovations, adhisthana belong to original structure.

**Structural details:** The temple complex covering one acre area contains śrīkōvil, namaskāra-maṇḍapa, base of cuṟṟambalam and agra-maṇḍapa. Śrīkōvil is a circular sāndhāra ēkatala structure (pl.4.27). It faces west. The mukha-maṇḍapa is created by recess on front above the adhiṣṭhāna and is supported by two pillars (pl.4.28). The granite adhiṣṭhāna has upāna, jagāti, tripaṭṭa kumuda, gaḷam, kampa and gaḷam-paṭi. The direct sōpāna has four steps and its side banisters are in hasti-hasta shape. Banister sides depict vyāḷa figure and ghanadvāra motif. Praṇāḷa issuing from above kumuda has makara simha base, multi faceted tube and gō-mukha end. The laterite wall has functional doors on four sides. The mukha-maṇḍapa on front is supported by two pillars. Dvārapālas on lotus pedestals holding club are placed on sides of prāsāda dvāra. There are no wall decoration and pilasters. Prastara is not discernible as it is covered by the architrave. The roof is conical with terracotta tiles culminating in stūpi.
In front of śrīkōvil is built detached namaskāra-maṇḍapa. This square maṇḍapa measuring 25 square meters has 16 wooden pillars, four inner and twelve peripheral. Curṛambalam around the inner courtyard is partially ruined. Its base exist on four sides, only on east nālambalam exist with tiṭappalḷī. Base of the projecting agra-maṇḍapa is on the west. It encloses principi balipittha. There is no dhvajastambha. Stone lamp is placed outside agra-maṇḍapa. This temple does not have madhya hāra and outer pradakṣīṇa patha. On the bāhya hāra there are sub-shrines of Subrahmanya, Ayyappa and Brahmarakṣas on north east.

The idol of Mahā Viṣṇu, the principal deity, is in stading pose and has four arms holding conch, disc, club and lotus. There is no other remarkable painting and sculpture in this temple. The vast circular śrīkōvil with high base, short wall and extending conical roof gives the structure a beautiful look and an impression of extending down to earth.

- Mahādeva temple, Kīḻhillam

The temple is located in Rayamangalam village in Kunnathunad taluk. The place is at a distance of 10 km southeast of Perumbavur.

**Historical background:** Traditions assign a date prior to 1000 A.D to this temple. The belief is that the Śīla idol in the temple was consecrated by Śrī Khara Mahāṛṣi. Tradition also associates Lord Paraśurāma with this temple. Earlier the
temple was the property of four families which handed over the authority to Travacore Devaswom Board.

**Structural details:** The śrīkōvil is a circular sāndhāra structure facing west (pl.4.29). The structure stands on a granite upapīṭha and adhiṣṭhāna. The adhiṣṭhāna has pādukam, jagati, tripaṭṭa kumudam, kumuda-paṭi, gaḷam, gaḷa-paṭi and paṭi. This is a ēkatala structure. There is no attached mukha-maṇḍapa in this śrīkōvil. The sōpāna on west has five direct steps with vyāli mukha banister. The wall is built with lateritic stone. There is one prāsāda dvāra and three ghanadvāras. The ghanadvāra on the north has dvārapālas fixed on either side. On the outer wall of the śrīkōvil there are twelve sham niches with śāla and kuṭa on the top. The praṇāla is on the north. This granite water chute has a makara simha base and plain tube with a gō-mukha. The śikhara is built in conical shape. It has a tiled roof with finial on top. The antar-maṇḍalam has demarcation with balikkals. Namaskāra-maṇḍapa is a later addition into this temple. The maṇḍapa is built on a plain short base without mouldings. This open square maṇḍapa has four concrete pillars on corners to support the tiled roof.

The sub-shrines of Lord Gaṇapati on southern side and Brahmarakṣas on northwest are within the inner balivaṭṭam. The temple well is also within this prākāra on the northwest. There is no cuṟṟambalam in this temple. However, a tiṭappaḷḷi is built on southwest. Instead of cuṟṟambalam only wall is built enclosing the antahāra. There is no Madhya-hāra and viḷakkumāṭam. A
remarkable feature is the remnants of an agra-maṇṭapam on the front with the principal balipīṭha installed within. This hints to the possibility of existence of curṟambalam structure with agra-maṇṭapam at some point of time in the past. Conspicuously the existing base of the agra-maṇṭapam does not have any adhiṣṭāna mouldings. The principal balipīṭha is placed on a high upapitha and it is well decorated (pl.4.30). The copper covered dhvajastambha is in axial alignment with the principal balipīṭha beyond the agra-maṇḍapa. It is flanked by two stone dīpastambhas on either side. The complex is enclosed by a simple compound wall and a simple entrance on the west. There is no elaborate Mahādvāra built here.

The annual festival in this temple is celebrated in the Kumbham month for eight days culminating on Tiruvātira asterisk. Another important day is the Śivarātri. The performing arts staged in this temple are Kathakali, Cākyār Kūttu and Ottam tullal.

- **Durga Bhagavati temple, Iringol**

The temple is situated two and half kilometres northeast from Perumbavur town within Perumbavur municipal town. This temple is dated to early period by scholars. The traditions enlist the Iringolkavu Bhagavati temple among the 108 Durgālayas. The location of the temple in the midst of a thick forest and the remarkable legends together also make the temple important for the study.
**Structural details:** The temple structure is located at the southeast in the grove (pl.4.31). The śrīkōvil is a circular ēkatala structure. It is sāndhāra and faces west. The adhiṣṭhāna is built of granite stone and has pāduka, jagati, vr̥ttā kumudam, kumuda-paṭi, kampam, gaḷam, gaḷa - paṭi, uttaram with flower motifs and vaḷaru mouldings. There is no upapīṭha. The structure has no mukha-maṇḍapa. The direct sōpāna has only two steps. The banisters have vyāḷa face carvings on top. Wall is also built with granite stone and has two ghanadwāras apart from the functional door on west. Wall has decoration and carvings. The prañāḷam is simple granite tube with curved end.

The conical roof is covered with tiles above thirty two rafters. Originally the temple was owned by thirty two Brahmin families and the thirty two rafters represent each of the family. The antar-maṇḍalam is marked with balikkals. There are no sub-shrines within this prākāra. Namaskāra-maṇṭapam on the west has similar pattern of adhiṣṭāna as the śrīkōvil. There are four stone pillars here. The ceiling has a sculptured panel with goddess Kārtyāyani in the centre. These wooden carvings reveal great perfection and plastic beauty.

The curṟambalam has two tiṭappaḷlis, one at south and another at north. No muḷayara is built here. There is no sub-shrine inside this prākāra also. Curṟambalam has entrance from all the four sides in addition to two doors in the valiyambalam. The row of metal lamps on wooden frame is fixed on the outer wall of the curṟambalam. The valiyabalikkal is installed in the projecting agra-
maṇḍapa. The dīpastambha of śīla is also installed within the same maṇḍapa. The present dhvajastambha was erected in 1998 AD. There are no sub-shrines in the bāhya hāra also. There is no kūttambalam and separate ūṭṭupura here. Though there is a compound wall there are no huge mahādvāras, only simple gateways are built on the east and west. These gateways lead to the path inside the forest to reach the temple.

The temple does not have any wall paintings or murals. Sculptural decoration is also scanty. The notable sculptures here are the carvings of goddess Kārtyāryani in the ceiling of namaskāra-maṇḍapa and the dvārapālas on either sides of the entrance to the śrīkōvil. Various materials used in construction of this temple are granite stone, wood, concrete, and tiles.

Very remarkable is the location of the temple inside the sacred grove. Popular belief is that the grove is the hair of the goddess. Hence, trees are not cut from here, only natural process of ageing causes the fall of any tree. This vegetation is habitat of many flora and fauna. However, the traditions behind constructing the temple here refers to the revealing of divine presence in a sila when touched with a sharp iron object by a female from Pulaya family. Thus the idol here is swayambhu. But there is no proper historical evidence in this effect and this tradition has been passed on through generations. The original builders of this temple were thirty two Brahmin families. Among them 29 are no more traceable, three families exist today and are involved in the day to day
administration of the temple as well. They are Nangachery illam, Pattassery illam and Oroliyam illam.

Trikkarttika utsavam in the month of Vṛścikam is an important festival in this temple, and the important event in this festival is the deepakaḷça. Another important cultural activity in the Iringolkavu is the annual nine-day festival which includes many rituals. Remarkably, in the procession only female elephants are used. This is believed to be the wish of the goddess. Ārāṭṭu, Śrī bali, cendā melam, ārāṭṭu eḻunnallippu, ārāṭṭu varavu and valiya kānikka are various rituals associated with the annual festival. The performing arts staged here include Ōṭṭam tuḷḷal, Ĉākyār kūttu and Pāṭhakam.

The simplicity of the temple structure with a very antique look is remarkable. Most notably the praṇāḷam reveals an early date of the temple; it is without a makara simha base, carved decorated śunḍu and gō-mukha end. The pattern of the praṇāḷam suggests a date prior to 13th century A.D.

- Śri Śiva temple, Cheranallur

The temple is located in Kuvappati village, 11 km north of Perumbavur in the Kunnathunad taluk. The river Periyar flows 400 meters north of the temple.

**Structural details:** This temple has circular ēkatala śrīkōvil facing east. It is a sāndhāra structure. The upapīṭha and adhiṣṭhāna are made of granite. The
adhiṣṭhāna has mouldings of pādukam, jagati, vr̥ta kumuda, kumuda paṭi, kampam, gaḷam, gaḷa paṭi, uttaram, gaḷam with flower motifs and paṭi. The sōpāna has five direct steps. The banister has vyāḷa carving on top. The pranāla has makara simha base, fluted śunḍu with rings and gō-mukha end. The granite wall has three ghanadvāras and one functional door. The antar-maṇḍalam is marked with balikkals. In front of the śrīkōvil is the square namaskāra-maṇḍapa. It has fifteen granite pillars and one wooden pillar in the sankaḷpa of Yakṣi.

There are tiṭappalḷis on north and south in the curṟambalam. Entrances are provided on four sides of the curṟambalam. There are no sub-shrines within the antar-maṇḍalam, but in the southern nālambalam sub shrine of Lord Gaṇapati is enshrined facing east.

There is an agra- maṇḍapa with principal balipīṭha. In the bāhya-hāra are the outer pradakṣiṇa patha and sub-shrines of Brahmarakṣas (on southwest), shrine of Lord Śāsta, Bhagavati and Lord Subrahmaṇya (on northwest). The maryāda has entrances on east and west. There is no huge gōpuram constructed here. The temple has very simple, plain and compact structure. Embellishments are not to be seen here.

The remarkable point is that this temple is one of one hundred and eight Śivālayas. The temple, as stated above has simple structure and paintings and carvings are not made here. The only sculptures here are the dvārapālas. The principal deity, Śiva, is enshrined in the form of a śila linga and worshipped in
his fierce form of the Tripurāntaka. Interestingly the sub-shrines are also enshrined in the linga form. There is hardly any icon in this temple.

- Sri Rāmaswāmy temple, Trikkalathur

The temple is located at Trikkalathur in Airapuram, Mazhuvunnur panchayat in Kunnathunad taluk. Popular belief is that the idol in this temple was installed by sage Agasthya and the story connects it to the epic Rāmāyaṇa itself. Legends related to the temple assign great antiquity. But the present structure does not have much antiquity. It dates to a period not more than 500 years. There are no historical events related to the temple. It do not cite in any inscription as well. Earlier the temple was owned by four Brahmin families, Celat (alias Kulikkat), Mullasseri, Telekkat and Atrisseri. The administration was handed over to a local Kshetra Seva Samiti in 1986 AD.

**Structural details:** The temple has three prākāras - the antahāra, akatte balivaṭṭam and bāhya hāra. The architecture of śrīkōvil is not in Kēraḷa style. The śrīkōvil is a circular structure with inner pradakṣiṇa patha (pl.4.32).It faces east. The structure stands on a granite upapīṭha and above which a granite adhiśṭāna with pādukam, jagati, vṛtta kumudam, kumuda-paṭi, gaḷam, uttaram, kampam, gaḷam with flower motifs, gaḷa-paṭi, vaḷaru and paṭi mouldings. The śrīkōvil has projected mukha- maṇḍapa. Sōpāna with five direct steps has vyāḷi mukha banister. The wall of the temple is built of granite stone. The wall is plain. There
are three ghanadvāras and one prāśāda dvāra. The praṇāla is on north with usual makara simha base and gō-mukha end. Most noticeable part is the śikhara of the temple. This is built with concrete. The āditala is of sloping padma shape, above which a plain grīva is and over the grīva is the lofty dvitala. On the dvitala portion there are eight kūṭus fixed. Among them four facing cardinal directions are bigger and the other four smaller. On top there are kalaśas. The śikhara of the temple is built in Drāviḍa style. The projected mukha- maṇḍapa has a trefoil shaped roof which rises up to the height of the āditala.

There is a sub-shrine of Lord Śiva as Dakṣiṇāmūrti installed within the śrīkōvil on the south. Another sub-shrine within the antar- maṇḍalam is an independent small shrine on the southeast facing east. This shrine attached to the mukha- maṇḍapa is dedicated to Lord Gaṇapati. This is built on a square plan; the śikhara is in Drāviḍa style and has sculptural decorations on it. The namaskāra-maṇḍapa is on east. This open square structure has 16 wooden pillars, twelve peripheral and four inner. Most remarkable is its super structure. The maṇḍapa has a flat concrete roof above it on the centre a miniature Dravidian śikhara is fixed. On top of the stūpi an image of Garuḍa is also fixed (pl.4.33).

The antahāra has a vast open courtyard enclosed with the cuṇḍambalam. Tiṭappalḷi is on west. There is a sub-shrine of Hanumān consecrated on the southwest facing east. Cuṇḍambalam has entrances from all the four sides. There is no vilakkumāṭam and agra-maṇṭapam. The principal balipīṭha is on the east. Further on east is the dhvajastambham built of cement and covered with copper
and the śila dipastambha. The outer pradakṣīṇa patha is on the bāhya hāra. Beyond the patha there are the sub-shrines dedicated to Lord Śāsta (at southwest), Brahmaraḵṇas, Nāgalakṣmi, Nāga (at northeast) and Bhagavati (at northwest). A compound wall with simple gateway on east and west enclose the whole area.

The annual festival is held in the month of Makaram. The festival goes on for eight days with the eighth day falling on Tiruvōṇam asterisk. The performing arts entertained here are Ōṭṭam tuḷḷal and Cākyā rūttu.

The remarkable feature of this temple is its architecture. In its plan the temple has Kēraḷa style layout. But in elevation aspect the temple has Dravidians pattern especially the sikhara portion. The miniature Drāvida śikhara above the namaskāra-maṇṭapam is also unusual in Kēraḷa temples. The reason and root for this Dravidian style influence is unknown. Considering the peculiarity of its structure, the Ramaswamy temple is very important among the central Kēraḷa temples.

4.4 TEMPLES WITH SQUARE SHRINES

- Mahādēva temple, Trikkariyur

The temple is situated in Trikkariyur village of Nellikkuzhi panchayat of Kothamangalam taluk. The temple is of great importance in the study from
architectural and historical perspectives. The temple is believed to have existed from the Cēra Kulaśēkhara period itself.

**Historical background:** The temple has much importance in the religious history of Kēraḷa. The traditions of Kulaśēkhara king Bhāskara Ravi Varman’s affiliation to Buddhism and the protest against it by the prominent Brāhmin communities in 10th century AD is popularly known. In this episode of Kēraḷa history certain incidents are related to the Trikkariyur temple. Trikkariyur was a prominent Brāhmin settlement in the early medieval Kēraḷa. This settlement was cantered on the temple. Thus the temple became the venue for the various discussions and actions to counter growing Buddhism. The belief is that the Brahmans defeated the Buddhist monks in intellectual dialogues and debate at this temple. As a result the Buddhists were asked to leave the kingdom of Kulaśēkhara.

Traditions are pointer to various events and processes leading to the decline of Śrāmaṇik religions and strong establishment of Brāhmanical religions in the land. There is a fragmentary inscription in the chamber of temple tank and the record is assigned to Bhāskara Ravi Varma.

**Structural details:** This is a mahākṣētram built with pañca-prākāras. The temple has an elaborate complex in traditional Kēraḷa style of architecture (pl.4.34). The principal deity is Lord Śiva. Worship is also offered to the same deity as
Śankaranārāyaṇa (the composite form of Śiva and Viṣṇu). The śrīkōvil is built on square plan. The inner garbhagṛha is circular on plan. There is an inner pradakṣiṇa patha around the garbhagṛha. The shrine faces west. Adhiśṭhāna of the śrīkōvil has the usual granite mouldings with vr̥tti kumuda. Mukha- maṇḍapa in the front is projected towards east. The direct sōpānam with four steps have side banisters with carvings. The laterite wall is a great piece of art. The whole wall area is covered with bhadrās, anurathas and kaṟṇas topped with kalaśa designs. On the hāra portion very remarkable mṛgamāla frieze is seen on four sides of the outer wall.

Kōṣṭas are also carved on the wall but without any mūrti inside. Śrīkōvil has one prāsāda dvāra and three ghanadvāras. There are two praṇāḷas, one connected to garbhagṛha and another connected to the mukha- maṇḍapa. These praṇāḷas have makara simha base plain śunḍu with rings and go-mukha end. The śrīkōvil is a dvitala structure with copper sheet covered roof and a finial on its top. There are no sub shrines consecrated within the śrīkōvil. But worship is offered to goddess Pārvati on the rear of Śiva shrine.

In the antar-maṇḍalam on the front is the namaskāra- maṇḍapa. This maṇḍapa has four simple stone pillars and is open on four sides. Stone idol of Nandi is placed in the maṇṭapam facing the main shrine. Regular worship is offered to Nandi also. The ceiling of the maṇḍapa has samatala vitāna wooden panel carved with Brahma in the centre and aşṭadikpālas around. This reflects a highly skilful art work. The roof of the maṇṭapam is covered with copper sheet as
well. The well for ritual purposes is on the northeast. Tiṭappalḷi and muḷayara function in the nālambalam. Very notable is the sub shrine of Saptamāṭkkal. This is located in the southern nālambalam. In Kēraḷa tradition, Saptamāṭkkal are generally represented in balipīṭha and only very rarely a separate sub shrine is made. In this temple the Saptamāṭkkal are represented in idols along with Lord Gaṇapati and Vīrabhadra. The sculptures are of high artistic value.

The curṟambalam has entrance on three sides except on south. Agra-
manḍapa is on east. It houses the principal balipīṭha. The maṇḍapa has typical Kēraḷa style upper structure of wood with tiled roof. The ceiling is exceptionally beautiful with wooden carvings. Outer wall of the curṟambalam is fixed with rows of metal lamps to form the viḷakkumāṭam. The dhvajam was reinstalled in 1976 AD. It is covered with copper. On the bāhya hāra is the outer pradakṣiṇa patha and sub shrines of Lord Śāsta and Yakṣī. The Śāsta shrine has an individual garbhagṛha and maṇḍapa. The kūttambalam is also in the bāhya hāra Gōpurams are built on three sides except on north, the eastern and western are the major ones (pl.4.35).

There are sub shrines and structures associated with the temple outside the compound also. The shrine of Lord Paraśurāma named as Koṭṭāram is on north in front of the eastern gōpuram. This is a single room without any idols, only lamp is light and worship is offered regularly.

The temple tank is adjacent to the koṭṭāram. There are no paintings on this temple, but some very remarkable carvings were seen on the hāra of Śrīkōvil,
aṣṭadikpāla carving on the ceiling of namaskāra- maṇḍapa and the depiction of Maharshis and other floral decorations on the wooden ceiling of agra-maṇṭapam are the notable carvings. The śila idols of Saptamāṭkkal are also beautiful sculptures. Various materials used in this temple structure are granite and laterite stones, wood, lime, bricks, etc.

As the temple had much intervention in various social activities, the cultural developments are also inter related. The performing art form named Sanghakkalī has its origin in this temple. This dance form, performed by a group of men, was originally performed in commemoration and celebrations of Brahmin victory over the Buddhist. Other art forms performed here include Tiyatt (a ritual art form), Kathakaḷi, kuttu, pāṭhakam, Ōṭṭam tuḷḷal, kurattiaṭṭām, Harikatha etc. Performing arts are viewed with great reverence here. These art forms are also remnants of bygone day’s culture, reflecting various aspects of contemporary social life.

The temple is significant for its architectural, historical and cultural aspects. Architecturally, the temple has in its plan the five prākāras and the structures are strictly according to traditional Kēraḷa style. Historically the temple is a standing witness to social change that occurred in the past millennium. This exposure and involvement in the social change has been reflected through various performing arts. The temple also has certain cultural links with another early medieval temple of Vāmanamūrti at Trikkakara discussed earlier. The Ōṇam celebration is equally important at both this temples. It is said there used to be a procession
from Trikkariyur to Trikkakara as part of the celebration in the earlier days. A comparative analysis of the traditions associated with these temples also deserves due attention. At Trikkakara the traditions hail the victory of Lord Vāmana over Mahābali, whereas at Trikkariyur the victory of Brāhmīns over the Buddhist is celebrated. The two temples thus act as legitimizing centres for the supremacy of Brahmanical order and cooordination and spread of the order are affected through the temple institutions.

- **Sri Mahādeva temple, Uliyannur**

**Māṭattilappan shrine**

This structure is built 200 meters south of the Mahādeva temple complex. This shrine is also dedicated to Lord Śiva. Presently the structure is in a ruined state (pl.4.36). This structure is believed to have been consecrated by Lord Paraśurāma and older than the Mahādeva temple. The temple is built in the Māṭatkovil concept of Tamil country (below p.). This nirandhāra square structure is raised on a twelve feet high laterite platform. Two flights of steps each having seven steps lead to a common landing further a single flight of six steps lead to the second landing and again another five steps lead to the top of the platform to reach the entrance of the śrīkōvil. The original roof was ruined, and a concrete roof was made recently. The total height of the structure is 35 feet and it has a circumference of 33.3 feet.
As mentioned above the building is in a ruined condition. The walls have lost plastering and exposes the laterite stone blocks very clearly. The adhiṣṭāna portion is plain, straight continuation of the wall until the ground level.

This is one of the rare Māttattilappan shrines in Kēraḷa, another important one is at Peruvanam in Trṣśūr district. The one at Paruvanam was reconstructed and is very well preserved. In plan and pattern both the structures has much similarities.

The Māttattilappan shrine is a peculiar aspect here. Substantial evidence is lacking to fix the original date of the temple.

- Śrī Kṛṣṇaswāmy temple, Potiyil

The temple is situated in Marampilli village of Kunnathunad taluk. This is a very popular temple and devotees throng to this place from far and wide. It is located on the south bank of river Periyar. The place name itself is derived from a tradition related to the temple. Accordingly, one of the ūrāḷars has found a poti (bundle /wrap) floating on the river Periyar while he was taking bath. He opened it and found a sālagrām. To install this sālagrām a new shrine was built in the Narasimhamūrti temple, in this shrine an idol of Lord Kṛṣṇa was consecrated over the Salagram. However originally the temple was dedicated to Lord Narasimha murthy and after finding the salgam the second śrīkōvil for Lord Kṛṣṇa was built.
Historical background: Although no evidence is available regarding the date of the construction of the temple, on the basis of architectural features and traditional account it may be assigned to a period between 13\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D.\textsuperscript{15} As stated above, originally only the Narasimhamūrti shrine alone existed. The Kṛṣṇa shrine was a later addition. Remarkably another legend states that the Narasimhamūrti shrine was destroyed in a fire of which the idol alone survived and it was during the construction of the Kṛṣṇa shrine that the Narasimhamūrti śrīkōvil was rebuilt. There are no inscriptions in the temple. The āḷars of the temple were Chennas, Asokatt, Atrasseri, Pallipuram, Potiyil, Patteri families and Itappalli swarupam. Presently the temple is administered by Īrānma Devaswom Board.

Structural details: There are one east facing and one west facing śrīkōvils within the cuegrāmbalam dedicated to Narasimhamūrti and Kṛṣṇaswāmy.

Narasimhamūrti shrine

This is a square ēkatala structure in sāndhāra style. It has granite adhiṣṭhāna with mouldings of padma pāduka, pāduka, jagati, vrīta kumudam, kumuda-paṭi, uttaram, gaḷam, gaḷa-paṭi, kampam, gaḷam with flower motifis, gaḷa-paṭi, vaḷaru and paṭi. The śrīkōvil has no mukha- maṇḍapa. The sōpāna with vyāḷi mukha carving banisters has five direct steps. The wall built with lateritic
stone has three ghanadvāras and one prāśaḍa dvāra. There are no decorations and embellishments done on the wall. The pranāla on the north has makara simha base with a simple, undecorated śunḍu and curved end. The pyramidal roof has been built with concrete and is thatched with copper sheets presently. On the southern side of śrīkōvil is attached to shrines of Lord Śiva and Lord Gaṇapati as upadēvatas, both facing west. The antar-maṇḍalam is marked with balikkals.

The namaskāra- maṇḍapa of Narashimhamūrti śrīkōvil is in front. The adhiṣṭhāna of the maṇḍapa has same height and pattern as that of śrīkōvil. This square maṇḍapa measures 9.48 sq meters. There are four stone pillars in the namaskāra- maṇḍapa.

**Sri Kṛṣṇa shrine**

This is a square dvitala structure of sāndhāra type facing west (fig.4.4). The adhiṣṭhāna has mouldings of pādukam, pādukam, jagati, vṛtta kumudam, kumuda-paṭi, uttaram, gaḷam, gaḷa-paṭi, kampam, gaḷam with flower motifs, gaḷa-paṭi, vaḷaru and paṭi. Most beautiful is the vyala mala on the valabhi (fig.4.5). The wall is built of granite stone with three ghanadvāras and one prāśaḍa dvāra. The pranāla has makara simha base, carved śunḍu and gō-mukha end. The square namaskāra- maṇḍapa on west measures 9.48 sq meters. It has four square stone pillars. There is no vāhana installed in the maṇḍapa. The well is on the northeast. Tiṭapaḷḷi is at northwest in the currambalam.
There are sub shrines within the akatte balivaṭṭam. It is located in the nālambalam on the southeast facing north and dedicated to Lord Śiva and Lord Gaṇapati. The curṟambalam has total seven entrances, two meant for temple staff only on the valiyambalam and two each at west and east and one at north.

There is no detached viḷakkumāṭam, but the rows of lamps are fixed on to the outer wall of the curṟambalam. There are two agra-maṇṭapam facing two shrines. Both the maṇṭapams contain principal balipīṭha of respective deity. The śila dīpastambham dedicated to Lord Narasimhamūrti belongs to a very early date where as the one dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa is a recent one installed in 1981 A.D. In the bāhya hāra are the outer circumambulatory path beyond which on the southwest are the sub-shrines of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Yakṣi. The temple administrative office is within the maryāda. There is no curṟambalam. The maryāda is simple ones with entrances on east and west and simple mahādwāras. The temple holds no remarkable carvings on stone or wood.

The annual festival of the temple is held in the month of Kumbham for five days. The fifth day being revati asterisk the ārāṭṭ ritual takes place. The performing arts staged here are Cākyārkūṭtu and Kathakaḷi. The famous Venmaṇi poets of 19th century hail from the Venmaṇi family, one of the ūrāḷars of the temple. The famous Cakyar kuttu artists from Potiyil family were also ūrāḷars of this temple.

- **Sri Rājarājēswari temple, Chottanikkara**
The temple is situated in the Kurikkat village of Chottanikkara panchayat in Kanyannur taluk. The temple description is important due to its great antiquity as well as its contribution towards the growth of Śakti cult. The temple complex include within its compound two separate temples which are closely linked, viz. Mēlēkkāvū and Kiḷēkkāvū. The temple is believed to be one of the consecrations of Lord Paraśurāma. Another belief is that the rites followed in this temple were laid out by Ādi Śankarāchārya (8th century AD). Yet another legendary person associated with this temple is Vilvamangalam Swami of 16th century AD. The only inscription available is on the mukha-māṇṭapam which states that the māṇṭapam was built into the existing temple. This record is dated in 792 of Kollam Era corresponding to 1617 AD. Considering the history of the earlier owners (The Ėlara grāmakkārs), the village heads from Panniyūr, also it is possible to ascribe a date not later than 14th century AD to this temple.

**Structural details:**

(a) Mēlēkkāvū:

This is the main temple dedicated to Goddess Rājarājēśwari. The śrīkōvil is square ēkatala structure facing east. It has granite adhiśṭāna with common mouldings without an upapaithha. There is no inner pradakṣiṇa patha. The projected mukha-māṇṭapam is directly connected to sōpānam with four steps. The banister has vyāli mukha carvings on top. The wall is built of laterite stone and provided with one prāśāda dwāra and three ghanadwāras. There are no
carvings and paintings on the wall. The praṇāḷam is of the common type but with a bhūtagaṇa below to its support. The super structure is ēkatala. The pyramidal roof is presently covered with copper sheet and it has a topping finial.

The sub shrine of Lord Śāṣṭa is at the north east facing east. The curṟambalam has entrances on all the four sides. The agra-maṇṭapam is on the east. It houses principal balipīṭha. The metal lamps are fixed on the wall of the curṟambalam and there is a platform around it to facilitate lighting of the lamps. The dhvajastambham is of teak wood. It is given a copper covering plated with gold. Beyond the dhwajam is installed the bronze dīpastambham. The naṭapantala is a modern addition. In the bāhya hāra is the outer pradakṣiṇa patha.

The mūlasthānam of the temple is on the south beyond the pradakṣiṇa patha. This has been called as pavila malli taṇa (pl.4.37). The sub shrine of Jēṣṭha Bhagavati is on the south west corner. On the northern side sub shrine of Nāgarāja, Lord Gaṇapati and Lord Śiva are also consecrated. A passage on the east leads to the next section of the temple namely Kiḻēkkāvu.

(b) Kiḻēkkāvu:

This is a small ēkatala square śrīkōvil facing west. The adhiṣṭāna has laterite mouldings plastered with cement. All common features of sōpānam, praṇāḷam and sikhara can be seen here. Very remarkable is the pāla tree (Alstonia Scholaris) on the northern side. The tree has much importance related to certain
beliefs and rituals. The tank on the north east side is also related to certain beliefs.

Cultural details:

As mentioned above the temple is important both as a cultural and religious centre. The presiding deity is Rājarājēśwari or Ādiparāśakti. But this same deity is worshipped in three different sankalpas in a day-in morning as Saraswati, in noon as Bhadrakāli and in the evening as Durga. Another notable fact is the pratiṣṭha of Lord Viṣṇu along with the goddess in the same garbhagṛha. Due to this reason all prayers are offered to Devi along with Viṣṇu. But most prominent practice and belief here is related to the exorcism. During the pāntīrṭi pūja, persons possessed with evil spirit offer prayers. Gathering of possessed people screaming, shrieking and dancing is usual scene in this temple. The belief is that at this temple the prayer to relieve from the evil is answered. It is believed that the goddess herself comes to the rescue of the person and defeats the evil spirit and save the person. The devotee with minor ailments is believed to be helped by Lord Śāsta who occupies a sub shrine in the temple and in the case of major ailments the goddess herself helps. During this process of exorcism the person undergoes many difficult and unexplainable struggles. Ultimately when she / he is freed from the spirit the person fixes an iron nail into a pillar in
front of the mukha-maṇṭapam. This is to prevent the exorcised spirit entering into
the body of any other person. In major cases where the help of the goddess was
availed, the exorcising takes place at Kiliḷkkāvu. In such instances the nail is
fixed on the pāla tree with head or fist. Sometimes a guruti (symbolic blood
sacrifice) is also performed. Tuesdays and Fridays are considered auspicious and
important for warding off evil spirits.

The temple is visited by hundreds of people every day. To regulate this
rushing crowd the authorities have made special arrangements for entrances
blocking the actual entrance and allowing entry only through newly made paths
for that. From architectural point of view or from historical perspective, the
temple has hardly anything special to boast of. It acts as a centre of Sakti
worship. It is the belief system that makes the temple important. Presently the
temple has a very well maintained administration under Cochin Devaswom
Board and has a temple building where copper is used in plenty (roof of Śrīkōvil
and Valiyambalam and agra-maṇṭapam) and gold plating (of sōpānam and facade
of śrīkōvil) in its structure.

- **Subrahmanyamswāmi temple Elamkunnapuzha**

  This temple is located in Elamkunnapuzha village in Kochi taluk. The village
  is in the Vypin Island which has formed from the Arabian Ocean as a result of
geological changes in 1341 AD. The Puduvaipu Era (Vypin Era) was
commenced in commemoration of this new land formation. This Subrahmaṇyāswāmy temple is the earliest in the island. Traditions associate the idol of Lord Subrahmaṇya, the principal deity, with Tiruchendur Subrahmaṇya temple at Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. It is believed that the idol of the deity originally belonged to Tiruchendur and it reached Elankunnapuzha through ocean waves. But considering the location of the temple in the Vypin Island it is certain that the temple dates only after 1341 AD, because the Island itself was formed in that year resulting from geological changes.

A proto- Malayāḷam inscription is found on the adhiṣṭāna of namaskārāṇaṭapam. Palaeographical facts reveal that this epigraph could be placed in 16th - 17th century A.D. The paintings can be dated to 17th century.

**Structural details:** The Śrīkōvil is a beautiful piece of art. It is square on plan measuring approximately 20 square meters. This east facing structure has granite adhiṣṭāna and laterite wall and the roof is dwitala covered with copper sheets. The roof has gables on four sides. This is a sāndhāra structure having a mukhayāmam and mukha-maṇṭapam. The sōpānām of four direct steps has beautifully carved side banisters depicting divine figurines. Praṇāḷam has usual makara simha base, multi sided śunḍu with an unusual tapering end. The śunḍu is supported by the image of bhūtagaṇa. Most remarkable and beautiful part of this temple is the wall of Śrīkōvil. This laterite wall is covered with carvings and
paintings alternatively. The bhadra projections, anurathas and karnas display high skilled carving, whereas the wall recessions are used for mural paintings.

Exquisite carvings of pilastered bhadras and karnas with intervening anurathas have tōraṇas on top. Decorations of kīcakamāla, puṣpamāla, hamsamāla and prastara crowned with śālas embellish the wall. The plain portions of the wall have been covered with traditional style mural paintings. Themes depicted in painting are Śakti pañcākṣari, Kirāta, various forms of Śakti, Kṛṣṇa Līla, Gaṇapati, Śiva Tāṇḍavam, Lord Śāsta’s hunting scene, Kunti, Durga etc.

Carvings are also notable here. Various wooden figures of Śiva and Viṣṇu are fixed on the grīva. Other wooden carvings are on the ceiling of the namaskāra-maṇṭapam, depicting aṣṭadikpālas and Brahma. The supporting beams have divinities carved onto bracket figures. On agra-maṇṭapam ceiling has the depiction of aṣṭadikpālas and Kirātārjunīyam story. On the Śrīmukhanm is the carving of Anantaśāyi. The balipīṭha with tōraṇa and ghanadwāra motif is raised on an upapīṭha and adhiṣṭāna.

The curāmbalam accommodate two tiṭappāḷis and sub shrines of Lord Gaṇapati, Śiva, Goddess Pārvati, Śakti and Lord Viṣṇu. There are entrances on four sides to enter the antahāra. On east side the agra-maṇṭapam is built. It houses the principal balipīṭha. The viḷakkumāṭam is a separate structure making a true madhya hāra. A total of 9000 brass lamps are fixed on the wooden frame in madhya hāra.
On the bāhya hāra are the dhvajastambham, dīpastambham, gaja-
maṇṭapam, outer pradakṣiṇa-patha and sub shrine of Lord Śāsta. The temple has
two mahādwāras, one at east and another at west. Both are dvitala built in typical
Kēraḷa style.

Among the 58 temples built in the Vypin Island, this Subrahmanya temple at
Elamkunnappuzha is the earliest one. This conclusion has been reached based on
comparing the various historical associations of the temples. This is the only
temple with carvings and paintings preserved in good condition found from
Vypin Island.

- Jayanta Tṛkkōv Narasimha temple, Chendamangalam

Jayanta Tṛkkōv also called Chenna Tṛkkōv temple is located at
Chendamangalam village in Paravur taluk.

**Historical background:** The temple has been connected to the Cochin royal
rulers and the Paliyam family. According to legends the temple was consecrated
by one Jayanta Maharsi. Hardly any information is available about the person.
This temple finds mention in the literary works of eighteenth century. A
fragmentary inscription was found from here. The temple had much prominence
during rule of Cochin rajas. It is notable that Chendamangalam is in the vicinity
of the Paliyam family who were the hereditary prime ministers of the Kochi
rulers. Presently the temple is owned and administered by the Paliyam
Devaswam trust. In the sixteenth century the temple witnessed many political
events. The treaty between the Kochi raja and samutiri was signed at this temple.

**Structural details:** The temple dedicated to Lord Narasimhamūrti has an
elaborate structure. The śrīkōvil has square plan. This is sāndhāra and faces east.
The adhiṣṭāna has granite mouldings. The śikhara is dvītala with tiled roof. The
attached mukha-maṇṭapam is projected from the śrīkōvil. Praṇālam is of
common Kērāḷa style. Sōpānam has four direct steps. Wall is built of laterite
stone and has one prāśāda dvāra and three ghanadvāras. Namaskāra- maṇḍapa in
the front is open on sides and is supported by four pillars. There are two sub
shrines, one at northeast and another at southwest of curṇambalam both dedicated
to Lord Gaṇapati. Other chambers of tiṭappalţi, mulayaṟa etc. also function in the
curṇambalam. Entrances are provided on all the four sides. Agra-maṇṭapam on
east is open on sides and is supported by six wooden pillars. It houses the huge
principal balipīṭha carved in granite. Beyond the agra- maṇḍapa is
dhvajastambха installed on a raised platform and shaft covered with copper.
Further on south is brass dīpastambham. There is a naṭapantal supported by eight
huge circular pillars. The bāhya hāra contains pradakṣiṇa pathа, sub shrine of
Lord Śāsta (on south) agra śāla and ūṭṭupura. Mahādvāras are on east, south and
west among this the eastern one is dwitala and the others are simple.

Some very beautiful wooden and granite carvings are seen in this temple
as part of embellishment. The granite pillars of namaskāra- maṇḍapa have
sālabhaṇjika figures carved on it. These are beautiful carvings displaying skill of stone carvings with perfect anatomy and natural expression. Wooden carvings are on the ceiling and the entablature of the namaskāra-maṇṭapam. On the grīva of the śrīkōvil are the figures of Dhanwantari mūrti, Narasimhamūrti, Lord Śiva, Lord Kirāta mūrti and Kirāta with Arjuna, all carved on wood. Wooden vyāḷi bracket figures are fixed on four corners of the śrīkōvil. Another beautiful wooden carving is that of goddess Mahālakṣmi on the śrīmukham. Granite stone has been extensively used in the construction of the temple. Laterite is used for outer compound wall. Wood and lime plaster are other important materials used in the construction.

- **Mūkāmbika Temple, Paravur**

  This famous Dēvi temple is situated in the Paravur municipal town of Paravur taluk. The temple assumed great importance due to the śrīkōvil of the principal deity as Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and learning. There are many rituals related to learning performed in this temple. The temple’s first construction was done under the order of Parvur raja, the local ruler of 16th century A.D. Subsequently the temple was taken over by the Travancore government in 19th century and in 1950 AD the temple was vested with Travancore Devaswom Board. There are no inscriptions in this temple.

  **Structural details:** In layout the pattern followed is common Kērala style. But the peculiar feature is that the śrīkōvil is built in the middle of a rectangular pond enclosed by the cuṟṟambalam. Thus the akatte balivaṭṭam has a pond, not
courtyard, in the centre of which the śrīkōvil stands. The base and adhiṣṭhāna of the śrīkōvil and its antar-maṇḍalam is built in the centre of the pond. This is connected to the cuṟṟambalam by a 3 meter long bridge on the east, north and south. The śrīkōvil is rectangular on plan without inner pradakṣiṇa-patha and mukha-maṇḍapa. This is an ēkatala structure having tiled roof. The granite sōpāna has three direct steps. Praṇāḷa is simple without carvings. The wall has a prasāda dvāra and no ghanadvāra. The pilaster carvings on the wall are beautiful. A pradakṣiṇa patha is attached to the inner side of the cuṟṟambalam, it is provided with entrances on all four sides. The sub shrine of Lord Gaṇapati is in the southwest corner of cuṟṟambalam facing east. Further the architectural components of the temple are common tiṭappaḷḷi, valiyambalam, agra-maṇḍapa with principal balipīṭha, viḷakkumāṭam fixed on the outer wall of cuṟṟambalam, outer pradakṣiṇa-patha, nāṭapantal and compound wall and the temple tank. The remarkable part is the śrīkōvil built in the midst of the pond.

As mentioned earlier many rituals and celebration here are specific to Saraswati Dēvi. The annual festival is a celebration of 10 days, ending on Uttram asterisk of Makaram month. But most famous festival here is the Navarātri. This is greatly celebrated by students. During this time, books are made objects of worship for three days. On the day of Vijaya dasami, these worshipped books are opened. It is believed that by such worship the person will progress in learning. On The Vijaya daśami day another important ceremony is conducted, the Vidyāraṃbham, in which young children are ritually initiated into the world of
letters and learning by a guru in the Sannidhi of Saraswati Dēvi. The guru first writes the letter ‘Om’ in the tongue of the child with a gold ring. Further, hold the child’s finger and make her/him write ‘Hari Śri Ganapateye Namah’ on rice spread on a plate. Thus the child is officially and ritually introduced into learning. The temple being the worship centre of goddess Saraswati, the ritual of Vidyārambham has gained in popularity. Every year thousands of people from far and wide come here with young children for Vidyārambham.

There are some special offerings also done in this temple for progress in learning and intellectual development. One of the popular offering is Vidya-mantra puṣpanjali. Some kaṣayas (herbal ayurvedic tonic) specially prepared and worshipped are also given in this temple.

The temple’s architecture is the most remarkable one. The king who constructed the temple was an ardent devotee of Mūkāmbika Dēvi of Kollūr temple. The temple at Paravur was constructed to avoid the journey to Kollūr for Dēvi’s darśana.

Conspicuous is the location of the temple. According to Keralōtpatti Paravur was one of the 32 Brāhmin settlements established by Lord Paraśurāma. This Mukāmbika temple is located in the heart of Paravur, yet the temple has not made its presence in any historical events of the place ever since its consecration in 17th century. Only a few Brāhmin families are seen settled around the temple.
Goddess of learning is worshipped here and there was an active movement of Vedic learning in this temple. In the present day also Vedic teaching and learning is imparted here, but on a smaller scale.

The temple is also an immense patron of arts, specially music and other performing arts. Artists consider it a privilege to perform in this temple during the Navarātri festival days. This 16th century temple has been a centre of learning and arts.

- **Dhanvantari Mūrti temple, Tottuva**

The temple is situated in Kuvappati panchayat in Kunnathunad taluk. The temple is located at a distance of nine kilometers northeast from Perumbavur at Tottuva junction on Kodanadu road. Traditions accord an antiquity of more than one thousand years to the temple. The belief is that the temple was consecrated by sage Paraśurāma, the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. The temple is not found connected with any historical events. Inscriptional evidence is also lacking to reach an approximate date of the temple. The temple structure was almost completely renovated in 1995 AD. This renovation included the śrīkōvil also.

**Structural details** The temple is built in pañca-prākāra lay out. The śrīkōvil is square in shape and faces east. The adhiṣṭhāna and upapīṭha has granite mouldings. The adhiṣṭhāna has pādukam, jagati, vṛṣṭa kumuda, kumuda-paṭi, gaḷam with flower motifs and projections, gaḷa-paṭi, uttaram, kampam, gaḷam, vaḷaru and paṭi mouldings. This is a sāndhāra structure, with dvitala super
structure. There is no mukha- maṇḍapa built on the front. The sōpāna has lateral steps, four on each side. The vyāḷa mukha banister has anthropomorphic carvings on the front. The walls are built of laterite with three ghanadvāra and one dvāra. There is no kōṣṭas and carvings or paintings on this śrīkōvil wall.

Praṇāla is on north with makara simha base, fluted tube and gō-mukha end. The upper structure is dvitala. The āditala has tiled roof where as the upper roof has copper sheet covering. There are ghanadwāra on the second tala also. The antar- maṇḍalam is marked with balikkals. There is no sub-shrine within the antar- maṇḍalam. Namaskāra- maṇḍapa is at front on east. It has the same adhiṣṭhāna pattern as the śrīkōvil. The four pillars in this maṇṭapam are made of stone. The wooden ceiling has simple lotus carvings. Within the akatte-balivaṭṭam, the well is on the northeast. Tiṭappalḷi is on northeast in the nālambalam. There is a sub shrine within the cuṟṟambalam - Lord Gaṇapati on the south west corner of cuṟṟambalam and two Brahmarakṣas on northeast.

The cuṟṟambalam has six entrances, one each at north, south and west and three at east. Viḷakkumāṭam is not built in this temple. The agra- maṇḍapa houses the principal balipīṭha. But the upper structure of the maṇṭapam has been ruined and only its base exists now. However, during the 1995AD renovation this portion was left undone due to certain faith related reasons.

On the bāhya-hāra is the outer pradakṣiṇa patha, the naṭa pantal with eight pillars and sub shrines of Lord Śāsta and Brahmarakṣas (on southwest) and that
of Annapurṇēśvari (on northwest). The mahadvāra is a simple structure on the East.

The walls of the temple are simple without carvings. The notable sculptures are that of the dwārapālas carved on stone. The principal deity, Dhanvantari, is installed as a Kṛṣṇa śila idol of Lord Viṣṇu in standing pose with four arms holding śangha (conch), Chakra (disc) and Amṛta kumbham. It has a height of 175 cm. The idols of Lord Gaṇapati and Śāsta are also of stone. Goddess Bhagavati is worshipped in a mirror form.

Though the traditions assign great antiquating, the temple has made least presence in any historical events. It seems that the temple confined itself as a religious institute and made very little interference in the social life beyond this scope. This could have been probably because the temple was a family’s property initially and had least interest in society.

The temple is remarkable for its presiding deity. Dhanvantari has been worshipped in very few temples; another notable Dhanvantari temple is at Nelluvay near Trśśūr. The deity being the cosmic healer is specially worshipped for cure from diseases. Ayurvedic medical practitioners too consider the worship of Dhanvantari auspicious. Hence, this temple is more popular for the healing power of the deity. It is believed that deceases could be healed if a person attend and worship in this temple regularly. Many give testimony to this quoting their own experiences.
4.5 Notes and Reference

3. Ibid. p. 17
6. Ibid. p.184
7. Ibid. p. 179
Fig. 4.1: Ekadasi Perumtrikkovil, Udayamperur - Plan of Circular Śrīkōvil and Namaskāra-Maṇṭapam

Fig. 4.2: Ekadasi Perumtrikkovil, Udayamperur - Adhiṣṭhāna
Fig. 4.3: Perumtrikkovil, Pazhur- Plan of the temple
Fig. 4.4: Kṛṣṇa temple, Potiyil – plan of square Śrīkōvil and Namaskāra-
Maṇṭapam

Fig. 4.5: Kṛṣṇa temple, Potiyil - Adhiṣṭhāna–
Thrissur District

Map. 5.1: Trissur District - Political Map