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IDENTIFICATION AND
HISTORICAL PLACEMENT OF A LATE MEDIEVAL
SOUTH INDIAN FEMALE DEITY SCULPTURE

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ABSTRACT

IDENTIFICATION AND HISTORICAL PLACEMENT OF A LATE MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIAN FEMALE DEITY SCULPTURE

By

Margaret Thorp Miller

This paper identifies the type, date of origin, style and meaning of an Indian female stone deity sculpture from the Kresge Art Center Gallery of Michigan State University.

This is achieved through an examination of the iconography and style of the figure in comparison with other Indian figure sculpture of the Medieval Period of South India. Interpretation of the iconography, moreover, further substantiates the identity of the figure and yields an understanding of the position of this image within the framework of the Hindu religion and society.

Through this research and comparative investigation of iconography, style, and meaning of the subject sculpture, I believe this figure to be a Śrī Lakṣmī image from South India of the Vijayanagar Period, 16-18th century A.D. or later.

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Margaret Thorp Miller

A THESIS

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"When many a year had fled,
Up floated, on her lotus bed,
A maiden fair, and tender-eyed,
In the young flush of beauty's pride
She shone with pearl and golden sheen,
And seals of glory stamped her queen.
On each round arm glowed many a gem,
On her smooth brows a diadem.
Rolling in waves beneath her crown,
The glory of her hair rolled down.
Pearls on her neck of price untold,
The lady shone like burnished gold.
Queen of the gods, she leapt to land,
A lotus in her perfect hand,
And fondly, of the lotus sprung,
To lotus-bearing Vishnu clung
Her, gods above and men below
As beauty's Queen and Fortune know."¹

---Rāmāyana

¹W. J. Wilkins, Hindu Mythology (London: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1913), pp. 133-34.

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CHAPTER I

TYPE OF GODDESS

Brief Description of Subject Sculpture

Figure 1. Śrī Lakṣmī

Goddess of luck, prosperity, good fortune, standing with a lotus in her hand with a parrot perched behind.

Vijayanagar Dynasty or later, 16-18th century A.D.
Granite, H: 31 in. (head to ankle where sculpture has broken off).
Provenance: unknown, South India.
Kresge Art Center Gallery, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

The following is a brief iconographical description of the Śrī Lakṣmī image (Figure 1): chalchala type image; tribhanga pose; katakā hasta, right hand gesture, holds padma, lotus, with parrot behind; kirīṭa-mukuta, headdress; śiraśchakra, halo; ratna-kundala, jeweled earring; kanthī hara, flat, solid necklace; skandhamālā, shoulder tassels; kēyūra, biceps ornament; kucha-bandha, breast band; katisūtra, hip band; dhoti, waist to ankle garment.

Description of Iconography of the Lakṣmī Image According to T. A. Gopinatha Rao

In 1966 the Kresge Art Center Gallery acquired for its permanent collection an Indian stone sculpture. The figure at the time was thought to have been a Hindu Śrī Lakṣmī image of the 11th or 12th century A.D.



Figure 1

Śrī Lakṣmī. Granite. H:31 in. South India. 16-18th century A.D. Kresge Art Center Gallery
Michigan State University, East Lansing

It is my purpose to bring to bear certain evidence which indeed indicates that the figure is a Śrī Lakṣmī figure, but that it is of a much later date probably from the 16th to 18th century A.D.

According to T. A. Gopinatha Rao in Elements of Hindu Iconography, the iconography of Lakṣmī is described as follows:

There is goddess-worship associated with the cult of Vishnu and Brahmā as well [as with the cult of Śiva]. The goddess is here invariably looked upon as the consort of the god; and chief among Vishnu's consort is Lakṣmī. When the ocean of milk was churned for obtaining the ambrosials for the gods, many other valuable things came out from that ocean. The goddess of wealth Lakṣmī, who became afterwards the consort of Vishnu, came out from that ocean then. Lakṣmī is conceived to be treasured by her lord on the right side of his broad chest. She is known by several names, such as, Śrī, Padmā and Kamalā. She is seated upon a padma and holds in each of her two hands a lotus. She is also adorned with a lotus garland. On either side is an elephant emptying water on her head from pots presented by attendant celestial maidens.... The colour of Lakṣmī is to be golden yellow. She would wear golden ornaments set with rubies and other precious gems; in her ears there should be jewelled nakra-kundalas. The figure of Lakṣmī has to be like that of a maiden who has just attained age and should be of very handsome appearance, with pretty eye-brows, eyes like the petals of a lotus, a full neck and a well developed waist. She should wear a bodice and be adorned with various ornaments on the head. In her right hand she should carry a lotus flower and in the left hand a bilva fruit....

.....
The figure of Lakṣmī should have only two hands when she is by the side of Vishnu. But when she is worshipped in a separate temple she should have four hands..., and be seated upon a lotus of eight petals.... She should be adorned with keyūra and kañkana.¹

¹T. A. Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography (2 vols.; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Indological Publishers, 1968), I, Part II, pp. 372-74.

Iconometry of Subject Sculpture

The Kresge Śrī figure, like all Hindu sculpture, was carved according to rules laid down in the Śilpaśāstras (or art treatises) for the measurement of various parts of the body, their relative proportions, and for the posture of the figure. The Kresge sculpture has been carved in the most common proportion in that she is navatāla, or nine heads in height. Hindu images had to follow the rules of proportion, be well executed, and pleasing so that they would invite the deity to inhabit them and would enhance the feeling of devotion of the worshiper. These rules are found in the dhyanas which are verses describing the power and personality of the gods and goddesses and in the lakshanas which indicate the form and proportions of the figures in keeping with the dhyanas.¹ Most of the Śilpaśāstras were written during and after Gupta rule, and although elaborated upon with the passage of time most of the fundamentals of art theory have remained unchanged to the present day. Although South Indian sculpture was considerably different in style from that of the North it adhered to the same basic codes of image, attitude and gesture.²

Iconography of Subject Śrī Lakṣmī Figure Including the Significance of the Iconography as Geographical and Chronological Factors

The attitudes and gestures of Hindu gods and goddesses, as well as the objects which they held in their hands and their various kinds

¹Daya Ram Thapar, Icons in Bronze. An Introduction to Indian Metal Images (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1961), p. 11.

²C. Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes (New Delhi: B.C. Sanyal, 1963), p. 18.

of dress and ornamentation, thus made up the iconography which distinguished one form of a god or goddess from another. Moreover, because the iconography, particularly the decoration, varied in design from place to place at different time periods, these factors are sometimes of help in dating as well as in identifying an image.

The Kresge Śrī Lakṣmī figure stands in the position known as sama and takes the tribhanga attitude. In this attitude her lower limbs to the hips are turned slightly to the left and her torso and shoulder to the right while her head leans to the left. This attitude is characteristic of many Śrī Lakṣmī figures, but is also widely used as a posture in all Indian sculptured images.

There are, moreover, three types of icons which are worshiped in five different ways depending upon the material of which they are made and the purpose for which they are intended. The Kresge sculpture being of medium size and therefore semi-moveable is probably of the chalchala type and was most likely used when sacrifices were offered.¹ As the figure has only two arms it strongly indicates that she was originally placed to the right side of Viṣṇu, her consort. However, according to Gopinatha Rao: "Even when the Devi is not made to stand by the side of her consort, she may sometimes be given only two hands, one of which may be made to carry a parrot or a mirror and the other a blue-lily;...."²

All standing Hindu images were placed upon a platform. Although the Kresge Śrī sculpture has been broken off at the level of her ankles,

¹Thapar, Icons in Bronze. An Introduction to Indian Metal Images, p. 24.

²Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, I, Part II, p. 339.

it is probable that she once stood upon a lotus pedestal (padma pītha) or was perhaps even part of such a pedestal. The open double-petalled lotus flower with one set of petals pointing upwards and the lower set drooping down was often used as a design for round or oval pedestals and in this case would be particularly in keeping to indicate the divine origin of the deity and to symbolize her particular attributes. The double-petalled lotus pedestal can be seen supporting the Śrī figures from the Vaiṣṇava Trinity Sculptures in Figures 2 and 6.

The symbolic hand gestures called mudras or hastas play a very important part in indicating an action which a god is engaged in or a quality characteristic of a particular god. The Kresge Śrī sculpture holds her right hand in the katakā-hasta in which the tips of the fingers curl around toward the thumb to form a circle. The palm of her hand faces front and is raised upwards near her right breast which is the usual position for this gesture. As she holds a lotus in this hand, the gesture could also be termed padma-hasta, meaning a hand holding a lotus. The fact that she holds a lotus, identifies her as being Viṣṇu's consort, Lakṣmī, otherwise known as Śrī or Śrī Lakṣmī.¹ There are numerous examples of Śrī Lakṣmī figures holding lotus buds, however, for a specific example of this we can again refer to the fore-mentioned Śrī sculptures in Figures 2 and 6.

According to Gopinatha Rao, an authority on Hindu iconography, the parrot which perches on the hand of the figure behind the lotus further supports the identity of the image as a Śrī Lakṣmī figure.²

¹Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, I, Part II, p. 373.

²Ibid., p. 339.



Figure 2
Vaisnava Trinity. Granite. H: 54 1/4 in. (Sri Devi); 51 in. (Bhu Devi); 69 1/4 in. (Visnu).
South India. First half of 10th century A.D. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

There are, however, few examples to be found of Lakṣmī figures accompanied by parrots, thus indicating that the parrot is not commonly used as a Lakṣmī symbol.¹

The left arm of the Kresge sculpture, although broken off at the wrist was probably held in the lola-hasta in which the arm hangs to the side with the hand drooping gently. This can be conjectured by the position of the part of the arm which remains intact. The lola-hasta is peculiar to South Indian images² and is generally seen in female figures who have nothing to clasp in their hand. Moreover, the most typical hand positions for the Śrī Lakṣmī image are the padma-hasta as previously stated and the lola-hasta. Examples of this can be seen in the Śrī figure from the Vaiṣṇava Trinity sculpture in Figure 2, the Śrī figure from the Vaiṣṇava Trinity sculpture in Figure 6, and the Śrī Devī in Figure 10.

In addition to the hastas there are headgear which are characteristic of South Indian sculpture and of certain goddess figures. The Kresge figure wears a coronet called a kirīṭa-mukūṭa which usually occurs in Vaiṣṇavite images (Viṣṇu, his consorts, and his avatars or incarnations).³ The kirīṭa-mukūṭa on the subject sculpture consists of a conical

¹Chintamani Kar, Indian Metal Sculpture (London: Alec Tiranti Ltd., 1952), Plate 21.

²Mulk Raj Anand, The Hindu View of Art (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1933), p. 196.

³Ibid., p. 197.

shaped crown surmounted by a top-piece on a bulbous circular cushion. It has a central motif in front, in this case a leaf shape, and is otherwise simply decorated with a few incised designs. The fact that this kirīṭa-mukūṭa is more conical than cylindrical in shape and is surmounted by a swelling topped by a bud-shaped tip indicates that this comes from a period toward the end of the 14th century or later.¹

It is also pertinent to note that as the rank of a person was judged in India by his headdress so too would the importance of the gods, goddesses, and minor deities be gauged by the size of their headdress.² The size of the kirīṭa-mukūṭa of the Kresge Śrī would then indicate that she was indeed a goddess of significance. Examples of kirīṭa-mukūṭa of a type similar to that worn by the Kresge sculpture can be seen in the following figures: Viṣṇu from the Vaiṣṇava Trinity Sculpture (Figure 6) and Viṣṇu (Figure 7), both of which have leaf motifs at the base of the headdress of a more ornate nature than that of the Kresge figure; Śrī Devī (Figure 10), which has a kirīṭa-mukūṭa of identical shape and simplicity of design without the leaf ornament.

The śiraśchakra on the back of the head of the subject sculpture is very simplified in design. This consists of four flat circular bands out of the center of which hang straight tassels. The original purpose of the śiraśchakra was that of a halo which shown from behind the head of the deity. By the late Medieval Period it had become as small as that

¹C. Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, pp. 25-26; Figure 11 (b, c), p. 26.

²Thapar, Icons in Bronze. An Introduction to Indian Metal Images, p. 32.

seen on the subject sculpture although from the Pallava Period on it usually was composed of a simple lotus-petal design.¹ Below the śiraśchakra of the Kresge sculpture can be seen the back part of the necklace from which hangs a locket in the shape of a banyan leaf, a decoration typical of the late Chola and Vijayanagar Period.²

Next to the headgear probably the most characteristic decorations are the ear ornaments or kundalas. The subject sculpture wears ratna-kundalas which are composed of two circular shapes with the indication of an inset gem in the center. According to Gopinatha Rao Lakṣmī "should wear golden ornaments set with rubies and other precious gems: in her ears there should be jewelled ratna-kundalas."³ These ratna-kundalas are very rare and occur in sculpture of the Chola period or later.⁴ The fact that the kundalas are quite plain is a further indication that the subject sculpture was originally accompanied by her consort as goddesses who were individually represented "wore the dragon kundala at least in the right ear."⁵ Two very fine examples of ratna-kundalas are found on: Śrī-Devī of the Vaiṣṇava Trinity Sculpture (Figure 2) and Lakṣmī (Figure 5).

Hara, or necklaces, were worn by all deities. The Kresge Śrī wears a kanthī, a flat, solid string with a central bead tied high on

¹Kar, Indian Metal Sculpture, Plate 56, p. 46.

²Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, Figure 14 (d), p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 29.

⁴Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, p. 373.

⁵Thapar, Icons in Bronze. An Introduction to Indian Metal Images, p. 45.

her neck.¹ This is accompanied by two other flat necklaces, one which rests above the kanthī and the other which flows down between her breasts. The simplicity and length of these necklaces is characteristic of the Vijayanagar Devīs.² An example of necklaces of similar formation to those of the subject sculpture can be seen on the Lakṣmī image in Figure 12.

Skandhamālā or shoulder tassels, are worn by the Kresge sculpture. These consist of a central tassel flanked by strands which form a loop on top of the shoulders. The use of a tassel on the right shoulder did not begin until the late 10th and the 11th century of the Chola Dynasty and it was not until the late Chola Period that two tassels appeared, one on each shoulder.³ In some examples of late Chola sculpture, the tassel was divided into several strands hanging loosely over the shoulder as in Figure 5. The most characteristic skandhamālā of the Vijayanagar Period, with the exception of a few earlier examples, was composed of the side tassels split into two strands, one of which was made to hang loose while the other circled the shoulder as in Figure 6 and 12. It would thus appear that this particular skandhamālā, although missing the loose tassel, is of the Vijayanagar Period.

The biceps decoration, keyūra, of the subject sculpture consists of a flat curvilinear ornament held on the arm by two simple bands which

¹Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, p. 31.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 30.

resemble armlets. It is possible that the lower band is an armlet, although its juxtaposition to the kēyūra discounts this and, moreover, the armlet is usually placed closer to the elbow. This particular kēyūra design is similar to some of the biceps ornaments of the Chola Period. It is not, however, peculiar to any period, for throughout the history of India the kēyūra has usually taken on either a more ornate floral pattern (Chola Period) (Figure 3), or simplified itself to the other extreme in becoming a plain band resembling an armlet (Vijayanagar Period) (Figures 8 and 12).¹ The subject sculpture wears no kaṅkana, or wrist bracelet, which is generally seen on all goddess figures.²

The upper part of the body of Indian goddess figures is often covered by a tight fitting bodice made of very fine cloth which appears to be transparent. The subject sculpture may wear such a garment as indicated by the incised curving diagonal line and two swirling lines which are carved on the abdomen area and which may be a decorative way of treating the indication of a very fine drapery. The garment of the torso of the subject sculpture is thus rendered in a way typical of Indian sculpture in general in that it subtly serves to indicate the natural lines of the body.

The kucha-bandha, or breast band, worn by the subject sculpture is significant in that it serves to differentiate this goddess from

¹Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, p. 31, 32; Figure 20 (2b) (3b), p. 33.

²Stella Kramrisch, The Art of India (3rd ed., London: The Phaidon Press, 1965), Plate 112, p. 131.



Figure 3

Pārvatī. Granite. H: 46 in. South India. 11th century A.D.
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland

others, and in that it appears for the first time in Chola sculpture.¹ The simplicity of the kucha-bandha worn by the subject sculpture, however, indicates that she is of the Vijayanagar Period.² This particular kucha-bandha consists of a jeweled strip of cloth hung from slender shoulder straps which covers the breasts and serves to keep them in position as the name indicates. In the case of South Indian Vaiṣṇava Trinity sculpture in which Viṣṇu is represented with two consorts, the one on his right side, the principal one (Śrī Lakṣmī) is always shown with the kucha-bandha³ (this does not occur in the sculpture of North India). "The consorts of Viṣṇu are Śrī and Bhūdevī everywhere except in sculptures of north-eastern India...."⁴ Furthermore, in regard to the use of the kucha-bandha principally by Śrī Lakṣmī, and lest she be confused with Pārvatī due to certain similarities, it is significant that C. Sivaramamurti states, "Pārvatī never wears the kucha-bandha as she is the only consort of Śiva, except when she manifests herself as Kālī or Mahishamardīnī Durgā, in which forms the kucha-bandha is a nagakuchabandha, namely a snake artistically coiled into a knot over the center of the breast."⁵

There are numerous examples of South Indian Śrī Lakṣmī figures wearing the kucha-bandha. However, those figures whose kucha-bandha

¹Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, p. 37.

²Indian Sculpture from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1963), Plate 30.

³Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, pp. 37, 38.

⁴C. Sivaramamurti, "Geographical and Chronological Factors in Indian Iconography," Ancient India, No. 6 (January 1950), p. 34.

⁵Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, p. 38.

must closely resemble that of the subject sculpture are: Lakṣmī (Figure 5), whose kucha-bandha rather than being jeweled is decorated with a brocade pattern; Śrī Devī (Figure 10), whose kucha-bandha appears to be of a rather plain design; and Lakṣmī (Figure 12), whose kucha-bandha although designed with a central flower and leaf motif is otherwise as simple in concept as that of the Kresge Śrī figure.

The kaṭisūtra, or waist band, is usually made up of a number of strips of material with a buckle in the center on either side of which hang ribbons as illustrated in Figure 3. The kaṭisūtra of the Kresge sculpture, however, consists of two strips of material and there is no evidence of a clasp or of ribbons. The decoration formed by the nīvī, or short folds of the hem which hang from the waist band down to the thighs on both sides of the Kresge Śrī is often found on the sculpture of the late Chola Period and later. However, in most cases the waist bands are more ornate than that of the subject sculpture and/or only one hem tip is shown (Figures 3 and 8).

Below the waist band of the subject sculpture there is a flat band which hangs down to form a median square pattern. This strip also hangs in loops on either side of the waist and then falls down in stylized folds on either side of the figure. This way of draping the median and side loops is characteristic of the Chola Period (Figures 3 and 6), while the style of the long side strips with their circular-patterned incised decoration is more indicative of the Vijayanagar or Nayak Period (Figures 7 and 12).¹

¹Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, p. 35, Figure 24 (a), p. 36.

The Lakṣmī image in Figure 5 resembles the Kresge Śrī in the style of certain parts of her waist to ankle garments. The waist band of the Lakṣmī in Figure 5 is patterned as is the loop which hangs down from it, and in this way these articles of dress are more ornate than those of the subject sculpture. Also the median loop in Figure 5 does not form quite such a square pattern as that of the Kresge Śrī. However, the design of the side loops and the conception of the patterned cloth which hangs to the side of the legs is very similar especially in the way the folds swing outward at the base away from the legs. Moreover, the stylization of the folds through the use of incised lines (four lines as opposed to two on the dhoti of the subject sculpture), and the use of incised lines to give the effect of a pattern on the side draping material, offer a similarity to the subject sculpture.

There are many examples from later periods in which incised lines indicate the pattern of drapery, although in the later sculptures there is often no side cloth at all and there is much variation in the style of the median loop. The folds of the dhoti worn by the Lakṣmī sculpture in Figure 12 are rendered by two incised lines although no pattern is indicated. The side cloth hangs in three curled strips and the median loop has been omitted. The folds of the dhoti worn by the Śivakāmi sculpture in Figure 9 are delineated by three rows of incised dots. A very ornate material pattern is also indicated between the folds through the use of dots. Although there is no drapery to the side of the legs, a loop of cloth forms a square shape between the thighs.

The dhoti-type garment of the subject sculpture drapes from her waist down to her ankles. The dhoti, which is the orthodox mode of dress in India even today, consists of a piece of material folded over at the waist and secured in front and back by the katisūtra. Double incised lines indicate in schematic fashion the rhythm of folds in the dhoti of the Kresge Śrī. The strips of cloth hanging to either side of her body likewise fall in folds which are indicated by double incised lines and the fabric is given texture by a pattern of incised circles. The use of incised lines to indicate the garment folds became a common device of the late Chola Period¹ and was used thereafter (Figure 5). In the later periods, however, the side cloth often was very small or was omitted altogether and the median loop took on a variety of shapes and styles (Figures 8 and 9).² The dhoti of the Pārvatī sculpture (Figure 8) is arranged in folds which are indicated by the use of a single incised line. The median loop forms a semi-circle and there is the briefest suggestion of drapery between the legs.

In summary the iconography of the subject sculpture indicates that she is indeed a Śrī Lakṣmī figure from the South of India and was most likely placed in a niche beside her consort, Viṣṇu. Furthermore, the style of her iconography would suggest that she was created during the Vijayanagar Period or possibly later.

¹Thapar, Icons in Bronze. An Introduction to Indian Metal Images, Plate LXIII. Sivaramamurti, South Asian Bronzes, p. 36-37.

²Kar, Indian Metal Sculpture, Plate 21. Art of India and South-east Asia, Plate 66, p. 49.

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF THE GODDESS ŚRĪ LAKṢMĪ HISTORICALLY WITHIN THE HINDU RELIGION

Concept of the Goddess Lakṣmī

Hinduism reached its final form as the result of the impact upon it of the Dravidian South. "Here, on the basis of indigenous cults fertilized by Āryan influences, theistic schools had arisen, characterized by intense ecstatic piety."¹ This devotional Hinduism, which was spread by many wandering preachers and hymn-singers in the Medieval Period, had a great effect on Hinduism.²

From before the Christian era educated Hindus looked upon either Viṣṇu or Śiva as the highest god and considered other gods to be secondary expressions of God. Thus the two sects of Vaiṣṇavites and Śaivites were formed. For the most part, the two sects recognized that each of their gods was a different aspect of the other, and so each tolerated the other.

To the Vaiṣṇavite, Viṣṇu is the high god, the unconquerable preserver of the universe, "...the source of the universe and of all things."³

¹A. L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1954), p. 298.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 300.

According to one myth Viṣṇu rises from a lotus bloom;² in another he sleeps in the cosmic waters on the snake of a thousand heads. While he is sleeping a lotus arises from his navel, and in the lotus lies the creative force of the world. After the world is created Viṣṇu awakens to rule in the highest heaven. Viṣṇu's consort or female counterpart is Lakṣmī. Although all Hindu gods have complementary goddesses, "Lakṣmī is an important goddess in her own right."³

Lakṣmī, meaning fortune, is the goddess of luck, prosperity, abundance, and good fortune as well as the śakti or energy of Viṣṇu. She is also called Śrī, meaning beauty, and Kamalā or Padmā, meaning lotus-lady.⁴ Both Śrī and Lakṣmī are conceptualized as fortune in the Vedas. Beauty and fortune in the Taittirīya saṃhitā are the wives of Aditya, the solar-principle. Beauty is described in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as being born from Prajāpati, the lord of progeny.⁵

The first time that Lakṣmī is mentioned by her two most important names, Śrī and Lakṣmī, is in the Khilas or "Supplements" which is an apocryphal hymn appended to the Rig Veda.⁶ Here are found descriptions of all the meanings which were to characterize her in Medieval

¹Basham, The Wonder That Was India, p. 300.

²Donald A. MacKenzie, Indian Myth and Legend (London: The Gresham Publishing Co., Ltd., n.d.), p. 122.

³Basham, The Wonder That Was India, p. 300.

⁴Alain Daniélou, Hindu Polytheism (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), p. 259.

⁵Ibid., p. 261.

⁶Heinrich Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, ed. by Joseph Campbell (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 91.

times. In this hymn she is addressed in the following manner: "'Thou art the mother of created beings"....'¹ Moreover, she is called kṣamā, earth, and as such is linked with the Mother Earth goddess, a very old concept which spread over a wide area of Asia. It is said she "...presides over the fertility and moisture of the soil and over the jewels and precious metals in the womb of the earth...."² As such '...she is called, "The One Possessing Dung" (karīṣinī)....'³ and her two sons, Mud and Moisture represent the two ingredients of rich earth.⁴

As goddess of good fortune and beauty it is said in the Khilas that she is honey-like (mādhavī), and capable of giving "...gold, cows, horses, and slaves."⁵ 'She wears "garlands of silver and gold."⁶ She can grant good health, wealth, children and fame. 'She is "made of gold" (hiranyamayī),..., imperishable, beautiful, and valuable as gold.'⁷ She is also called Jewel (Hirā).⁸

Lakṣmī is probably most frequently associated with the lotus symbol. In the Khilas she is called: lotus-born (padmasambhava), standing on a lotus (padmesthita), lotus-colored (padmavarna), lotus-

¹Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 91.

²Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, I, p. 158.

³Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 91.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁸Daniélou, Hindu Polytheism, p. 262.

thighed (padma-ūru), lotus-eyed (padmāksi), abounding in lotuses (padmini puskarnini), decked with lotus garlands (padmamālīni).¹

Lakṣmī is said to have arisen from the ocean of milk, holding a lotus in her hand, when it was churned by the gods and anti-gods, for ambrosia. This story comes from the Rāmāyana and several of the Purānas.² It is told in the Viṣṇu Purāna as follows:

...Then, seated on a lotus,
Beauty's bright goddess, peerless Sri, rose
Out of the waves;....³

Lakṣmī mythology associates her with the lotus symbol both independently and through her existence as the consort or śakti of Viṣṇu. Lakṣmī is referred to in the Khilas as '...harivallabhā and viṣṇupatnī, "The Beloved Spouse of Vishnu."⁴ As Viṣṇu is the cosmic sea, the substance from which all things arise, and all things return again, it is fitting that Lakṣmī, as the lotus goddess, be his consort.⁵

"Rising from the depths of water and expanding its petals on the surface, the lotus ... is the most beautiful evidence offered to the eye of the self-engendering fertility of the bottom."⁶

As previously pointed out, Indian mythology tells us that at the beginning of time Viṣṇu sleeps in the universal waters supported by the

¹Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 91.

²Wilkins, Hindu Mythology, p. 130.

³Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 92.

⁴Ibid., p. 133.

⁵Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, I, p. 165.

⁶Ibid.

snake, Ananta, who symbolizes this water. When a new world cycle begins a golden lotus bud bursts forth from the navel of Viṣṇu. This lotus represents the creative forces within his body. "This radiant lotus of the world is the goddess Padmā, the śakti or divine energy of slumbering Viṣṇu. She is the awakening of his substance, in dream, as the miracle of life."¹ In this aspect she is also sometimes called multiplicity, while Viṣṇu is said to have the power-of-cohesion. She is thus the active force of their dual existence; he is the inactive force.

The idea of the consort being a female counterpart or one of the dual aspects of the divine is a very important one in Hinduism. In the Viṣṇu creation myth Lakṣmī as the female principle is regarded as "...the most potent force in creation, being representative of the Energy, Power or Virtue which manifests itself throughout the universe in qualities both benign and malignant...."² Further descriptions of her as the śakti of Viṣṇu found in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa are as follows: Viṣṇu is all pervading, she is omnipresent; Viṣṇu is meaning, she is speech; she is understanding, she is intellect; Viṣṇu is righteousness, she is devotion; she is earth, Viṣṇu is the support of the earth.³

Iconographical Interpretation

How then does the Indian image maker personify the goddess Lakṣmī so as to convey her many meanings to the devotee? Because of her

¹Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, I, p. 165.

²E. B. Havell, The Art Heritage of India (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala Sons and Co. Private Ltd., 1964), p. 159.

³Mackenzie, Indian Myths and Legend, p. 149.

association with the lotus she is almost without exception portrayed with a lotus. She is usually represented as a woman in her prime, seated on or standing upon a lotus, and holding a lotus in her hand. She is most often shown with two arms seated or standing beside Viṣṇu holding a lotus in her hand. Her other most characteristic pose is shown with her holding a water jar (symbolizing abundance), from which grow five lotus blossoms, two of which support two attending elephants. These elephants with their raised trunks sprinkle the contents of the water jar over the goddess of fertility, Gaṇā Lakṣmī (Lakṣmī of the Elephants).

A review of the symbolic meaning of the lotus then is necessary for an understanding of why the image maker almost invariably depicted her in association with this flower. We have seen how the myths concerning her and Viṣṇu have involved much reference to the lotus and how Lakṣmī is sometimes called Lotus or her name at least includes the word lotus in it.

The lotus is equated with the universe and the cosmic waters.¹ (The Hindu conceive of the waters as being female). It is also life rising from the waters and thus represents the unfolding of all creation or the womb of the universe. It therefore has the faculty of bestowing life, fertility, and abundance of all kinds -- specifically wealth.

"From this root the sap is sent forth into all directions, it rises through the central stem, spreads through the side-shoots, flows out

¹Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, p. 90.

through the nodes, penetrates into the plant's branches, leaves, flowers and fruits, and wherever it appears it engenders life, the life that animates animals and man, demons and gods, that makes the fields fertile and the cattle thrive, pours riches and wealth over the earth...."¹

The lotus, moreover, is associated with the idea of purity and therefore with the color white and with pure gold. Although the lotus rises from the mud, it is clean, white and pure.

The forms and shapes that the images of the Hindu gods and goddesses take find their character in the parts of the lotus plant. The meaning of this is found in the notion that the human body is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic lotus plant.² Thus it is that Lakṣmī's body and limbs are portrayed as being round and cylindrical like the lotus stalk, her fingers are like the lotus rhizome shoots, and her eyes are the shape of the lotus petal.

To understand the type of beauty most commonly aimed for by the Indian artist in creating a Lakṣmī figure, one must take into account the dual aspect of the divine. It is thus that the Indian artist sought to design a divine type which would combine and transcend the physical beauty of both male and female principles. Thus we see in all images the use of broad shoulders and impressive body combined with rounded parts and smooth skin. When the female ideal is depicted sexual characteristics are added to this basic form. These characteristics, moreover, are usually most prominent on a fertility image such as that of Lakṣmī.³

¹F[red] D. K. Bosch, The Golden Germ (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1960), p. 64.

²Ibid., p. 223.

³Havell, The Art Heritage of India, pp. 160-61.

We have seen how Lakṣmī is associated with the purity of gold and with gold as symbolizing wealth and abundance. It is for these reasons that the Indian artist image maker presents her as bedecked with gold and jewels. As goddess of fertility she sometimes holds in her one hand a fruit, such as the fore-mentioned bilva fruit, which symbolizes "...the fertility of crops and trees"¹ and connotes "...offspring as well, the fruit of the womb."² Furthermore, to symbolize her beauty (Śrī) she is occasionally shown with a parrot.³ Apparently parrots were sometimes given as offering gifts to the gods and goddesses and were considered to be sacred. They were also commonly kept as pets by upper class ladies⁴ so that it may simply be that she is accompanied by a parrot as an ornament. However, it is interesting to quote from the great South Indian novel in verse written toward the end of the 2nd century A.D. by Prince Ilangô Adigal.⁵ The following could well describe the subject Lakṣmī figure:

"To hear your voice, soft as the ancient harp
called yâḷ and sweeter than nectar, the green
parrot keeps silent. Woman of noble gait, he
perches, drunk with pleasure, on the flower of
your hand."⁶

¹Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, I, p. 165.

²Ibid.

³B. V. Shetti, Asstt. Curator, Prince of Wales Museum of Western India to Margaret T. Miller (May 5, 1967).

⁴Basham, The Wonder That Was India, p. 196.

⁵Prince Ilangô Adigal, Shilappadikaram, trans. and introd. by Alain Daniélou (New York: New Directions Publishing Co., 1965), p. VIII.

⁶Ibid., p. 8.

Worship of Lakṣmī

Medieval Hinduism of South India is characterized by popular devotional movements whose main focus was the devotion to and worship of a personal God. Bhakti is the Indian word for the devotion and adoration with which the gods and goddesses were worshiped. This cult of bhakti systemized itself into various schools. The Śrīvaiṣṇavas school of the South consisted of the devotees of Viṣṇu with the goddess Śrī acting as mediator.¹ The various goddesses and śāktis also were conceived of as being part of the Mother Goddess and as such became the focus of the devotional movements along with Viṣṇu and Śiva. The Mother Goddess was worshipped according to certain esoteric religious rituals as defined in the Tantras. The devotional religion of the Goddess was a powerful force in Medieval South India and remains so to this day.²

Bhakti is a very intense and fervent affection and devotion for a personal deity. It may come as a result of knowledge but this is not necessary. The personal god is the object of worship. However, worship is not bhakti although this outward act may encompass bhakti. It is a belief in a personal god, not in a system of beliefs. Pure works can lead to bhakti, but the result of works is transient and bhakti promises immortality. Just as the Indian artist does not sign his work, but rather is content that his identity be merged with his own creations, so can the realization of self come through surrender

¹William Theodore De Bary, ed., Sources of Indian Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 329, 344, 349, 351.

²Phillip Rawson, Erotic Art of the East (New York: C. P. Putnam's Sons, 1968), p. 169.

to and faith in the Universal Self. Bhakti does not depend on effort but on faith in the grace of god and the belief that his power will determine the good of the Universe.¹

The path of bhakti was open to all classes. Although it appealed to the masses their intense religious feelings as expressed in bhakti exerted an influence upon all of Indian society and art. Originally the three paths to salvation demarcated three different religious points of view and three levels of mind, occupation, and class level. For the Brahmin and intellectual the path of knowledge lay open; for the business man, the politician, the artist and the labourer lay the path of works; the path of bhakti was for all men who were filled with love for and faith in God.²

The divine image was the medium through which one could transfer his love and devotion to his god. The images and their worship became the most potent factor for the majority of Indians to express bhakti, and it was for this reason that the rise of bhakti in the South manifested itself in the creation of so many images. Moreover, this further explains why the image had to follow the canonical orthodox concept of the god and why it must possess beauty and life. For in the process of worship the devotee becomes one with the deity who has been invited to reside temporarily in the image. In one of the Vaiṣṇava texts it is said that the divinity will draw near willingly

¹Jitendra Nath Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography (2nd ed., rev. and enl.; Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1956), pp. 71-73. Havell, The Art Heritage of India, pp. 165-71.

²Havell, The Art Heritage of India, pp. 165-69. De Bary, Sources of Indian Tradition, pp. 335, 346.

if the image is beautiful. For the devotee the image must sustain the presence of the god so that his inner vision can behold the god. The attitude of the artist is likewise that of an initiated devotee. Whether one produces an inner vision for oneself or for an image for others bhakti is necessary.¹

From the 11th century A.D. to the present day, part of a particular festival, Divali, has been dedicated to Lakṣmī pugana, the worship of Lakṣmī as the goddess of wealth.² This festival, which means festival of the feast of lights, takes place during three days in November.³ It is primarily dedicated to Viṣṇu and his deeds. In the evening of the second day the worship of the goddess of wealth takes place. This worship may not have much connection with Viṣṇu other than the fact that Lakṣmī happens to be his consort. The rite is primarily performed by wealthy people such as merchants and traders.⁴ Many lamps are lighted during this festival and we see in the Dīpala-kṣmī figures (in which Lakṣmī holds an oil lamp in her two hands) the physical representation of the Divali Lakṣmī.⁵

Because of the size and iconography of the subject Srī Lakṣmī figure it is my primary conjecture that she was placed in a temple

¹G. S. Ghurye, Gods and Men (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1962), pp. 166-67.

²Jean Antoine Dubois, Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India: and of Their Institutions, Religious and Civil (3rd ed.; Madras: Higginbotham and Co., 1879), p. 283.

³Ghurye, Gods and Men, pp. 166-67.

⁴Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, Plate 96 (b).

⁵Kar, Indian Metal Sculpture, Plate 22.

compound primarily dedicated to Viṣṇu and as such was both worshiped in a subsidiary relationship to him and independently as the goddess Lakṣmī by those devotees who chose her as their personal deity.

A general description of a South Indian Viṣṇu temple complex indicating Lakṣmī's placement in it follows. The temple compound and main structures are oriented to the East with entrances on the East side. The temple compound is surrounded by a rectangular wall having a gopura in the east and south and sometimes in the west and north. Within the compound are temples, shrines, courts, holy ponds, halls, and in some cases, chariots for the carrying of shrine images in processions. A small stone lotus altar stands by the main entrance upon which are placed offerings. Behind this is a wooden mast which indicates the main sanctuary. In Viṣṇu temples a Garuḍa or Hanuman is placed behind the mast. The cella faces east, is square in shape, and contains an image of Viṣṇu in human form. Behind the main temple are two more temples dedicated to the children of the god and opposite the southern portal is a temple in which his consort Lakṣmī appears.¹ The outer walls of these temples were covered with an amplitude of images (the temples appear more like huge sculptures) and as such provided for the religious tone of the times as found in bhakti. It is probable that the subject sculpture was placed in a niche beside Viṣṇu on the walls either of the Viṣṇu or the Lakṣmī temple.

¹Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, I, p. 288. Stella Kramrisch, The Hindu Temple (2 vols.; Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), II, p. 299.

Because the subject sculpture is from the late Medieval Period of South India it is possible that she could also have been placed in a small chapel in a village or she could have been part of an individual household chapel. Once the Muslim rulers extended their influence to the South, many smaller Hindu images like that of the subject sculpture were made for this purpose in order to meet the religious needs of the people.¹

Regarding the question as to whether or not Lakṣmī would have played a prominent enough role in the religion of the time to have been placed in a temple dedicated solely to her, there seems to exist a difference of opinion among certain authorities. According to G. S. Ghurye, Lakṣmī and Padmāvatī (another characteristic name for Lakṣmī) are treated as separate entities as apart from their male counterpart, Viṣṇu.² As such they are entitled to have temples of their own and Ghurye cites two examples to substantiate this: the temple of Padmāvatī at Tiruchannoor near the Vaiṣṇava center of Tirupati; the temples of Gajā Lakṣmī at Mahabalipura and at Doddagad-daralli near Hasan in Mysore built around 1113 A.D.³

On the other hand, Basham states that although she was "...never the object of a special cult, her icons are numerous, and she was much worshiped as a subsidiary deity."⁴ According to Rambach images of

¹ Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography, pp. 244-45.

² Ghurye, Gods and Men, p. 246.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Basham, The Wonder That Was India, p. 316.

Lakṣmī were placed over the doors and windows of sanctuaries.¹

Daniélou states, "She had no temples but is worshiped in every home on all important occasions. The day dedicated to her worship is observed all over India" (Divali is probably this day).²

¹Pierre Rambach, Vitold De Golish, The Golden Age of Indian Art (New York: The Studio Publications, Inc., 1955), p. 39.

²Daniélou, Hindu Polytheism, p. 262.

CHAPTER III

COMPARISON OF THE STYLE OF SUBJECT ŚRĪ LAKṢMĪ SCULPTURE WITH THE STYLE OF SOUTH INDIAN MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE

Comparison of the Style of Chola Period Figure Sculpture with That of Vijayanagar Period Figure Sculpture

Stone figure sculpture of late Medieval South India with the exception of images from the late Chola Period, is often of rather poor quality. On the other hand, some of the metal sculptures of this period attain a high degree of excellence. It would seem that skill of workmanship and quality of design passed from the hands of the stone sculptors to those of the metal workers.¹ This may have been due to the fact that the spread of the bhakti cults in the South brought about an increasing demand for smaller sculptures for use in processions and in homes. Metal, of course, would have provided the most desirable medium for this use. In turn, this may have furnished the sculptors with an inspiration which served to infuse life into these images.

The lack of quality in the stone figure sculpture is sometimes blamed upon a too rigid following of the canons of iconography and iconometry, but were this true of stone sculpture it would probably

¹ Sherman Lee, A History of Far Eastern Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1964), p. 209.

have also been true of metal sculpture. It is perhaps more likely due to the encroachment and ultimate control over the Deccan by the Muslims. With the fall of the Vijayanagar Kingdom in 1565, the last strong cultural Hindu empire of the South was ended. Thus, the feeling of security and confidence which existed among the Hindus during the earlier dynasties was lost along with the stimulus of state patronage, and these feelings were reflected in a lack of vitality in the arts.

Analysis and comparison of the style of figure sculpture of the Chola Period (9th century A.D. to early 14th century A.D.) and of figure sculpture of the Vijayanagar Period (14th century A.D. to 17th century A.D.) reveals certain characteristics which permit dating of Indian figure sculpture.

The overall composition of the Chola sculpture is unified by the symmetry of the figure, a sense of balance, and the flowing contours of its outlines. The images are filled with prana -- the breath of life -- and appear to be about to move or dance. There is a fluid flexion of the body and limbs; there is unity in the rhythm of these forms.

The Vijayanagar sculptures are more static in pose and composition. The body is stiff and unmoving. There is no sway and little feeling of rhythm in the body and limbs. The body appears to be limp and lifeless.

These general compositional differences can be most readily illustrated by a direct comparison of the late Chola Bhu Devī in Figure 4 with the Vijayanagar Lakṣmī in Figure 10. The composition



Figure 4

Bhu Devī. Granite. H: 32 1/16 in. South India. 13th century A.D.
National Museum, New Delhi

of the Bhu Devī is unified by the continuity of rhythm of the pose to which the other formal elements relate in harmonious accord. The gentle sway of the body and rounded swelling of the forms give a quality of life, breath and even movement to the figure which seems to defy the characteristics of the material from which she is carved. Although the Lakṣmī figure likewise stands in the tribhanga pose there is a stiffness in her stance and a lack of harmonious relationship between parts which does not allow for visual continuity. Thus, one is very much aware that she is a lifeless image carved in immovable stone.

A comparative examination of the figural elements of the Bhu Devī sculpture (Figure 4) with the Lakṣmī sculpture (Figure 10) further reveals certain characteristics which relate to the overall compositional qualities of Chola and Vijayanagar sculpture. The body and limbs of the Chola sculpture are supple, rounded, and organic with each part blending easily into the next. The figure is thus unified by the repetition of these rounded areas, the inter-relationships of these areas, and the balanced organization of the parts into a whole. In the Vijayanagar Lakṣmī sculpture the elements of the body are rounded and curved in shape, but the organic transitional areas between forms seen in the Chola sculpture is lacking. Moreover, the Lakṣmī figure illustrates the change in the relative proportions of limbs, head and torso which is characteristic of the Vijayanagar Period. The shoulders have become broader and more square, the arms are far too large and heavy for the body. In addition, the arms of the Lakṣmī figure appear

to be added to the body without any sense of organic unity. The torso is stiff and summarily treated, lacking the swelling of breath and the soft curving flesh which one sensed in the abdominal area of the Bhu Devī. Whereas in the sculpture of the Chola Period (Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5), the breasts seemed to swell out and hang down slightly from their weight, in the Vijayanagar Period (Figures 8, 9, 10, and 12), the bosom is smaller, stiff, and defies gravity.

The faces of the Chola sculptures are carved in the round (Figures 2 and 4). Each feature grows out of the overall ovoid shape of the head and is softly modelled. The eye and eyelid are shaped like petals. The eyelid is sometimes half closed, which lends a softening and sensuous effect to the face. The eyebrow blends into the forehead. The nose is graceful in shape and flows into the gently curving cheek. The mouth turns upward slightly in the corners. The shape of the head is like an egg, the jaw is sometimes broad but its' graceful curves blend with the oval form of the face. The expression conveys both a sense of serenity and of vitality.

The features of the faces of the Vijayanagar sculptures tend to be carved on the surface in a linear, stylized fashion (Figures 8, 9, 11, and 12). Rather than growing out of the ovoid shape of the head, they appear to be applied to the head. The eyes seem to stare or bug out. The lids are part of a double line which outlines the eyes and accentuates the open-eyed look. The eyebrows are highly arched. The nose is very characteristic of the period and is pointed and beak-like. The mouth is usually V-shaped; the upper lip, like the eyelid, is outlined with an incised line which gives it a harsh appearance. The head



Figure 5

Laksmī. Bronze. South India. 13th century A.D.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

shape is triangular. The expression is often ridiculous; the figure appears to be in a constant state of shocked surprise.

The drapery or dhoti of Chola sculpture reveals and accentuates the sway and flow and rounded forms of the body beneath (Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5). The drapery of the later Vijayanagar Period tends to confine and imprison the body within the sculptural material (Figures 10, 11, and 12). Rather than flowing in gentle curves with modelled folds, the drapery is as static as the form beneath it and the folds are given surface treatment through an incised, stylized pattern of lines.

The ornaments, like the drapery, on the Chola sculpture are treated in detail and are softly modelled and in high relief (Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). The ornamentation on the Vijayanagar sculpture tends to be more simple in design and execution (Figures 8, 10, 11, and 12). The relief is usually lower than that of earlier sculpture and, in fact, much of the decoration is conceived through the use of flat plains and incised linear surface patterns.

Comparison of Style of Subject Sculpture With Examples from Vijayanagar Period

A comparison of the subject sculpture with other figure sculptures of the Vijayanagar Period demonstrates a definite stylistic similarity.

The stiff stance and general lack of grace of the pose of the Kresge Lakṣmī as well as the proportions of the limbs, body, and head are very similar to that of other sculptures from the Vijayanagar Period (Figures 10, 11, and 12). In each instance, the huge arms which hang from enormous square shoulders seem to weigh down the figures

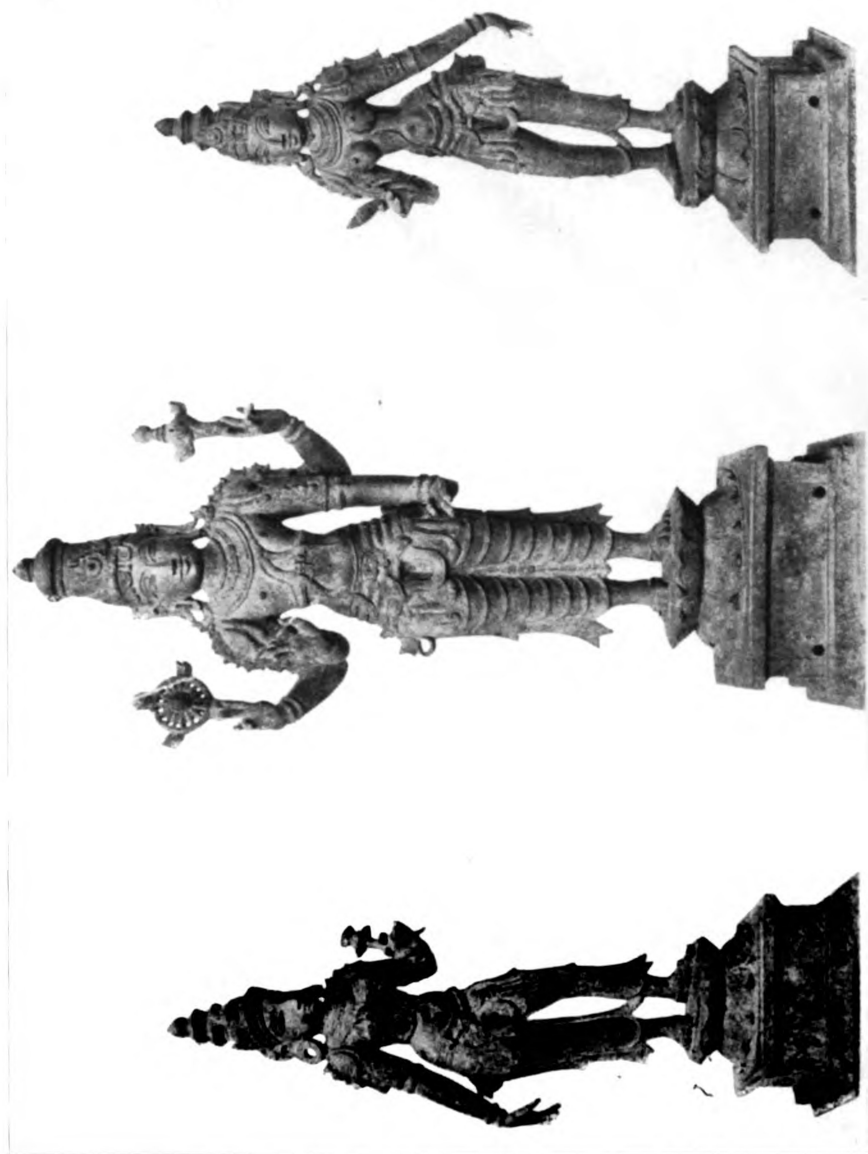


Figure 6

Vishnu With Consorts. Bronze. South India. 14th century A.D.
Government Museum, Madras

giving them a heavy, awkward appearance. The small taut torsos of the images in Figures 10 and 11 twist in a tense fashion to fit the tribhanga pose having none of the fluidity and ease of the Chola figures. The faces of the images stare out abruptly at us with those peculiar features of bugging eyes, beak nose, and turned up mouth distinctive of the period.

The treatment of the facial features of the Pārvatī (Figure 8) and Śivakāmi (Figure 9), sculptures is also similar to that of the Kresge Śrī in that the eyelids, eyebrows and mouths are executed in low relief circumscribed with incised line. The body and limb proportions of these figures, however, are more harmonious and their poses less taut which is probably due to their earlier origins and the lingering Chola influence upon their conception.

The style and execution of dress and ornamentation of the Kresge Śrī is similar to that of other figures of the Vijayanagar Period in that these features are treated in a surface manner with little awareness of the underlying form. The drapery is depicted in a stiff, linear, stylized fashion and the ornaments are applied in flat, low relief (Figures 9, 11, and 12).

Prana, the life breath, the energy and force of vitality which attracted the goddess to reside in her image and the devotee to draw near in adoration and which was so essential to the Medieval Hindi philosophy of bhakti is lacking in the subject sculpture as it is in many other stone sculptures of the period (Figures 10, 11, and 12). This force in earlier sculpture was conveyed through the use of graceful ease of pose, flowing contours, merging and swelling volumes of



Figure 7

Viṣṇu. Bronze. H: 46 1/2 in. South India. 14-15th century A.D.
..
Denver Art Museum, Denver



Figure 8

Pārvatī. Bronze. H: 26 1/2 in. Madras. 14-15th century A.D.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Figure 9

Śivakāmi. Bronze. H: 27 3/4 in. South India. 14-16th century A.D.
The George P. Bickford Collection, Cleveland



Figure 10

Śrī Devī. Granite. South India. 15-16th century A.D.
William Hayes Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge



Figure 11

Viṣṇu. Brass. H: 13 1/2 in. South India. 16th century A.D.
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland



Figure 12

Lakṣmī. Brass. H: 25 1/2 in. Mysore. 16-17th century A.D.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

limbs, torso, hips and breasts. In the Kresge Śrī one senses a tenseness of stance and a discontinuity of form which effects a lack of visual unity and vitality. The life breath which pressed out in the swelling abdomen and was expressed in a general sense of fluidity of form of earlier sculptures does not appear to be present in the Kresge Śrī. In the earlier figures, moreover, the drapery and ornamentation served to reveal and accentuate the rhythm and vitality of the sculptural forms. These features of the Kresge Śrī are applied in a surface manner to the rather uninteresting and static forms they cover. Although not totally lacking in grace of form the Kresge Śrī Lakṣmī is far removed from the ideals of beauty and vitality of the images of earlier figures and would thus appear to be of the Vijayanagar Period or later.

Summary of Suggested Dating According to Museum Authorities

Communication with certain authorities in the field of Asian art reinforces the position that the subject Śrī Lakṣmī figure is of South Indian late Medieval origin. Correspondence with B. V. Shetti, Assistant Curator of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in Bombay indicated that the figure was an 18th century A.D. South Indian image of Śrī Devī (Devī meaning goddess).¹ Mr. A. K. Bhattacharyya, Director of the Indian Museum of Calcutta, stated that the figure was

¹B. V. Shetti, Assistant Curator, Prince of Wales Museum of Western India to Margaret T. Miller.

from South India of the 17th century A.D. and that she was probably Śrī Devī.¹ Mr. V. P. Dwivedi, Assistant Curator of Oriental Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland stated that her iconography and style indicated that she was a Śrī Lakṣmī figure of the 17th century A.D. from either Madras or Tangore.²

¹A. K. Bhattacharyya for Shri S. P. Basu, Curator, Indian Museum, Calcutta, India to Margaret T. Miller (October 26, 1967).

²V. P. Dwivedi, Assistant Curator of Oriental Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio (April 20, 1967).

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