CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

India is a land of ancient civilization. Its philosophy, religion, literature, art and architecture show its specific Indian character. Religion plays a pivotal role in the life of the people. The Hindu temple is a unique creation of the Indian mind. The Hindu temple serves as a link between the human and the Divine, between earthly life and divine life, and between the actual and the ideal. It is both an object of veneration and a work of art. It is looked up as a place where god dwells on earth to bless humankind. It is a palace of the gods and goddesses with their divine and graceful appearance.

The temple is a sacred place where spiritual transformation takes place in a devotee. The central place of the temple is the *garbhagṛha*. The *garbhagṛha* contains the form and the potency of the divine. The devotees come to the temple for varied reasons. For example, for spiritual realization, inner awakening and self fulfillment, to offer prayers and petitions to god or goddess, to express their inner desires, to communicate faith in god, and also for social togetherness. The devotees enter the temple with hearts full of *bhakti* or devotion.

The temple is described as the body of god in cosmic form. The devotee experiences the power of the Supreme Being in him/her while entering the temple and continues to move around the *prahāras* (circumambulatory passages). Besides this, the devotee also sees the devotion and fervent feelings of other devotees who seek spiritual solace in the precincts of the temple. The *śikhara* (the spire) of the temple represents the aspiration and ascent of the devotee from earthly existence to the spiritual plane of pure and deathless consciousness. The *kalaśa* (ornamental pot found in finials and capitals) placed perpendicularly on the *garbhagṛha* represents the vessel of deathlessness, and it stands as the symbol of spiritual victory.
During the rite of circumambulation the devotee halts in front of each shrine of the *parivāra devatas* (gods related in family) and prays to the deity for the specific purpose for which that particular deity is installed in that shrine. For example, if the devotee comes across the shrine of Viñāyaka, the prayers of the devotee would mostly be to remove the obstacles that hinder the growth of his/her life and to bestow wisdom on him/her.

As and when the devotee approaches the interior building, he/she gets immersed in its space and gets exposed to the impact of the pillars and the walls of the *maṇḍapa*. While coming closer to the *garbhagṛha*, the devotee experiences a sort of silence and a spiritual vibration in his/her mind. To be clearer, the devotee moves around the temple, visiting the various deities installed, and, after a long process of walking, enters the *ardha-maṇḍapa* and moves towards the womb of the temple where he/she stops bodily and psychologically. There the devotee halts at the doorframe of the *garbhagṛha* and there he/she is separated from the *mūla bera* in the *garbhagṛha*. At this point the devotee forgets self and everything around him/her and experiences the *sākṣātkaṇa* (the fulfillment out of the direct *darśan* of the Lord). The devotee reaches a state of trance in seeing the Almighty. The devotee becomes one with the sacred architecture together with the images in the *garbhagṛha*. Then the devotee leaves the temple with the full satisfaction of the union with the Lord on the physical plane as well as in the spiritual plane.

The *mūla beras* in the *garbhagṛha* and the icons in the subsidiary sanctums are formed strictly following the Hindu iconographical rules. The icons are made in perfect proportion by the *sthapatis* so that they attain the power of divinity and life in them, after a number of *pūjās* performed to sanctify them. These icons are sacred, meant only for worship and are made for that purpose alone. The devotee looks intently at the deity with perfect concentration. The devotee observes the postures, the number of hands, the *āyudha* (weapons), *bhūṣaṇa* (ornaments), the hand gestures and the facial expression. No devotee can derive any benefit from these icons unless he/she regards them as imbued with a living quality and unseen divine powers. The solemnity and devotion of the devotee determines how these icons are going to benefit him/her when he/she approaches the icons with hope and expectation.
In this conclusion the researcher attempts to reflect on the above mentioned transcendental effect of the icons on the devotees, giving emphasis to the significance of the *mūla beras* in the temples selected for the study. The study evoked a rare sense of the Divine in the researcher. The supernatural feelings experienced by the researcher while studying the bodily postures of the *mūla beras* are presented under the general heading “The Aesthetic Evocation.”

6.2 The Aesthetic Evocation

The Hindus have conceived the highest form of beauty personified in the form of Śiva- Naṭarāja. Śiva symbolizes *sundaram*, which means ideal beauty and Śiva is *satyam*, which means the embodiment of truth. In India the ideal of divine beauty and truth is best expressed in Indian art and literature. The ultimate aim of beauty in art and literature is supreme bliss, that is, *ānanda* or aesthetic blissfulness in humans.

The reflections made here are based primarily on the aesthetic responses evoked in the researcher by Bharatanatyam and Hindu iconography. Being a trained Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer the researcher feels this study all the more gripping. The *mūla beras* have religious significance as well as artistic merit. Three major steps are followed in order to express in depth the insights gained while conducting this research. These steps try to highlight the impact the *mūla beras* have on the devotee while the devotee has the *darśan* of the deity in the *garbhagṛha*, as he/she is fascinated by the artistic beauty and divinity in the icons. They are classified into: (1) the Structural Implications; (2) the Psycho–Spiritual Responses; and, (3) the Religious Significance.

6.2.1 The Structural Implications

“The structural implications” discusses the import of the sculptural configuration of the *mūla beras*. The forms of the *mūla beras* is definite in proportions because they are shaped according to the *dhyāna ślokas* of the deities prescribed clearly in the *Śilpa Śāstras*. In other words, the *mūla beras* are made strictly following the iconographical rules and measurements. These rules govern the method of representing the gods with exact precision. In the field of sculptural measurement of the divine images, there is the measurement called *tālamāna* which
not only ensures the symmetrical beauty and the artistic grace of the image but also imparts unique spiritual meaning and symbolism to the divine images. This grammar of measurement prescribes a perfect system of measurement in the parts of the body of the deity. The conception of the plumblines, the linear measurements, the space measurements and the poses or deviations from the vertical median, controls the modeling of images.

A sculptor who wishes to represent the deity in any other way deviating from the custom or the dhyāna ślokas would be accused of ignorance of his profession, and of violating the laws of the religion. Moreover, the worship to the divine image would be stopped because an icon which is not made in accordance with the rules would lack power and divine grace and hence, not be revered. It is clear that the structural composition of the mūla beras always follows the strict rules by which the universal and cosmic can be presented through an individualized representation. Furthermore, it is observed that the worshipper believes in the life giving power of the consecrated images when the images exhibit structural perfection.

6.2.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

Every figure in Indian sculpture is symbolic in nature and has an evocative quality. These figures not only evoke the sense of physical beauty but also evoke basic emotional or psychological states in humans. On seeing an icon, the viewer should allow the icon to speak to him/her. The darśan or vision of the perfect postures of the icons awaken specific emotional responses and create ānanda or supreme delight in the devotee. The depth of the emotional evocation differs from person to person and the insights received by the perceiver on seeing the icon depend much also on the quality of the image and the ability of the spectator to think.

When a sensitive Bharatanatyam dancer views a perfectly shaped icon, his/her interpretation of the icon is most likely to be artistic in nature. Indian dance being highly symbolic, it is possible to study the interrelatedness between the two art forms. A classical dancer constantly tries to include the body postures of the deities in dance choreographies. The dancer evokes in the spectators the sculptured images of the deities in and through his/her dance presentations. The figures of the icons depicted on stage evoke visions of the dance movements of gods and goddesses. The evocation experienced by the researcher on seeing the mūla beras in the selected temples are presented in this concluding chapter.
The Religious Significance
The Indian ethos is founded on the *sanātana dharma* or eternal values of the country. The Hindu philosophy reveals the spirit of the principles of *sanātana dharma*. The whole world around us has been conceived as part and parcel of the Divine. Hence, every aspect of creation could be viewed with great and noble qualities attributed to them. Such an approach to nature helps humans to learn values of life from nature and to draw lessons of *dharma* from every object around them. This study highlights the sublime spiritual values taught through Indian dance and Hindu iconography, particularly the *mūla beras*.

What is meant here by the religious significance of the *mūla beras* is those human-spiritual values proposed to the devotees by the deities to follow in their ultimate search for truth. The iconographic details of the *mūla beras* are oriented towards transporting the devotees to a certain metaphysical realm. The attributes held in the hands of the *mūla beras* and their specific body postures exhibited enable the devotees to understand the actual world in which they live and they are ultimately to help the devotees to lead a life of *dharma* and realize liberation. In other words, the devotees believe that the *darśana* of the *mūla beras* is a means to *mokṣa*.

6.3 The Mūla Beraś
The *mūla beras*, the visible forms of the Divine, are subjected to a number of rites and rituals performed on them by the priests from dawn to midnight. It is believed that the *mūla beras* gain power and radiate the power of divinity to the devotees. The temples do allow the devotees to personally associate themselves with the religious deliberations to break the routine procedure of these religious services. This helps the devotees to experience the spiritual transformation in them as and when they enter into close association with the *mūla beras*. All these devotional practices enable the devotee to realize himself/herself and to know the purpose of his/her existence in this world. The significance of the *mūla beras* namely Śiva, Mīnākṣī, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Brahmā, Sarasvatī, Viñāyaka, Murukaṇ are discussed hereunder.

6.3.1 Śiva
Lord Śiva is conceived in two states. One is the *kaḍandanalai* and the other is the *kalandanalai*. *Kaḍandanalai* is the *nirguṇa* or *svarūpa* (absolute) state, which is amorphous,
devoid of qualities and distinguishing marks and can be realized only by transcendental experience. *Kalandanilai* is the *saguṇa* (integrated state), that is, the existence of primal energy within the various forms and manifestations of reality in the universe with distinguishing names. The devotee meditates on each form according to his/her mental level. This primal energy is called *puruṣa* or Śiva and the *prakṛti* or nature is called Śakti. Thus, it is believed that the creation of the universe takes place when Śiva and Śakti unite.

Śiva is manifested in various forms such as Ardhanārīśvar, Naṭarāja, Bhikṣātana, Bhairava, Kālāntaka, Vīrabhadra, Viṇādhara, Dakṣa iṣṭāmūrti, Candraśekar, Kalyan a Sundareśvar and many more. In these forms, the primary substance is Śiva, with various other forms and attributes. The manifestations of Śiva, with their respective characteristics, have their own peculiarity and individuality. Each divinity has a specific attribute of its own. Amongst all his manifestations, the form of Śiva–Naṭarāja is very special in appearance and it connotes high philosophical meanings. Hence, the researcher feels it apt to discuss the impact of Naṭarāja on the devotees and then proceed with the other forms.

**6.3.1.1 The Structural Implications**

There are numerous images of Naṭarāja in different styles and variations. The Ānanda Sadānṛtta Tāṇḍavamūrti, the *mūla bera* of Naṭarāja Temple in Cidambaram is the focus of discussion here. Usually the image of Naṭarāja is formed in proportion to *uttama daśatāla* and at times in *madhyama daśatāla*. The linear measurement used for making the Ānanda Sadānṛtta Tāṇḍavamūrti is *uttama daśatāla*. These measurements are designed in such a way that each attribute, the body postures and lines speak of the greatness of the Lord to the devotee. While dancing, if the dancer maintains the same posture, it will give more originality to the posture and will evoke real aesthetic sense in the dancer and the spectator. The dancer feels the divine moving in himself/herself and the spectator experiences the vibration felt by the dancer.

The deity Naṭarāja is found dancing on the pedestal with his right foot placed on the demon in *kṣipta* and the left foot lifted up has four hands where each hand holds symbolizes high philosophical meanings in it. The dancing Lord of Tillai Temple reveals the *pañjakṛtya*
(the five activities). This posture of Naṭarāja with perfection exhibits the five cosmic activities of the Lord.

6.3.1.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The image of Naṭarāja found as the mūla bera in the Tillai Naṭarāja Temple at Cidambaram elevates and thrills the perceiver. In addition to the perfect measurements of the image of Naṭarāja in the garbhagṛha, there is immense artistic beauty in the form. The face of the deity is found glowing and radiating with grace. The glance is very sharp and the smile on the face speaks volumes to the perceiver. The perceiver feels relaxed and feels at home when he/she has the darśan of the smile of the Lord. His smile makes the devotee feel comfortable and peaceful in life.

The body of the dancing god symbolizes the cosmic space and his sharp eyes look like surya, candra and agni. His spread out arms look like the directions and the garments look like the oceans. The foot placed on the demon and the foot lifted up represent the the universe and the whole galaxy is in the body of Śiva. This reference is found in the dhyāna śloka in Abhinayadarpana, that the buvana (universe) is compared to Śiva’s āṅgika (body); the vāṅgmaya (sound, speech and music) emanate from his vācika (voice); the candra and tārādī (sky, moon and stars) are his āhārya (ornaments). The whole body of the deity is depicted in the dancing posture. The stance is a unique yogic stance. Each and every part of the body of the dancing Naṭarāja is in motion. The hairs, ornaments, the snake around His neck and the cloth on the waist look to be flying in the air. The whole movement shows the speed at which the Lord must have danced. The mūla bera looks as if just stopped dancing and lifted the left leg in the posture he is usually found in.

The vision of such a sculpturesque posture captures and elevates the mind and the heart of the devotee. While dancing, the dancer attempts to bring to motion all the aspects found in the body of the dancing Naṭarāja and tries to evoke a spiritual and artistic feeling in the spectators. The Tillai Naṭarāja is found with four hands where the upper right hand holds ādamaru or drum, and agni or flame in the upper left arm. The lower right hand is in abhaya mudrā and the lower left arm is in gaja hasta. In dance, Naṭarāja is usually depicted with abhaya mudrā in the right hand and gajaladaṇḍa hasta in the left hand. After the study, the
researcher feels that Naṭarāja can also be represented with ṭamaru hasta in the right hand and ardha-candra hasta in the left hand. The right hand depicts the ṭamaru and the left hand depicts as if holding the agni. The big toe of the left leg is slightly separated from the other four toes. This is modeled in such a way that the icon balances its weight and this position keeps the measurement proportions.

6.3.1.3 The Religious Significance

The movement of the heavenly objects takes place with certain constraints and limits, which can be experienced by us. For example, the earth revolves round the Śūrya or sun in 365 days. All the planets move in their own axis and in their plane with perfect synchronization and rhythm. This is a scientific fact. When a devotee looks at this movement of the heavenly objects, it is believed that it is because of the dancing god that the whole creation moves in rhythm. The goddess Śakti or Śivakāmi, wife of Śiva, is found at the left side of Naṭarāja. The reason for this is that the cosmic dance of Naṭarāja takes place in prakṛti (nature) and Śakti is depicted as prakṛti. So, the dance of Śiva includes Śivakāmi in its movement. Human beings have abundant desires which may be good or bad. We cannot remove or purify our desires by ourselves. We need the help of the Divine. Hence, the Lord assumes five functions to help the devotees to annihilate or purify desires. His activities are known as Pañcakṛtya or Iyntoḷil. The five actions of the Lord are Sṛṣṭi (creation), Sthiti (protection), Samhāra (destruction), Tirobhāva (veiling) and Anugraha (benediction).

Sṛṣṭi is investing Tanu (body), Karana (sense organs), Bhūvana (life on earth) and Bhoga (earthly pleasures) into living creatures. Sthiti or protection allows the body of the living creatures to experience the fruits of its own right and wrong deeds. Samhāra or destruction is the act of removing the tanu, karana, bhūvana and bhoga. Tirobhāva or veiling helps the living creatures to work towards removing desire through their own lives. Anugraha or benediction is the joy and grace bestowed on the jīvātma who has been purified. The representation of the image of Naṭarāja’s joyous dance (ānanda tāṇḍava) crystallizes and explains all these five actions.

The dancing body of Tillai Naṭarāja has further significance. The upper right hand holding the ṭamaru or drum signifies the origin of sound and creation. The upper left hand
holds the *agni* or flame signifying the destruction of evil and also giving light to the universe. The *agni* also symbolizes the light that wipes off the ignorance from the mind of the devotee. These upper hands are in symmetry with the body and this position of the upper hands help in balancing the body of Naṭarāja. The specific postures and gestures symbolize the five basic functions of Śiva. The drum conveys creation; *abhaya mudrā* conveys protection, the flame conveys destruction, the supported leg conveys veiling and the lifted leg conveys grace.

It is believed that a prayer made by the devotee to Naṭarāja helps him/her to free from the cycle of births and deaths. It gives great hope to him/her for freedom from all sin and attainment of the highest bliss. Śiva dancing on the pedestal shaped like a lotus flower makes the devotees feel that the Lord is dancing in their hearts. The lotus shaped pedestal usually represents Muyalaga denoting the three impurities (*āṇava, māya, kanma*). The posture of the Lord destroying the Muyalaga makes the devotee feel that the Lord destroys all the physical enemies of the devotee as well as the evils within oneself. The downward pointed fingers of the hand denote the striving of the living beings for grace. The right arm holding the *abhaya mudrā* stands for the compassion of the Lord. The smile on the face is a reflection of his inner feelings.

The circle of flame around the image represents the natural cosmic environment. The flying locks of hair and the flowing garments signify the speed of his movement. His peaceful eyes represent the stable and equable nature of the Lord. The *tiruvāsi* or circle of flames symbolises *prakṛti*. The Lord moves within and along with *prakṛti*. The limbs and body of Śiva in movement represent the ability of *puruṣa* to be all pervading within *prakṛti*. From the above discussions, it is clear that the image of the Lord dancing is a combination of religion and philosophy.

### 6.3.2 The Manifestations of Śiva

Śiva is popularly believed to have manifested in sixty four forms. Amongst them the images of Candraśekar, Bhairava, Kalyāṇa Sundaramūrti, Someśvar, Sarabēśvar, Bhikṣāṭanamūrti, and Dakṣiṇāmūrti are focused in this thesis. Each deity mentioned in the study has several variations and forms. But the researcher has focused on the Candraśekara as the *mūla bera* of the Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli, Bhairava as one of the *mūla bera* of the Nellaiappar
Temple, Kalyāṇa Sundaramūrti as the mūla bera of Mīnākṣi Sundareśvar Temple in Madurai, Sarabēśvar as the mūla bera of the Kambhakheśvar Temple in Tirubhuvanam, Bhikṣāṭ anamūrti as one of the mūla bera of Tillai Naṭarāja Temple in Cidambaram, and Dakṣināmūrti as the mūla bera of Jambukeśvar Temple in Tiruvāṉai kōyil.

6.3.2.1 The Structural Implications
The basic measurements in the making of the image of Śiva and his manifestations, as the mūla bera, are the same because these images are composed within uttama daśatāla. The limbs and the body of Śiva in perfect proportions signify the ability of puruṣa to pervade within prakṛti. The clarity in the attributes and the postures help the devotee to worship the mūla bera with full devotion and the hope of receiving all the benefits and attaining salvation.

6.3.2.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses
The body and the limbs of Candraśekarā in the Nellaiappar Temple are smooth and mature with complete growth. The face reflects sensuousness, tranquility, beauty and joy. The eyes are wide open and elongated. The nose is straight and elegant. Only when the four features, namely the body, face, eyes and nose are properly fashioned, the beauty of the image would create wondermnt in the perceivers. Depending on the perfection of the form, the evocation takes place in the perceiver.

The Candraśekarā is represented as standing in samapāda sthānaka with four hands. The upper right hand holds aṅkuśa in kartarīmukha hasta. The aṅkuśa here signifies a weapon for destruction of the enemies as well as a weapon of protection of the devotees. The upper left hand holds the mṛga (deer) in kartarīmukha hasta. The mṛga in his hand shows that the lord destroys the opposing forces and holds them in his hands and at times wears them as his garments and ornaments. For example, Śiva wears the skin of the tiger as his loin, adorns the snake as his ornament, sits on the skin of tiger. The lower right hand holds abhaya and the lower left hand holds kaṭaka hasta. When a dancer depicts Śiva in his/her dance, the deity can be depicted with two kartarīmukha hastas kept on either side of the ears as how the deity in the temple is installed. Besides this, the Lord can be depicted with kartarīmukha in the right hand as if holding the paraśu (axe) and sīrhamukha in the left hand depicting the deer.
While seeing the Kālaṁhāramūrti in the Tillai Temple at Cidambaram, the form of Śiva is so vigorous and ferocious that he is found in krodha bhāva. The body of Śiva is found with temper. The perceiver gets scared on seeing the anger in the face of the Lord, but understands the scene from the purāṇas and praises God for his merciful love on his devotees and his anger on those who harass his devotees. While enacting the story of Mārkandeya, the dancer can show the raudra rasa which is found in the face of Śiva. While depicting Śiva, usually the hands of the dancer would be in abhaya mudrā in the right and daṇḍa hasta in the left hand. But this form of Śiva can be depicted with one hand in kapitta as if holding a rope and the other hand in muṣṭi as if holding a big knife. The rope symbolizes a weapon of the Lord to catch the enemies and also to hit them. The knife symbolizes as a weapon of destruction of the enemies who harass his devotees. When all the body postures of the mūla beras are studied clearly, then it is easy for the dancer to depict the deity with the exact attribute in the story. This enhances the beauty and the quality of the dance too. Instead of showing the same actions repeatedly, new symbolic movements can be brought into use, without deviating from the traditional movements.

The image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti in Jambukeśvara Temple brings out the infinite wisdom imbibed within the Lord. On seeing the face and eyes of the deity, the perceiver feels calm and relaxed, and perceives the light that is radiated in the eyes of the deity. He experiences the yogic state. Dakṣiṇāmūrti is found seated in vīrāsana usually under a tree with disciples around him. He is found with four hands. The upper right hand carries the rosary in kaṭaka hasta and the upper left hand holds the agni (fire) in kaṭaka hasta. The rosary signifies the ṛṣi state of the lord chanting the prayers and the mantras. The agni symbolizes the destruction of the evil within oneself and the destruction of the enemies around. The agni also stands for removing the ignorance and shedding light in the minds of the devotees.

The lower right hand is in the upadeśa pose in vyākyāna mudrā which symbolizes the lord as the teacher of truth, moral values and good activities. The lower left hand holds the Vedas or pustaka (book) in śīla karṇalvismaya. This represents that the lord teaches the Vedas to his devotees. The image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti is the embodiment of wisdom, tranquility and serenity. His plentiful hair falls over his shoulders. As a guru, he teaches his doctrines to
his disciples who are collected round him. While depicting Šiva in dance compositions, he can also be represented in aindra maṇḍala or ekapāda in araimandi with both the hands in kapitha hasta near the ears. In addition to this posture, Šiva can be represented with haṁsāsyā in the right hand and kuvī patākalalapadma in the left hand. Such different postures enhance the quality of the dance compositions, the choreography and the dancer. Moreover these postures are not imaginary but are found in the deities that are stably installed in the sanctum sanctorum and the subsidiary sanctums.

6.3.2.3 The Religious Significance
When a distressed devotee seeks the help of god, it is immediately granted to him/her with great joy by the deity as he is most affectionate towards his devotees. The lord always assures assistance. Šiva, in the form of Bhairava helps the devotees by punishing those who harass them. In the form of Liṅ gōdbhava, where God is immanent, formless and incomprehensible, he reveals to the devotees that he is a God who has no likes and dislikes. When a devotee sees the form of the Liṅ gōdbhava, he/she understands the reality of life that nothing is permanent in this world. The devotee also gains a lesson that falsehood is not appreciated by God. God never tolerates falsehood even if the devas or the gods or the goddesses get involved in it. It creates a realization in the devotee that if god can punish Brahmā, the creator, for his falsehood, then one day or the other the Lord will definitely punish the humans also for their evil activities.

The different manifestations of Šiva help the devotee to understand the love the Lord has for his devotees as he kills the enemies and protects the devotees. Besides this, the lesson the devotee learns from these manifestations is that the Lord does not bear up evil. So the devotee maintains a pure life to find favour with the Lord.

6.3.3 Pārvatī or Šakti
There are many avatāra images of Šakti, namely Šrī Mīnākṣī, Kāmākṣī, Durgā, Mahiś āsuramardinī, Bhairavī, Kāntimati Ampāl, Candikeśvarī and many more. Each manifestation of Pārvatī has a special attribute of its own. Each avatāra was taken for a special purpose but ultimately it was for the benefit and salvation of the devotees. The researcher here focuses on Šrī Mīnākṣī. Šrī Mīnākṣī is the mūla bera of Šrī Mīnākṣī Temple in Madurai.
The female images, namely Umā, Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī, Durgā, Bhūmīdevī come under the measure of *madhyama daśatāla*. The manifestations of Pārvatī are formed in the same *tāla*. The linear measurements are the same for all the above mentioned deities and are somewhat similar to the male images of the same *tāla*.

The Goddess Mīnākṣī is decorated with ornaments and clothed in a silk saree. V. Ganapati Sthapati describes Pārvatī in the following way. All these comparative descriptions are based on the *mūla bera* of Śrī Mīnākṣī in the Śrī Mīnākṣī Temple. Śrī Mīnākṣī’s forehead is compared to the crescent moon; eyebrows like the bow, eyes like the fish named *kenḍai*; nose like the sesame flower; lips like the *kōvai* fruit; ears like the conch; and the face like a full moon or lotus and the neck like a conch. The shoulders are compared to the bamboo or sugarcane; the entire arm to a palm shoot or a bamboo stalk; fingers to a fish or flower; nails to the parrot’s beak; breasts to a flower bunch; torso to the face of a bull; waist to the hand drum; thighs to the elephant’s trunk; and the ankle to the *viral* fish and the foot to the tortoise. The total appearance is likened to a beautiful damsels in the form of a peacock. Śrī Mīnākṣī is found standing with two hands where the right hand holds the flower with a parrot on it, and the left hand is hanging loose like the stalk of a bamboo.

The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

On seeing the *mūla bera* of Śrī Mīnākṣī in the *garbhagṛha*, the devotee stands still in awe and wonder. The goddess is modeled with extreme beauty and grace, radiating serenity. The smile on her face is so divine that the devotee who goes to her for worship feels totally relaxed and relieved from all sorts of tensions. The face of the deity radiates love and care as a mother does. The way she stands with a flexion in her body makes the perceiver admire the beauty of a woman, the beauty of creation, the beauty of the icon and the beauty in the hands of the sculptor who made the icon.

While depicting the goddess in dance, the dancer can show her in the way the goddess is installed in the *garbhagṛha*. Usually she is represented in a rigid way of holding the *kapittha* or *kaṭ akāmukha hasta* in one hand and the other in *doḷ ā hasta*. There is no flexion in the body because some styles of dancing object to the flexions. But, the researcher feels that
when portraying Goddess Mīnākṣī in dance, she can be shown the same way she is presented in the temple, which would give more grace and appropriateness to the dance. Doing this does not change the style of dancing because only when the exhibition of the deities is needed in dance, the iconographic postures are implied. No changes are made in the āḍavus, the basic movements. Moreover, the postures of the deities are not going to be out of the lines of the body postures because the dancer follows only the postures of the well proportioned images.

While seeing the Śakti avatāra images namely Durgā and Mahiṣāsuramardini, who are vigorous and ferocious in their forms and character, the perceiver gets scared of the weapons held in their hands. The most scaring gestures are the tongue projecting outwards, the skull in one hand, the kapāla with blood in one hand and the wide opened eyes with full of anger. But regardless of all this the perceiver admires the force with which the goddess fights for her devotees against the enemies who harass them. While depicting her in dance, so many variations can be brought in. The goddess is said to possess ten pairs of hands and each hand holds different weapons. So in saṅcāribhāvas (improvisation of a particular sentiment or a story in various ways), all these characteristics can be very well brought out.

6.3.3.3 The Religious Significance

The religious significance of the mūla bera of Śrī Mīnākṣī is that she has a beautiful forehead and well defined eyebrows. These features ensure a stable and secure income. A well proportionate image would bring happiness to the community. A gracefully rounded neck ensures success in every action. Beautiful thighs would ensure fertile crops, attractive ankles would protect the growth of villages, and pretty feet would foster learning and add to the moral values of the community. As Goddess Śrī Mīnākṣī is a perfect feminine with all the features in perfectness, the devotee who worships her will be filled with abundant fertility and wealth, thus making him/her happy.

6.3.4 Viṣṇu

Lord Viṣṇu has many manifestations namely Varadarāja Perumāl, Govindarāja Perumāl, Vaṭabhadra Śayana Perumāl, Kallal akar, Śrīnivāsa, and many others; and the ten incarnations, namely Matsya, Kurma, Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Raghurāma, Balarāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Kalki.
6.3.4.1 The Structural Implications

The images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva when consecrated as chief deities are set in uttama daśatāla. But when one of these images is consecrated as the chief deities, then the other two images are installed as parivāra mūrti and so they are set in madhyama daśatāla. Therefore, it is clear that madhyama daśatāla is also used for male images and this rule does not decide the relative status of the deities, rather it is only a convenient technical tool. Most of the manifestations come under the uttama daśatāla. But a few like the Vāmana and Bāla Kṛṣṇa come under the uttama pañcatāla measurements.

The divine image of Viṣṇu is shaped in uttama daśatāla. For the images to have a divine touch, four important features are necessary, namely the body, face, eyes and nose. The most attractive form of Viṣṇu is his standing posture with one hand in varada mudrā and the other hand holding the mace while the other two hands at the back are holding the cakra and śaṅkh. Śrī Rāma, the incarnation of Viṣṇu, is considered to be the most complete and perfect of all the avatāras. He possesses the qualities of a uttama puruṣa (noble man) and a lakṣya nāyaka (man committed to a goal). It is said that there are thirty three special structural characteristics in the image of Śrī Rāma.

Ganapathi Sthapati says that the sacred form of Śrī Rāma should possess five elongated parts namely the eyes, chin, nose, chest and arms; four shortened parts such as the neck, buttock, knee and genital organ; five delicate features such as the finger joints, hair, teeth, nails and skin. His image should have six prominent features namely the armpits, abdomen, upright chest, nose, shoulders and forehead; seven reddish parts such as the corner of the eyes, lips, tongue, cheeks, palms, nails and soles of feet; and the three broad parts namely the chest, head and forehead.

6.3.4.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The form of Viṣṇu is found in different ways. While viewing the sthānakmūrti of Viṣṇu, the perceiver experiences the karuṇā or mercy of the Lord. The face is so pleasant that one feels to sit at the feet of the Lord and just look into his eyes. The reclining posture of Viṣṇu also attracts the perceiver. While looking at the image of Śrī Raṅganātha in Srirangam and the Goviṅdarāja Perumāl’s image at Tillai Naṭarāja temple in Cidambaram, the perceiver
stands still gazing at the massive figures. While looking at the Viṣṇu lying on the serpent’s couch or the pedestal, the lord does not seem closing His eyes. The fine skill of the sthapati is seen in the image. This attracts the viewer the most.

The śayana posture is depicted by the dancer in pārśvasūcī maṇḍala with one leg stretched sideways. The right hand of the dancer is in patāka where the head is placed and the left hand is in doḷā hasta. The head is in parāvrata pose with the eyes closed. But in the icons of the Śayanāmūrti, the eyes remain open. The deity is found with four hands. The upper right and the upper left hands hold the conch and the discus in kartarimukha hasta respectively. The other two hands are left hanging loose. So a dancer can show the Śayanāmūrti by holding the doḷā hasta with both the hands or even kartarimukha hasta. After studying the bodily postures of the icons, many variations can be made in the saṅcārībhāvas. Viṣṇu can be shown with one hand varada mudrā and the other hand in urū hasta or one hand in varada and the other in nidrā hasta and the like.

Śrī Rāma is the mūla bera in the Rāmasvami Temple at Kumbhakonam. He is found in standing posture with four hands in the garbhagṛha. The two hands hold bow and arrow and the other two hands hold abhaya mudrā in the right and varada in the left. Sometimes the left hand is placed on the thighs in urū hasta. On seeing the image of Śrī Rāma, the perceiver finds the elegant and soft nature of Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Śrī Rāma. The posture is with the bow and arrow and thus the kingly nature is also found in the image. While depicting the Ramayana episodes in dance, Śrī Rāma can be depicted with the śānta rasa and rājasa character with grace and manliness as found in the deity installed in the temple.

6.3.4.3 The Religious Significance

The religious thoughts are reflected in the fashioning of the primary deities. When a devotee prays to Viṣṇu, he/she experiences the mercy or grace of the Lord. The devotee recollects the stories where the lord has blessed his devotees. One such striking example is the gajendra mokṣa (the rescue of the elephant). The devotee thinks that when the lord was so benevolent to an animal, then how much loving and caring will the lord be to his devotees who trust in Him. This great quality of God’s love for the devotees is a re-assuring factor for the devotee.
In the static forms of Viṣṇu as the Vaṭabhadra Śayana Perumāl and Śrī Raṅganātha the Lord is shown neither asleep nor awake, nor dreaming; but he is in the three states. He symbolizes creation, protection and destruction. The lotus issuing from his navel symbolizes creation; the two demons Madhu and Kaiṭabhā near his feet suggest their destruction; and the posture of one of his hands is in the attitude of bestowing protection. So when a devotee prays to Śrī Raṅganātha, he/she feels that the lord protects him/her and will remove all the obstacles that hinder his prosperity and will thereby create joy and a new way in his life.

Viṣṇu is represented as Śrī Rāma who is an embodiment of righteousness, love, compassion, order, heroism and beauty. The devotees pray to him for patience, confidence, courage, hard working, obedience, and intelligence. These are the characteristics found in the life of Śrī Rāma. So the devotees feel happy to pray to such a wonderful incarnation of Viṣṇu.

The śrivatsa on the chest of the deity is a symbol of prosperity, fortune and manliness. This symbol is known as Arupalakṣī mī or formless Lakṣī mī, which represents the inseparable integration of Goddess Lakṣī mī with Viṣṇu. When the devotee sees the symbol on the chest of the Lord he/she feels the mahāpurusālakṣaṇa of the deity in oneself. The devotee imbibes the good nature of the Lord into himself/herself and understands the value of the wife or the beloved in life. The śaṅkh or the conch held in the hand of Viṣṇu is called pañcajanya. As the orṅkāra or the praṇava mantra emanates from the śaṅkh, it symbolizes the act of creation. The cakra or the wheel in the hand of Viṣṇu called the sudarśana cakra reveals many lofty ideas. Cakra is the solar symbol representing eternity. It symbolizes the wheel of time where the destiny of man is seen in all his ebbs and flows in life when he mounts up in fortune and goes down in adversity. It symbolizes the wheel of power representing sovereignty. Viṣṇu, as the protector of the universe, and as the Emperor of emperors, carries the wheel which is the symbolic of the power that he wields for the benefit of the universe. The cakra in Viṣṇu’s hand symbolizes the destructive ability of the Lord. The devotee prays to Lord Viṣṇu and gains all the fortunes from each part of the deity.
6.3.5 Lakṣ mī
Lakṣ mī is called as Kṣ amā Devī, the goddess of earth; and Prajānām Bhavasī Mātā, the mother of all creatures. She is the beloved queen consort of Viṣṇu. She is called by various names like Ārana Vaḷḷī Thāyār in Ulakalanṭā Temple, Madurai Vaḷḷī Thāyār in Kūṭ al Akar Temple, Vijayalakṣ mī Thāyār in Vaḷḷī abhadra Śayana Temple, and Solaimalai Nāciyār and Kalyāṇa Sundaravallī Thāyār in Kalla Akar Temple.

6.3.5.1 The Structural Implications
The image of Viṣṇu is set out in uttama daśatāla and his consorts Śrīdevī and Bhūmīdevī are fashioned in madhyama daśatāla measures. Sītā, the wife of Śrī Rāma, is also fashioned in madhyama daśatāla. As Śrī Rāma is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, Sītā is also a form of Lakṣ mī. The image of Sītā is placed to the right side of Śrī Rāma. The height of Sītā’s image is to the level of Śrī Rāma’s shoulder. The image of Lakṣ mī is found in the padmāsana or the ardha padmāsana posture or in samapāda sthānaka. She is represented with lotus held in each of her hands.

6.3.5.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses
The posture of Goddess Lakṣ mī is full of grace and divinity. The goddess seems to be modeled in a submissive way to the Lord. Her basic natures shown are calmness, serenity and submissiveness. While showing Goddess Lakṣ mī and lord Viṣṇu together in dance, the peaceful and erotic expressions can be improvised for Lakṣ mī.

Sītā is found beside Śrī Rāma and the style of her stance brings out her devotion and subjugation to her husband. She presents herself in feminine nature and her grace is seen throughout her body with head slightly bent down in submission. While depicting such characters in dance, if the grace is brought into the body of the dancer then the spectator will feel the character of the feminine presented in the dance pieces.

6.3.5.3 The Religious Significance
Goddess Lakṣ mī is the embodiment of luck, wealth, prosperity and good fortune. It is believed that she blesses the devotees with abundance of wealth and riches. She also bestows
fortunes and prosperity on them. She presides over the fertility and moisture of the soil and over the jewels and precious metals in the womb of the earth. She is specially prayed to by the farmers as she is the goddess of rice growing agriculture.

Goddess Lakṣmī is represented as standing in samapāda sthānaka or sitting in padmāsana posture on the lotus. She is seen with lotus held in each of her hands. The lotus in her hands symbolizes the feminine charm. Two guardian elephants are found sprinkling the life giving water over the broad hipped body of the goddess. The pouring of water symbolizes life in abundance. She purifies the minds and hearts of the devotees. She is, therefore, the goddess of prosperity, riches, fame, and success, long life, health, purity and offspring. Goddess Lakṣmī’s another form is Sītā who is an embodiment of dedication, devotion, serenity, patience, calm, virginity, love, compassion, beauty, humbleness and confidence. When the devotees pray to Śrī Rāma, they involuntarily direct their prayers and petitions to Sītā also. The divine couple bestows the devotee with all the qualities inherent in them. Women pray to Śrī Rāma to bless them with husbands like the Lord and men pray asking for wives with the qualities of Sītā. Mostly the divine couple is prayed for happy marriage and good life.

6.3.6 Brahmā
Brahmā, the creator of the universe, is one among the Trinity. Brahmā in the sannidhi of Tillai Naṭarāja temple is found in seated posture.

6.3.6.1 The Structural Implications
Like Śiva and Viṣṇu, Brahmā is also set in uttama daśatāla. He is represented in standing posture as well as sitting posture. He is seen holding the kamaṇḍalu and the akṣamālā in the upper right and the left hand respectively. The lower right hand is in abhaya hasta and the lower left is in urū hasta.

6.3.6.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses
Usually the image of Brahmā is not found as the mūla bera in the temples. There is also a story in the purāṇas for this reason, which has been discussed earlier. But we find his image in the subsidiary sanctums where he is found standing/sitting with four hands. This image
gives a dignified, mature and majestic look. The face is also modeled in a very mature way because He is considered to be the Grandfather of the heavenly beings. On seeing His face and eyes the devotee perceives the wisdom that He radiates. Another striking feature is that Brahmā is found with four faces. One facing the front, one each facing the both sides and one is facing the back. If it is an icon then all the four faces are visible. If it is a sculpture caved on the wall of the temple, then only the three faces are seen. While depicting in dance songs, Brahmā is depicted as in writing the Vedas with catura hasta in one hand and haṁkāsyā hasta in the other hand. This is what is found in the devata hastas taught to the dancers at the preliminary stage of learning. But He can also be represented as holding the kamaṇḍalu, the akṣamālā, or holding abhaya mudrā in the right and urū hasta in the left. If the deities are studied thoroughly then they can be beautifully and innovatively exhibited in dance choreographies. The standing postures are usually sama or svastika in the dances. That can be changed depending on the leg posture of the respective deity installed in the temple.

6.3.6.3 The Religious Significance
Brahmā, the god of wisdom and knowledge, is adored by many. Though there are no temples in Tamilnadu with Brahmā as the mūla bera, the devotees pray to him when they see him in the other sanctums. It is said that Brahmā wrote the Vedas and so devotees pray to him for Vedic knowledge. He is considered as the essence of enlightenment. The kamaṇḍalu or water pot held in the hand of Brahmā is said to contain water within and it is from this vessel that the earth is filled with water. It also connotes dāna or gift. It is also a symbol of auspiciousness, a sign of plentifulness, prosperity.

The devotees pray to him so that they are confident of getting in abundance because that is the basic quality of Brahmā. Without water one cannot survive in this world. Brahmā is the giver of life through water. So he is adored by his devotees for his creartion. The akṣmālā held in another hand connotes the sacredness and ascetic nature of the Lord. That is why we find the sages holding the akṣmālā and reciting their prayers and hymns with a belief that they would be purified from all their earthly sins and desires and would remain pure, and finally achieve mokṣa or liberation.
6.3.7 Sarasvatī
Sarasvatī, the wife of Brahmā, is one among the three goddesses known for her wisdom. Goddess Sarasvatī discussed here is the mūla bera of the Mīnākṣī Temple.

6.3.7.1 The Structural Implications
The female images namely Umā, Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī, Durgā, Bhūmī come under the madhyana daśatāla measure. The posture of Sarasvatī is found seated in padmāsana or ardha padmāsana posture. She is found with four hands holding the akṣamāla, pustaka, padma (flower) and vyākyāna mudrā.

6.3.7.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses
Sarasvatī is found with grace, elegancy, beauty and charm. When one thinks of Sarasvatī, the musical instrument vīṇā comes to mind. But Sarasvatī is not depicted that way in the sanctums. While depicting Sarasvatī in dance, the right hand can be in kapittha hasta as if holding the akṣamāla and the left hand can be in kapittha as if holding the white lotus. Another set of hastas are the left hand in kapittha hasta holding the pustaka and the right hand in haṁśāsya hasta as if teaching. Innovative hastas can also be used rather than just showing her with the vīṇā.

6.3.7.3 The Religious Significance
Sarasvatī is considered as the goddess of learning and she is an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. The devotees come to her pleading for knowledge and wisdom. Without learning, no human can be educated in this world. So every devotee asks her to bestow him/her with the ability to learn well. She is also considered to be the goddess of arts. Every artist prays to her for his/her upliftment in the field of arts.

6.3.8 Viṇāyaka
Viṇāyaka, the older son of Śiva and Pārvatī, is called by several names such as Gaṇeśa, Gaṇapati, Orṅkārasvarūpa and Mōdakapiriyan.
6.3.8.1 The Structural Implications
Viṣṇu has the face of an elephant, three eyes, a fat body, protruding stomach and short limbs. According to the form, different kinds of implements are held in his many hands. The image is found in standing, seated, or dancing posture. The standing posture of Viṣṇu is appropriate for processions as utsava mūrti. In the garbhagṛha has, the seated form is consecrated for worship. The structural implications are studied with regard to the standing Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu image in a flexed posture and Viṣṇu in āsana or seated posture.

6.3.8.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses
The image of Viṣṇu in uttama pañcatāla exemplifies both profound spiritual meaning and artistic creativity. Viṣṇu is commonly found with four hands. The miniature form of the deity is so attractive and appealing to the viewers. Each form is of artistic beauty. There are Viṣṇus with five pairs of hands. Instead of depicting in dance the usual kapittha hastas denoting the paśa and the arṇkuśa; Viṣṇu can be shown with other hastas denoting the other attributes that are discussed in the study of the Viṣṇu at the Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli.

The Nartana Viṣṇu (dancing Gaṇapati) found in the Mīnākṣī temple in Madurai is an embodiment of beauty and vitality. One leg is lifted up from the ground and all the three pairs of hands are seen dancing with the different attributes. Usually Viṣṇu is shown in dance with two kapittha hastas near the belly or near the ears. For a variety, Viṣṇu can be depicted with the left hand in doḷā at the level of the eyes and the right hand in kapittha hasta holding arṇkuśa.

6.3.8.3 The Religious Significance
The image of Viṣṇu is the most elegant expression of the metaphysical quality of the scared Om, the fundamental sound and the origin of all other sounds. The written form of the Om sound in Tamil is similar to the face of Viṣṇu. Om stands for the absolute substance, the entire universe, and the essence of all Vedas. Om is the Brahman from which all creation begins and into which all return.
The sound Oṁ comprises three syllables – a, u and m where a sound signifies conception (Brahmā) the u sound existence (Viṣṇu) and the m sound dissolution (Śiva). Oṁ also stands for wind, fire and the sun, as well as for the past, present and future. Keeping all these philosophical significances, the sculptor has visualized a form to represent the written word Oṁ. The curve of the letter represent the head and the face of the elephant; starting with the broken tusk on the left side over the broad elephant’s head, curving downward into the unbroken tusk following the trunk to the end in a circle at the tip of the trunk, in which a round modaka is placed, becomes the letter m in Tamil.

Viṇāyaka is thus compared to the praṇava mantra Oṁ. As Oṁ stands for the Brahman from which all creation begins, Viṇāyaka is also worshipped first in temples by the devotees. The first invocation is always directed to him before any work is initiated; and then, the devotees think of offering their prayers and sacrifices to Viṇāyaka. As the image of Viṇāyaka is considered as a form of the saguṇa Brahman, it embodies the unique and unequalled qualities of the Supreme Being who carries out the three tasks of creation, protection and dissolution. Viṇāyaka’s three eyes show that he is conceived as an embodiment Śiva himself. The modaka stands for the world of reality. Hence, it is believed that Viṇāyaka bears the weight of reality and also protects and nurtures it. Since the letter Oṁ represents the protective aspect of the divine being, Viṇāyaka is held in great regard and worshipped by those who seek good things in life.

He is found with ghant a or bell in one of his hands, which denotes the symbol of auspiciousness. It is said that Sarasvatī resides in its tongue, Brahma in its face, rudra in its belly, Vāsuki in its stem with its entire body signifying the divinity of time. Its handle denotes the prāṇa śakti (vital force). The metal bells, when struck, reverberate the sound oṁ. It is believed to dispel all demoniac feelings within the devotee and infuse in him/her with divine bliss. It is also believed that the bell and its sound pleases the god and mitigates the devotee from the fear of birth and death.
6.3.9 Murukaṉ

Murukaṉ is the younger son of Śiva and Pāvatī. He is called by various names such as Subrahmaṇya, Kārtikēya, Skanda, Ār umukha, Aḷ akar, and Pāḷ aniāṭi. In the temples erected for Murukaṉ, the chief deity is Murukaṉ surrounded by subsidiary images. In Śiva temples, the image of Murukaṉ is fashioned as parivāra deva or subsidiary image.

6.3.9.1 The Structural Implications

The width of the garbhagṛha may be divided into 29 parts and to height of Murukaṉ may be adopted as any one of the 7 measures starting with 11 parts up to 19 parts. Secondly, dividing the width of the garbhagṛha into 20 parts, the height of the image could be taken as 10, 11 or 12 parts. Each part of the body is composed within measurements and proportions. When Murukaṉ is the chief deity, the image is set out to uttama daśatāla. The consorts of Murukaṉ, Vaḷḷī and Deivāni, are set to madhyama daśatāla measure. When Murukaṉ is considered subsidiary deity, then the image is fashioned within adhama daśatāla proportions. When the image is made with perfect proportions as laid down in the Śilpaśāstras, and then it is believed to radiate the power of the Divine.

6.3.9.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The image of Murukaṉ attracts anyone who sees it because of the beauty and charm on the face of Murukaṉ. In the six abodes of Murukaṉ, He is found in different postures and forms. But all the six forms are full of beauty, grace, smile and charm. He is the only god represented very young with two consorts on either side of Him. While depicting Murukaṉ in dance, repeated hastas are always used as if he is riding on the peacock or one hand in śikhara and the other in triśūla hasta. He is said to have six pairs of hands where each hand holds different attributes. So, the dancer can represent Murukaṉ in various other ways also. Moreover, while depicting Him according to the purāṇas, the apt posture of the deity installed in the shrine can be taken instead of showing the same hastas used to denote Murukaṉ.

6.3.9.3 The Religious Significance

Murukaṉ is considered as the god of beauty, knowledge, honesty, courage and obedience. Murukaṉ is also considered a child god, but still the devotees come to Him and pray for
protection, good qualities and courage. The śaktivel or the vēlāyudha that is held in the hand of Murukāṉ is an important accessory. It is said that by holding this weapon, the three energies of Śakti namely the iccā śakti (energy of desire), the jñāna śakti (energy of wisdom), and the kriyā śakti (energy of action) are within Murukāṉ. Moreover, this instrument is believed to represent the three guṇas (sattva, rājas, and tāmas), the trinity (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva), the three inner fires (garhapathya, avahaniya and dakṣiṇadhya) and the three Vedas. The vēlāyudha, a symbol of Murukāṉ, is often worshipped by itself. This implement is of two kinds: yaukika and laukika. The former is installed to benefit king, the public and the patron. The latter one includes all the other Śakti implements that are worshipped by everyone to be benefited by everyone. The other attribute held in Murukāṉ’s hand is the vajrāyudha. Two śūlas placed end to end make the vajra. It symbolizes the non-dual character of the Divine Being and also the fusion of Śiva and Pārvatī. Thus, the devotee feels fully satisfied after the darśan of the Lord because he feels that on seeing Murukāṉ, he has seen the trinity and the three goddesses. Children pray to him for knowledge as He was the one to teach Brahmā and Śiva the meaning of the Ṭām praṇava mantra at Svāmimalai. He is the god of courage. He killed many asuras. And He has a large number of devotees who worship with great love and devotion.

6.4 Conclusion
The mūla bera installed in the garbhagṛha is infused with life breath and is charged with divine power. The prescribed rituals, mantras (a spoken formula), yantras (geometrical diagrams) and meditations performed by the priests transform the mūla bera into the living representations of the presence of god on earth. An icon is worshipped with deep faith that the image can serve as an effective means for the sustained attention on the divine nature and power. The thesis tries to bring out the unique process in the devotee who moves on from the physical darkness of the outer world to the illumination of the inner world of the experience of the Divine. This transformation takes place as the devotee physically moves from the external light to the inner chamber of darkness; the garbhagṛha. In this process of movement the devotee seeks to rise above the objective details symbolized to the subject that is symbolized. The artistic quality of the icon facilitates upholding the attention on the deity. The stylized iconographic details quicken the mental processes of the devotee to ready superimposition and abstraction.
The transformation of the stone or bronze or metal image into a living divine force that radiates divine power makes the devotees to feel the transubstantiation in the mūla beras. So, it is clear from the study that the temples that house the icons, serve as an energetic expression of transforming the intangible forms into tangible forms of divinity. The mūla beras satisfy the spiritual needs of the devotees as well as transport the devotees to a state of spiritual ecstasy. It is truly a transcendental experience. To understand this complex process the pratimā lakṣaṇa and the āṅgikābhinaya of the deities have been studied. It has been a rewarding study in discovering how these two arts, Bharatanatyam and Iconography, help to invoke the transcendental presence of the Divine among the devotees.