

CHAPTER - III

RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

Religious tourism is one of the most prevalent and popular forms of Cultural heritage tourism in Andhra Pradesh. Today and is among the earliest precursors of modern day tourism. Pilgrimage takes many forms, but central among them is the desire of religious adherents to supplicate deity for blessing, become closer to God, offer prayers to get healed and receive forgiveness for sins. Such pilgrimage requires self-humbling and penitence which are affected more readily in some cases by the afflictions associated with travelling along a prescribed pilgrim route. In some religious traditions, the pathway to the religious site can be as enlightening and spiritually moving as arriving at the holy site itself.

Travel for religious purposes has been there from the most ancient times. All religions have their Holy places and places of worship. Such places are called by different names like Devalaya (House of God) Temple, Church, Masjid and Gurudwara which mean a building for religious prayers and house for communal worship. The pilgrimage is a journey undertaken for betterment of the spiritual knowledge and peace. According to the World Tourism Organization, an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year. According to the U.S. Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, Americans travellers overseas for "religious or pilgrimage" purposes has increased from 491,000 travellers in 2002 to 633,000 travelers in 2005 (30% increase). Travel or pilgrimage to religious places in Andhra Pradesh is considered an integral part of its culture and tradition. India is a land of pilgrimage. In our society, the pilgrimage journeys performed to seek God's grace and to learn moral values and to get respect in the individual community. Within the holy space human beings are given the chance to transcend themselves when they come face to face, in contemplation, with the divinity. The pilgrimage, instead of diminishing in our apparently ever more secular, scientific and technologically oriented world, is experiencing considerable growth. This is true in all religions.¹

In India in general, Andhra Pradesh in particular domestic and international travel by Hindus for religious purpose is an important part of the tourism economy. The experience of Pushkaram on rivers (once in 12 years), Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara, and Medaram Warngal District (Biannual) religious congregation of pilgrims is perhaps the largest tourist gathering in the world. Pilgrimage should be considered a form of heritage from at least three perspectives. First, the sites visited are heritage places including temples, mosques, churches, shrines, sacred mountains and caves. Second, pilgrimage routes have become heritage and cultural resources based on their historical role in the practices of pilgrimage. Finally, the forms of worship and the religious rites undertaken at the venerated places have become part of an intangible heritage.

Each region of the world is seeking to exploit its strengths. Andhra Pradesh's competitive advantage lies in the area of religious tourism² because its religious heritage and culture is considered unique. Religious tourism has a great potential in India as well as in Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh is richly endowed with ancient temples and religious festivals. Religions originating in India, be it Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism, have a vibrant culture and spiritual philosophy. Together, they present a viable, alternative way of life as compared to the materialism and confrontation prevalent in the West.

According to Das Gupta,³ pilgrimage tourism plays a great role towards socio-economic changes according to Indian sentiment. The pilgrim centres or tirthasthal used to be visited by a number of tourists to earn divine blessing and religious merit. One of such centre, it is felt that, where taking holy dip during *makarsankranti*, in a life of person earns that much of virtue which one can earn by visiting all the pilgrimage centres throughout the life. The pilgrimage tourism is a vital and living experience to pilgrimage sites which have therefore become important destinations, because they are closely linked with the cultural identity and heritage of destinations.

Special area development⁴

It is a debatable question whether pilgrimage tourism leads to the development of specific area only i.e. whether on account of its 'specific' nature it has only a limited potential for tourism development. There are certain centres which serve very specific purpose of performing 'pilgrimage', the scope of pilgrimage tourism can be called area specific in the sense that if one is the devotee of a particular sect/religion/shrine, he will visit repetitively those places where his worshipping deity resides. After sometime, owing to lack of 'any other adventure' he may lose some interest, unless otherwise motivated. This, no doubt, indicates a limited scope for the growth of pilgrimage tourism. On the contrary adventure tourism has a field wide open right from the Himalayas down to Cape Comorin. Pilgrimage and tourism are closely related. Tourist industry fetches large number of 'local tourists' mainly to pilgrim centres. Pilgrimage tourism helps greatly in travel promotion. One finds that ever increasing demand for better travel facilities at pilgrim centres to cater to the large number of pilgrim tourists has pressurised the state governments and tourism departments to come up with concrete plans. Since this kind of tourism involves large profits it has attracted a number of private tour-operators.

Hindu Religious Centres

The Hindu religious literature is replete with expressions of belief that visiting sacred places is an act of holiness. An influential Hindu religious journal tersely sums up the reason why pilgrimage to sacred places should be undertaken: "In order for achieving identity with the Cosmic Reality: the knowledge of this reality (*Bhagvan*) is acquired through lustless and greedless association with the holy men; it is at the *tirthas* that holy men are encountered".⁵ The above conclusion is based on verses taken from the *Padmapurana*.

The uppermost desire of a religious person is not only to live in the world of sacred order, but actually to be part and parcel of the sacred order. The sacred places are those parts of the differentiated space where the religious man believes that the sacred

order exists. Hence, his desire to visit sacred places is obviously too much to expect that all pilgrims visiting sacred places will give sophisticated and philosophically articulate answers when asked about their purpose of visit. Nevertheless, when the answers of some pilgrims are such that no specific material motive can be imputed to them, their desire to visit sacred places can only be understood on non-mundane grounds.

The ritualistic aspect of this category of pilgrimage may include worship of the deity, bathing in a sacred river or lake, giving of alms, attending religious discourses of holy men, the singing of *bhajans* (religious songs), participating in *kirtan* (devotional songs in chorus), and performance of other religious rituals considered appropriate for the place and occasion. Bathing in a sacred river or lake is not to be interpreted merely as a purificatory ceremony; it has much deeper significance. For example, the *Kumbha Mela* at Haridwar and other places means bathing in the *amrita*, or life-giving water. The life-giving water is not merely present in symbolic form. For the pilgrims a whole cosmic event is being re-enacted, one in which they actually feel that they are participating. The myth is reactualized, at the specific time and at the specific place. The pilgrim is bathing in the "original" *amrita*.

At the highest level the religiously-oriented elite, by making pilgrimages to famous shrines eulogized in the traditional Sanskrit literature, maintains the vitality of a Pan-Indian Hindu holy space. With this view in India there existed a tradition that people from the South should visit Varanasi and the people from North visit Rameswaram. Likewise, the Chardham Yatra (Varanasi, Rameswaram, Puri, Dwaraka) which comprises the four corners of the country. There is also another chardham yatra, popular in the North India to Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri and Yamunotri.

At the secondary levels of religious circulation both the materialistic aspects of Hinduism and its regional or sub-regional folk elements find expression. The gods and goddesses no longer remain philosophical abstractions; instead man begins to "use" them as instruments for tangible purposes. It is also within the framework of this religious circulation that elements of the "little tradition" a local goddess may become parts of the

"great tradition"— the universal one god. The two broad levels of religious circulation thus reflect the philosophical and the mundane aspects of Hinduism. The Sanskritic universal aspects of Hinduism continue to be circulated through one pattern while the regional cultural elements circulate through the other.

Pilgrimage Destinations of Andhra Pradesh⁶

Spiritual tours of Andhra Pradesh take one on tours to several spiritual destinations of the State which are much renowned for their religious and spiritual significance. Scattered all over Andhra Pradesh, these places give the tourists the bliss and peace that may have eluded them for long and which may have inspired them to visit the spiritually and religiously endowed personalities and places.

Tirupati⁷

This city, in the extreme southeast corner of Andhra Pradesh, is the destination of countless pilgrims, who make the ascent to Tirumala through the nearby hills to worship at the Venkateswara shrine,⁸ reputedly the wealthiest in Southern India. The substantial revenues enjoyed by the local temple management, known as the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), have funded renovations at many religious sites in the vicinity, as well as supporting civic projects and numerous charitable and educational institutions.⁹

Other than a visit to the temples at Tirupati and Tirumala,¹⁰ which may be accomplished in a single day, a side trip can be easily made to the nearby palace at Chandragiri fortress and the religious monument at Mangapuram. Excursions to the small, early shrine at Gudimallam¹¹ is famous for the remarkable *linga* venerated within the sanctuary of the Parashurameswara Temple. This 1.5 m high cult object, which dates back to the 1st C.B.C.,¹² has a well-preserved figure of Shiva carved on to its shaft. The god is shown with matted hair and holding a trident; the lower part of his body is clearly visible beneath the folds of his costume. The popular temple **Sri Vinayaka Temple** is at Kanipakam, a small village on the bank of Bahuda River. "**Kani**" means wetland and

"**Pakam**" means flow of water into wetland. Both places can be reached in a single day. The lesser-known temples at Narayanavanam and Nagalapuram can be seen on the way to Madras. Tirupati is directly connected by air with Bangalore, Hyderabad and Madras. The airport lies 12 km south of the city. Trains are convenient, as Tirupati lies on the main line from Bombay or Hyderabad to Madras. A continuous bus shuttle links Tirupati with Tirumala, starting before dawn in order to ensure that devotees are in time for the first devotional celebrations.

Dramatically sited at the foot of the bluff of red sandstone that marks the beginning of the Tirumala Hills, Tirupati is a lively commercial city focused on the **Govindaraja Temple**. Its crowded streets echo the rectangular plan of the monument, which is laid out on an east-west axis approached along a thoroughfare lined with shops and stalls. This passes through a magnificent free-standing *Gopura*, erected in 1624. Its passageway is flanked by decorated jambs and lintels carried on ornate brackets. Maidens on either side stand on *makaras*, clutching creepers with curling stalks that frame miniature divinities. A carved portrait of the sponsor of the *Gopura* appears on the south side of the passageway. This shows Matla Anantaraja, a local chief, in the company of three wives, paying homage to Govindaraja. The seven-storeyed pyramidal tower, which rises almost 50m, is covered with finely finished projections capped with model roof forms, with openings in the middle of each side.¹³

A short distance on the west is the twin compounds of the *Govindaraja Temple*, one behind the other, linked by modestly scaled gates. The outer *gopura* has *Ramayana* scenes carved on the passageway walls. A tall swing pavilion outside has columns covered with elegant foliage. The twin shrines at the west end of the inner compound are dedicated to Ranganatha, the reclining form of Vishnu, and Krishna with consorts. A minor shrine nearby has an icon of Lakshmi identified with the poetess Andal. The sanctuaries open off a common hall, the piers of which have crouching lions and extended brackets. The hall in the southwest corner has finely finished colonettes on the outer piers, while the central space is lined with *yalis* projecting inwards. An exquisitely

finished pavilion in the middle has ornate columns of grey-green granite and a wooden roof.

Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple Tirumala¹⁴

The wooded crags of the Tirumala Hills, rising 700 m above Tirupati, provide a splendid natural setting for the Sree Venkateswara Temple 22 km distant from Tirupati via., a winding steep road. Pious devotees make the trip by foot, starting at the modern *gopura* at the base of the hill and then following a picturesque path through the forest. Because of the great crowds, that regularly exceed 50,000 in a single day, worshippers have to wait in line before entering the Temple, in which there is a quite rapid system of entry and exit. Pilgrims come from all over the country and abroad; their offerings in notes and coins, sometimes even gold and silver, are sorted in the *hundi*, or treasury, within the complex.¹⁵ The worship of Venkateswara, Lord of the Seven Hills, is traced back to the 9th Century - 10th Century Chola era. It was, however, under the patronage of the 15-16 century emperors of Vijayanagara that the shrine was expanded and Venkateswara was adopted as the protective deity of the royal family. The promotion of Venkateswara, known variously as *Venkataramana*, *Tiruvengdaanatha* and *Srinivasa*, amounted to no less than an imperial cult, the god appearing together with rulers on their seals and coins. (He is nowadays portrayed with a black face and his eyes covered, to prevent his gaze as it is believed from scorching the viewer.) Krishnadevaraya¹⁶ visited Tirumala seven times, making lavish gifts and endowments on each occasion. His portrait and those of his queens are still to be seen. Achyutadevaraya, his successor, who began his career at Chandragiri, ordered special ceremonies at Tirumala and Sri Kalahasti before hastening to the Vijayanagara capital, where he was crowned in 1529. The Tirumala shrine continued to attract benefactions from the later Vijayanagara rulers of the Aravidu line in the first half of the 17th century.¹⁷

The brass images of Krishnadevaraya and his two queens (right) and a polished granite sculpture of Achyutadevaraya (left) is the finest portraits of the Vijayanagara era.¹⁸ Two halls with columns covered with carvings, those on the front and central aisles

displaying rearing *yalis*, stand to the south of the entrance *gopura*.¹⁹ A small pavilion within one hall has ornate supports, with cut-out colonettes overhung by curving eaves. The north part of the compound is occupied by a kitchen where food is prepared for pilgrims; the sweets known as *laddus* are a specialty offered as prasad. A lamp column cloaked in gold sheet stands in front of the *gopura* (Plate 19) that gives access to the inner compound. Similar metal covers the threshold and jambs of the doorway itself.

The main shrine, in the middle of the inner compound of the Temple, is a modest Chola-period structure. The tower, with a hemispherical roof covered in gold sheet and topped by a gilded pot finial, has been rebuilt. The preceding hall has sculpted columns overhung by curved eaves cloaked in gold. A portion of the inner space is given over to the *hundi* already noted. The standing crowned image of Vishnu within the sanctuary is ornamented with diamonds and rubies; metal icons of Shridevi and Bhudevi are placed at either side. The remainder of the compound is occupied by colonnades and minor shrines, one 14 C example housing an image of Varadaraja, and an office where donations can be made in foreign currency. A large Rectangular Tank, with stepped sides and a pavilion in the middle of the water, is seen to the north.²⁰ The musical Fountain is very much attracts to every body (Plates 20, 21).

Sri Mallikharjuna Swamy Temple (Dwadasa Jyotirlingam)

Srisailam is one of the Dwadasalingam, situated in the thick and inaccessible forests of the Nallamalai hills, in the northeastern portion of the Nandikotkur Taluk of Kurnool District.²¹ It lies on a straight line west of Vijayawada, right as it were in the centre of South India. It is 110 kms north of Nandyal Railway Station. On leaving Nandyal, one has to proceed to Atmakur, which is at a distance of 65 kms by road and from Atmakur to Nagaluti, which is 20 kms off. There are two routes to reach Srisailam from Nagaluti.²²

In the early medieval period, Srisailam raised to prominence as a pilgrim center with Alampur, Umamahesvaram, Siddhesvaram and Tripurantakam serving as gateways,

thus contributing to the colorful, religious and cultural life of the Andhras Srisailam was referred as Sriparvata, Srisaila, Mallikarjunam, Parvatam, Srigiri, Srisaila Mallikarjunam and Srikailasa in many inscriptions, literary texts and the Puranas.²³

This important and religious shrine is situated, on what is called the Rishabhagiri hill, on the southern bank of the sacred river Krishna, and is famous as Srisailam or Sriparvata, which is one of the several abodes of the Lord Shiva. In almost all the Hindu puranas, mention is made of this ancient place. Srisailam is a sacred place of pilgrimage, which has been known from ancient times in India.²⁴ Sri Adi Sankara, the renowned *Advaita* philosopher visited Srisailam and stayed at this spot for some time.²⁵ There is legend concerning the origin of this temple, among the tribal population, called Chenchus,²⁶ who live in this part of the hills. According to this legend prevalent among the Chenchu tribes, Lord Mallikarjuna (Plate 22) is known among these tribes as "Chenchu Malliah". It is interesting to note, that the Chenchus have free permission, even today, to go into any part of the temple, including the Garbha Griha, enshrining the sacred Linga. It is in fact this tribal people, which help to drag the car in the annual ratha (cart) festival of the temple and also at other minor services within the temple.

During the great Sivarathri festival, when thousands of people congregate to bathe in the sacred waters of the Pathalaganga and worship Lord Mallikarjuna, the Chenchus also go and worship inside the Garbha Griha independent of the designated Priests.

The temple stands in the little hollow on the top of Srisailam hill overlooking the sacred river Krishna and surrounded on all sides by beautiful forest. On the eastern side of the temple, the causeway from Nagaluti is carried straight on, down the hill, to the bed of river Krishna, which is here known as Pathalaganga, and is regarded as a very sacred river for pilgrims. The river Pathalaganga is about two miles from the temple, with a flight of stone steps leading to it. An inscription in the temple records shows that these steps were built by of the Reddi Dynasty of the Kondaveedu kingdom. The enclosure to the temple forms roughly a square measuring five hundred feet from east to west and six hundred feet from north to south. On the northern, southern and eastern sides are lofty

gateways. In the centre, there is a stone enclosure containing the main temple. The main temple of Lord Mallikarjuna stands in the centre of this inner courtyard and is surrounded by a number of minor shrines. The temple of Bhramaramba, consort deity of the lord or the Amman temple as it is popularly known is in a separate enclosure west of the inner courtyard.

The main temple is a small structure, consist of the sanctum sanctorum the Lord in the form of a Linga presides with a small pillared porch attached to the front. The main temple of Mallikarjuna is a stone-built structure, and in front of the shrine, does the Vijayanagar king Harihara built the exquisitely carved Mukha mantapa or the pillared hall the second in 1404-1405 A.D. It contains several beautifully sculptured stone pillars and ornamental stone eaves. The most valuable and sacred object within the temple is an exquisitely carved bronze image of Lord Siva, in the form of Nataraja. The idol is a masterpiece of craftsmanship held in reverence and devotion by the visitors.

Between the Mallikarjuna temple and the eastern gateway of the courtyard are two handsome pillared halls one of which contains the Nandi. On the northern side of the temple under the shade of a '*Vata Vriksha*' is another shrine dedicated to Mallikarjuna, and local legends say that this shrine contains the original 'Linga' over which the black cow the divine carrying the lord of the princess Chandravati gave its milk.

On the northern side of the pillared Mukhamantapa, is a little Siva temple, containing a carved stone 'Linga' called the *Sahasra Linga*. This famous representation of the Lord is made by the stone being divided into twenty-five facets each of the latter having a representation of forty lingas thus making a total of one thousand Lingas. The three headed Naga is coiled round the breast of the Linga and is mounted on a beautiful stone pedestal. A remarkable feature of this temple is that originally the stepped tower over the shrine chamber, the door frames and the eaves of the pillared hall in front of it, and the figure of the bulls etc., were all engraved in copper gilt plates and ornaments. In the temple in addition to the stone carvings, there is an important bronze image of Siva.

This is one of the most exquisite bronze images of Andhra Desa. It represents Lord Siva in the dancing pose Nataraja.

Sri Kalahasthi Swara Temple, Kalahasti²⁷

Srikalahastheeswaraswamivari Temple is one of the most ancient and historical Saivite temple in India. It has the history of several 'Yugas'. The greatness of this kshethra was mentioned in *Astadasa Puranas* (18 puranas). The place is otherwise known as "Dakshina Kailasam, Sathyavratha Bhaskara Kshethram and also Rahu-Kethu Kshethram. As per the historical versions, SRI (the Spider), KALA (the Serpent) and HASTHI (the Elephant) have sacrificed their lives in true devotion to Lord Siva. In recognition to their true devotion this kshethram of lord Shiva is called "Sri Kalahasteeswara"²⁸ (Plate 23). Thousands of devotees visit this Temple to seek the blessing of Lord Siva. This Kshethram is also called as "Dakshina Kasi". The river Swarna Mukhi flows South to North in Srikalahasthi. The devotees will have holy dip in the River Swarnamukhi and perform "Rahu-Kethu Sarpadhosha Nivarana Pooja" and Abhishekams to Sri Gnanprasaanna Sametha Srikalahastheeswaraswamivaru to get rid of their sins and to fulfill their wishes. Srikalahasteeswara Swamy Temple is reputed, as the Rahu – Keethu Kshetra, if the people who have Rahu – Keethu Doshas, Graha Doshas and Sarpa Doshas the unmarried and No Children and those who are facing various problems for a long period perform the most effective "Rahu - Keethu Sarpa Dosh Nivarana Pooja" in this Temple all the Doshas get removed and desired results occur. Thousands of devotees from the country and abroad perform this puja and fulfill their vows again and again after receiving good results.

Pancharama²⁹

Pancharama is the name given to those five Lingayat temples.³⁰ These places are distributed over three districts, East Godavari, West Godavari and Guntur of Andhra Pradesh. All Hindus consider visiting these temples as very sacred. Pancha means five and Aarama is peace. So Pancharama means five pleasant and peaceful places.

Amararama is installed at Amaravati³¹ in Guntur district. The name of Lord Shiva is Amareswara Swami and considered incarnated as, Aghorarupam. **Draksharama**³² is located at Draksharamam in East Godavari District.³³ The lord Eshwara is called Bhimeswa Swami³⁴ (Daksharama) and seen as Tatpurusha Mukha Swarupam. **Kumararama**³⁵ (Plate 24) is available in Samalkot, East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. The temple is called with same name as Daksharamam - Bheemeswar Swami. But Lord Shiva is seen here as Vamadeva Mukha Swaroopam. **Somarama** is at Bheemavaram situated in West Godavari district. Lord Shiva is called Someswara Swami (Somarama) in this temple and considered as Sadyojatha Mukha Swarupam. **Ksheeraramam**³⁶ is situated at Palakollu, West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. Rama Lingeswara Swami (Ksheerarama) is the name given to the Lingam installed in this place and Lord Shiva is Eshanya Mukha Swarupam. There is a saying that all these temples are installed by Gods (Devatas) and visiting all in one day (especially during *Karthika Masam*, i.e., during November-December month) is very sacred. For those visiting Pancharama Shiva temples during the Karthika masam from Hyderabad, AP Tourism Development Corporation and the State Road Transport Corporation are operating special buses to these shrines.³⁷

Puruhutika Devi (Asthadasa Shaktipeetham) Pithapuram³⁸

Pithapuram is formerly called as Pithikapuram / Pushkara kshetram in Puranas and Tantras. The temple of Puruhutika devi is located within the temple campus of Kukkuteswara swamy. Kukkuteswara swamy temple is present is situated on the outskirts of the Pithapuram village towards Kakinada. It is a big temple. Just entering in to the temple one sees a pond which is called as Padagaya Sarovaram (Pada Gaya Sarovar). Pilgrims will take holy bath in this pond. Main temple of Kukkuteswara swamy is built towards the right side of the pond. Puruhutika Devi temple is present in the North-East corner of the Kukkuteswara swamy temple. It is constructed facing south. Puruhutha temple is small but looks very nice with the carvings of Ashtadasa Shakti peethas on its walls. The idol of Puruhuthika devi has four hands.

Sri Jogulamba Devi (Asthadasa Shaktipeetham) Alampur³⁹

This village, on the north bank of the Tungabhadra River, lies 30km north of Kurnool. Alampur was threatened by the rising waters of the Srisaïlam Dam, 85km downstream. The barrage erected here has saved the temples, but has deprived them of the river view that they once enjoyed. Other structures in the vicinity have been dismantled and re-erected near the village.⁴⁰

Alampur formed part of the kingdom of the early Chalukyas of Badami,⁴¹ and was evidently an important settlement, judging from the many temples erected here in the 7C-8C. These comprise the largest and earliest surviving Hindu monuments in Andhra Pradesh. The group of nine temples at Alampur (Plate 25) is known as the Nava Brahma,⁴² even though they are all dedicated to Shiva. With the exception of the Taraka Brahma, the temples conform to a standard scheme, with east-facing sanctuaries surrounded by passageways and preceded by columned halls, all contained within rectangles of walls. The first feature to be seen on arriving at Alampur is the reconstructed (Plate 26) Sangameswara Temple,⁴³ the blocks of which were brought from Kudaveli at the confluence of the Tungabhadra and Krishna Rivers, now a flooded site. The Temple is elevated on a high terrace embellished with a frieze of animals, pilastered projections and a prominent parapet. The niches on the outer walls of the Temple have pediments of different designs, some with pairs of *makaras*. The niches on either side of the entrance frame large pot-bellied *yakshas*. The tower is of the standard type.

The Nava Brahma group of temple stands in the middle of the village, surrounded by houses. They are described from north to south.⁴⁴ The Veera Brahma Temple has its outer walls divided into projecting niches framed by pairs of pilasters, with triangular pediments of arch-shaped motifs above. The Vishva Brahma Temple is more elaborate. Pediments of complicated designs based on arch-shaped motifs surmount the niches and windows. The beams are incised with scrollwork. Triple niches appear in the passageway around the sanctuary. The adjacent Arka Brahma Temple is partly ruined.

The Kumara Brahma Temple,⁴⁵ the earliest of the group, has a plain exterior with perforated stone screens lighting the interior passageway. The internal columns and beams are decorated with foliation and miniature figures. The Bala Brahma Temple,⁴⁶ the only one currently being worshipped, has its outer walls partly concealed by a later colonnade. Various sculptures, including a series of the Matrikas, are placed here. The Garuda Brahma Temple is similar to the Vishva Brahma Temple, but is almost devoid of carved decoration. The sanctuary doorway has bands of foliation, a flying Garuda figure and flanking guardians. The Svarga Brahma Temple, dated 689, has a frontal porch of six columns with fluted shafts and pot-and-foliage motifs embellishing the bases and capitals. The Temple is notable for its elaborate sculptures, including a complete set of Dikpalas in the corner niche. The arch-shaped frontal projection on the tower frames an icon of dancing Shiva.⁴⁷

The Padma Brahma Temple, the latest in the series, displays complicated niche forms on the outer walls and inside the passageway. The tower is incomplete, and there is no entrance porch. The Taraka Brahma Temple has an unusual multi-storeyed tower with the usual arch-shaped frontal projection. The Archaeological Museum, next to the Temples, is home to a fine collection of Early Chalukya sculptures.⁴⁸ The masterpiece is an exquisitely refined image of dancing Shiva with multiple arms holding different weapons, trampling on a dwarf; the detached facial expression is noteworthy. Other items include images of Durga and ceiling panels showing dancing Shiva and a coiled serpent. A slab for libations is carved with a squatting figure of Lajja Gauri. Numerous decorated columns and beams are also on display. Among the items assigned to the Late Chalukya period are polished basalt Nandi ridden by Shiva and Parvati. That Alampur continued to be an important site in later times is indicated by fortifications and gateways inside the village, and by the Papanasanam Group, 1.5 km southwest. These small temples are assigned to the 9C-10C, a period of transition between the Rashtrakutas and Late Chalukyas. Most examples display pyramidal multi-tiered towers; one has an unusual apsidal-ended roof. There is little external decoration, but the internal columns are decorated with figurative and foliate motifs. A fine Durga image is preserved in one temple; another shrine has a ceiling panel showing Vishnu's incarnations.

Sri Sita Ramaswamy, Bhadrachalam

Bhadrachalam is located 120 km from Khammam. It is nearly 40 kilometers from Kothagudem. The nearest railway station to reach Bhadrachalam is Kothagudem known as Bhadrachalam Road. The Temple for lord Rama was built on the banks of river Godavari at Bhadrachalam in Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh by one of his devotees Ramadasu during 17th century. Ramadasu was the Tahasildar of that area under the Tanisha Rule. One can see the silver chariot at the temple. The museum exhibits the ornaments donated by Ramadasu to the deities Sita, Rama and Laxmana. The other places of interest at Bhadrachalam are Jataayu Paaka, Dummugudem, Gundala and Sriramagiri.

Appikonda Temple, Visakhapatnam⁴⁹

Appikonda is a small village, lying to the backside of Visakha Steel Plant in Visakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh on the coast of Bay of Bengal. On the seashore is a four shore temple complex enclosed by compound wall facing west, the main entrance porch in the South-West corner of the Western compound leading to the sea. They are dedicated to Siva in the name of Someswara, Appeswara, Chilliswara and Sivalinga belonging to medieval period. The largest and the most important of the four temples is Somesvara Temple in which worship is going on. There is a large Nandi sculpture in front of the Somesvara mandapa. Two more sub-shrines are located within the prakara wall, one in the North-East corner of the Western compound wall. All these temples are built of Khondalite stone.⁵⁰

Sri Satyanarayana Swamy Temple, Annavaram⁵¹

The holy place of Annavaram in East Godavari district is situated at a distance of 45 kms from Kakinada Town. The temple of Sree Veera Venkata Satyanarayana Swamy on the Ratnagiri hill is the only temple of the Lord in the entire India. The shrines of goddess Vana Durga and Kanaka Durga nearby are also held in great veneration. (Plate

27) The temple at Annavaram has been constructed to depict the chariot concept concretely. The front side of the temple depicts the chariot. The mount Meru on the floor with the pillar at the center, and the idols at the top are intended to bring forth the idea that the Lord not only remains at the heart's center but also permeates the entire universe. The wheels depicting the Sun and the Moon serve to remind us that this Juggernaut moves on the wheels of time, and goes on for ever and ever, thus the Annavaram temple satisfies both the ritualistic values and the spiritual aspirations of the devotees. There is a 'Sun Dial' at Annavaram, which is of interests to tourists.

Sri Venkateswara Temple, Dwaraka Tirumala⁵²

Dwaraka Tirumala (Chinna Tirupati) is situated at distance of 34 km from Eluru, West Goadavari .According to a legend, the temple dates back to the reign of Raja Dasaratha and Lord Sri Rama and Sidha Nagarjuna. Unique for being the only temple with two idols under one Vimana.This is where you can have a glimpse of south Indian architecture at its best with the eye-catching 5-storey Gopuram. The prakara of the temple is adorned with idols of various deities.

Kanaka Durga temple - Vijayawada⁵³

Vijayawada, the political and commercial capital of Andhra Pradesh, is hallowed with several legends, thanks to *Indrakeeladri* hill, (Plate 28) the abode goddess Kanaka Durga (the consort of god Siva) and the Krishna River flowing by it endowing the people with both spiritual and material happiness. The origin of this shrine is known to be of 8th century. The temple was constructed during the Regime of Mughal rulers. According to hagiography, Mogalaya Ruler Thanisha with the assistance of his Ministers Akkanna and Madanna managed the temple with head quarters at Kondapalli.⁵⁴

Adi Sankaracharya visited this temple during 8th century and worshipped the deity and installed "Srichakra" at the feet of Goddess. This temple is of Smartha Agama Sampradaya. Sub-temples of Lord Sri Malleswara Swamy, Sri Nataraja Swamy temples

are located on north east corner of the Goddess. Sri Subrahmanyeswara Swamy Temple is located on north side of main temple. This temple is one of the 10 major temples of the state and one of the popular pilgrimage centres, and has been acquiring importance day by day. Hiuan Tsang, a Chinese traveller wrote that he has seen many stone inscriptions in the vicinity of the temple that revealed historic events. Palakethu Bhupaludu made two inscriptions in the period 1150-1240 A.D. The nine-day festival of Navarathri ends on Vijaya Dasami Day when people worship arms and perform Ayudha Pooja.

Kanaka Durga is specially decorated as Balatripura Sundari, Gayathri, and Annapoorna. Mahalakshmi, Saraswathi, Lalitha Tripura Sundari, Durga Devi, Mahissura Mardini and Raja Rajeswari Devi on each day of the Narvarathri festival. On Vijaya Dasami day, the deities are taken in a swan-shaped boat around the Krishna River, popularity known as “Theppotsavam” i.e., festival of floats. Though a ghat road was laid in 1969, most of the pilgrims prefer to climb the steps leading to the temple an arduous task for women and children. Some devotees climb the hill, decorating the steps with turmeric powder and vermilion to redeem their pledge of Metla Pooja.

Raja Rajeshwara Temple, Vemulavada⁵⁵

The original existence of the temple and Lord Raja Rajeshwara (Plate 29) is lost in the mists of antiquity. Even Puranas mention the existence of the deity. Historically, the place was the capital of the Chalukyas of Vemulawada, who ruled from A.D. 750 to A.D. 973.⁵⁶ The rock cut inscriptions found in the place however, refer to the village as ‘*Lemulavatika*’. Tradition associate this place with famous Telugu Poet “*Bheemakavi*” but there is more definite proof of the famous Kannada Poet “*Pampa*” living here as the Court Poet of Arikesari – II and dedicated his “*Kannada Bharatha*” to his royal patronage.⁵⁷ The temple is an ancient and famous Saivite temple in Andhra Pradesh State and now acclaimed as one of the gigantic temples in Telangana region, enthralling with its rare spiritual ambience. The temple complex comprises of Sri Seetharama Chandra Swamy temple and Sri Anantha Padmanabha Swamy temple [Vaisnavate temples] because of which the shrine is also known as “*Harihara Kshethram*”. A Dargah of a

Muslim devotee situated within the precincts of the temple stands as an ample evidence for religious tolerance. A unique worship “Kode Mrokku Badi” [worship of bull-Nandeeswara, the Vahana of Easwara] is found only in this temple throughout the country and this worship take precedence over all rituals.

Sri Saraswathi Temple, Basara⁵⁸

The Goddess Saraswathi Devi is located in Basar Village on the left bank of river Godavari situated in Adilabad District of A.P. is having Puranic and historical importance. This is the only one and unique temple of Goddess Saraswathi in South India. The history of the temple goes back to the times of Mahabharatha which is said to be nearly five thousand years old. The Goddess Saraswathi is known for initiation of *Aksharabhyasa* and is also called as Sri Gnana Saraswathi. Sri Veda Vyasa after the epic war of ‘Maha Bharatha’ travelled to south from North. He reached *Dandakaranya* region and performed penance to please Goddess Saraswathi on the banks of holy river Godavari.

Sri Mukteswara Temple, Kaliswaram⁵⁹

This village lies in Karimnagar district thick forest surroundings, at a distance of 16 kms from Mahadevapuram and 32 kms from Manthani⁶⁰ at a picturesque spot where the river Godavari receives into its stream another small river called the Pranahitha. The place is considered to be sacred not only on account of it being a confluence but also due to the existence of many ancient temples. Among these temples, the one dedicated to "*Mukteswara Swamy*" is the most important.⁶¹ Special significance attached to this shrine owing to, the existence of two Sivalingams on one Panavattam. The Sivalingam in this place is considered to be one of the three Jyothirlingams of Lord Siva which constituted the three corners of the Andhra Desha, the other two being at Srisailam in Kurnool and in Draksharama in East Godavari districts. There is also a temple dedicated to Brahma here, a rather uncommon feature. Mahasivarathri festival celebrated here for two days during the holy month of 'Magha' attracts a very large number of devotees.

Sri Trikuteswara Swamy Temple, Kotappa Konda⁶²

It is located 63 kms east from Guntur; Kotappa Konda is noted for the ancient Siva temple located on top of a hill. Kotappakonda, the temporal abode of Trikuteswara Swamy, is a village, 13 kilometers south-west of Narsaraopet in Guntur district. Its original name is Kondakavuru, but is more popularly known as Kotappakonda or Trikutaparvatam, a three-peaked hill nearby. Though surrounded by other hills, the three hills, also known by the names of Trikutachalam or Trikutadri, can be distinctly seen from a distance from any direction. The three peaks are named after the Hindu Triumverate, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. The epigraphs at Kotappakonda clearly state that the deity established in the shape of Sivalinga on the hill top is known as Trikuteswara or Trikotswara. A steep flight of steps lead to the hill and the deity is located at a height of 1,587 feet. There are a number of ponds on the hill of which eight are located in front of the temple.

Sri Pachala Someswara Temple, Panagal⁶³

It is located 3 km north of Nalgonda, a district town 112 km east of Hyderabad, partly via NH9; the village Pangal is overshadowed by a Qutb Shahi Fort built on the summit of a nearby hill. A large Tank on the edge of the village has a long dam wall. A black tablet found here bears an inscription dated 1551, during the reign of Ibrahim Qutb Shah.⁶⁴ Two late Chalukya monuments dating from the 11th century stand next to each other on the edge of the Water. The Pacchala Someswara Temple consists of four linga sanctuaries, a fifth having been lost, arranged on two sides of an open columned hall. Only two shrines survive with their walls and multi-storeyed towers intact. Carvings of miniature figures set in creeper motifs cover the wall pilasters and intervening recesses. A large variety of divinities appears here, including Shiva and Parvati on Nandi, Vishnu riding on Garuda, Vishnu and Brahma adoring the linga, multi-armed Ravana shaking Kailasa, and a lyrical panel with Shiva dancing, the tresses of the god's hair flying outward. The other shrines have unsculpted walls, occasionally relieved by chambers in

the middle of each side, complete with balcony seating, columns, eaves and square towers. The columns inside the hall display additional figures on the cubic blocks.

The Chayya Someswara Temple stands in the middle of a compound with an entrance structure on the south. The Temple consists of a trio of shrines, dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, each roofed with a fully preserved pyramidal tower. The sanctuaries open off a common hall, the columns of which have multi-faceted shafts with cubic blocks covered with epic scenes. Six subshrines stand within the compound.

Srimukhalingam, Srikakulam⁶⁵

Srimukhalingam is one of the oldest Siva temples located on the left banks of River Vamsadhara in Srikakulam District, The temple, built in the 9th century by the eastern Ganga kings, surprises everyone with its elegant sculptures with remarkable symmetry in the ground plan as well as the elevation.⁶⁶ It is considered to be amongst the finest examples of Kalinga style of architecture.⁶⁷ Elegantly carved, this complex consists of three temples dedicated to three forms of Lord Shiva namely, Mukhalingeswara, Bhimeswara and Someswara.⁶⁸ To witness the marvels of sculptures, carvings and intricate architecture, one has to visit this temple. The architecture of the temple is so elegant that one just cannot move eyes from.⁶⁹ It is in a state of neglect with no proper connectivity and lack of amenities for pilgrims who come from far and wide. It takes almost two hours from Srikakulam to reach the temple though the distance is just 50 km. The road is in a bad state, particularly after Jarjangi.⁷⁰

Sri Kurmanatha Swamy temple⁷¹

Sri Kurmanatha Swamy Temple, incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu, in Sri Kurmam, is 13 km away from Srikakulam town. The most sacred and ancient shrine of Sri Kurmam, situated on the shores of Bay of Bengal, is the only Swayambhu temple in the world The temple is dedicated to Sri Kurmanatha Swamy, which is the second avatar (as tortoise) of Lord Vishnu. This is the only temple for Sri Kurmantha Swamy in India.⁷²

Prominent references about this shrine are available in Kurma, Vishnu, Padma, Brahmaanda Puraanaas. While the shrine is said to be more than a few million years old, outer structures were reconstructed many a time - after dilapidation of the previous one and the latest temple structure is more than 700 years old. According to the inscriptions in the temple dated 1281 A.D, the holy place of Kurmakshetra was actually reestablished by Sri Ramanujacharya under the influence of Jagannatha Deva.⁷³

Unlike many other temples, the presiding deity here is facing west and hence there are (Plate 30) two "dwaja stambhaas" (flag posts) one in the east and the other in the west. This temple is known for its marvellous sculpture, particularly on the southern entrance, where there are 108 pillars, where no single pillar is similar to the remaining. The unique stones on the floor in the Pradakshina Mandapam (circumambulatory passage) are said to infuse magnetic energy into the devotees through their feet. The ancient pictures on these walls, made from natural colours, resemble those in Ajanta – Ellora caves.⁷⁴ Department of Posts has released a set of two Commemorative Postage Stamps on Arasavalli and Srikurmam temples of Srikakulam district.⁷⁵

Arasavalli Suryanarayana Temple⁷⁶

The famous Sun God Temple situated in Arasavalli Village is at a distance of about 1 km east of Srikakulam Town head quarters of the coastal district in Andhra Pradesh. It is one of the ancient and one among the two sun God temples in our country. The 'Sthalapuranam' of the temple narrates that lord Devendra had founded this temple and installed the existing idol of the sun God commonly known as Lord Suryanarayana Swamy.

Sri Varaha Narasimha Swamy Temple, Simhachalam⁷⁷

The popular Varaha Narasimha Temple at Simhachalam is built high up in the secluded forest of the Kailasha Hills, 16 km north of Visakhapatnam and 800 feet above

the sea level This shrine is believed to have been dedicated originally to Shiva, but was later transformed into a Vaishnava place of worship after a visit by Ramanuja at the end of the 11th century The story is borne out by the principal motive image of the Temple: a *linga-shaped* form, composed of sandalwood paste, concealing a diminutive stone effigy of Vishnu. Dating back to the 8th - 9th century, the Temple was entirely rebuilt in 1268 by a military commander of Narasimha, the Eastern Ganga king of neighbouring Orissa. That Simhachalam continued to be a place of importance in later centuries is evident from the visit of Krishnadevaraya, the emperor of Vijayanagara in 1516. The growth of nearby Visakhapatnam ensures that the Temple continues to expand.

The Varaha Narasimha Temple (Plate 31) is approached by a long winding road that ascends the hill, arriving at a car park from which flights of steps ascend to gateways on the north and west. These take the form of *gopurams* with steeply pyramidal towers, recently renovated. Most visitors enter through the north *gopura*, inside which a large hall is built into the northeast corner of the enclosure. The peripheral supports of polished granite are fashioned as seated lions. The animals support shafts with carved reliefs and sharply modelled double capitals. The internal columns are enlivened with bands of foliage and jewelled garlands. A lofty flagpole stands in front (west) of the porch that gives access to the inner enclosure. The main Temple consists of two halls, one open the other closed, aligned with the square sanctuary and its surrounding passageway, the outer hall has round columns decorated with figural friezes and garlands. One of these is identified as the pillar out of which Narasimha miraculously appeared. One of the pillar locally known as "*kappa Sthambam*" (Tribute pillar) (Plate 32) is believed to possess great curative powers.⁷⁸ The 12 columns of the inner hall support a ceiling with rotated squares. The sanctuary which lies beyond is roofed with a corbelled vault. The outer walls of the shrine and hall are raised on a high basement adorned with *yalis* and makaras. The wall projections have framing pilasters, with *yalis* in full relief. Icons of gods, ascetics and royal figures stand beneath ornate trees carved in shallow relief.

Major panels in the middle of the sanctuary walls depict Varaha (north), Narasimha disembowelling Hiranyakashipu (east) and Trivikrama (south), each

surmounted by a smaller icon of Krishna in the pediment. These sculptures are executed in the finest Odishian style, with smoothly rounded bodies contrasting with delicately etched facial features, costumes and jewellery.⁷⁹ The figural compositions are interspersed with exuberant scrollwork and creeper motifs. Windows capped by ornate pediments admit light to the hall. The pyramidal towers over the sanctuary and hall are crowned by circular ribbed elements. The inner enclosure of the Temple is surrounded by a colonnade into which three small shrines are built. That in the northeast corner is conceived as a chariot, with large wheels carved on the basement. Life-size prancing horses are placed either side of the access steps. There is a perennial spring locally called *Gangadhara* on this hill, with great medicinal properties, while providing the numerous pilgrims that flock at this temple with a source of water for bathing and other purposes.

Sri Saneeswara Swamy Temple, Mandapalli

Saneeswara Temple is a small shrine situated at Mandapalli in East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. Mandapalli is Situated 38 Km from Rajahmundry, 60 Km from Kakinada and 30 Km from Amalapuram. Saneeswara (Saturn) is one of the planets in Navagraha Zodiac Constellation. In the days of yore, this locality was the holy ashram of the sage Dhadhichi Maharshi. The temple enshrines Saneeswara, Bhrameswara and Nageswara in the form of black stone Shivlingas. Large number of pilgrims visits this temple every year especially on Saturday of every week. This temple is also known as Sri Mandeswara Swami Temple. The Legend has it that Saturn himself consecrated the linga representing Lord Shiva here. In Tamil Nadu, Navagraha tour Circuit is very popular pilgrimage destination. In Andhra Pradesh there is only one temple for Saturn.

Sri Jaganmohini Kesava Swamy Temple, Ryali⁸⁰

Ryali is located 40 Km from Rajahmundry, 74 Km from Kakinada and 34 Km from Amalapuram and it is situated between the rivers Vashista and Gautami, Tributaries of river Godavari, this is the site of the renowned Jagan Mohini Kesava Swamy temple. The exquisite idol, made of black stone depicting Maha Vishnu and Mohini on its front

and rear sides, is a real marvel of sculptural dexterity. This is very rare feature at Ryali where Vishnu and Lord Siva Temples faces each other in East, West direction. 11th Century Shrine of Sri Jagannamohini Kesava Swamy is Salagrama monolith with 5 feet height and 3 feet width. Salagramasila is itself the form of Sri Maha Vishnu.

Narasimha Swamy Temples

The Lord Narasimha is Lord of Dharmapuri.⁸¹ A large number of devotees visit the sacred shrine of Lord Narasimha. Dharmapuri⁸² is called after the name of King Dharmavarma who was a staunch devotee of Lord Narasimha, is known for its rich culture and produced many artists in the disciplines of theatre, classical music and poetry. It has a rich treasury of temples and idols of Hindu Gods spread allover the town The Shiva Panchayatanam (Miniature temple formed with the idols of Lord Siva, and Goddess Parvati, Lord Ganesh, Nagaraja and Nandiswara). The town is well located on the banks of Holy River Godavary and by virtue of this it is called as Dakshin Kashi. The Trishataka Kartha Kavi Sheshappa hailed from this place only. It is also called as a great *Hari Hara Kshetra* with the presence of Lord Siva in the form of Ramalingeswara.⁸³

Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple of Yadgirigutta⁸⁴ situated majestically atop the Raigiri hill is a favorite pilgrim centre. The original name of Yadgirigutta was Yadgiripalli.⁸⁵ Long ago Sri Yada Maharshi son of Sri Rushyashruna Maharshi with the Blessings of Anjaneya Swamy had performed great penance for Lord Narasimha Swamy (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) in a cave on the hill currently known as Yadagirigutta. Pleased with his deep devotion, Lord Narasimha appeared before him in five different forms as Sri Jwala Narsimha, Sri Yogananda Narasimha, Sri Ugra Narasimha, Sri Gandaberunda Narasimha, and Sri Lakshmi Narasimha. **Sri Panakala Swamy Temple, Mangalgi**⁸⁶ located 12 kms from Vijayawada is one of the prominent pilgrimage centres Guntur District. It is famous for the Panakala Swamy temple on the hill and Laxmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Mangalgi town. Midway on the steps there is a temple of Lord Panakala Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy there is only the face with the mouth widely opened. A Dhvajasthambham was erected in front of the temple in 1955. Behind

the temple there is the temple of Sri Lakshmi. Sri Krishnadeva Raya stone inscription of the kings of Vijayanagar relate besides to the conquest of Rayalu over Kondapalli etc., that Siddhiraju Thimmarajayya Devara granted a total of 200 *kunchams* (10 *kunchams* make one acre) land in 28 villages of which Mangalagiri was one and gift of 40 *kunchams* by China Thirumalayya to Ramanujakutam. The steps to the temple were constructed by Sri Channapragada Balaramadasu in 1890. There was a cave next the Devi temple on the hill. It is said that, there is a way to Vundavalli from that cave, and the sages used to go by that way to take bath in Krishna River. Now, the cave is very dark, and the way could not be seen.

Sri Narasimha Swamy Temple, Ahobilam⁸⁷ is located in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh in the hills of the Eastern Ghats, about 400 KM northwest of Chennai. The temple consists of nine shrines to Lord Nrisimha located around a 5 KM circle. In addition to the nine shrines, there is a temple for Prahaladavarada Varadhan in the foothills of the mountain. Due to security reasons and the difficulty in performing daily worship, many of the *utsava vigrahas* of the nine shrines are kept in this temple. Ahobilam is the place where the Lord killed Hiranyakasipu and saved Prahalada. Mahalakshmi took avathar as Senjulakshmi among the Senju, tribal hunters of the hills, and married the Lord. The Nine Narasimhasthalas are :- 1. Jwala Narasimha 2. Ahobila Narasimha 3. Malola Narasimha 4. Krodha Narasimha 5. Karanja Narasimha 6. Bhargava Narasimha 7. Yogananda Narasimha 8. Kshatravata Narasimha and 9. Pavana Narasimha.

Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Temple, Penchalakona is situated at the foot of Hill of the picturesque Penchalakona Valley. The history of the Temple is buried in a hoary past. The river Kandaleru as it is now called, originates from the water falls of the mountain ranges on the west and the South had another name Kanvayeru. The only construction that seems to have been attempted about 670 years ago was the Garbhalayam (Sanctum Sanctorum) which had gradually been left neglected. And today it is in a state of virtual collapse. The image of the lord is a self manifested one. Two stones inter twisted to form a lion's Head at the top. Hence the Lord is called "*Penusila Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy*".

Sri Mahanandiswara Swamy Temple, Mahanandi⁸⁸

Lord Mahanandiswara is Swayambhu. The Goddess is Sri Kameswara Ammavaru. There is a Pushkarini in front of the temple within the compound and this is called Rudra Gundam, the water in *Pushkarini* is crystal clear always. There is an outlet from the Pushkarini at 405 feet height so that the depth of the Pushkarini is always maintained at constant level. It is believed that spring water with good speed flows underneath the Lingam and falls in the *Pushkarini*. The spring water here is very famous for its medicinal value because it is curing several diseases besides enabling a worshipper to secure spiritual enlightenment. Pilgrims have to take holy dip in this Pushkarini in which there are Pancha Lingams. The lingam in the centre is called Varuna Lingam. The water which comes out from the outlet of the Pushkarini perennially is utilized for irrigating the lands around the village.

Lepakshi Temple⁸⁹

Lepakshi is famous for its significant group of temples dedicated to Veerabhadra Papanaseswara and Raghunatha. The Skanda purana mentions Lepakshi as one of the 108 important Siva Kshetras. Later on, it was developed into the present exquisite temple by Virupanna during the Vijayanagara period, Lepakshi has the unique distinction for possessing the biggest Nandi and the huge Nagalinga (Plate 33). Lepakshi is situated at a distance of 14 kms East of Hindupur in the Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh.⁹⁰

Lepakshi literally means an 'embalmed eye' or painted eye. The Veerabhadra temple of Lepakshi is a notable example of the Vijayanagara style of architecture and is situated on the hillock shaped like tortoise locally called 'Kurmasaila'. Nagalinga is another icon located to the South-East of Lepakshi temple. It is a gigantic Monolithic Naga of seven hoods shading the phallus, around which the tail of the naga is wound in three and a half coils. It is 18 feet in height structure. The colossal bull is known as *Lepakshi Basavanna* (Plate 34) lies to the North-East of the Veerabhadra temple at a distance of about one furlong. The bull carved of a huge boulder is remarkable piece with

an astounding quality. It is carved with excellent proportions and precision. The body of the bull and even the chains hanging around the neck are carved in detail. There is a figure of the *Gandabherunda*, bearing an elephant in the claws, hanging as a pendent to one of its chains around the neck. This Lepakshi Nandi measures about 27 feet in length and 15 feet in height and is the largest monolithic bull carving in India.

Veyi Sthambhala Gudi, Hanuma Konda (Thousand Pillar Temple)⁹¹

The thousand pillars of this temple have been transferred to a nearby site for restoration work. The few odd ones left here and there do not add up to the court and make one wonder what the name is all about. Built in 1163 by the Kakatiya king Rudradeva, the temple rests on a star-shaped platform about 7 ft in height and is evidence of the evolved nature of Kakatiya architecture. (Plate 35) It is in Chalukyan style and has three shrines dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Surya. Lord Shiva is the presiding deity and a large number of people visit this temple every day. Black basalt rock and granite is used in most Kakatiya temples as it was widely found in the region. Indeed, it still is. A 6-foot high Nandi facing the temple is an imposing sculpture. Inside the temple is a circular *natya mandap*.⁹²

Bhadrakali Temple, Warangal

The temple is dedicated to Goddess Bhadrakali, the Glant mother Goddess, with fierce looking eyes and face. The main attraction of the temple is the stone image of the deity in human form, in sitting posture, wearing a crown and having eight hands holding various weapons. The deity which measures 2.7 meters in height and the width is believed to be worshipped by the historic ruler Pulakesin-II of Chalukya Dynasty in the year 625 A.D., after his win over the "Vengi" region of Andhra Desh. Later "Hari" a Minister of Kakatiyan Ruler Ganapathi Deva, constructed the approach road and huge tank near the temple. The temple is located in the City of Warangal.⁹³

The Ghanpur group of temples⁹⁴

The Ghanpur group of temples, comprising of 22 temples constructed within a double walled stone enclosure contain a veritable museum of Kakatiya art and architecture.⁹⁵ Among the group of temples, the main temple, which is dedicated to Lord Siva, is most attractive. The main attraction is of the *Sabhamandapa* porches. Two *madanikas* or *salabhanjikas*, which are on northern side portico, are much more attractive and blithe in their appearance, compared to the famous Palampet (Ramappa Temple) figures. Apart from these, mythical figure such as *Gaja-Kesari*, (Half human-Lion form) riding on elephant, (Horse-head Lion back) are also arranged under the eaves in eastern and southern side porticos. To the north from main temple, there is another temple dedicated to Siva which is exact replica of the main temple. To the south of the main temple, there is a pillared mandap whose central ceiling is decorated with different kinds of patma motives. Additionally over nineteen subsidiary shrines consisting of garbhgriha and antarala are placed around the temple.⁹⁶ These magnificent groups of temples are located amidst tall and lofty palmyra trees and this luxuriant vegetation serves as a beautiful backdrop making visit to these temples a visual feast and a memorable one. The Ghanpur groups of temples are located in Ghanpur mandal headquarters, around 62 kms away from Warangal.⁹⁷ The group of temples is a protected monument but nothing has been done to renovate or improve it. The temples are in a dilapidated condition. The mud wall around the temple is also dilapidated and there is a growth of wild bushes on it and in the area enclosed by the wall.

Ramappa Temple, Palampet⁹⁸

The temple is built in the year 1213 A.D. by 'Recherla Rudraiah'. This historic temple attracts tourist from India and abroad as it is known for its architectural and sculptural beauty.⁹⁹ The sculptures were engraved according to the postures mentioned by Jayapa Senani in his famous work 'Nritya Ratnavali'. The postures pertaining to Bharata Natya, Shrunga, Bharunga, Rathi, Perini Nritya etc., are encraved on the pillars and top-beams of 'Mukha Mandapam',¹⁰⁰ (Plate 36) The mythological episodes such as

'Gopika Vastrapaharanam, Tripura samharm, Daksha Samharam, Ksheera Sagara Madhanam, Girija Kalyanam etc., stand for the highest standards of Kakatiya Sculpture.¹⁰¹ The 'Nagini' (Plate 37) and other eleven devanarthakis are arranged on supporting beams on both sides of each entrance.¹⁰² The aesthetic sense which scaled innumerable heights in Kakatiya sculpture¹⁰³ is clearly evident in these twelve postures of deva narthakis. The Mudras and Bhangimas have highly inspired the dance master Dr.Natraja Ramakrishna in giving shape to the historical classical dance 'Perini Siva Thandavam'. The Ramappa Lake adjacent to the temple covering natural flora and fauna will certainly become a feast to the eyes of every tourist.¹⁰⁴

Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple, Chilkur Balaji (Visa Balaji Temple)

The Balaji Temple is located at Chilkur in the Hyderabad district. It is 33 Kms away from Mehdipatnam. Approximately 75,000 to 1,00,000 devotees visit in a week. Generally temple gets heavy rush on Fridays and Sundays. The temple at Chilkur is managed by a private trust of hereditary trustees. The entire family of the archaka, including the women are dedicated themselves to serve the God. Chilkur Balaji popularly known as Visa Balaji Temple or Visa God is an ancient Hindu temple of Lord Balaji on the banks of Osman Sagar Lake near Hyderabad, India. The temple is one of the oldest in Telangana, having been built during the time of Akkanna and Madanna. This temple does not accept any money, does not have a hundi, from the devotees. The other such temple is the Jalaram temple in Virpur (Rajkot), Gujarat. During a visit the devotee goes through the usual rituals of prayer, including 11 circumambulations of the inner shrine, and makes a vow. Once the wish is fulfilled devotees then walk 108 times around the sanctum sanctorum.

Famous Architectural Temples

Vontimetta is notable for the **Kodandarama Temple**, the largest in the region. This 16th century monument is contained within a rectangle of walls with three imposing *gopuras* (plate 38). The columns here have cut-out colonettes on which attendant

maidens are carved, replaced by Krishna and Vishnu on the central supports on the south. Maidens and deities are combined in triple sets at the corners, a device unknown elsewhere. Pillalamarri¹⁰⁵ **Kakeswara Temple**, established in 1208 stands northwest of Pillalamarri, a small village located 5 km north of Suriapet, 133 km east of Hyderabad on NH9. Though not preserved well, the monument is a fine example of the Kakatiya style.

Nagulapad Kameswara Temple is a late Kakatiya structure, dating from 1358. Its hall has porch projections on three sides, each approached by a flight of steps. The linga sanctuaries of the Triple-Shrined Temple were consecrated in 1234. The outer surfaces of the sanctuaries are poorly preserved, in striking contrast to the excellent condition of the interior. The ornamentation of the columns, beams and ceilings here is unsurpassed in Kakatiya art. Chebrolu Brahmalingeswara Temple consists of a small shrine surrounded by a colonnade, standing on a island in the middle of a large square tank. The main object of worship here is a linga with four images of Brahma carved on its sides, set into a lotus bowl. The linga is viewed through doorways on four sides, each with cut-out screens and sharply modeled overhanging eaves.

Bhavanarayana Temple at Bapatla was erected by the Cholas when they conquered the Krishna Delta region in the 10th century. Architectural connections with the Tamil country are seen in the multi-storeyed pyramidal towers of the triple shrines. Goli, a small village, lies about 100km west of Guntur, a short distance from the route to Vijayapuri, 43km further west, a stopping-off point for Nagarjunakonda. Goli is best known for its Buddhist antiquities, dating from the Ikshvaku Era, but other remains are also of interest. They include three Dolmens west of the village, and the dilapidated Malleswara temple in an old fort to the south west. Cherzala, a remote village, 56km northeast of Guntur via Narasaraopet, is of interest for a number of modest shrines, in particular the Kapoteswara Temple. Though currently in use as a Hindu place of worship, the apsidal-ended plan and vault of the building recall similar, 3rd century to 4th century Buddhist structures at Nagarjunakonda.

Bikkavolu is located about 45km east of Rajahmundry, and can be approached by road or train. The 9th century Chandrashekara, Golingewara and Rajarajeswara Temples, which stand in a row, are all assigned to the Eastern Chalukya era. Characteristic features are the moduled plinths, pilastered walls with regular projections, parapets of miniature roof forms and multi-storeyed towers crowned with square roofs, some resorted. Finely sculpted icons of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Durga are set into the wall niches.

Satyavolu is 30km east of Mahanandi via., Giddalur, is the setting for two other Early Chalukya monuments. The Ramalingeswara and Bhimalingewara Temples stand next to each other, the first being the larger. Both have shrines with wall niches in the middle of three sides, roofed with curving towers of the Alampur type. Yaganti is a visited spot, 90km south of Kurnool via Banganapalle, is delightfully located at the head of a rocky valley framed by a crescent of sandstone cliffs. A cascade feeds a large square tank in front of the 16th to 17th century Umamaheswara Temple. This pond is surrounded by animated friezes of courtly and mythological scenes carved on the blocks just above water level. The slightly irregular layout is explained by the monolithic Nandi which is accommodated here. The interior columns have figures of deities, many standing in arched niches, and decorative patterns carved on the shafts.

Tadpatri Chintala Venkataramana Temple, situated in the middle of the town, is contained within a rectangle of high walls, broken on the east by a soaring *gopura* with a steeply pyramidal tower, partly incomplete. Sculptures enliven the granite basement and walls. The Bugga Ramalingeswara Temple is located 1km north of the Tadpatri town, overlooking the sandy bed of the Pennar River. The incomplete *gopuras* on the north and south are the most elaborate in Southern India. The architectural elements are obscured by carved divinities, donors, guardians, sages and dwarfs. The double basement is interrupted by figural niches with lobed and arched profiles; tower like pediments rise above. Gorantla small town on the east bank of the Chitravati River, 30km southeast of Penukonda, is worth visiting for the Madhavaraya Temple, a fine example of the early Vijayanagara style. The monument was erected in 1354 by a local chief and in spite of its

relatively plain exterior preserves interesting reliefs. The compound in which the Temple stands can be entered through a massive gopura, never completed and neglected now.

Muslim Religious Centers

The state of Andhra Pradesh is well known for its secular spirit. People of different religions live in this state amicably and their compatibility is very noticeable. There are a large number of religious monuments of different religions as well that truly reflect the diverse religious and cultural heritage of the state. Prominent among them are the Mosques in Andhra Pradesh.

The Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad is one of the largest mosques in the world, noted for its capacity of over 10,000 worshippers. The construction of the mosque began when Quli Qutub Shah ruled the state in 1617. But it was in 1687 when Aurangzeb annexed the Golconda kingdom and finished the construction of the Mecca Masjid which became one of the most popular and beautiful mosques of the world. This Masjid is also said to contain some sacred relics, one of which is the hair of Muhammed. The Mecca Masjid (Plate 39) in Hyderabad is listed as a heritage building in Hyderabad. The Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad is an architectural marvel and a majestic and imposing structure. The hall is massive measuring about 67 meters by 54 meters with a height of about 23 meters. There are 15 beautiful arches supporting the roof. The grand structure, with its granite finishing and huge courtyard wears a Mughal look more than that of Qutub Shah Dynasty. The Mihrab is said to contain a brick that had been brought from Mecca. The octagonal columns on either side are built from single piece of granite with an arched gallery above it. The large pond in the courtyard has slab seats on the sides.

One of the biggest and the oldest Masjids in Hyderabad, the **Jama Masjid** is the ideal place to go, to explore Islam. It rises with its majestic white towers just a few meters above the Charminar. Jama Masjid is one of the most popular mosques in Hyderabad and is visited by a large number of Muslims every year. It is indeed one of the most attractive examples of Muslim architecture. A rough climb of about 400 stairs

would lead you to the **Chote Hazrat Ki Dargah** in Hyderabad and once you reach the place you will surely understand that it was worth the toil. Built in the memory of Hazrat Ali, who was the son in law of prophet Muhammad, way back in the period of Asif Jahis, the Chote Hazrat Ki Dargah is a popular and sanctified pilgrimage center for the Muslims.

Kazipet Dargha, Warangal¹⁰⁶ began here with much fervour and gaiety. A symbol of unity, people cutting across religious and caste affiliations through this historic site every year. Hazrat Sayyad Shah Afzal Biyabani devotees raised a dargah and began Urs (celebrations). Islamic scholars say there are only three such dargahs, coloured in green, in honours of great personalities - one in Baghdad, the other in Madina and the third one - here in Kazipet. The dargah attracts huge crowds from different parts of the country and abroad. **Ameen Peer Dargah- Kadapa**¹⁰⁷ was established in 1683 by Sufi saint Peerullah Husaini claiming lineage to Prophet Mohammed. This dargah is also known as Pedda Dargah and even more famously as South Ajmer dargah by the locals and visitors and is said to be nearly 324 years old. Though it is little known, Ameen Peer Dargah is visited by most of the famous celebrities from Bollywood and political field.

Bara Shaheed Dargah Nellore, 12 Mazars Shareefs, Dargah of 12 Shaheeds, situated at Nellore Tank, a 3rd big and beautiful lake in Sri Pottisriramulu Nellore District. The Bara Shahid Dargah is built in the memory of 12 Muslim Nawabs from Karnataka who laid down their lives for the sake of Peace, communal harmony and goodwill. A three-day roti festival commences at the Bara Shaheed Dargah in Nellore on the annual festival which begins on the third day after Moharam. An estimated 15-lakh people took part in the roti festival last year. The festival helped in spreading the message of universal goodwill. **Urs of Hazrat Ali, Zahirabad** is held in the Kohir region of Zahirabad every year. The popular festival of the Urs is organized in the dargah of the saint in the town of Kohir. The followers of the Muslim religion gather here to pay homage in the memory of the saint Hazrat Ali every year.¹⁰⁸ The famous Dargah of Saint Hazrat is nestled here. Many Muslim followers gather at Kohir to celebrate the union in the months of October and November.

Christian Religious centers

Andhra Pradesh reflects the secular spirit of the nation. People belonging to different religions live in peaceful harmony. Christianity has also had a great deal of impact in this state. You will find many people who religiously follow the Christian faith. One of the most important landmarks of Hyderabad, **St Joseph's Cathedral**¹⁰⁹ was completed in 1891 as part of a school and a convent for the Roman Catholic population in Abids area. It has a renaissance facade with Corinthian pilasters, the central bay flanked by two towers on either side. Other historical and important churches in the vicinity are St. George's Church (1865-67) at Abids and the Christ Church (1868) at Ramkote.

The Medak Church¹¹⁰ is one of the largest churches (Plate 40) in the country. The construction of the Church began in the year 1914 and after 10 years it was consecrated during Christmas in 1924. Built out of solid white granite, the church is symbolic of the Gothic style of architecture. The Church tower is 173 ft high, with four pinnacles. What is sure to attract your attention the most in the Medak Church are the stained glass windows. These fantastic windows narrate stories from the Bible. The pictures have been painted in bright hues and are sure to impress you. The 'Divine Manifestation', the 'Crucifixion' and the 'Ascension' have all been depicted in these wonderful windows. **Gunadala Mary Matha Church** was later built and consecrated in the year 1971. St. Mary's Church, this church is located on top of a small hillock in Gunadala, which lies on the eastern side of the city of Vijayawada. Every year the Feast of Our Lady of the Lord is held in the month of February and is attended by a large number of devotees. A fair is also organized on this occasion. Lakhs of pilgrims from all corners of the State and neighbouring States like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka come to the shrine here every year to offer prayers to Gunadala Mary Matha during a three-day festival. Pilgrims of all faiths come to offer prayers at the statue of Mother Mary in the grotto.

Spiritual centers

Mantralayam, Kurnool

Mantralayam is widely known as containing the tomb of the Madhwa Saint Sri Raghavendra swamy.¹¹¹ The tomb itself is not of architectural interest. The grant of the landed endowment attached to it is said to have been made by Venkanna Pant, the well known Dewan of Siddhi Masud Khan, Governor of Adoni, from 1662 to 1687. Quaint story of Sri Thomas Munro is told about the place.¹¹² At about 6am daily will take place the cleansing of the Sri Raghavendra Brindavan with water, after the remnants of the previous days puja offerings are removed. This is followed in order by anointing with Panchamritham bathing with pure water, adornment with clothes and precious ornaments, worship with flowers and offering of Mangala Harathi. Similar worship and offerings are made at the shrines of Sri Pranadeva (Sri Vayudeva) and at the Brindavans of Sri Vadindra and other swamis. Later sacred water and prasadam (tokens of divine grace) are given to the devotees. In the evening utsav to the swami is conducted and concluded by "Swasti" and Mangala Harathi.

Puttaparthi,¹¹³ Anantapur

This village is situated on the west bank of Chitravati river about 60 km south of Anantapur via Dharmavaram. In spite of its somewhat remote location, located 400-km from Hyderabad by road, situated at a distance of about 30 km from Penukonda, 5 km from Penukonda-Bukkapatnam road, it has now become a centre of great attraction, Puttaparthi. It is abode of Puttaparthi Sri Satya Sai Baba, one of Southern India's most celebrated saintly figures. Sai Baba is credited with spiritual wisdom, and is notorious for his occult powers. His residence is visited by large number of disciples from all over the country and abroad. In recent years, devotees of Sai Baba have constructed the Prasanthi Nilaya, and ashram for the saint and his followers, where many of them live for prolonged periods. Prasanthi Nilaya is a large colony furnished with all possible facilities, including guest houses and dormitories, kitchens and dining halls. There are, in addition, a Sanskrit school, printing press, post office and private hospital.

Brahmamgari Matam,¹¹⁴ Kadapa

Brahmamgari Matam (Plate 41) is in the Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh, and a famous pilgrimage center. Kandimallayapalle is located 60 km away from Kadapa. It is well facilitated with roads. The preferable route from Kadapa to Kandimallayapalle is via Mydukur. Sri Pothuluri Veerabrahmendra Swamy Reservoir is part of the Telugu Ganga irrigation project. The reservoir has a capacity of 2 billion cubic meters. Along with the surrounding hills, the reservoir has become a popular tourist place.

Sri Viswa Vignana Vidya Adhyatmika Peetham¹¹⁵

Sri Viswa Vignana Vidya Adhyatmika Peetham is a Divine Institution, was initially at Baghdad, Arabia. Then it moved to Persia and then came to India in 1472 A.D. In India it was established at Delhi and remained there for six generations.

The great Master Madin Kabir Sha Sathguru was the first Head of the Peetham who came to Pithapuram from Hyderabad and established this Peetham at Pithapuram in East Godavari District. Sri Madin Kabir Sha was a disciple of the Great Sufi Master Phiran-E-Peer, the descendent and spiritual successor of Prophet Mohammad. Sri Madin Kabir Sha Sathguru had followed the preaching of His Master, performed great penance and accomplished in it. He had number of disciples. The great master Madin Kabir Sha Sathguru composed spiritual poetry in Arabic and Parsee languages. History reveals that, his contemporary public, requested him to display a miracle in testimony of his divine power. His first-born son Sri Madharsha Sathguru succeeded him to be the Peethadhipathi (Head of the Institution). Similarly Sri Hasan Miya Sha Sathguru, the first-born son of Sri Madharsha had succeeded him.

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preparation of his meals for that day. Sir Thomas ordered the rice - Mantrakshate Prasad - to be cooked along with his evening meal and gave up any thought of 'resuming' the taxes of the village to the British. (This episode is found in a British newspaper of the time, *The Madras Gazetteer*, which can still be viewed at the Collectorate in Anantapur).

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