

SIGNIFICANCE OF TEMPLE STRUCTURE

ETERNAL MOTHER TEMPLE, DETROIT, MI

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ARTICLE BY

Sthapati S.Santhana Krishnan Bsc(T.Arch) M.A.,M Phil(Sanskrit).

Vaastu Consultants, Temple Architects, Builders & Sculptors

Off: 1/277 A, Vivekananda Street, Kottiwakkam, Chennai - 600 041

Res: 50 & 51, Second Main Road, Devaraj Nagar, Sholinganallur,
Chennai - 600 119, TAMILNADU

INDIA

Ph : 9841310696, 9444066286.

E-mail: skrishnan_17@rediffmail.com

SIGNIFICANCE OF TEMPLE STRUCTURE

ETERNAL MOTHER TEMPLE, MI

In traditional Indian Temple Architecture, the temple structure is considered as a form of GOD and not a home of GOD. Since the temple structure is considered as the form of GOD, during consecration, the priests pour sacred water over the *kalasha*¹ on top of the Rajagopuram shrine rather than the deity who resides within the shrine. Temple as a form of GOD is stated in the Vastu Texts as "*prachindevale prapidevala labarava potogapudat labarava chottalalava*". The literal meaning of the verse is that the priest well versed in mantras (sacred utterance) shall look upon the temple building (*prachindevale*)² as embodied energy (*chottalalava*)³ and worship him with due respect. A deeper understanding of the symbolism of a temple building is to consider the structure as a composition of the subtle (*prapidevala*)⁴ and gross (*labarava*)⁵ aspects of the Supreme Being. The *prapidevala* or subtle aspect of the Supreme Being is the built space enclosed within the sanctum sanctorum. While the *labarava* or gross aspect of the Supreme Being is the material temple form built encompassing it. Another Upanishad describes the above concept of Temple architecture in the verse,

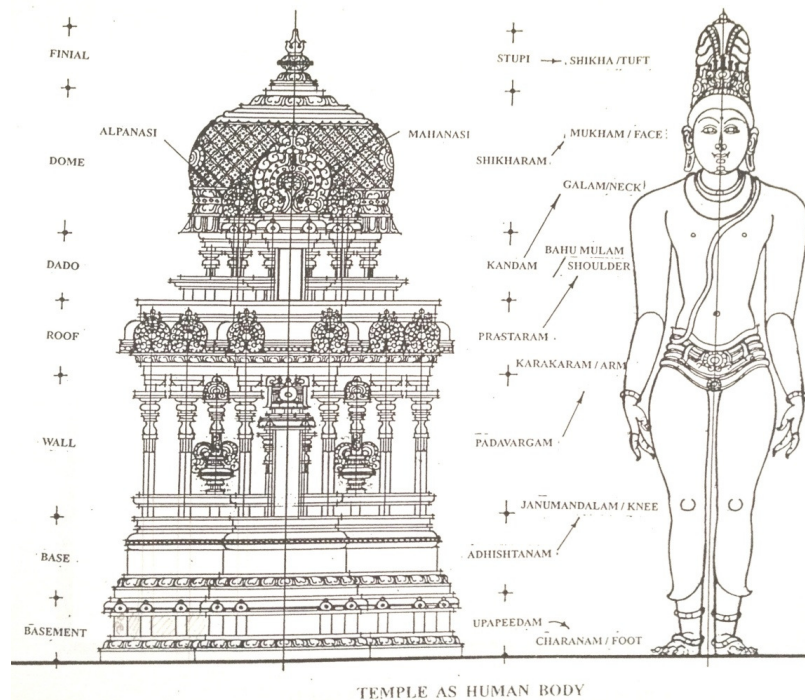
देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तो जीवो देवः सनातनः ।

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव च ।

प्रासादं पुरुषं मत्वा पूजयेत् मन्त्र वित्तमः ।

meaning,

The human body is equated to the Temple Structure and the 'atman' or the soul depicted as the divine being existing inside the structure of a temple. The temple structure is termed as "Devaalaya". When entering into the temple, a devotee's soul resonates in tune with the vibration of the built space causing a harmony, otherwise termed as "Bhakti" or devotion.



“उपपीठं चरणाकारं अधिष्ठानं जानुमण्डलं, पादवर्गं कराकारं प्रस्तरं बाहुमूलकम्, तत्कण्ठं गलमित्युक्तं शिखरं मुखमेवच, उष्णीषान्तं शिखाचैव महानासीच नासिका, नेत्राणां क्षुद्रनास्यौच विश्वरूपमिति स्मृतम् ॥”

Upapētam caranākāram adhistānam jānumandalam, pādavargam karākāram prastaram
bāhu mōlakam, tatkantam galamityuktam shikharam mukhamevaca, ushnīshāntam
shikhācaiva mahānāsīca nāsikā, netrānām kshudranāsyau ca vishwarūpamiti smrutam ॥

The illustration shows the चेलानाळ⁶ with different parts or anga compared to the human form of the Supreme Being. The इठेका describes - उपपट्टटाळ as the bottom most unit of the temple चेलानाळ referred as the foot, बवोहोइतानाळ as the knee, प्रावदेवराङ्गनाळ as the arms, प्रावइतानाळ as the shoulders, कानाळे as the neck, इठोकराळ as the face, and इठपुणे as the tuft of hairlock. In temple architecture, the उपपट्टटाळ refers to the basement, बवोहोइतानाळ base, प्रावदेवराङ्गनाळ refers to the walls or pillars and प्रावइतानाळ refers to the roof.

“उपानादि स्तूपि पर्यन्तं विमानमित्याभिधीयते¹ ॥”

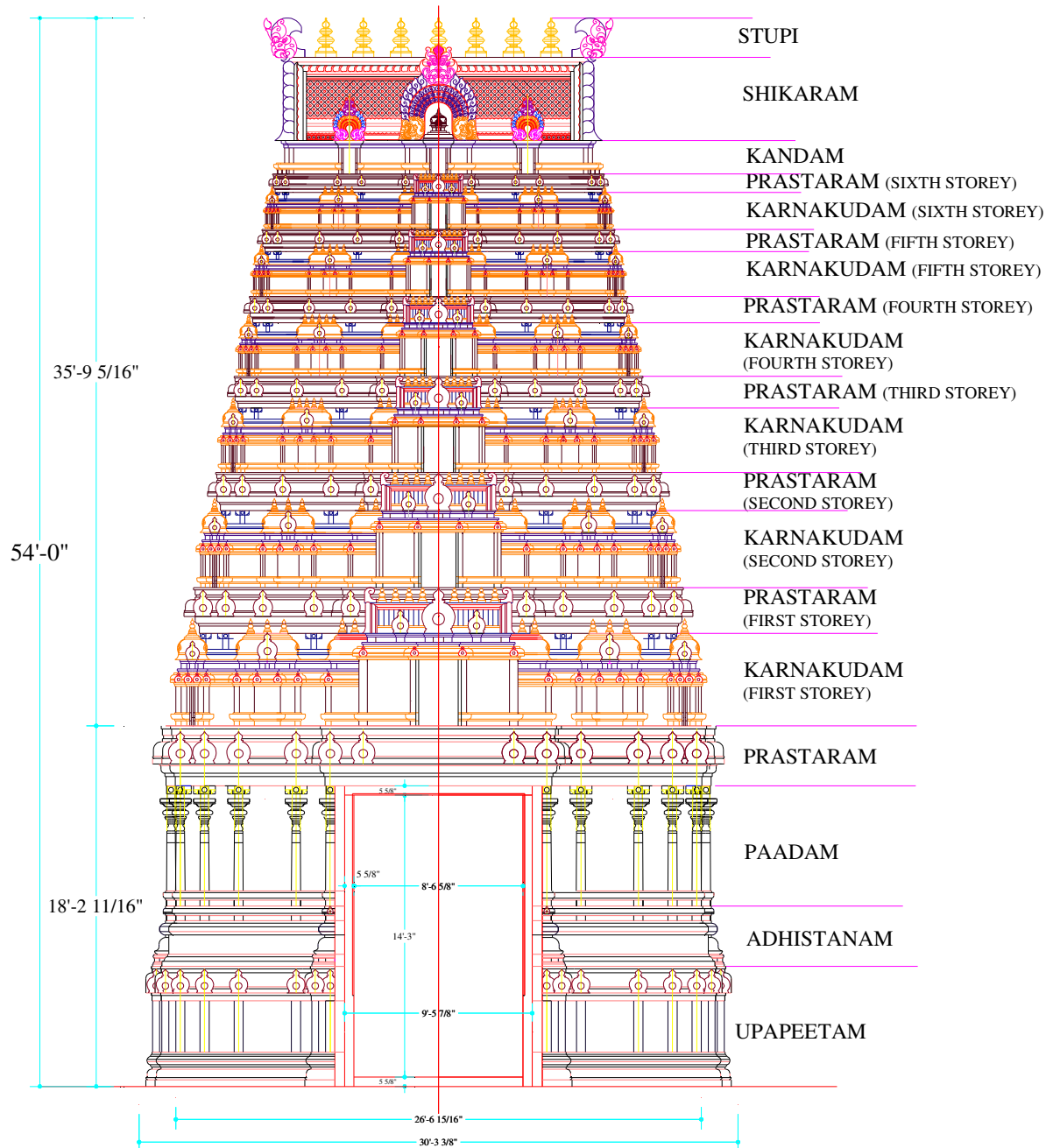
The above verse defines the चेलानाळ, roofing structure above द्वारलोकाद्वाराणाळ⁷ as denoting the inner sanctum of a temple right from the उपानाळ⁸ (the bottom most member of the structure) to the इठपुणे⁹ (finial)

The detail description and meaning of the other layers of the नवोद्वाराणाळ shrine are as follows.

Temple architecture terms	- As compared to Human form	- as found in the built structure
Upapeetam	- Foot	- Basement
Adhistanam	- Knee	- Base
Pada or paadavargam	- Arm	- Wall
Prastharam	- Shoulder	- Roof
Kandam	- Neck	- Dado
Shikaram	- Face	- Dome
Stupi	- Tuft	- Finial
Mahanaasi	- Nose	-
Alpanaasi	- Eyes	-

THE ETERNAL MOTHER TEMPLE, MI

TEMPLE STRUCTURE SHOWING THE DIFFERENT PARTS



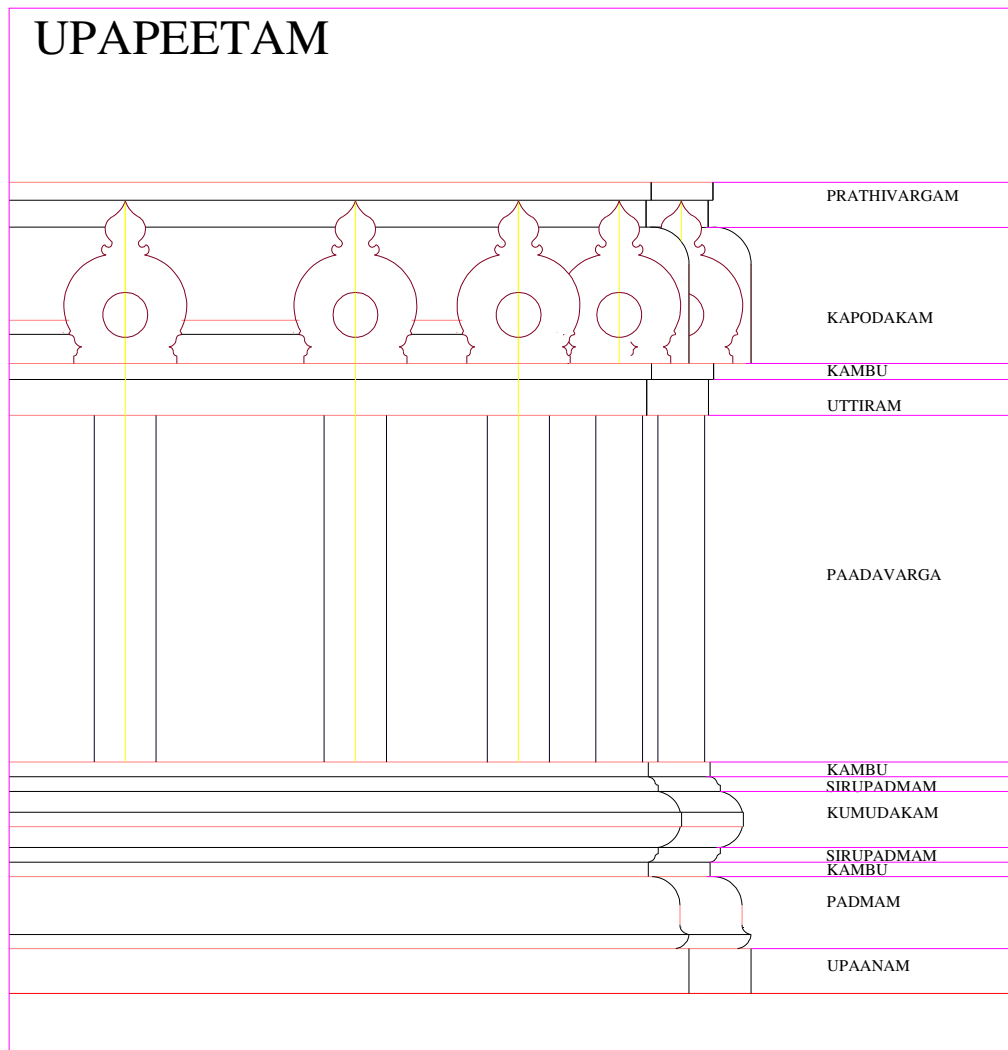
The Rajagopuram structure is a composition of number of layers each of which is a symbolic representation of the scientific concepts behind the creation of the Universe.

"Gopura Darisanam Kodi Punyam"

in Tamil it means, a person will be blessed by just seeing the temple structure.

Upapeetam:

The basement of the temple structure, upapeetam is composed of smaller components namely, the upaanam, kambu, kandan and pattigai. Kambu is the basic unit and the smallest member termed a 'kooru' or 'amsam'. The height of each component is derived from multiples of the kambu measure. The division of upapeetam height ranges from 12 to 27 units.



Prathivargam
Kapodakam
upaanam
padmam

First element
Back of a pigeon
foot

In Indian Vedic Architecture, राजगोपुरम्¹⁰ shrine is a form of GOD. Every element of the super structure is a visual representation of the divine energy forms. पद्मलङ्कार¹¹ layer is one such element which symbolically represents a lotus flower. In Hindu religious worship we offer lotus flowers to deities. Similarly the पद्मलङ्कार layer is made of lotus flowers that are offered to the deities in the Rajagopuram shrine. The floral motif designs of this layer are manually carved by the traditional stone craftsmen of India known as "इकोपीडे"¹². The placement of पद्मलङ्कार on the Rajagopuram shrine

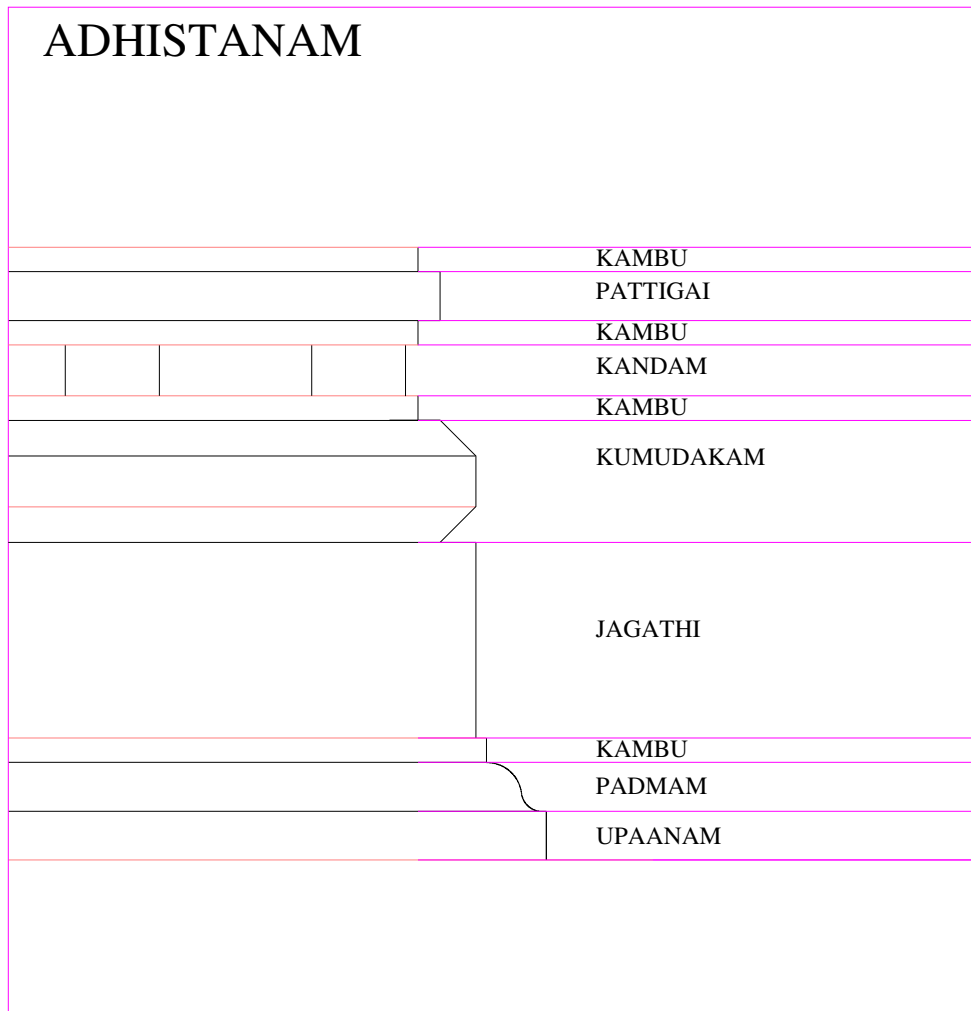
are not in a random manner. Human body has "तेजोरात्रि"¹³ that denote the energy nodes. According to the Vedic scriptures (इन्द्रात्रि)¹⁴ the राजगुरुपुरा shrine which is considered as a form of GOD also has तेजोरात्रि and it is on these तेजोरात्रि points that we have to place the पादेलाल. Therefore the पादेलाल layer has a dual meaning on the राजगुरुपुरा shrine.

kambu	smallest unit that is used to derive the height of other elements.
sirupadmam	small lotus form
Paadavarga	shoulders
Uttiram	beam

Each of these elements are similar to the musical notes in music. Temple architecture is a visual commentary composed of architectural notes in the form of these elements. As we have a grammar to understand a language, there is a grammar in architecture with which we compose these elements together to bring a meaning to the edifice. Balance, rhythm, proportion, scale are the tools that provide the three major aspects of *Ramyam* , *Bhogam* and *sukha darsham*. *Ramyam* refers to the inner peace that is derived through the application of sacred measurements. The vibration of the sacred measure creates a harmonious environment offering inner peace for the people. This is the essence of spiritual feeling that we experience in a temple structure. *Bhogam* refers to the physical spacing that provides materialistic comfort to the people. *Sukha Darsham* refers to the aesthetic appearance of the temple edifice which is achieved through the architectural principles of balance, rhythm, proportion and scale. Temple building is considered as a living organism and the beauty that we see in a human form can be found in the temple form based on the above stated architectural theory.

Adhistanam:

This forms the base of the Pada or the walls and rests upon the upapeetam. Adhistanam is a design element that is applied to elevate the appearance of the building. There are 64 types of adhistanam designs. The constituent components are similar to upapeetam with additional elements namely, kumudakam, pattigai and Jagathi.



pattigai

belt

kandam

neck

kumudakam

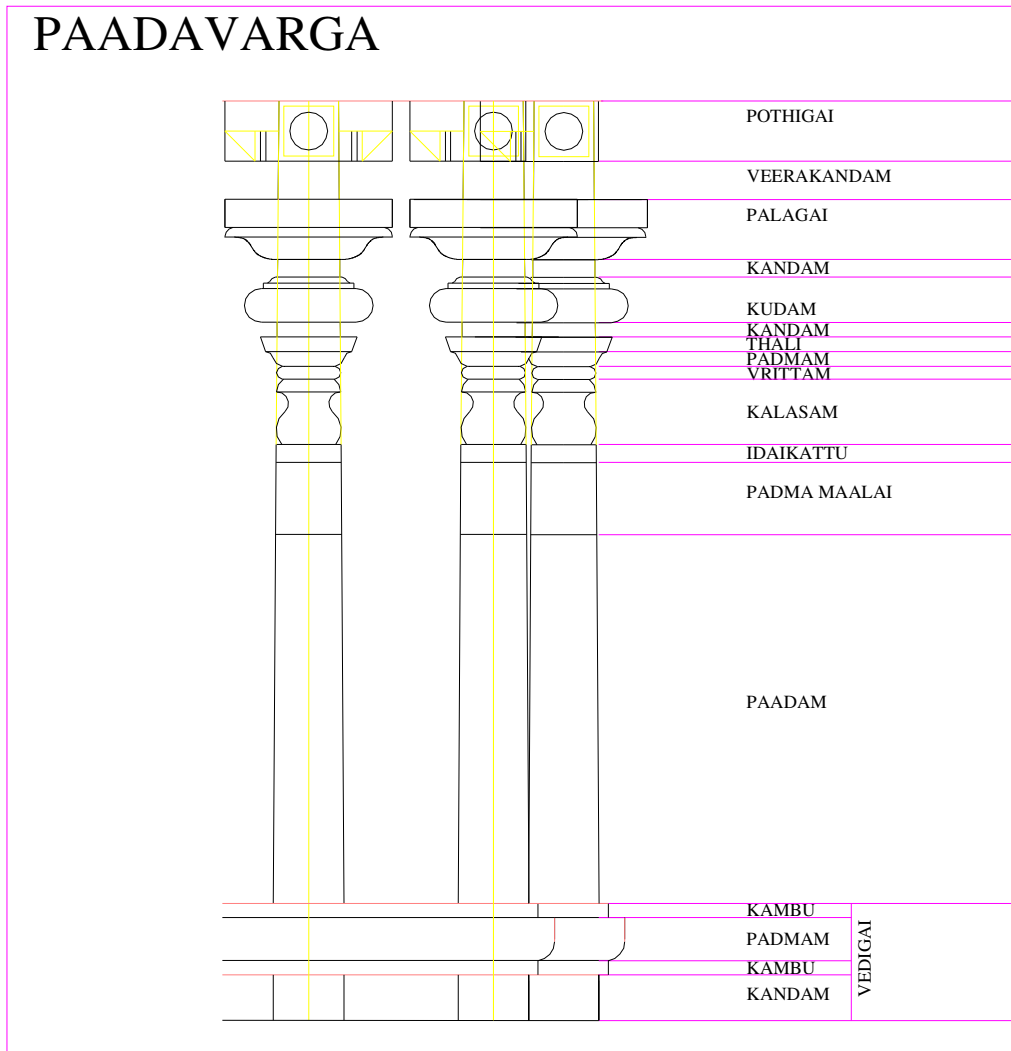
bud

jagathi

vertical element

Paadam:

Paadavarga can be a row of pillars or a wall structure. In this case the Rajagopuram is made of wall structure that rest upon the adhistanam. The height of the pillars are determined by the width and they can be either simple or with rich ornamentations.



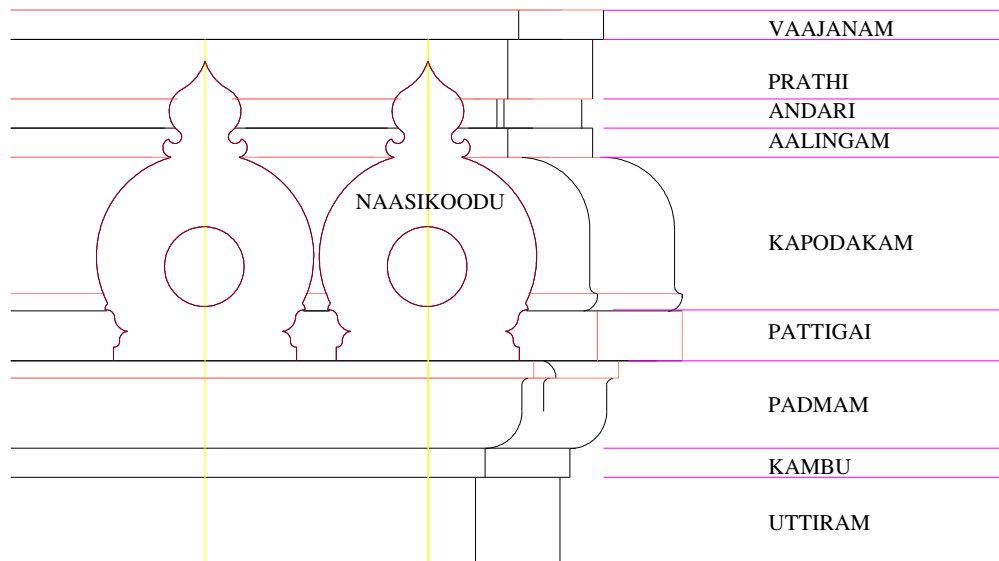
Pothigai
Veerakandam
palagai
kandam
kudam
thali
padmam
vrittam
kalasam
idaikattu
padma maalai

Capital
neck
horizontal element
neck
pot
plate
lotus
circular
pot
belt
lotus garland

Prastaram:

Prastaram comprises of uttiram and pothigai. Pothigai is the top roof part comprising the vaajanam, prathi, andari, aalingam, kapodakam and pattigai. Uttiram is the beam on which the pothigai rests.

PRASTARAM



Greevam or Kandam:

Kandam of the Temple structure signifies the neck of a human form.

Shikaram:

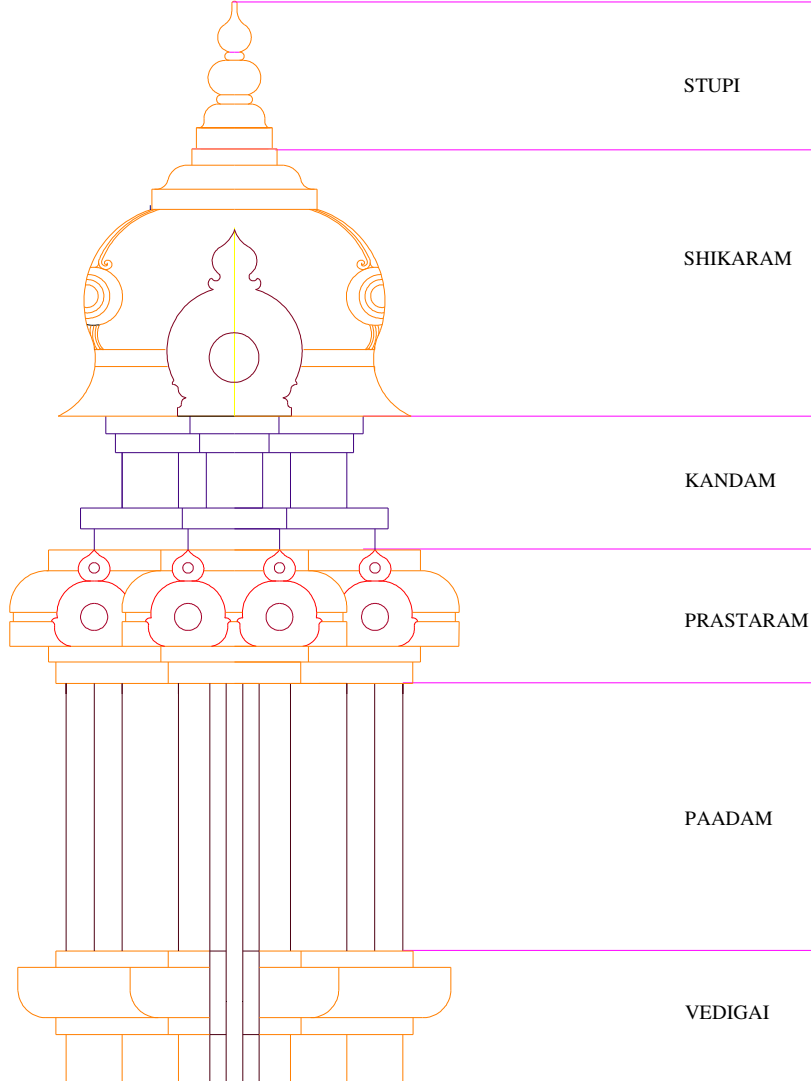
Shikaram signifies the face of a human form. Naasikoodu is the architectural element that represents the nose.

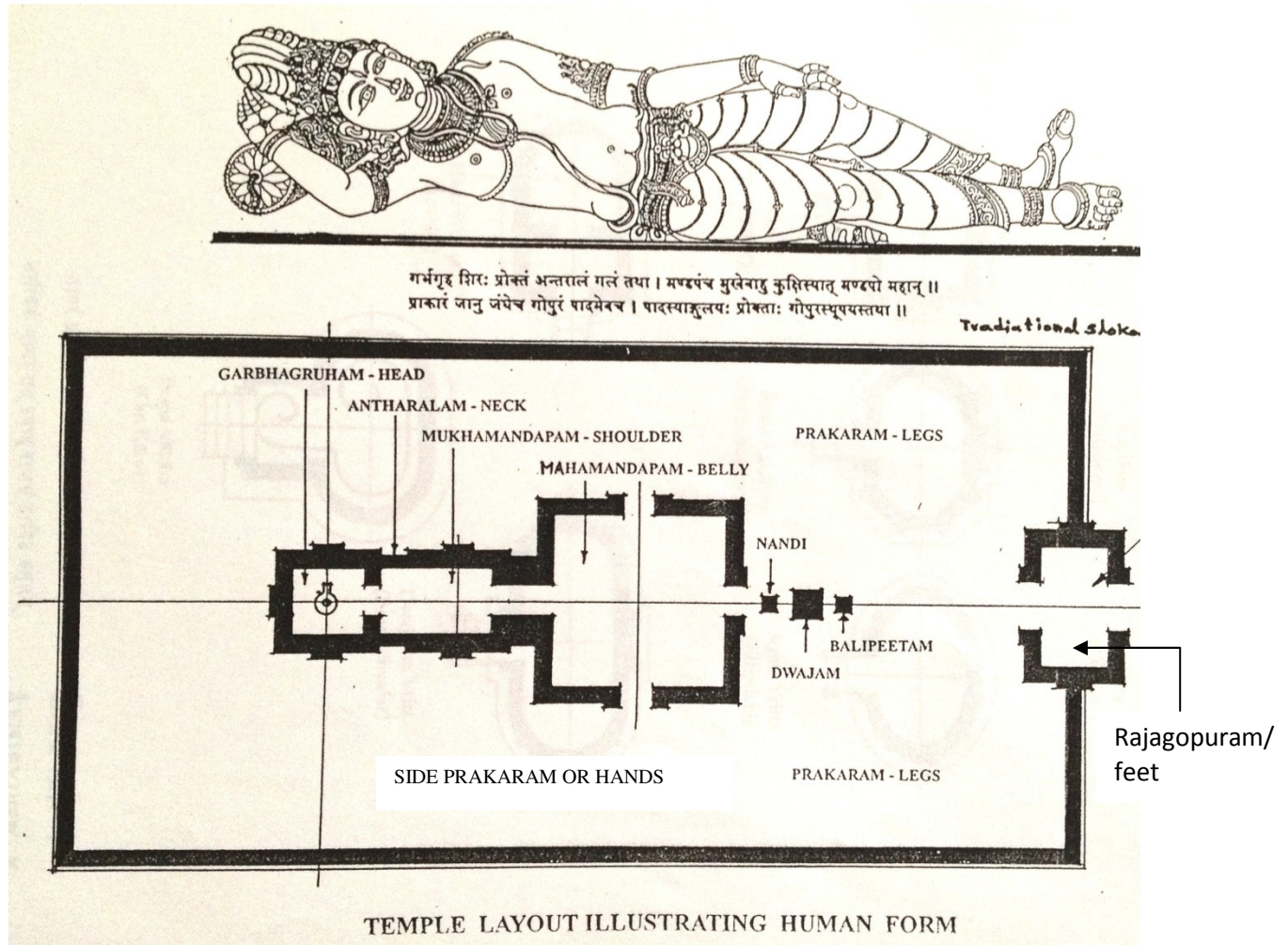
Stupi:

Stupi signifies the hairlock or tuft of a human form.

KARNAKOODAM

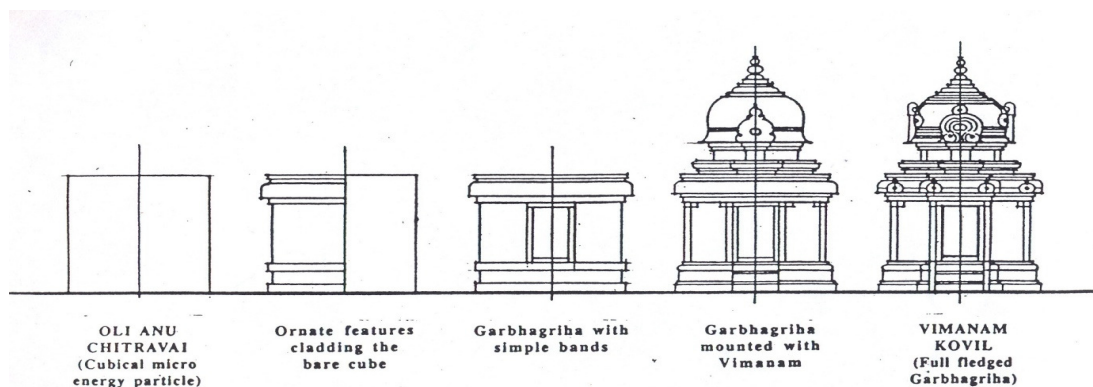
KARNAKOODAM IS THE MINIATURE FORM OF A TEMPLE STRUCTURE SHOWING THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE HUMAN FORM. THE SAME FORM WILL BE REPEATED ON THE ENTIRE RAJAGOPURAM IN EACH STOREY. THIS IS TO SIGNIFY THE SACRED GEOMETRY OF THE UNIVERSE. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS WOULD BE THE LEAVES ON A TREE. GOD GEOMETRIZES AND CREATES SIMILAR LEAF FORM ON THE ENTIRE TREE IN DIFFERENT PROPORTIONS. THE SAME CONCEPT IS APPLIED IN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN TERMS OF REPETITION OF FORMS.





Temple structure represents the form of the Supreme being not only in the elevation but also in the plan. In the above illustration, temple has been depicted as the lying posture of the Almighty in the human form and the sloka from the Vastu texts quoted relates each of the temple feature to the various parts of a human form. The *गर्भगृह* is said to be the head, the *अन्तराल* as the neck, *लुकेलान्दपल* as the shoulders, the two pathways or prakarams on either side of the *गर्भगृह* as the hands, *लकेलान्दपल* as the belly, the front corridor as the legs and finally the feet representing the Gopuram.

PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT OF A TEMPLE FROM A CUBE



Glossary of Terms

1. કોલોકોલ	Finial of the temple structure.
2. પાવણકોલ	Temple structure
3. વાદ્ય પાવણકોલ	Embodied energy form
4. સુષુપ્તકોલ	subtle energy
5. કોલોકોલ	Gross matter
6. પાવણકોલ	The pyramidal roof structure above the sanctum sanctorum which is constructed based on various measurements (maana - pramaana in tamil). <i>Vimanam</i> means numerous measurements .
7. કોલોકોલકોલ	Sanctum sanctorum or the inner core of a temple complex which houses the deity
8. પાવણકોલ	Bottom most part of the temple structure.
9. કોલોકોલ	finial or kalasha on top of the vimanam.
10. રાજગોપુર	The word 'Gopura' has been coined from the Tamil word 'koppu', which means roof of a structure. The roof structure for the gateway to a temple is called Gopuram and the base walls on which it rests is called 'kudavarai' in Tamil. The entrance gateway to temples is generally named as 'Vaayil Gopura' in Vastu texts where <i>Vaayil</i> means mouth of the temple or entrance. The term <i>Rajagopuram</i> was used in later stages and does not have reference in the vastu texts. During King Krishna Devaraya's rule, temple entrances were ornamental Gopuras famously called as ' <i>Raaya Gopura</i> ' . The word promulgated and got transformed into what we called today as 'Rajagopuram'
11. પાવણકોલ	Lotus
12. કોલોકોલ	Craftsman, sculptor
13. કોલોકોલ	Chakras correspond to vital points in the physical body i.e. major plexuses of arteries, veins and nerves.
14. કોલોકોલ	The <i>shastra</i> is the knowledge which is based on principles that are held to be timeless. <i>Shastra</i> is also a by-word used when referring to a scripture.