CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Hinduism is one of the world’s oldest living religious and evolved over a period of about four thousand years. Hindu religion centres on the worship of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śivā who are venerated as the gods of creation, protection and destruction respectively. It is believed in the Hindu mythology that God Viṣṇu takes avatārā to destroy the evil asuras and protect the earth from destruction whenever the need arises.

According to ancient Indian texts, Viṣṇu assumes three forms namely, Incarnation or Avatāras, Aveśa, and Amśa, to protect the earth from the evil forces. The concept of incarnation or avatāra of God in human form is a common belief in Hinduism. Avatāra means the Lord who is in the highest realms chooses to come ‘down to earth’ in the form of man or an animal on the earth and living there, till the purpose for which he had descended on the earth was accomplished. Although the avatāras of Viṣṇu are considered to be more, only ten avatāras are traditionally accepted. This dissertation is a result of the study of third Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu in art and literature of Tamil Nadu in an historical and cultural prospective. The Varāha worship was very
popular in ancient India and medieval India. In the modern times the worship of Varāha incarnation is not very popular like that of Siva and Viṣṇu worship. But there are many of Varāha temples still under worship in Tamil Nadu. This shows the continuous worship of Varāha even today. The various aspects of Varāha worship from early time in Tamil Nadu are proved from the archaeological and literary evidences in this work. The etymological analysis of the term Varāha reveals that the word is split up into two parts Vara and aha, i.e., Vrunothi ithi Vara, the significance is to refer to the principle of force, which envelopes, prescribes a limit to an unlimited or unbounded field. Thus, by controlling potency gives form to that was formless and brings forth a system of forces and counterforce. The absolute firmness, force and the ferocity shown by Varāha or wild boar against its enemies gained importance in the early civilizations. In India, the worship of Varāha was popular one time or other whenever the expansion of territory was made by the ruling monarchs of the respective times. The occurrence of number of Varāha representations confirms the popularity of Varāha worship in Tamil Nadu.

The examinations of the archaeological evidences reveal that the ferocity and valour shown by the wild boar and its habit of rooting the earth inspired the ancient man. Hence, boar as Varāha attained sanctity and was worshipped as rescuer of earth. The historical study of ancient
civilizations also shows that the concept of Deluge, submerged earth and the association of wild boar with fertility were common features for all of them. This factor also noticed in the then ancient Indian societies. The earliest reference of Varāha was noticed in the paintings found in rock shelters in India. These paintings generally portray the hunting of the animal or the ferocious fight between human and wild boar. In India, the earliest known paintings of the wild boar are found in the rock shelters in Bimbetka in Madhya Pradesh.

The concept of Varāha and worship was confirmed from the study of the Vedic literary works. In the Vedic text boar was regarded as the guardian of rice cooked in milk of the asuras and was later on they depicted Varāha as the saviour of sacrifice and as the rescuer of earth. From the study it is inferred that Varāha is shown as the protector of sacrifice in the animal form, when the Cosmological aspect was portrayed. The study also brought out the fact that later depictions of Varāha in human form reveal the concept of Varāha as the rescuer of earth. The study of the early Sanskrit literatures revealed that Brahmā (Prajāpati) was identified with Varāha. Brahmā was recognized as Viṣṇu in the later period literatures. Hence, this might have caused the inclusion of Varāha as one of the avatāras of Viṣṇu. These religious ideas sowed in the Vedic period penetrated deep and had developed in the Indian thought, culture and art during the Kushana and the Gupta period from 2nd century CE to 4th century CE.
The idea and worship of Varāha was known to the ancient Tamil society. It was well attested in the Tamil literatures. The first occurrence of Varāha as lifter of the earth was in Paripādal, the late Sangam literature. It also narrates the act of Varāha as the rescuer of earth and his association with Bhūdevi. During the Pallava rule the act of Varāha as the lifter of the earth became popular due to the advent of Bhakthi movement in the 6th to 8th century CE. The Alviārs in their hymns constantly sang in praise of the Varāha avatāra.

The worship of Varāha gained importance during the reign of Vijayanagara Kings in the Tamil country and was proved from the writings of Temple chronicles (sthalapuranas). The above survey of Tamil literary works confirms the existence of Varāha worship from 3rd century CE to 17th century CE.

Extensive study of Varāha sculptures found in the rest of India revealed that Varāha worship was widely practiced. The worship of Varāha gained importance in central India. The zoomorphic and anthropomorphic forms of Varāha sculptures found largely in this region. In this study, it is inferred that Varāha in the animal form was very popular in early stages while later on it was replaced by the anthropomorphic form. One of the earliest sculptures of Varāha was from Mathura which has been dated to 2nd century BCE. The survey of
these sculptural representations reveal that the Varāha sculptures in human body with head of the boar became popular in India and it has gained momentum. Varāha avatāra occupied a primeval position and the physical representation of this form has been witnessed in the sculptural representations.

Devotion to Varāha was proved from the existence of number of temples and sculptures in South India. The dynasties such as Chālukyas, Pallavas, Pandyas and later on Cholas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagara held their sway in South India and began to acquire territories to expand beyond their kingdom. This policy of expansion led to the worship of Varāha as he was regarded as the rescuer of earth. The study of medieval history reveals the fact that the Kings styled themselves as the manifestation of Viṣṇu and claimed that they were the protectors of the territory under their control. Hence, the incarnation of Viṣṇu gained prominence in the medieval and the late medieval periods.

The study of temples devoted to Varāha in Tamil Nadu revealed that the temples of Varāha came into existence from 7th century CE. The inscription of Varāha temples provides evidences on various gifts made to them. The epigraphs mention the name of the god and the different festivals connected with the worship. These temples of Varāha were continuously patronized by the Chola rulers in the medieval period (10th
to 15th century CE) though they were mostly Saivits. This has been revealed from the inscriptions of Chola kings from Tiruvidandai, Srimushnam, Singavaram and Mahabalipuram temples.

The study of inscriptions and temples revealed that whenever the Kings wanted to acquire territories or to protect their territory from their enemies they revived the worship of Varāha.

Earliest and most frequently depicted sculptures of Varāha are found in Thondaimandalam, Pandya mandalam and Kongu mandalam. The analysis of iconographic forms of Varāha in these temples reveals that Bhūvarāha and Ādivarāha images are commonly found in Tamil Nadu. The study also reveals that there are only a few images of Vaikuṇṭha Varāha installed in the temples of Tamil Nadu.

Varāha representation in various materials such as stone, metal, stucco, and terracotta images placed both in temples and houses reveals that the worship of Varāha continued to exist from early times. The stucco images of Varāha in his various forms are placed on the Vimāna, temple towers (Gopura) both in the Siva and Viṣṇu temples. Varāha images of bronze, wood and ivory are also kept and worshipped both in the temples and houses. The copper plates issued by the Chalukaya, Hoysala and Vijayanagara rulers have the engraving of Varāha figure on their seal and the above dynasties had Varāha as their crest (lachchana).
Later on the Nayaka rulers of Madurai also had Varāha as their emblem and issued copper plates with Varāha seals. The study of seals and emblems depicted with Varāha images shows the authority of kingship and shows the importance given to Varāha worship by the rulers.

Saivism was in its zenith during the Chola period in Tamil Nadu and received their royal patronage. The later period Saiva literatures mention Varāha as the lifter of earth and also depicted his act of rooting the earth with his snout. This act of rooting the earth by Varāha was mostly described in the Lingothbhava form of Siva. After the Cholas the Second Pāndyan Empire came in to existences. Varāha as a boar is also illustrated in the Kritharjunayam story. Both Śiva (Kīrāta) and Arjuna aimed a boar with their arrows and claimed the dead animal. The sculptural representations of fighting between Śiva and Arjuna over the dead animal boar are noticed in the temples constructed by Chalukayas, Rashtrakutas and Hoysalas. The portrayal of this story was also formed in the later period temples in Tamil Nadu. The rift between Saivism and Vaisnavism in the later period paved way for worship of Siva as Varāhaesvar at Damal.

The worship of Varāhi (one among the goddesses of Sapthamāthirka group of sculptures) gained importance in the 7th to 9th century CE. Varāhi was worshipped as one among the deities placed in
the sub shrine (Parivāra devatha) of the temples. The importance gained by the Saktha or Sakthi worship led to the construction of separate shrines for the female deities hence the worship of Sapthamāthrikas began to decline, but Varāhi as the goddess of magical powers gained prominence and is worshipped widely even today.

The concept and popularity of Varāha inspired the Jain and Buddhist religions to include Varāha as one of the pantheon of their realm. The study of Jainism revealed that Varāha was considered as an emblem of Yakshas and Yakshis of Tirthankara Vimalanatha. Hence, it is inferred that Varāha emblem was considered as auspicious for the Jains. The examination of the Buddhist works reveal that Mārīcī with face of the boar and the chariot drawn by seven pigs was the most popular deity of the Buddhist Pantheon. This is evident from the occurrence of number of sculptural representations of Mārīcī found in India.

To conclude, the outcome of the study of Varāha incarnation in Tamil Nadu reveals the earliest depiction of Varāha was noticed in the rock paintings. The exact reference of Varāha as the rescuer of earth and his worship was found in the Sangam literature. This concept and idea of Varāha avatāra later on noticed in the hymns of the Ālvārs and they praised the act of Varāha with more devotion than a performance. These
ideas also influenced the artist of the Pallava period, hence, massive
were created and this structural images of Varāha confirms the worship
throughout the ages.

The inscription and sculptural study proved that the Varāha images
were installed and worshipped by the rulers who had that the thrust for
expansion that the by the rulers who had the thrust for expansion and
accumulating more territories. Later on when the Cholas established their
power in Tamil Nadu the worship of Varāha lost importance. But the
existence of temples and the expigraphical evidences proved the
continuous worship of Varāha avatāra. Later on the worship had gained
momentum during the Pallava, Pandya and Adiyamān rulers as seen
from the sculptural representations of these periods. Any religion or
worship has to get the support both from the ruling king and the
common man. In the case of Varāha worship, the ruling monarchs in
particularly had the passion for the worship and they considered
themselves as the protector of their subjects. Hence, the worship gained
importance whenever the necessity arose.

The cause for the decline and the reduction of the importance of
the worship of Varāha in Tamil Nadu was due to the rise of Saivism. In
Śiva temples the western side of the sanctum adorned with
Lingothbhava, where in Varāha is depicted in subdued position to Siva.
This concept and sculptural representations were mostly found in South India, particularly in the temples of Tamil Nadu. This iconographic form of Śiva was very popular in Tamil Nadu and this aspect can be viewed as an attempt to reduce the popularity of Varāha worship, which had gained prominence in Tamil Nadu during the medieval period.

Varāha and other Daśāvatāra forms not only inspired the ancient and medieval artists, but also the present artists who express basic ideas in art objects, music and dance performances.

This work proved the earliest reference of Varāha from ancient history of Tamil Nadu. This avatāra was practiced among the common people like that of other worships prevailed in Tamil Nadu also proved. The idol worship of Varāha in some temples was also in practice from ancient to modern period proves that this incarnation was one of the famous popular worships prevailed in Tamil Nadu. The importance of different religions in Tamil Nadu was exposed to the people by way of art. Like that Varāha worship was also exposed to the public proved the importance given to Varāha worship in Tamil Nadu. Historical research of this kind attempts to forge links to the past when religion was a way of life.